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South African Jewish Report

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Miraculously escaping Hezbollah rocket attack

TALI FEINBERG

In what people are calling a miracle, a South African group that planned to hold a ceremony at the "South African Forest" in the north of Israel on 23 September escaped with their lives after Hezbollah rockets rained down on the very spot.

The group, led by the Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNF SA), were on a solidarity mission to Israel and were planning to commemorate the 10 South Africans who have died since 7 October, including Daniel Perez. They decided at the eleventh hour to hold the ceremony at Perez's grave in Jerusalem instead, in light of Hezbollah's attacks in the north. That decision saved the lives of the 100 people, including many South African olim, who planned to attend the ceremony from all over Israel.

They are just a few of the many people affected by the increasing tensions with Hezbollah, which has now seen Israel take a proactive approach with its Operation Arrows of the North. Olim who have previously been spared Hezbollah rockets are now experiencing attacks. South African olah Yael Lacob, who has lived in Israel for 30 years, saw her neighbour's house go up in flames in a direct hit. Her village had previously never been in the line of fire.

"We live in Mosheshet, in the lower Galilee," says Lacob, speaking to the SA Jewish Report from her home, which was damaged. "It is usually a very tranquil, peaceful place. Even since 7 October, it's been very quiet here. On Saturday night [21 September] there were

two sirens in the middle of the night, and at about 06:20 in the morning [22 September], there was another siren. My husband, daughter, and I quickly ran to the safe room.

"About 20 seconds later, we heard a huge boom. The whole house shook and we heard glass

people came to help put out the fire. Another missile landed one street below us and houses were damaged, but in both hits, thank goodness, no-one was injured." Most of the windows in Lacob's house were shattered, window blinds were blown out of their frames, and tiles blew off the roof.

we're very happy and blessed to be here, and happy and blessed to be okay and not injured."

A South African olah who doesn't want to be named because her children are in senior positions in the army says, "I'm in Kiryat Tivon and we have been in and out of the safe room since the early hours of Sunday morning. There were two direct hits in Tivon today [23 September] and so many more intercepted. It's crazy here. I've lived here for 17 years and I'm terrified. We've had one bombardment before, but nothing like this. We've had so many rockets in the last few hours, but thank G-d for the Iron Dome."

One rocket fell close to her house. "It felt like it was in my garden, but it was actually across the highway in front of my house. It was strong enough to blow out all the windows of a house 10 houses away. Shrapnel from intercepted rockets has rained down on the entire neighbourhood."

Sid Kaplan is a founding member of Moshav Manof in the southern Galilee. "The situation is beyond words," he says. "As we don't have a bomb shelter, we were forced to leave and come down to my brother in Kfar Saba. On the way down, we had to stop on the highway and lie on the ground as two rockets exploded above us. Wherever you are is like playing Russian roulette. The situation is extremely dangerous, and very surreal."

Shelley Liss Barkan has remained in her evacuated town of Shlomi, saying she will never leave. She teaches at a school in nearby Kabri, close to Nahariyah. "The pupils have been greatly affected," she says. "There are children that shake, cry, faint and vomit every time an alarm goes off. They have completely lost their concentration, and emotionally there are many problems."



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Last-minute change of plan saved lives ... Joyce Levin; Wayne Miller; Saul Jassinowsky; and Idan, Fran, and Henry Blumenthal at Daniel Perez's grave on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem on Monday 23 September

shattering. So we knew that it was very close to us. We waited for a few minutes and then we heard shouts outside. It turned out that our neighbour's house had a direct hit and it was on fire. They were in their safe room and escaped uninjured.

"Very quickly, the fire trucks came and many

"Despite the very frightening experience, we're blessed to be in a very supportive community. Whenever help is needed, there's always someone to turn to," she says. "We've also got lots of support from Telfed and the South African community in Israel. Despite the problems, Israel is home and

Continued on page 3>>

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US Jewish history museum could become part of the Smithsonian

ASAF ELIA-SHALEV – JTA

American Jews are one step closer to having a Smithsonian museum dedicated to their history.

The House of Representatives has unanimously approved a Bill to study the possibility of bringing the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, in Philadelphia, under the Smithsonian umbrella.

The Weitzman, as it is known, is considered the premier museum of Jewish history in the United States and already has an affiliation with the Smithsonian. Full membership in the Smithsonian network of museums would unlock federal funding opportunities and confer additional prestige on the Weitzman.

The Bill had the support of 36 Jewish groups and was co-sponsored by a bipartisan slate of 94 representatives.

Lawmakers spoke of rising antisemitism in the United States and Israel's multi-front war, in speeches

ahead of the proposed law's approval.

"Pervasive anti-Israel bias has infected our country. Antisemitism is on the rise and threatens the safety of all communities and institutions," said Bryan Steil, a Wisconsin Republican. "Let me be clear, antisemitism has no place in America. Israel is in a fight for its very existence from the terrorist threat of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. I strongly support our ally, Israel, and our Jewish friends in the Middle East."

The Bill's author, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Jewish Florida Democrat, said the elevation of the museum's status could help in the fight against antisemitism.

"With antisemitism skyrocketing, acknowledging the past and acting to build a better tomorrow is more critical than ever," she said. "It will take a whole-of-society effort to do this, and folding the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History into the Smithsonian is one step toward that goal. We must uplift Jewish stories and raise awareness of the contributions of Jewish Americans throughout our

nation's history."

If passed by the Senate and signed by the president, the law would establish a commission to consider transferring the museum to the control of the Smithsonian trust. Ultimately, the Weitzman would join a collection of Smithsonian museums dedicated to other minority groups, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos.

Supporters of the plan are motivated in part by the view that the Smithsonian's United States Holocaust Memorial Museum plays a critical but limited role in educating Americans about Jewish history and fighting antisemitism.

"The Holocaust describes the darkest moment in the history of the Jewish people, perhaps the darkest moments of humanity, but it does not tell people about who the Jewish people are," said Phil Darivoff, the Chairperson Emeritus of the Weitzman. "It does not tell the unique and joyful story of Jews in America and that is something that Americans need to understand."

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'Comm-unity' requires happiness

Torah Thought

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman relates that someone once asked Rav Avigdor Miller how he should prepare for the judgement of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rabbi Miller replied, "Smile."

"How does smiling grant someone a good judgement?" he asked. "I will explain with a *mashal* [parable]: someone owns a chain of stores. At the end of each year, he takes inventory and decides what changes have to be made for the upcoming year. Some stores will need more advertising, some employees will be laid off, and so on. The proprietor's advisor says, 'Even if you let go of some employees, don't fire this one. He always has a smile on his face, which gives consumers a good feeling. There are people who come to the store just to see him and be greeted by his smile. We need him around.'"

Similarly, at the end of the year, Hashem takes inventory of His world to make determinations for the year ahead. If someone always has a smile on his or her face, bringing joy to others, he or she has positioned themselves as an indispensable asset to the world, and Hashem will take that into consideration when making a determination for the year ahead."

We're blessed to live in a large, vibrant Jewish South Africa. We are comprised of thousands of people. On the one hand, that affords us countless opportunities like diverse friendships, multiple shuls, extensive programming, and more. At the same time, the larger our community gets, the harder it is to know others and feel like you matter.

In advising large religious institutions, pastor

Rick Warren describes our mission as growing larger and smaller at the same time. We grow larger by attracting more people and families who share our vision, values, and mission, but we must simultaneously grow smaller by providing programmes, opportunities, and experiences in which people know each other, feel like they belong, and connect with others.

You can't spell "community" without "unity", and you can't have a thriving community without the people who comprise it being committed to uniting with one another.

This is what we should be striving for this year – being there for everyone. We need to reach out to others. We need to create a real love, passion, and drive, but we need to do it through *simcha* – innate happiness!

Dr Nicholas Christakis, a physician at Harvard Medical School, authored a study that concludes that happiness is contagious. The same way that when one person yawns it affects others, when one person smiles or is happy it leads to others' happiness and smiling as well. Be the person who sets off the chain reaction of smiles, and make yourself indispensable to Hashem this *yamim noraim* (high holy days) season.

As we grow larger, we cannot also grow smaller without everyone's help. Wishing you and your family a *ketiva ve'chatima tova*.

Rabbi Alon Friedman
Yeshiva Mizrachi



Shabbat and Yom Tov Times

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Firing exposes News24 columnists' 'glorification of violence'

TALI FEINBERG

When the editor of media giant News24 dismissed Jewish columnist Howard Feldman, it exposed deeply ingrained double standards at the widely read South African news site.

Editor Adriaan Basson told Feldman that "in light of your recent tweets about the pager explosions in Lebanon, I have decided to terminate your column on News24. News24 can in no way be associated with writers who glorify violence, which you did, in my opinion."

But News24 is, in fact, associated with writers who glorify violence. In April, columnist Iqbal Jassat, who regularly calls for the destruction of Israel and openly supports Hamas, glorified the 13 April Iranian attack on Israel, calling it a "heroic mission" and a "just cause", saying "it will be recorded in history as momentous". He was writing on extremist anti-Israel website the Media Review Network (MRN), of which he is a founder.

At least three News24 columnists blame Israel for Hamas's atrocities of 7 October, and one expresses approval of it. "While some will call it Palestinian terrorism, an examination of the facts will lend itself to the fact that these are actually acts of resistance in response to the real terrorism," wrote News24 columnist Dr Aayesha Soni, in a MRN piece titled "Israel has no-one to blame but itself" on 9 October. "Meticulously planned and bravely executed, the Palestinian resistance is showing the world that they are willing and more than capable of defending their own land and people."

On 29 December, the day South Africa took Israel to the International Court of Justice, Soni retweeted a statement by Hamas leader Izzat al-Rishq, calling Hamas "heroes of resistance", and expressing approval of "Al-Qassam's slogan: 'It is a jihad of victory or martyrdom'".

South African Jewish Board of Deputies national director Wendy Kahn notes, "News24 has published an opinion piece by [former Cabinet minister] Ronnie Kasrils justifying Hamas's indiscriminate killing of civilians on 7 October. Yet, it chose to fire Feldman over a tweet on his own platform, justifying the killing of terrorists. We believe this is double standards."

In his most recent piece for News24, Jassat also blamed Israel for 7 October. On 11 October, former

News24 assistant editor and current columnist Qaanitah Hunter wrote a News24 column titled "The violence in Israel didn't just happen. Consider the context" also blaming Israel for the Hamas massacre.

Jassat's account on X (formerly Twitter) was suspended for violating the platform's rules, but his MRN account tweeted, "No safe writing spaces for Zionazi terrorists" in response to Feldman's dismissal. His MRN website released a statement on 7 October applauding Hamas's atrocities, and published Hamas's own statement that day. MRN regularly features

Hamas statements and published a 16-page document by Hamas explaining its atrocities.

Kahn says Feldman's dismissal "is indicative of the narrowing of space for Jews to express opinions on the Middle East. While every innocent death in this conflict is a tragedy, there should be space for Jews to support Israel's war against terror, without fear of being intimidated or cancelled."

South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks says, "It is important to hear Jewish voices in South Africa. Feldman's tweet about his dismissal has garnered more than 810 000 views, as there is growing concern about the cancellation of people who have views that differ from mainstream media. We hope News24 will continue to have pro-Israeli voices, as it certainly features those who are pro-Palestinian, and treat both sides honestly and fairly."

She adds, "There is also a widespread misunderstanding by the South African media of the pager attacks on Hezbollah terrorists. Hezbollah has the largest military of any non-state in the world. It has rained rockets on Israel for 11 months, displaced more than 60 000 people, and is shooting rockets further south, endangering millions."

"Israel has to defend itself and when it does – by targeting terrorists with pagers – those who are pleased do not condone violence. Instead, they are relieved that Israel is protecting herself in a

way that avoids hurting innocent people. Israel has the right to defend itself from an army that seeks to annihilate it and has been at war with it for 11 months. Recognising that does not equal the promotion of violence."

Feldman says he was "floored" when he received the message from Basson. "It's not like I don't have a relationship with him. He could have handled it very differently. He could have messaged me to say, 'Please can we have a conversation, because I'm worried about what you are tweeting.'"

"In a way I wasn't surprised, because my sense is it's been quite difficult for News24 to give me a platform," he adds. "I think there is tremendous pressure to appear not to be supporting Israel in any way. I have noticed in my articles [on News24] that if I referred to Hamas's sexual assault of Israeli citizens, I would have the word 'alleged' [added to the text]. But somehow nobody needed to qualify Hamas's claimed numbers [of deaths]. I was never allowed to refer to Hamas as a terrorist organisation."

"So, I had to be very cautious about what I wrote and made sure that everything was verifiable. Whereas if you see some of the other columns as recently as the weekend, with vitriol against Jews or Israel, it goes unchecked."

Feldman is referring to *City Press* editor Mondli Makhanya's piece published on News24 on 22 September, in which he stated: "A [Jewish] community that produced some of the 20th century's most courageous advocates for justice has

overwhelmingly (at least from the outside) become a cheerleader for a genocidal regime."

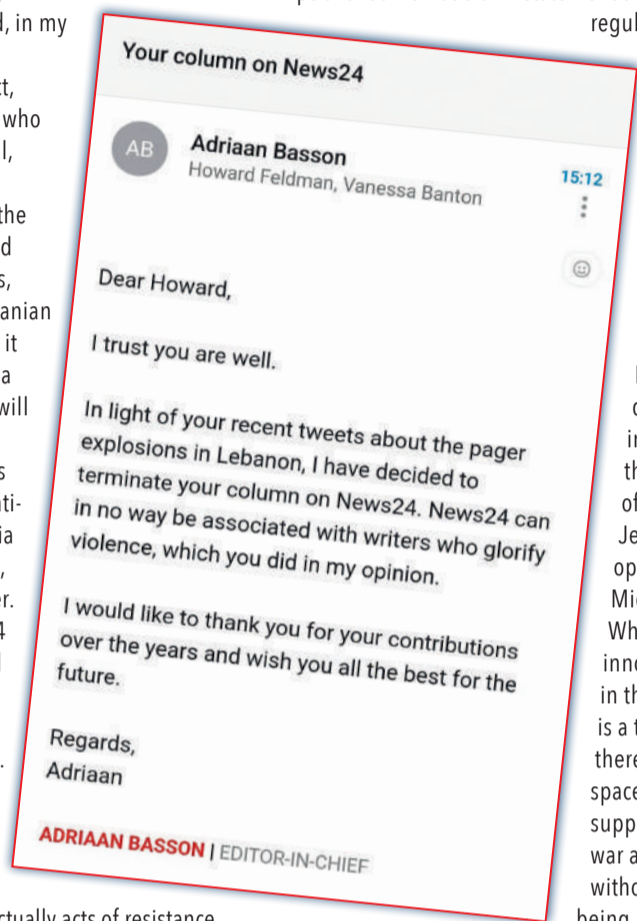
Makhanya went on to describe Israel's pager attack as "the worst terrorist attacks by a legitimate state", conveniently ignoring Hezbollah's daily terrorist attacks against Israelis, including the murder of 12 Druze children.

While some have commented that one shouldn't celebrate the misfortune of others, Feldman said, "I think it needs to be contextualised. I was never told which tweet was the offending one. It may have been when I said Israel's attack was genius, and at the end I said it was 'really cool'. Maybe it was wrong to say that. I certainly don't think I was celebrating someone's misfortune. I think it is simply about the fact that Israel had a 'win', and the anger about that gets misdirected at me."

Feldman writes for many publications but doesn't think another South African publication would welcome him, as he believes the media in South Africa operates on a "groupthink" level. "But thankfully my voice is still heard," he says.

To the community, he says: "Obviously, it's upsetting, but the reality is, it is not about me. We are living in a world that requires us to be resilient. We've done that for thousands of years. We are fighting for truth. I'm so confident about that, that this is just another day in the fight for good."

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Basson for comment but did not receive a response by the time of going to print.



Miraculously escaping Hezbollah rocket attack

>>Continued from page 1

She is still running the large kitchen that she voluntarily runs to feed soldiers hot meals. "It gives me an aim and something to do – it helps. We now have thousands of soldiers in the north and we have so many requests for food that we are overwhelmed."

Telfed chairperson Maish Isaacson says, "Telfed staff and volunteers have been calling residents of the north on a regular basis since October, in addition to personal visits. We are here for them. We saw from our calls and visits to *olim* in the south how important these calls are – they have not been forgotten and we know they are dealing with immense trauma and stress."

"We also reiterate the importance of following the guidelines from the Home Front Command," says Isaacson. "The language barrier is daunting for *olim*, which is why Telfed is working in close co-operation with the Home Front Command and has created a WhatsApp group where we share all the guidelines in English, directly from the official source."

As for the South African group that escaped the barrage, JNF SA executive committee member Saul Jassinowsky explains that at the ceremony, the group were going to donate

equipment to the firefighters battling the raging flames resulting from the rocket attacks. Instead, the firefighters found themselves battling a blaze in the very forest where the handover was to have taken place. However, the donated equipment will still make its way to them.

JNF SA chairperson Michael Kransdorff says they had been preparing for months to hold the ceremony at the forest's memorial monument for fallen South Africans. "When we realised the area had been hit, we were shocked. It really brought it home that it could have been us."

Jassinowsky says that, "We are in the land of miracles and the land of protection, and with everything going on, we couldn't feel more safe or more protected. I'm a strong believer in divine providence, and we landed up exactly where we were meant to be."

"We are also launching an initiative to replant the Be'eri Forest, which was destroyed on 7 October," he says. "Everyone is invited to join us in planting trees in the names of those who were killed on or since 7 October. The forest was the site of the Nova festival and the land is steeped in blood. But as Jews, we commit to renewal. We plant, we grow, we rebuild – and therein lies our strength."

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Outrage over proposed renaming of Sandton Drive after Leila Khaled

NICOLA MILTZ

The City of Johannesburg's proposal to rename Sandton Drive after an infamous Palestinian plane hijacker has sparked a divisive debate that cuts across political lines.

Renaming the road "Leila Khaled Drive" is viewed by many as a gross violation of the city's own renaming policies, and a waste of money. Businesses and residents are outraged at the attempt to glorify violence and extremism in the heart of Sandton's business district.

Khaled, 80, is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, an internationally designated terrorist organisation. She is known as the poster girl of Palestinian militancy for her role in hijacking TWA flight 840 from Rome to Tel Aviv in 1969, as well as many other terrorist activities.

"To venerate violence and honour such an individual is an affront to peace-loving South Africans, including the Jewish community in Johannesburg," says Rolene Marks, spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF). On its behalf, she condemned the proposal as "malicious", "divisive", and "deliberately provocative".

Sandton Drive is home to the United States Consulate and is within walking distance of several synagogues and Jewish schools.

The Joburg metro announced the proposal on 18 September, urging interested and affected people or parties to submit their comments or representations within 28 days. They have until 15 October to lodge objections.

The protracted renaming saga dates back to 2018 when now failed mayor Thapelo Amad (then councillor of the minor Al Jama-ah political party, which at the time held one out of 270 seats in the Johannesburg City Council) brought the troublesome motion before the council. Amad stepped down as mayor last year on the eve of a motion of no confidence in him. He had sparked controversy soon after 7 October when he posed with an assault rifle and a flag with the Hamas logo, proudly posting: "We stand with Hamas, Hamas stands with us, together we are Palestin [sic] and Palestin [sic] will be free. With our souls, with our blood, we will conquer Al Aqsa."

The original motion in 2018 was rejected by the Democratic Alliance and other parties, but they were outnumbered when the Economic Freedom Fighters and the African National Congress voted in favour.

Fast forward seven years – which have included a few Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions SA protests calling for a speedy name change – and the matter has once again reared its head.

The proposal has been met with widespread opposition from several parties, including ActionSA.

Its Gauteng chairperson, Funzi Ngobeni, says he believes "Sandton Drive" is a perfectly neutral and unifying name. It is perfectly appropriate for a heterogeneous and cosmopolitan society such as Johannesburg.

"As ActionSA, we will leave no stone unturned to lobby all political parties in the City of Johannesburg to vote against this proposal as we believe it offers no benefits whatsoever to the residents of our great city."

Ngobeni says the party is not against the renaming of public landmarks to reinforce the City's heritage, as it honours those who have played a significant role in history and strengthens our collective identity.

But he expressed concern about the challenges the metro is grappling with, including service delivery failures, crippling water shortages, rampant unemployment, severe housing shortages, crumbling infrastructure, and rising crime rates.

He says these pressing challenges require urgent attention, rather than the renaming of a street.

Democratic Alliance Councillor Martin Williams has been following the saga closely since 2018, and says the renaming "serves no purpose other than to antagonise significant

sections of the community."

Williams notes how the proposed naming is in direct contravention of its policies.

According to these policies, "Naming after living people should be avoided, because community attitudes and opinions can change over time"; and "names should not be discriminatory or derogatory from the point of view of race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or gender, colour, creed, political affiliation or other social factors to any community or section of a community; names should promote goodwill and reconciliation; names should promote a sense of ownership and the character of an area".

He says no-one has demonstrated how Khaled has contributed to the development of Johannesburg.



Councillor Lynda Shackelford says she had been inundated with calls from irate Sandton residents, many of whom suffer regular water outages because of persistent problems with the city's ageing infrastructure.

"My phone has not stopped ringing. The city is thinking of changing the name of a road that leads you to Sandton, thereby taking Sandton off the map, It's illogical," she says.

Marks says the name change appears deliberately provocative towards the US Consulate located on Sandton Drive, potentially discouraging American investment in Johannesburg.

She says Khaled's infamy extends beyond failed hijackings. "She continues to advocate for violence and terror against Israelis to this day. In recent years, she has made statements supporting 'resistance' in all its forms, first and foremost through armed struggle."

She says the SAZF condemns the City of Johannesburg's apparent attempt to appease extremist minorities at the expense of offending a significant portion of the city's residents.

"This political manoeuvre is viewed as both malicious and counterproductive, especially during a time when the nation should be celebrating its unique history and unity," she says.

The recommended route for objections by email is to the relevant city official, domicam@joburg.org.za
Please cc your councillor. In the case of Ward 90 that is marcw7@gmail.com

Most of Sandton Drive is within Ward 90. You can also email Lynda Shackelford at jhbward103@gmail.com
If using email, please include full name and cell number. Preferably also ID and address. POPIA Act to be observed.

Info used only for purposes of Sandton Drive issue. Williams says people are free to say whatever they choose but suggests challenging the city on adherence to its own policy on the "Naming and Renaming of Streets and Other Public Places in the City of Johannesburg".

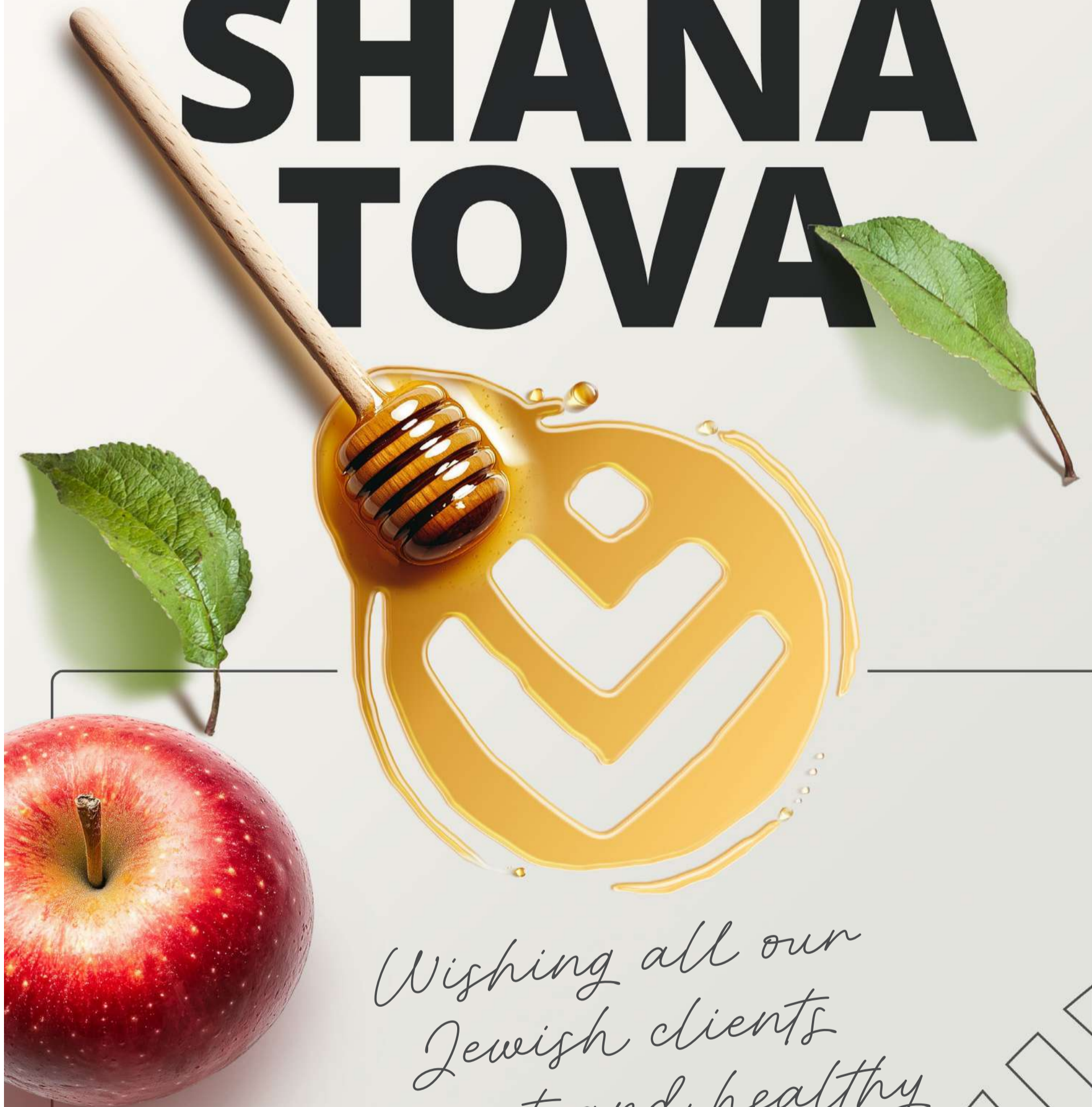
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Don't turn the other cheek

Steering clear of trouble or challenges is much easier than facing problems head on with the clear intention of finding a solution. As we approach Rosh Hashanah, and look back on our year, not having had any confrontation or harsh words with anyone else seems good, right?

It looks good because avoiding conflict and tough challenges means avoiding saying anything that people don't want to hear. So you come across as Mr/Mrs/Ms Nice Guy and that feels good. Or does it?

I avoid conflict where possible, but it doesn't serve me. I risk allowing something I know is intrinsically wrong to happen, or I don't stand up for myself. These are not positive experiences. I hazard a guess they are not what we are put on this earth to do either.

We aren't the ones who are meant to turn the other cheek. Sure, we are told not to seek revenge. However, when someone harms us or our loved ones, or does something that we know is wrong, we can't ignore it.

Right now there are many in the world who condemn Israel for fighting to ensure that terrorist organisations, like Hamas and Hezbollah, are never again able to perpetrate the atrocities of 7 October. Exactly what did they expect Israel to do? Avoid confrontation and say, 'Okay, you did this horrific thing to my people, but I forgive you and let's chat about how we can take this forward'? Really?

Do you know anyone in their right mind who would do that? Not least of all because Hamas violently dragged 251 innocent men, women, and children to Gaza, where they held them in the most horrific conditions. And to date, almost one year later, it still has more than 100 of our people – and we do not know whether they are dead or alive. How can this be acceptable?

What is clear is that Israel is not out seeking revenge, but rather ensuring the terrorists do not have the capacity to do what they did again. Why? Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic Republic of Iran have vowed to destroy Israel and its people. We believe them and there is no way Israel can allow it.

Israel did not start this war, nor did it want a war, as Israeli President Isaac Herzog keeps repeating. Israel does not want to fight; however, it does want to live in peace without the constant threat of another 7 October massacre. It also wants its population to go back to living safely in their homes in northern and southern Israel.

The general idea in the mainstream media is that Israel has now launched an attack in Lebanon on people who were innocently getting on with their lives. It was unprovoked, or so they want you to believe. In reality, since 7 October, Hezbollah has been firing missiles at Israel consistently, aiming directly at the Israeli populace. Not at strategic or military sites. No, directly at where ordinary Israelis live.

And just as the heat was on for Hezbollah to up its game, Israel struck with the pager offensive. Many would have you believe – and they do their best to believe it themselves because it suits them – that Israel attacked innocent people. However, that is the furthest thing from the truth. The attack was directed at active Hezbollah operatives. And since then, as Hezbollah fires more and more missiles towards Haifa and even Tel Aviv, Israel focuses its attack on Hezbollah leadership and strategic places to take out their ability to harm Israel. All this to safeguard its population and enable them to go back to their homes in the north of Israel to live in peace.

I do get that war begets war and battles beget more battles. And who knows when this will end. However, as much as I hate violence and war, I cannot see how Israel can do otherwise. Should it be gentler? To what end? Will that convince Hezbollah and Hamas to come to the table and genuinely look for a peaceful way forward? If that were possible, I would subscribe to that, but I don't believe that Hezbollah and Hamas are looking for peace. And Israel is not going to allow them to walk all over it or destroy the country. So it's in a catch-22. I certainly don't have the answer, but it isn't to turn the other cheek or avoid confrontation.

Last week, our columnist Howard Feldman, who has such a quirky turn of phrase, was "fired" from News24 because he had apparently "glorified violence" on his personal Twitter (now X) account. Feldman wasn't employed by News24, nor paid for his column, but certainly is outspoken about Israel's right to defend itself. (See story on page 3.) Feldman could have turned the other cheek and let it go because, well, we as Jews are getting used to people refusing to hear Israel's and our side of things. But he didn't. He released the letter from the editor to all who would read it and put forward his side of the story.

Feldman is a brave man. He pulls no punches. He says it like it is, and very often people find this offensive. Truth is, most of us don't do what he does because we can't take the backlash and ridicule that comes from taking an unpopular stand. It is much easier to go with the flow and not challenge where we see wrong being done.

Feldman can never be accused of that. He stands up and is counted, and I so admire and respect that.

Right now, once again, those who are anti-Israel and anti-United States are doing their best to rub our combined noses in their running of our authorities. They are trying to change the innocuous name of Sandton Drive to Leila Khaled Drive. Khaled is a terrorist with two failed hijacking attempts on her record. She is no friend of Israel, or the West. But those who hate Israel hold her in high esteem.

While the South African government has every right to want to change the names of streets named after apartheid leaders, Sandton Drive is not one of them. And the general idea is for streets to be renamed after South Africans who did something great for the country. Khaled isn't South African, nor has she done anything for this country.

The crux is that we as citizens have an opportunity to voice our disapproval of the name change and prevent it happening. In our story on page 4, we explain exactly how.

Don't turn the other cheek. Don't ignore this wrong. Be active citizens and make sure it doesn't happen.

As we wind down to Rosh Hashanah and the high holy days, don't get depressed and downhearted because of what the world is saying and doing to us. Do something. Stand up and be counted. This is one way you can do that.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag sameach!

Peta Krost
Editor

We will not be publishing next week as it is Rosh Hashanah but will be back the following week on 10 October.



The art of warfare

OPINION

DR DAVID BROCK KATZ



International newsrooms lit up when the news broke of thousands of pagers exploding in the hands and pockets of Hezbollah commanders across Lebanon on 17 September. The blasts signalled a new phase in the year-old attritional battle on Israel's northern border.

The audacious operation, which Ian Fleming would not have been able to conceive as a work of fiction, severely rocked Hezbollah's command structure. The next day, before there was time to assess the extent of the damage wrought on the group's command and control structures, a further series of explosions surgically targeted another 500 communication devices.

Instantly, the much-vaunted Hezbollah was left with a severely damaged C3 (command, control, and communication) system, and its morale plummeting to all-time lows. Iran's favourite proxy has been dealt a lethal blow, rendering enormous psychological and material damage, and leaving it vulnerable to an Israeli conventional attack should the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) choose to deliver a well-timed strike.

I have been careful not to name Israel as the protagonist behind this startling Trojan Horse operation as the Jewish state has not claimed responsibility. However, despite the absence of an official declaration, the world knows that only one entity is capable of conceiving and then executing such a daring plan.

One can only imagine the impeccable planning, incredible espionage, impossible logistics, and flawless technological skills deployed. I have used the term "Trojan Horse" for a good reason, as the operation mimicked the best of ancient Greek mythology. Similarly, the Greeks coaxed the Trojans into bringing a wooden horse filled with concealed soldiers through the gates of their impregnable defences.



An exploded Hezbollah pager

The operation also encompassed the doctrine of the ancient Chinese military sage Sun Tzu of "being like water and following the course of least resistance". Another British military philosopher, Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart, spoke of the "strategy of the indirect approach". He encouraged commanders to bypass areas of apparent resistance and prepared defences and instead choose the less obvious or more convoluted route to unhinge the enemy psychologically.

Students of warfare are taught that military science is made up of a measure of science and, most importantly, a good measure of art. I have already hinted that the planners of this operation pushed the envelope regarding the science of delivering thousands of lethally rigged pagers into the hands of the enemy. Apparently, the planners used a myriad front companies to disguise their origin and intent.

The process of intercepting Hezbollah's request for communication devices and managing to ensure they reached their intended target, modified with deadly intent, goes beyond belief. Ensuring that the devices exploded in unison on a single command

delivered hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away will enter the history books as an unimaginable technological triumph. The study of military science, beyond ensuring that past mistakes are not repeated, is also about discovering the art of the possible. No-one will ever hold an electronic device or switch on a microwave again without trepidation.

Now to the art of warfare. Israeli society encourages free thinking and intellectual pursuits, leading to their unique brand of inquiring minds. Israeli culture encourages chutzpah, resulting in an excess of self-confidence and audacity that can often annoy an outsider. Intellectualism, intuition, and chutzpah are carried over into the IDF's and other state security organs' military doctrine.

The IDF's military doctrine reflects the society at large, and few other militaries in the world allow the latitude for decision-making that occurs at all levels within the force. Encouraging intuition and devolving decision-making down to the lowest levels makes for a highly agile military security cluster. We call these attributes collectively the art of warfare. Not many nations besides Israel have the ability to execute an operation of this nature.

A year's worth of brutal and complex warfare in Gaza has honed the IDF's urban warfare military doctrine to standards that will be taught internationally at military colleges for years to come. These skills have come at an enormous price in military and civilian casualties on both sides. The IDF can field a large army of combat-hardened soldiers, unlike before 7 October, when many doubted that the new generation of computer-game kids would rise to the occasion.

The IDF has performed beyond expectations, despite the adverse onslaught of world opinion and the constant threat to the lives of the remaining hostages. In subduing, if not wholly

defeating, Hamas, Israel has skilfully avoided a war on two fronts. Crippling blows dealt recently to the command and control of Hezbollah may open an opportunity for the IDF to strike at south Lebanon and end the

rain of missiles that has made 60 000 Israelis refugees.

History teaches that missiles and air strikes alone are insufficient to defeat a resilient enemy or bring them to the negotiating table. Israel has used a unique form of hybrid warfare, where the opportunities of an interconnected and globalised world have been exploited to weaken the adversary. Some claim, with justification, that Hezbollah is not the same adversary as Hamas. It is far better trained and equipped and enjoys a severalfold numerical advantage over Hamas. However, the IDF is not the same army it was pre-7 October 2023, having proved itself in brutal combat. Securing a safe zone free of Hezbollah missiles may require a boots-on-the-ground approach, with all its attritional caveats. Israel has an opportunity that cannot be squandered, although its exploitation may be costly.

• Dr David Brock Katz is a research fellow at Stellenbosch University in the faculty of military science. He has published three books and numerous academic articles dealing with aspects of South African military history and military doctrine.

Darkness begets darkness, light begets light

OPINION

MIKE ABEL



More than ever, in almost 80 years, our past will define our perspectives on the future as we go into Rosh Hashanah of 2024 (Year 5785):

As we approach this *yom tov*, we do so with damaged hearts, deeply sad and heavily burdened by our people enduring unspeakable violence on 7 October; the recent murders of Eden Yerushalmi; Hersh Goldberg-Polin; Carmel Gat; Alexander Lobanov; Almog Sarusi; and Ori Danino, and think incessantly of the more than 100 hostages who remain in starving captivity – if alive – in subterranean terror tunnels. It's a period unlike most of us have ever experienced in our lifetimes.

Seventy-nine years ago, our global Jewish family was emerging, broken, torn, shattered, and destroyed by the Holocaust. Sixty-three percent of all Jews globally were murdered by the Third Reich and its eager collaborators in Europe, as the world either mostly stood by or deliberately limited our escape from murder by stopping emigration and even escorting ships back into German waters towards the gas chambers, firing squads, and certain death.

Nothing we have seen in the past year, since 7 October, isn't what we have seen and experienced before as a people. And the grotesque global response to this profound tragedy is equally expected. It seems to be our lot. And yet, we are here, in 5785, when all our historic enemies no longer are.

This time, it will be no different.

On the peaceful Shabbat morning of 7 October Simchat Torah, no less, when we concluded the year of reading the Torah, and as we entered a new cycle of reading, we did, indeed, enter a "new cycle". Of both reading and learning new and tragic things about our security in Israel, and indeed, within the world. For us, it was a day of unimaginable tragedy, the bloodiest one in Israel's history.

For antisemites around the globe, it was one of celebration. Unperturbed by savage rapes, indescribable murder, and a depravity unseen in decades, our now apparent enemies saw past all this

horror to take to the street continually in support of these genocidal monsters. They still are. It's ongoing. On the streets of London, New York, Melbourne, on Ivy League campuses, and everywhere else you'd expect sane humans to be filled with abject horror. And yet...

To put a finer point on this matter, Jews comprise 0.01% of the world population. The murder of 1 200 Jews in one day in 2023, is proportionally the equivalent murder of 3.7 million Christians, 2.8 million Muslims, 1.8 million Hindus, or 720 000 Buddhists in one single day. And the world is surprised that we are horrified? And as a people who lost more than 60% of their global population just 80 years ago. And in a country – Israel – that's one-fifth the size of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. A country smaller than the state of New Jersey. A tiny speck of land that constitutes only 0.4% of the Middle East but is regarded as "colonised".

Put differently, 99.6% of all land in that region isn't Jewish. And yet, Israel has a standing item for condemnation at the United Nations, Item 7, which no other country in the entire world other than the minuscule Jewish state has as

a permanent agenda item. One could almost become paranoid.

So, what does this all mean for us as we go into a New Year?

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish period of renewal. Of closure and new beginnings. A time of hope. The very thing that has defined us and sustained us for more than 5 000 years.

It's a time of deep reflection, as we look inwards and determine how we can each live a better, more meaningful, purposeful, and happier life. That's what we're specifically instructed to do at this very time of year. And to ask forgiveness for any sins committed, knowingly and unknowingly.

A time of despair while celebrating Rosh Hashanah isn't new to us.

It's an enduring and endless chapter in our historic existence. Be it the time of the Pharaohs; the Spanish Inquisition; the pogroms of Europe; the Holocaust; the murder of our athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics – at the very time, ironically, an American Jew, Mark Spitz, won the most gold medals at those Games – or the carnage at the Nova festival of peace and celebration on 7 October 2023; and the Sabbath morning slaughter at the surrounding kibbutzim.

So, this Rosh Hashanah, we can only lean towards the words and wisdom of the iconic Jewish poet and musician, Leonard Cohen, who sings, "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

And that's our role. Our duty. This year, and every year. To let the light in. Hope. Joy. Even gratitude. Because we're here. We bear witness. We honour those who have passed. We carry their torches, and in their names, we try to give light unto the world. We endure. And we create. We embrace life and living. We embrace love.

We must never succumb to hate. It's not our way. As Nelson Mandela said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

He also said, "The brave man isn't the one who doesn't feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." And that's a large part of what these times call for. Living, as we do, with hope and optimism, hard as that sometimes may be, to build our families, our lives, our communities, and our societies. By consciously laying the groundwork for reflection, resilience, and unity, we can swim our way towards optimism in spite of the currents.

Given this is a Rosh Hashanah message, I'd like to reflect on the teachings of Pirkei Avot 1:2 that the world stands on three things: First, Torah – our religious and spiritual beliefs, whoever we may be; second, service to society; and third, acts of loving kindness.

Darkness begets darkness, light begets light, and love begets love. That's precisely why we're still here after 5 785 years.

In closing, let's consider the sage words of the late rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, "To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair."

Shana tova umetuka. Have a good and sweet year.

• Mike Abel is the founding partner and executive chairperson of M&C Saatchi Group South Africa.



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We have good friends, and they are Christian

LEE TANKLE

The Jewish community may feel alone in South Africa, especially since the start of the war in Gaza. However, South African Christians constantly show up to prove we are not.

This is clear when listening to Marie Sukers, a member of the African Christian Democratic Party and former member of Parliament, and Tshegofatso Motaung, a former anti-Israel activist who is now a passionate Israel advocate.

“We know Israel is not an apartheid state,” Sukers told those at a breakfast organised by Koleinu SA and the Union of Jewish Women. “There is no parallel between what happened in South Africa and what is happening in the Middle East. If you perpetuate a lie, you are misdirecting the focus, and the solution will not come.”

She went on to say that, “It is grotesque and vulgar to say that Israel is like the apartheid regime. The coloured and black people in our country have no idea what’s happening in the Middle East. Their pain, their poverty, and their circumstances do not allow them to even consider what’s happening there. They are in a mode of survival. Our country is in the midst of a

deep social and economic crisis.”

Sukers said she is deeply angry that the South African government has endorsed and perpetuated this idea, even going so far as to take Israel to the International Court of Justice. And this when the country has millions of people who need social grants and provincial health systems are collapsing.

Sukers said the forces against Israel are asking the wider South African population to remain unengaged in what is happening at home, and to forget the horrors of apartheid, to fuel their narrative.

Motaung got swept up in the anti-Israel fervour until, she said, she found out the truth. She explained that when she was growing up she heard about Israel only in reference to the Bible. It wasn’t until she had gone overseas to attend the University of

Sussex in the United Kingdom in 2009 that she heard people speaking of Israel as an apartheid state. She was drawn into this thinking because those who were saying it supported South Africa.

“I realise in hindsight that the Lord allowed me to be blinded because I was not ready to respond, and I didn’t know just how vicious people get towards the Jewish people and to those who stand with Israel,”

she said.

Motaung explained that after university, she educated herself about Israel and this gave her the courage to stand up for what she believes in.



THERE IS NO PARALLEL BETWEEN WHAT HAPPENED IN SOUTH AFRICA AND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IF YOU PERPETUATE A LIE, YOU ARE MISDIRECTING THE FOCUS, AND THE SOLUTION WILL NOT COME.

She agreed with Sukers that it is wrong to compare what is happening in Israel to what happened to people like her and her family under the apartheid regime.

For her part, Sukers “never thought of Israel as an apartheid state, just by virtue of the fact that I read. What was important to me, however, was, as a political leader, to understand the dynamic.”

Motaung said she was deeply shocked by South Africa’s position against Israel. “The government does not represent us,” she said. “We have many problems in this country. This is the last thing that we should be engaging in, especially as people who believe in the Bible. We should fix what is in our backyard.”

Motaung said she couldn’t get her head around how people in the south of Israel were getting ready to celebrate Simchat Torah on the morning of 7 October and were then attacked and massacred. She couldn’t understand how the people of Israel couldn’t mourn but instead had to go fight. After all that, she

said, they had South Africa taking them to court.

For Motaung, “the biggest problem is how there is such a determination to not acknowledge the truth”.

Sukers explained that we may not be hearing many opposition voices in government because it is costly for people in politics to stand up for Israel.

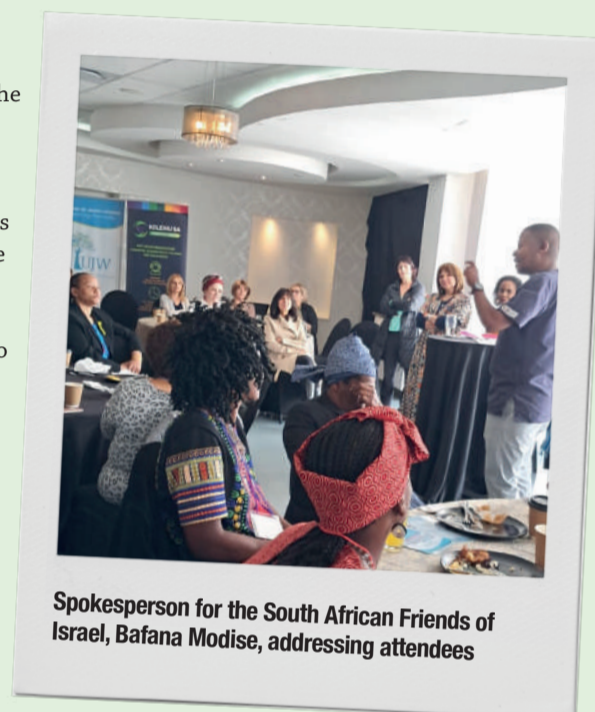
“The voices that are in power and the media houses will champion the most popular narrative – and now that is to be against Israel,” she said.

“We had better teach our children that this is the moment to choose your friends wisely,” said Sukers. “South Africa has decided who its friends are. We all need to decide who our friends are.”

Sukers advocates that we as a community need to mobilise and show our discontent, “Unless you become militant for your belief, they will continue to ignore your voice.”



Israel advocate Tshegofatso Motaung and Koleinu SA co-founder Wendy Hendler



Spokesperson for the South African Friends of Israel, Bafana Modise, addressing attendees

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Zionism is a loaded term

LEE TANKLE

Zionism is largely irrelevant to the current situation in Israel and Gaza, insists Palestinian American activist and blogger Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib. He was speaking at the African Global Dialogues Conference in Johannesburg on 19 September.

Alkhatib said that Zionism is central to Palestinian politics, but today's demonisation of Zionism as the root of all evil is a crude simplification when considering the landscape of Palestinian politics.

"Zionism was very central to the Palestinian story, to the Palestinian narrative, to the Palestinian perception of injustice and grievance," Alkhatib – who grew up in Gaza and has lost 31 family members in this current war – told the conference (organised by the New South Institute and its director, local academic and activist Ivor Chipkin).

Alkhatib said that since the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel on 7 October and the ensuing war, "Zionism has taken

on an oversized role. You see the use of the word 'Zionist' as a slur from the pro-Palestinian point of view, as it has become more mainstream. It is used this way by large segments of both the Palestinian and pro-Palestine communities, Western allies, and people in the global south."

Alkhatib said that it's easy for academics to claim that Zionism is the reason the war continues and so many people have been killed. However, this point of view is way too simplistic as it ignores Palestinian involvement in the situation.

Similarly, David Hirsh – the academic director and chief executive officer of the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism – explained that the idea of people conflating Zionism and evil comes from the idea of Jewish exceptionalism.

"To refer to Israel as the Zionist entity, or to Israeli policy as Zionist policy, or to Israelis as Zionists, is to make Israelis exceptional. Because we don't talk about people like that. We don't talk about the French or the Germans or the Uruguayans or anybody by reference to their nationalism, we talk



Palestinian American activist and blogger Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib

Photo: Twitter X

about them by referring to where they come from." More importantly, this makes it "possible to think of Zionists as being a political movement, based on ideas that we disagree with, and

therefore a political movement that is wrong, and that we would like to defeat, and then would like to disappear".

For Hirsh, discussing Zionism like this is avoiding accusations of antisemitism because antisemitism in certain circles has become disgraceful, but not Zionism.

"It's challenging to talk about antisemitism because the left, in general, teaches young people to recognise those who claim antisemitism as Zionists who are doing so in bad faith to delegitimise the left and Palestine solidarity," he said.

"Jews quite often get accused of being like Nazis, like genociders, like people who support and facilitate the deliberate murder of children," said Hirsh. "Of course, it's not new for Jews to be accused of facilitating and carrying out the deliberate murder of children, so in the end everything comes down to whether it's true or not."

Hirsh said that, "The problem arises if it's not true. If it's not true that Israel is exceptional; if it's not true that it is a settler colonial state, an apartheid state, a genocidal state, an evil state. If it's not true, then we are teaching people to relate to Jews around the world as though they were Nazis, and that has a particular landing place for Jews, to be accused of being genocidal and Nazis."

Alkhatib added that, "Zionism means different things to different people, and there are a lot of people in the Jewish diaspora that, out of love for the Jewish people in Israel, will identify as Zionists. But for some, Zionism has become the main face of Israeli policy. We have reached a point now where Zionism has become a distraction in the way in which we can try and move forward to a path for peace."

Agreeing with Alkhatib, Israeli historian and professor emerita of history at the University of Haifa Fania Oz-Salzberger explained that global perspectives on Zionism, particularly in the intellectual spheres, are creating a greater chasm.

She said that what she considers to be her Zionism – the Zionism of Herzl, Ben Gurion, and Yitzhak Rabin – is being opposed by the current extremist right-wing government in Israel.

"My kind of Zionism – my parents', my grandparents', and my children's Zionism – says that full compatibility is possible in the two-state solution, with a free, sovereign, independent Palestine next to a free, independent, and secure Israel," she said.

"If we have a fully Jewish state from the river to the sea, this to me is anti-Zionist, and many people like me won't stick around," she said. "Also, if we have an Arab state, once Israeli society leaves, there will be little sustainability in the region. A one-state solution is not doable in this day and age, and it will not be safe for me and my children. The only hope we have is for a two-state solution that is in line with the Zionism of Herzl, Ben Gurion, and Rabin.

"We were stateless for two millennia, and it didn't end well for us, to put it mildly," she said, "I want my nation state, which must be a liberal democracy, embracing all its citizens, Jews and non-Jews, and then next door, the Palestinian nation state, hopefully also embracing the same principles."





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Legal experts debate usefulness of SA's ICJ case

LEE TANKLE

Many Middle East experts see South Africa's involvement in Israel's affairs – going so far as to accuse the Jewish state of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – as doing more harm than good.

Palestinian American humanitarian activist Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib explained at the African Global Dialogues Conference on 19 September that the comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa are facile.

"South Africa has been invoked in the most unhelpful of ways," Alkhatib said, "It is an unhelpful comparison that misdirects people."

However, local human rights lawyer Nicole Fritz said she believes South Africa took Israel to the ICJ because it has positioned itself as a champion of international humanitarian rights.

"We saw the South African government become a signatory to the Genocide Convention in 1998," said Fritz. "It was one of the key players in securing endorsement and support for the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was key in securing Africa as the largest regional bloc to sign up and support the Rome Statute for the ICC."

Fritz said South Africa has a controversial history in terms of abiding by international humanitarian law. In 2017, South Africa disregarded an ICC order set for the arrest of Sudan's Omar al-Bashir, who was accused of genocide and war crimes, and facilitated a flight for him to escape arrest. Similarly, in September 2023, South Africa invited Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is accused of war crimes by the ICC, to attend the BRICS summit in this country.

Fritz said that South Africa taking Israel to the ICJ could potentially be read as "a resuscitation of the responsibility to protect international humanitarian law".

"The responsibility to protect was never intended to justify military intervention. It arose in recognition of the glaring failures of our international human rights system to do anything without intervention."

Fritz said that South Africa acted against Israel out of sympathy for the people in Gaza because they are particularly vulnerable, not having a state they can appeal to for protection.

Former president of the ICC from 2018 to 2021, Chile Eboe-Osuji said it was important to let the ICJ judges do their jobs and make their decision, whatever that may be.

Milos Hrnjaz, associate professor of international law at

humanitarian law as a project is to try to minimise the suffering, to try to minimise the harm, to try to, to some extent, regulate the violence. Which means to regulate the means and methods for the weapons which are used and to identify certain individuals and

have scepticism regarding South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ in terms of promoting peace in the area.

Shany and Sassòli shared doubts about whether the correct legal framework has been used. As Shany said, "When you ask the wrong legal question, you are inevitably likely to obtain the wrong legal answer."

Shany is reluctant to let the ICJ decide because the South African legal team "cited the wrong provision of the law just to get to the court".

He said that, "The intervention of a third party – like South Africa – in such a conflict may be doing more harm than good. When you have two parties and each of them is fully convinced that they have the whole truth and justice on their side, when third parties are encouraging this narrative, they might exacerbate the conflict and not help the parties get down from the very high trees that they have climbed."

Sassòli said that, "It is true that there is peaceful change, there is the possibility you must adjust. And while international law is inevitably very conservative, one problem is that if Israel is convinced that it is right and the Palestinians are also convinced that they are right, and will not give in to any demands, there is little chance for peace."



South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice has been criticised by experts

Photo: Screenshot

the University of Belgrade, said, "One thing you can see in the proceedings before the ICJ is that this is an opportunity to speak to the international community about the facts."

Israeli scholar of humanitarian law and human rights, and holder of the Hersch Lauterpacht Chair in Public International Law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Yuval Shany, said that while international humanitarian law seeks to justify wrongs in the world, it does not wish to and cannot start and end wars.

"The goal of international

groups of individuals that deserve protection," Shany said.

Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists since 2013 and professor of international law at the University of Geneva, Marco Sassòli, explained that international humanitarian law dictates a responsibility to protect all civilians and that violations of that responsibility by one side do not justify violations by another.

Shany said that, while he believes international humanitarian law does not have any magic solutions, he does

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The Tupperware party is over

OPINION

Anyone who has decluttered and made those sometimes heartbreaking and difficult choices about material possessions will know how challenging it is in the beginning and how liberating and rewarding it is in the end.

The realisation that we actually needed much less sets in as we admit that those umpteen salad dishes and Tupperware containers in their allocated cupboards, stacked one above the other (creative and beautiful indeed), just remained in the stack while we selected the same top three most of the time.

I recently downsized and had to edit. When it came to Tupperware, I had to be ruthless. It was easier with the ones whose plastic looked

yellowish and showed scratches on the outside. They resembled my own face, with its unwanted wrinkles.

It was hard to part with at first, but my life had to be simplified and from now on, I would use Jiffy plastic bags for storage. In the event of decanting soups and other pot foods into containers, I would use my salvaged Tupperware and the other much cheaper plastic brands on the market. After all, they worked as well. In some cases there are so many disposable versions, I have made them my go-to varieties because I don't need to wash them.

Even when the sweet lady tried to sell me some Tupperware from her cute booth outside KosherWorld, I resisted in the knowledge that

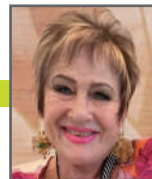


A Tupperware party in the 1950s

it would be more expensive than my perfectly satisfying new brands, already on my grocery list.

I must admit that I did give a thought to how much the rent of the Tupperware cubicle could be, and this brought me to the thought of the once-upon-a-time Tupperware parties

ROZ BASSERABIE



I had hosted or attended. The consideration of what sort of tea and goodies I would have on my dining room table and where I would set up the Tupperware. The perk of being the hostess was that, if the sales from the event were good, she would get

a lovely new version of a container or dispenser or other Tupperware gift. Of course the seller would receive a tidy commission.

I remember the culture and opportunity of those parties. Even at breaks in the working routines of the corporate world, employees and sellers of the brand would make hay while the sun shone and earn themselves extra money, over and above their monthly salaries.

It was a win for stay-at-home moms and unemployed housewives. A way to earn some income, some Tupperware, and some time out of the mundane routines. There was social connection, lovely tea parties, and lots of fun and insights into what was available in the kitchen and homeware industry. (*MasterChef* eat your heart out!)

I got involved even though, at the time, I worked as a teacher, came home to my own kids, and prepared a yummy tea, between marking books and bribing my children to behave as I wanted.

Now, like one of my favourite mantras, "This too shall pass", Tupperware, its iconic status and specific selling and marketing style, have come to an end. Decades of stable and mostly reliable business practice are waving goodbye and succumbing to the competition of a plethora of similar (but not as classy) products.

Online shopping has pipped it at the post and the age of instant gratification and mass competition has put a marvellous invention to rest.

To Earl S Tupper, a huge thank you! As an innovative chemist, you invented the first bell-shaped container in the 1940s in Massachusetts not long after the Great Depression. Your benign aim was to design an airtight seal for plastic storage containers (like those on a paint tin) because it would help war-weary families save money on costly food waste. The bowl created for this was called the Wonderlier Bowl and it changed the way the world stored food. Your Tupperware became a fabric of Americana and spread to the rest of the world.

Through your invention, women found a marvellous way to make money and develop their innate business savvy. An entire culture developed, and has lasted for more than six decades.

I am pleased that I was a part of it for a while, but know that, like so many inventions and iconic products, my own children and definitely grandchildren won't have a clue about any of it. Archaic, personas non grata, dinosaurs.

To Laurie Goldman, I feel for you in your capacity as president and chief executive of Tupperware Brands Corporation. When the macroeconomic environment challenges such a giant in the direct sales industry and renders it bankrupt, it must be sad. But undoubtedly someone of your ilk will make another plan.

I suppose everything has its time. In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 it says "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

The Tupperware party may be over, plastics are not popular in most of their forms, but while it was happening, a good time was had by all, and plenty of *iMali*, *tshetele*, dollars, bucks, pounds, rubels, rands, shekels, and *gelt* were made.

• Roz Basserabie, a devoted mother and grandmother, is a speaker whose purpose in life is to inspire others with positivity and innovative ideas towards living creatively. She is a published author of two books, with the third one on the way.

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Progress at the expense of principles is meaningless



MANDY ALLEN

OPINION

The murder of Mahsa Amini two years ago by the Iranian regime for allegedly violating dress codes has become a symbol of the fight for women's rights in Iran and the broader struggle for democracy.

The African National Congress (ANC's) silence on the ongoing uprising in Iran, paired with the violent suppression by Iranian authorities, is a stain on its legacy. By staying silent while embracing the Iranian regime in the BRICS alliance (including Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) alongside human rights violators like China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, the ANC reveals its selective morality.

Moreover, the ANC's role in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice shows how far it strayed from South Africa's constitutional principles in a desperate bid for relevance ahead of the elections held in May 2024.

On 16 September, the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities and others around the world marked the second anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death with protests reminiscent of the 2022 mass uprisings under the banner "Zan, Zendegi, Azadi" (Woman, Life, Freedom). Her death ignited widespread courage, particularly among women and young girls, who defied the regime by removing their mandatory head coverings, cutting their hair, and dancing in public – acts of reclaiming their bodily autonomy. These protests united men and women in their demand for dignity and basic human rights, seeking an end to the Islamic Republic's oppressive theocratic rule.

Yet, the Iranian regime remains resistant to change. Like in 2022, when more than 500 protesters were killed and thousands arrested, the government is expected to respond with force, using morality police, paramilitary groups, and surveillance to stifle dissent. Nevertheless, the Iranian diaspora will hold solidarity rallies worldwide, even as far away as South Africa, where the ANC's silence persists.

Iran's inclusion in BRICS, formalised in January 2024, is unsurprising, given the cozy relationship between Pretoria and Tehran. The BRICS summit in August 2023, which followed South Africa's Women's Month – a period supposedly dedicated to gender equality – highlighted the ANC's hypocrisy. When questioned about Iran and Saudi Arabia's entry into BRICS despite their dismal human rights records, President Cyril Ramaphosa stated that South Africa's foreign policy was rooted in human rights and neutrality. However, this claim rings hollow, especially following South Africa's support for Hamas after its 7 October attacks.

Iran's human rights abuses are alarming even by authoritarian standards. In 2023 alone, at least 853 people were executed, and more than 350 have died in 2024. Journalists, activists, and lawyers are regularly harassed, arrested, and detained. Women endure systemic oppression, facing laws targeting girls as young as nine and the threat of abduction by morality police for "re-education". The LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning) community is also targeted under Iran's strict Sharia law, with homosexuality punishable by death.

The international community has taken notice. The United States has sanctioned the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), while the European Parliament and legislators in the United Kingdom are pushing to designate it a terrorist organisation. The IRGC is notorious for its violent suppression of protests and aggressive foreign policy, supporting proxy wars in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen. Iran's ongoing pursuit of nuclear weapons, despite global condemnation, further destabilises the region. The ANC's alliance with such a regime, which aligns with terrorist organisations like Hezbollah and Hamas, exposes the moral decay within South Africa's ruling party.

Two Iranian journalists, Niloofar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi, who bravely reported on Mahsa Amini's death, were imprisoned in Iran's Evin Prison. Sentenced to 13 and 12 years after sham trials for "conspiracy against national security", they were released on bail, only to face charges under Iran's hijab laws for celebrating their freedom without wearing head coverings. This case exemplifies the regime's relentless oppression of women and the media.



Mahsa Amini who was murdered in Iran in 2022

Photo: Facebook

As South Africa faces its own political challenges, the courage of the Iranian people serves as a reminder that progress without principles is hollow. The ANC's willingness to trade South Africa's founding values of human rights, democracy, and equality for short-term political and economic gains jeopardises the country's young democracy. Now, more than ever, South Africa should stand with the people of Iran and all those oppressed by authoritarian regimes, instead of aligning with such regimes for financial and political benefits.

Mahsa Amini's image, displayed on posters, banners, and t-shirts, has become a symbol of resistance and the fight for women's rights. South Africa, too, must remember its own history of resistance and

the principles that brought it freedom. We have a moral obligation to speak out, demand accountability from our government, and uphold our commitment to human rights, no matter the cost. As the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said, "Morality isn't an option. It's essential." The ANC must heed this lesson if it seeks to maintain any moral standing.

• Mandy Allen sits on the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council ManCom and the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies' Antisemitism Subcommittee. She is a writer and editor who is researching contemporary antisemitism, with a focus on social media.



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SA emergency specialist making a critical contribution

NICOLA MILTZ

When war erupted in Israel nearly a year ago, Johannesburg emergency physician Professor Efraim Kramer knew where he needed to be. He was sure that his more than four decades in trauma and emergency care could make a life-saving difference.

"I did what thousands of Jewish doctors around the world did. I volunteered. This is what we do. It is who we are," he says.

Kramer, 69, is a specialist in emergency, disaster, and mass-gathering medicine, known for assisting FIFA Medical during soccer World Cup tournaments. He has been involved in medical missions after tsunamis, volcanoes, earthquakes, and floods; as well as with hospital emergency protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After the 7 October massacre, he contacted MiluEM, a network of international volunteer emergency medicine specialists supporting Israel during times of crisis. "I sent through all my documentation and waited to hear back," he says.

Despite the overwhelming number of volunteers, Kramer's remarkable skillset caught the attention of the Israeli Health Ministry. He was chosen to assist medical teams in the north, an area facing increasing threats, bombs, and fires caused by rockets launched by Hezbollah from Lebanon.

"I was asked to go to Safed in the north for two weeks, I offered to go for six." He has since been back to offer more of his time.

"My primary function was to help make the hospitals ready for wartime injuries, and to help keep the teaching system going while lecturers were engaged in active service," he says.

Kramer was assigned to Ziv Medical, the main hospital in Safed, serving the culturally and religiously diverse population of the Galilee and the Golan Heights. He also conducted training throughout the region.

"More than 50% of the staff there are Arabs and Druze who did not have the same emergency training experience as those who served in the army. They were not battle ready," he says.

"We are not tourists, we have come to help and just being there makes a big difference. It gives them something, makes them feel that they are not alone, that there are people in the world who care."

War injuries require a different level of care than typical cases like falls or car accidents, he explains. High-velocity shrapnel wounds cause massive bleeding and extensive damage, demanding specialised techniques to control blood loss and stabilise patients. These injuries often involve massive, severe wounds, making quick and precise treatment crucial for survival.

Kramer played a vital role in enhancing the hospital's preparedness. His hands-on

injured people who are unable to be evacuated due to roads being blocked by damage from rockets or fires," he says. "People on these kibbutzim and *moshavim* need training on how to save lives should they not be able to get to hospitals."

The area is hot and rockets spark dangerous bushfires. "Farmers and community members are the ones who put out the fires, using hoses. There are no fire brigades. Helicopters are being used elsewhere in war operations and sometimes farmers get injured and they are far from a hospital," Kramer says. "Communities have to know how to treat on sight because they have no other choice."

Kramer also addressed protocols and equipment at makeshift casualty centres, set up in different parts of the Golan for people to get treated before being transferred to hospital.

"The average person I came across was extremely resilient, they just get on with it. They go to work, kids go to school, sirens go off, shopping gets done, fires break out, and life goes on. It's when you start talking to people that you realise the level of anxiety and stress and the constant worry about coming to work one day and hearing that your home has been bombed. The nurses take strain," he says.

Everyone has been affected in some way.

"From the taxi driver who used to see 1 000 tourists a day to hardly seeing any; to the *felafel* shop owner who has very few patrons; to the many displaced people I worked with at the hospital who have been evacuated from their homes and are living in a hotel room. The Arab villages are being bombed. Everyone in that area is affected no matter who you are. Druze, Christians, Muslims, and Jews are all impacted."

Hospitals in the region have turned underground parking lots into wards, with intensive care units and operating theatres. "The emergency department at Ziv Hospital



Professor Efraim Kramer



Professor Efraim Kramer giving a presentation at the Ziv Medical Center in Israel

approach and wealth of knowledge ensured that healthcare workers were equipped to manage the influx of wartime casualties if and when needed. From triage to trauma care, Kramer's presence has been a beacon of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape.

The Galilee is sparsely populated with small *moshavim* and no major highways, "One of the main concerns is treating

is a bomb shelter. It has been built this way," he says. "If a siren goes off, you close the doors and it is a self-contained safe area. This is how Israelis live, it has been like this for years."

Kramer says Israelis are grateful to all volunteers.

"We are not tourists, we have come to help and just being there makes a big difference. It gives them something, makes them feel that they are not alone, that there are people in the world who care," he says.

"There is tremendous camaraderie and solidarity regardless of your ethnicity and religion. Bakeries send boxes of pastries, deliveries of hamburgers and *felafels* come from people who have travelled far."

Kramer's every need was taken care of, from housing at a Chabad apartment to shul services at the hospital, frequented by Jews of diverse backgrounds. "Everyone is looking after everyone else, doing the best they can. Life goes on, it has to. There is a war, but people carry on. Israel does everything possible to save lives, that's who we are."

Kramer's commitment to saving lives transcends borders. His decision to step forward during Israel's darkest hour exemplifies the spirit of solidarity and humanitarianism that has become so crucial in this time of crisis.

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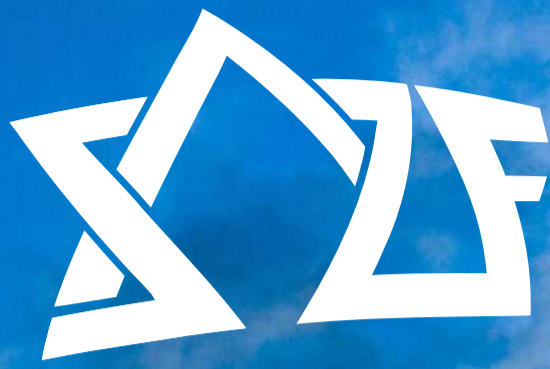
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We are still standing strong

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



I have been searching for the right words to capture my feelings after all we have been through since 7 October. And then it came to me. It's the soul-stirring opening line of the final parsha of the year that we read on this Shabbat, days before Rosh Hashanah: "You are all standing strong here today before G-d."

The verse uses the word "nitzavim" for the verb "to stand", which implies to stand with strength. According to the great Torah commentator Rashi, this is G-d's promise to the Jewish people that we will never be destroyed. We will endure throughout history; no matter the great difficulties and challenges and calamities we face – we will still be standing strong in the end.

And we are still standing strong, thank G-d. Doesn't that say it all? It's now almost one year since the 7 October massacre, the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. That day shook the Jewish people to the core. But we remain standing. Proud, strong, defiant, more determined than ever. After everything we've been through – the trauma of the attack, the losses in the ensuing war, the painful plight of the hostages, the rockets and missiles from Hezbollah and Iran, the horrific antisemitism that has

been unearthed and targeted at Jewish communities across the world in the aftermath – we're still here.

Looking back at this past year, it's staggering what Israel has weathered. We stand in awe of the heroism of the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for fighting a gruelling war – now on two



fronts – and in unimaginably difficult circumstances, with more care for civilian casualties than in any armed conflict in history. We bow in humble tribute before

the grief of the bereaved families, whose brave loved ones have fallen in battle to defend Israel from bloodthirsty barbarians, and thereby make our world a safer place for all.

The pain of the hostage families in particular is indescribable after many months of not knowing where their loved ones are or what is happening to them. The heart of every Jew is with those families. And with those whose family members were slaughtered in cold blood by their captives.

But it goes beyond the physical threat. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries, Jewish communities have been on the receiving end of poisonous antisemitic rhetoric emanating from street and university protests, with antisemitic incidents surging to the point where, in many places, outward signs of Jewishness are considered a risk.

Here in South Africa, while we have been blessed with some of the lowest rates of antisemitism in the world, our community has had to contend with a government that sided with violent regimes and terror groups that make no secret of their genocidal intent towards Israel; a government that has levelled a modern blood libel against the Jewish state at international forums such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

But, through it all, we "are all standing strong here today before G-d". This means that our strength comes from our connection to Hashem; knowing that He is always with us, and will continue to be with us, every step of the way, especially in times of crisis. No matter how difficult things get, we are never alone.

Ultimately, to "stand before G-d" also means to live authentically, standing firm with a clear conscience, being true to our

most sacred values. And I think we can take great pride as a community in doing exactly that – every day since 7 October we have stood firm and unapologetically in our support for the justice of the cause of the state of Israel, and her brave soldiers and people. We have gathered as a community with pride and dignity, strength and resilience, to pray, to rally for the brave soldiers of the IDF, to express love and support for the hostages, to protest, to make our voices heard.



We've stared down the African National Congress (ANC) in the face of its unconscionable stance on Israel and the shameless way it has sided with our enemies. In the process of our defiance, we've seen off a particularly hateful foreign minister, who lost her seat in Parliament and her position in the Cabinet, and watched the ANC reap the whirlwind as it haemorrhaged support in the recent elections, losing its national majority.

Let us resolve to continue standing strong together in unity before Hashem, resolute and confident. And in this merit, may Hashem bless our special community, our brothers and sisters in Israel, and all of *Am Yisrael*, and indeed all humanity, with a new year of peace and safety for all.

• Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein is the chief rabbi of South Africa.

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This year, give G-d the benefit of the doubt

OPINION

RABBI YOSSI CHAIKIN



I'm going to struggle to pray these high holy days. I stood in shul a year ago, pleading with G-d for a year of blessings and peace. That's not quite how it turned out, it seems. I'm not saying He said no. Perhaps His answer was, "not yet", or "I will give you blessings, but not the way you understand blessings". Whichever, I don't handle rejection very well.

I'm going to try to let Avraham Avinu – our forefather, Abraham – be my role model in this. When Abraham found out that G-d intended to destroy Sodom and surrounds, he immediately began to plead with Him to save those cities. He literally bargained, grovelled, and begged G-d to spare the inhabitants. It was to no avail, as G-d confirmed His intention to proceed with the destruction. Genesis 19 records that the following morning, an undeterred Abraham returned to the very spot where he had prayed the previous day. There, he engaged in his daily worship even as he watched Sodom and Gomorrah going up in flames.

I will also focus on the many blessings that did occur during 5784. Sadly, they were eclipsed by the enormity of the evils that took place. But stories of miraculous salvation abound, starting even on 7 October: the many who managed to escape the savagery; the spectacular rescue of hostages; repeated missile attacks thwarted. Clearly G-d didn't abandon our people. There's method in what we perceive as chaos.

I will need to remember that prayer isn't a divine vending machine – put your coins in, press the right button, and the requested item pops out of the slot at the bottom. We pray to connect with Him, to acknowledge and internalise that all our needs, be they health, sustenance, or *naches*, are provided by the One above.



Praying this year on Rosh Hashanah takes on a whole new meaning

proceeded to hurl the two books into the fireplace.

I hope that on this day of reckoning, G-d will look at me kindly, giving me the benefit of the doubt and judging me favourably. This is why I always make an effort over this period to look at others benevolently, hoping that this is the way I will be judged myself. Perhaps even more effective will be to give G-d the benefit of the doubt for His actions, accepting that even if I cannot understand what He did to this world over the past 12 months, there is a reason in His eyes.

This year, I will be more specific in my requests. A year ago, I prayed for a *Shana*

tova. Of course it was a good year, not from our perspective, but from G-d's. He is the source of all goodness, and as the Tanya teaches, nothing inherently bad ever descends from above. It just may appear that way with our human eyes. For 5785, I'm going to beg, not just for a good year, but also for a sweet year, one that is not only divinely good, but one perceived by us down here as revealed good.

Shana tova umetuka.

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi of the Oxford Synagogue and chairperson of the SA Rabbinical Association.

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Clearly G-d didn't abandon our people. There's method in what we perceive as chaos.

I will inspire myself with one of my favourite Chassidic stories. This is the one about a Chassid who asked his rebbe if he could observe his Kapparot service. The master directed the disciple to the home of a simple villager, assuring him that this man's observance of this ritual would be far more remarkable. The Chassid observed that this man was preparing to perform Kapparot, not with a live chicken, as many do, nor with money given to *tzedakah*, but rather with a set of two notebooks.

He opened the first, a record of his misdeeds in the past year, some more grievous than others. There was the time he had rushed his evening prayers; the instance when he had spoken unkindly to his fellow; the day he felt he had not been totally honest in one of his business dealings. The list went on and as he read it, tears flowed down his face. He then closed the first notebook and asked his wife to pass him the second, where he had recorded the instances when he felt G-d had let him down in the course of the year – a veritable litany of *tzorres*. There was the day the cow died; the time when a thief broke in and stole some goats; the frost that killed the potato crop; and the storm that damaged his roof.

He closed this notebook as well, held them both aloft and called out, "G-d, You forgive me, and I will forgive You. Let's call it even." With that, he swung the books over his head, reciting the traditional formula, "May this atone for me," and then



New year, new light, new life

OPINION

Hey, does anybody still make new year's resolutions? Maybe you do still make resolutions and yours goes something like mine?

"My new year's resolution this year is to keep the resolutions I made last year!"

My friend said his goes like this, "My new year's resolution is to have a fat bank account and a skinny body. Last year, I got mixed up."

In fact, most people I know have long stopped making new year's resolutions because they know it doesn't work. They just go "in one year, and out the other!"

In much of the world today, especially for us Jews in Israel and around the world, people are living with uncertainty and confusion. So, let me share an idea about Rosh Hashanah which I believe can help us confront the confusion and find some clarity.

In Jewish thought, the new year isn't only when we need to buy a new calendar or a seat in shul. The new year means a new light. According to the mystics, every new year, a divine light comes into the world for the very first time since creation. Implicit in this new light is the potential for new opportunities on every level.

A new year with its infinite new light means there really can be a new me and a new you. Yes, believe it or not, we really can reinvent ourselves. How? Good question. But that's not what Rosh Hashanah is about. It's not about the details. It's about the potential, the hope, the commitment, and the resolve to do better than we did last year. How? We'll have to figure that out. But first things first.

I recall back in my yeshiva days in Montreal, a moment when the *Mashpia*, my spiritual mentor, made a deep impression on me with an idea culled from one of the philosophical treatises we were studying at the time.

In the second section of Tanya, the author Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, explains the concept of "continuous creation". Very briefly, it goes something

Rosh Hashanah is a time to turn new year's resolutions into new light and new beginnings



like this. Since G-d created the universe from nothing way back when, it obviously required a powerful flash of divine energy to bring the world into being from nothingness. It follows that this creative force can never be removed from the universe, or the world would simply cease to exist immediately. Without the creative force of G-d which brought the world into existence originally, it would simply revert to its original state of ... nothingness.

This is the deeper meaning of the expression used in our morning services describing the wonders of the Creator, how G-d "in His goodness, renews daily, continuously, the work of creation".

Not only does the Creator renew our world every morning, but He does it perpetually, continuously, hence the concept of continuous creation. G-d didn't create the world all those years ago and now he's on vacation in the Caribbean. He hasn't retired or even semi-retired. And He doesn't suffer from mid-life crises either. His involvement with His world, our world, is continuous and

constant. If the Creator would forget about us, even for a second, we would cease to exist. Taking His eye off the ball is equivalent to pulling the plug on the universe. It would simply go back to its default position, which was non-existence.

Isn't it encouraging to know that G-d has us in mind, and that we haven't been forgotten or left to our own devices. This is the real meaning of the term "divine providence", that the world isn't working randomly, or even on autopilot. There is a higher plan, or, in the words of Tevye the fiddler, a "vast eternal plan". He is involved and looking after us, then, now, and forever.

And if He renews the work of creation every day, every hour, every minute, second, and nanosecond, then effectively, this means that every day it's a brand-new world. And not only every day, but every moment. Every second, the world has just been recreated. And if it's a new world, then this presents us with a brilliant new opportunity. It's a new world now, and I needn't be burdened by the past. That was an old world. I can make a new beginning today, this hour, this second. "Hey, I really can start again!"

A new world brings with it the opportunity of a new

you, personally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually. We can reinvent ourselves at any given moment. We can change our attitude at any given moment. And we can change the way we look at our surroundings, wherever we may be, any time we want to. In a second, things can improve. If we would only be a little more objective, we would see the many positive and encouraging things going on around us instead of focusing only on the negative.

I know about all the problems in the world. Israel is on our minds every moment of the day. I'm not wearing blinkers, and I'm not naive. But the world is too beautiful and precious to let it slip away into oblivion because of negativity and pessimism. Let us renew ourselves, our families, our community, our country, and our world.

There's a new light coming this Rosh Hashanah. And with it comes a new world with new life, new beginnings, and new blessings for all of us. G-d knows, we need it!

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



RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

Real peace requires peace from within

OPINION

RABBI DAVID STAV



In a year marked by such deep pain, loss, and internal division, the high holy days bring with them the annual opportunity for reflection and reconnecting. While the entire holiday season celebrates the themes of family and community, particularly within the symbols and customs of Yom Kippur and Sukkot, we can (re)learn how to bridge our differences and overcome disharmony.

Within the text of the famed *Kol Nidrei* prayer at the very outset of the Yom Kippur service, we recite, "Anu matirim lehitpale im haavaryanim" (We permit to pray alongside transgressors). While one might find this line perplexing, the lesson is clear that particularly on this day, we must put aside even more personal differences and grievances.

Sukkot is symbolised by the four species, each with its own unique identity yet with the ability to unite in order to achieve the impact of the *mitzvah*. Similarly, the sukkah itself is an "open" of Jewish identity where there's a strong custom to invite others to eat and relax within its confines and break down any boundaries.

Tragically, we can lose sight of the power of these messages and forget what it means to be accepting of differences of opinion, observance, and even belief.

While it's difficult to think back to before 7 October, it's important to recall that in the days and weeks before that horrific date, Israel was caught up in turmoil that was deeply tragic, even threatening to our continued existence.

Amidst the conflict and protests against judicial reform, Jews were turning against Jews on Israel's streets in confrontations that often bordered on outright violence. In one of the most disturbing displays of internal discord, last Yom Kippur, on the very day where unity and sanctity should prevail, public prayer services were vocally attacked by forces who decided to make religious services the target of their political anger.

While many thought that this would be the darkest moment of the new year, we all know what followed less than two weeks later, and continues to haunt us until this day.

Even as we mourn the losses of war and remain in a period of deep fear and uncertainty about what may lie ahead, it's our responsibility not to lose sight of our national need to remain focused on unity.

Our enemies certainly recognise that when we're a divided people, we're a weaker people. It's incumbent upon us to appreciate that if we're unable to address our internal strife, we'll be that much less able to address the myriad external threats that challenge us now and in the future.

Alongside the national call for solidarity with our soldiers and the piercing cries for the safety and return of our hostages, our prayers must focus on returning unity to our people. This is the true message of this time of year, and if we can embrace it, realise it, and live it, may we hope to be blessed with a new year of greater safety, security, peace, and health.

• Rabbi David Stav is the founder and chairperson of the Tzohar Rabbinical Organization.



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The unaffordable cost of fear

OPINION

RABBI LEVI AVTZON



Over the past few years, especially these past 12 months, fear has taken up too much space in our hearts.

For many Jews, it's fear of antisemites. Fear of showing our Judaism too publicly. Fear of sickening political actors pandering to the haters in society. Fear of the future. Fear of simply being Jewish, or supporting Jews.

We all understand the causes and feelings that are leading to fear. Even those living under a rock are aware of the madness of our times. No-one in our community needs a reminder of what's happening.

And yet, despite the magnetism and logic of fear, we cannot afford it.

We can't afford to give up more of our emotional real estate to fear. Fear is way too expensive for our health – the worst squatter ever.

Just think about how much fear we have encountered in recent years.

Whether it was the COVID-19 pandemic and the tremendous fear that it brought – "Don't visit gran;

you might kill her." The future of this country – "I'm telling you, rabbi, I used to be an optimist just like you, but now I've given up on this country. I'm telling you, it has three years left!". Corruption. Potholes. Mental health. Leftism. And a million other legitimate reasons for fear. I'm done.

I need to generate a healthier, more value-based emotional response to life's curveballs.

We have given this monster – fear – way too much power over us and our decision-making – how to live, where to live, who to live with, what to study, which jobs to pursue, and which investments to make. Fear often dictates the bottom line.

"Hide under your pillow and feel sorry for yourself and victimised", says fear.

Honestly, I'm tired. I'm tired of living with so much hesitancy. I'm tired

of being preached to by fear-addicts about how their way of life is more reasonable and justified. "See, the worst-case scenario can take place!" Yes, it does, unfortunately. Let's be honest, it's never what you expected. And fear does nothing to mitigate it, so why the fear?

I'm tired of the narrative that says that if life isn't perfect, then it's terrible – "I signed up for paradise, and I'll take nothing less, therefore I'm scared of this life." I'm tired of the fantasy that if we are fearful enough, we can protect ourselves from whatever destiny G-d has for us. I'm tired of over-protecting my kids. Yes, there's a difference between protecting and over-protecting our children. It's the difference between children who will blossom and children who will cower.

I want to live. I want my kids to live. I want to believe that the best days of our lives, community, and homeland are ahead of us. I want to believe that my kids will earn a good living no matter where they live, no matter how many distinctions they get in matric, and which university they get into – or not. I want to believe that G-d, who takes care of the smallest ant, can figure out a way to take care of and protect me and my children, my community, my nation, and decent people all over the world.

I want to live in a world where, no matter how much ugliness exists in the ignoble hearts of haters and losers, I'll never hand over my worldview to the fear-based paradigm that so many people willingly adopt as their *weltanschauung* (view of life).

I want my kids to have a smile on their face, a jump in their step, and a twinkle in their eye. Yes, I don't want them to be too naïve and gullible – the world has risks they must be aware of and try to protect themselves from – but I also want them to be happy, curious, hopeful, innocent, and pure. They don't need to carry the burden of adults' paranoia, fears, and shattered dreams. It's not their burden to carry. And hopefully, they will never accept its unbearable burden.

I don't want sugar or fear in their diet. They need to fly, and achieve the purpose G-d created them for. Let my fears and worries not hinder and stilt their growth spurt.

That's one of the reasons that believing in Hashem is so transformative. If you wholeheartedly believe that there's a master of the world who runs this world and who you can speak to directly, then why fear? Yes, we talk to G-d directly, multiple times a day – "*Baruch atah Hashem*" (Blessed are you, dear G-d) talking directly with the Creator with every cup of water I drink and every time I use the bathroom.

King David writes in Tehillim 23, "Even when I walk in the valley of the deepest darkness, I will fear no harm. For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." What's the point of believing in G-d if you don't derive one of its blessed benefits of living with serenity? What a waste of faith! Faith breeds serenity.

Think about it, a child feels safe in their parents' hands. Even when the parent must do something the child doesn't like, like take them for an injection, admonish them, or even send them to bed for the 18th time that evening, the child will still love their parent. Even if they scream, "I hate you, dad!" How much more so with Hashem! I'm safe in His hands. Even when I'm being admonished or challenged by Him. I'm safe because "You are with me".

I must do my part to be safe, cautious, and responsible, and then I'll leave the rest to Him. That's the trade-off of believing in G-d. I take on the responsibility of faith and observance, and in return, I get serenity, contentment, and joy.

No, this isn't about denying the events of 7 October and the nonstop news cycle of the past year. The pain is real. The loss is real. Even the fear is real. The terror is devastating. But they won't win. Never!

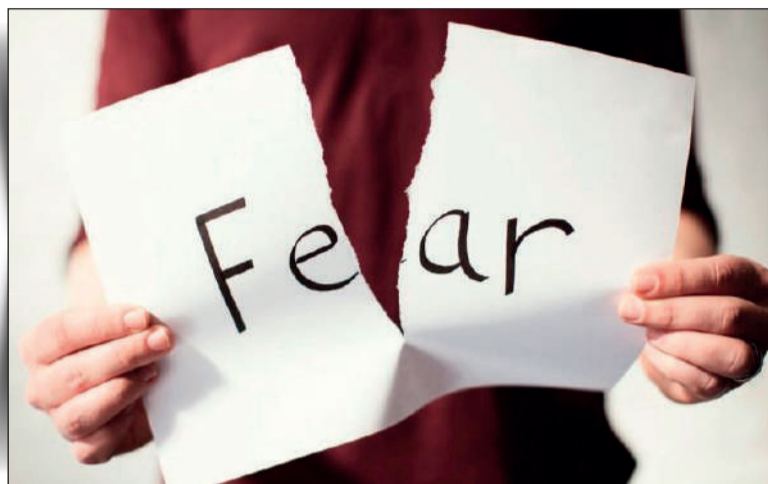
After the critical journey of validating, holding, and releasing our emotions, we are challenged to become the guides of our emotions and put our minds and values back in the driver's seat. We do so by achieving mental clarity, articulating our morals, values, and perspectives, and recalibrating our emotions so that our feelings about life align with our values.

The more a person matures in their mind, the more their emotions realign. That's why adults should have more control of their emotions than children. Their minds have evolved, and they have clarified their values.

Like any emotion, fear has its uses. But we have overused it, and it's hurting us and our families. Can we try a different approach? Can we overcome the gravity of fear, and choose to uplift ourselves with faith?

To a sweet year that we will face with fortitude and faith.

• Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the rabbi of Linksfield Shul.



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Celebrating amidst pain? Look back 2 700 years



RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

OPINION

Rosh Hashanah is a day of profound duality, where emotions blend between awe and solemnity, pride and joy. We stand before G-d in judgement, fully aware of our inadequacies and helplessness, yet we also reflect on the loyalty and love that have marked Jewish history, while urging G-d to remember our devotion. For one day, we glimpse the world we hope to create, a world imbued with heightened spiritual awareness, where G-d's presence fills every corner.

This day of awe magnifies the frailty of human life, while simultaneously elevating the nobility of a life lived in G-d's presence. It's both a day of the book of *Kohelet*, in which we confront the mortality and limitations of man, and a day of the book of *Shir Hashirim*, where the destiny of the Jewish people shines brightly. The power of Rosh Hashanah flows from this tension, the paradox between humility and strength, fear and pride. The day is intense precisely because of this internal paradox.

The shofar, the central symbol of the day, captures this dichotomy. Its sound, primal and raw, echoes a cry beyond words, stripping away the artifice of human language to reveal the purest prayer, a primordial scream to G-d. Yet, at the same time, the shofar also brings harmony to our prayers, adding melody to our words. In the Temple, it was part of a grand orchestration, blending with other instruments to amplify the moment of standing before G-d. The shofar embodies simplicity and grandeur, humility and celebration.

Historically, some would fast on Rosh Hashanah, intensifying the solemnity of standing in judgement before the divine. Though this custom has largely faded, the day remains one of muted joy, filled with reverence and gravity. We celebrate, but our joy is tempered, framed by the seriousness of the moment. Rosh Hashanah is a day of

proud reverence, tinged with solemnity, its symbols and customs perfectly balancing these dual emotions.

Though each Rosh Hashanah calls us to navigate a spectrum of emotions, this moment in history feels particularly challenging. We are surrounded by dark clouds. Our people continue to suffer on so many levels. Recently, I was asked to reflect on the "post-traumatic truth" and what our people have learned from 7 October. I politely reminded the questioner that we

agonising pain?

In the midst of a disheartened Rosh Hashanah in our past, we received a blueprint for navigating such bleak occasions. During the late 6th century BCE, we gradually returned to Israel from a Babylonian exile. Despite our efforts to rebuild the Temple and erect an altar, local opposition swiftly rose against us, accusing us of sedition and betrayal. Our efforts were halted for years, and the hope of national restoration seemed distant.

Two decades later, we resumed this project. Led by Ezra, a modest and vulnerable group of just more than 42 000 made their way back to Israel. Poor and barely defended, they set to work rebuilding Jerusalem. But progress was slow.

Fifteen years after this second stage, the situation had hardly improved. The walls of Jerusalem were in such ruin, it was impossible to walk around them. Our enemies mocked us, predicting our inevitable failure. Internally, the community was fractured as the aristocracy largely remained in Persia, leaving the returnees struggling without leadership or resources. Rosh Hashanah arrived under a veil of bleakness and uncertainty.

Ezra and Nehemiah gathered the small, weary group of returnees in the city square of Jerusalem for a public reading of the Torah. A special platform was erected for this occasion, and as the words of the Torah filled the air, an outpouring of tears erupted from the crowd. The people wept as they recalled

lost glories that seemed so distant and so impossible to reclaim.

Jewish destiny seemed to hang in the balance, and their hope for renewal felt futile. How could they possibly feel joy this Rosh Hashanah? So much suffering, so many struggles. With trauma weighing so heavily upon them, how could they even think of celebrating?

Nehemiah responded with a powerful

announcement: "Go, eat rich food, drink sweet beverages, and send food to those who have nothing prepared, for today is holy to G-d. Do not be sad, for the joy of G-d is your strength." Amid the helplessness, Nehemiah urged them to tap into a greater truth and a more profound force. No matter how bleak conditions seemed, they were still part of a larger divine narrative. The joy of G-d would be their strength. Pondering the eternal purpose and significance of a life before G-d could momentarily lift them above their sorrow and futility.

**In such bleak times,
it feels almost impossible
to summon the joy, pride,
or power traditionally
associated with
Rosh Hashanah**

First, because despite the darkness, G-d has larger plans and can swiftly reshape even the most dire reality. Second, because faith in G-d and a relationship with Him surpasses any fate we endure. And third, because faith itself provides courage, strength, and resilience. Faith would be their strength, not merely weapons, strategies, or armies. No bullet can destroy faith, and it will always endure.

They didn't ignore the calamity or the difficult conditions they faced, they simply took a pause to replenish their faith. Immediately after the festival season concluded, on the day following what we now call Simchat Torah – though it hadn't yet been designated as such – they returned to mourning and fasting. They tearfully uttered one of the most heartfelt and remorseful confessions in all of Tanach.

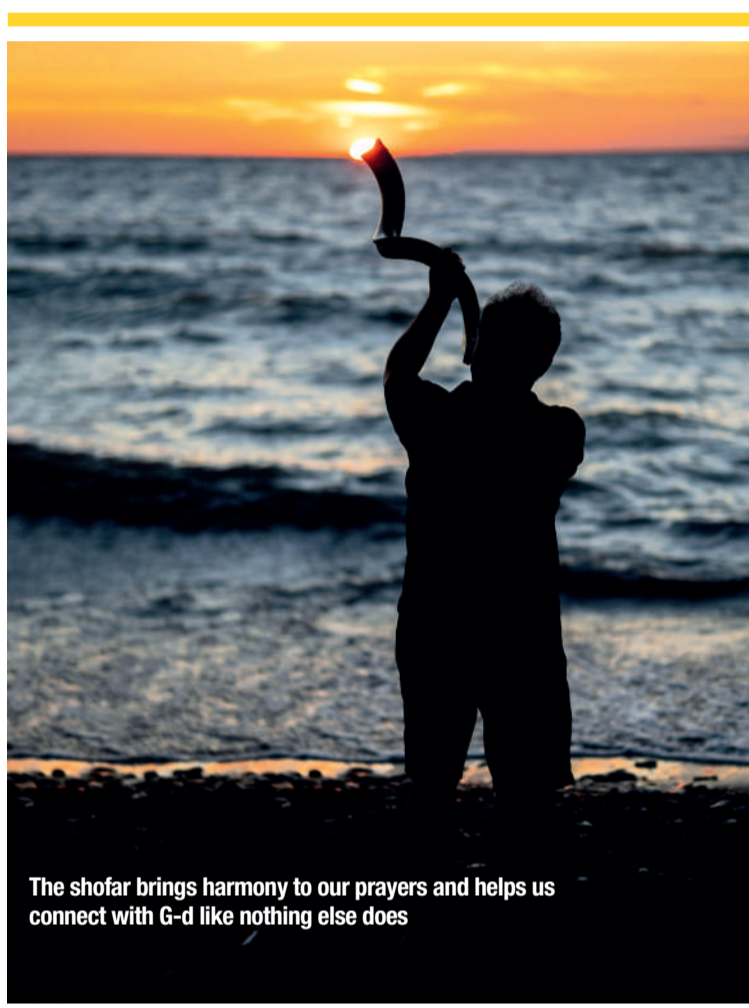
Yet, Rosh Hashanah itself called for emotional transcendence without succumbing to indifference toward the sadness, a moment to reach for the heavens and return to earth with renewed courage and vigour.

Jewish history often repeats itself. Here we stand, 2 700 years later, facing a similar Rosh Hashanah. Ignoring the sadness and suffering is unimaginable. We are surrounded by it. Yet, for these two days, we must rise above it without forgetting. We must find a way to merge our struggle and trauma with the glory of standing before G-d. We must tap into the larger historical mission we are part of – bringing G-d's presence into a g-dless world.

Rosh Hashanah must remind us why this battle is so crucial. It's not just a conflict over land or boundaries. This isn't about occupation or apartheid, it's about G-d's presence in our world. We are battling against those who falsely speak in the name of an angry and vengeful g-d who does not exist. We fight against those who desecrate the divine dignity endowed to every human being, violating their bodies and spirits. This is a battle against a culture that glorifies death instead of celebrating life, against a world that has lost its capacity to discern truth and uphold objective moral standards.

Rosh Hashanah is the day of divine authority, and we are locked in a struggle to preserve His presence. One day, His presence will be palpable and undeniable. Until that day, we have faith.

• Rabbi Moshe Taragin is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a Bachelor of Arts in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a Master's degree in English literature from the City University of New York.



The shofar brings harmony to our prayers and helps us connect with G-d like nothing else does

haven't even reached the post-trauma stage. Each day brings fresh pain, and the wounds of this past year haven't even begun to heal.

In such bleak times, it feels almost impossible to summon the joy, pride, or power traditionally associated with Rosh Hashanah. How can we celebrate a day of glory when so much of our world is cloaked in tragedy and darkness, and so many of G-d's people remain mired in misery and



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If not now, then never

OPINION

In 1985, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks – not yet a sir or a lord, and not yet a chief rabbi – wrote an article about repentance (*teshuvah*). The entire article was based upon the power of the word “now”.

He starts with a famous verse from the book of Deuteronomy (10:12), “And now Israel, what does the Lord your G-d ask of you other than to fear the Lord your G-d, to walk in all of His ways, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul?”

One of the reasons why this verse is so well-known is that it is prone to raise a smirk. How can Moses make it sound as if he’s asking for a small thing, when, in fact, he’s asking for us to keep all of the minutiae of Jewish law with utter dedication? The rabbis ask this question in the Talmud. It might have been a small thing for Moses, they insisted, but not for us!

But that isn’t initially the focus of Rabbi Sacks’s attention. Instead, he turns to a *midrash*. The *midrash* quotes just the first word of our verse, “Now.” It says, “The word ‘now’ means nothing other than *teshuvah*.” Why is that? What is it about that word that conjures up the notion of *teshuvah*?

In a nutshell, I think that Rabbi Sacks’s idea was this: *teshuvah* is something that has the power to change both the past and the future for the better. It’s obvious how *teshuvah* can change the future for the better. By repenting our sins, we set ourselves onto

a new trajectory. We turn a new leaf. And because of that, a future that was going to be full of continuing bad habits and bad deeds is averted and replaced with something brighter. But what about the past?

One of the great sages of the Talmud, Shimon ben Lakish, was a gladiator and a criminal, before turning his life around. He used to say that *teshuvah* has the power to change the past. What I take him to mean is that *teshuvah* has the power to change the significance of the past.

I once met a recovering drug addict who had dedicated his life to educating young people about the dangers of substance abuse. The first chapters of his life were truly lamentable. He became an addict at a young age, and turned to petty crime to feed his addiction. He was in and out of prison, and had alienated all who loved him.

Had his life ended in the midst of those troubles, his biography would have been one of almost unrelenting misery. But, because he had managed to get clean and turn his life around, those first chapters of his life take their place in a very different story. Had it not been for those exact episodes that were, at the time, so pitiful, he wouldn’t be the very inspiring person that he is today. His *teshuvah* had, in that

sense, taken his past, and given it a different meaning and significance.

What is this thing that can change both the past and the future for the better? That thing can only be the present. Nobody in the past can act to make things better. It’s too late. Nobody in the future can act to make things better, because the future doesn’t yet exist. It is only the present that can promise us salvation from both an ugly past and an ugly future.

Some philosophers and scientists think that all times are alike. As far as they’re concerned, there’s no past, present, or future. There are only times, laid out in an order from earlier to later. But none of those times are more real than any other. We happen to call the time that we’re in, “the present”, but that’s just because we happen to be here. People in

other times are busy calling their times “the present” too. But if that’s your perspective on time, then you run the risk of neglecting what Martin Luther King Jr called “the fierce urgency of now”.

“A history of *teshuvah*,” Rabbi Sacks wrote, “would contain some momentous ‘nows’. The moment when Rabbi Akiva decided to give up his life as a herdsman in favour of study, perhaps, or when Shimon ben

RABBI PROFESSOR SAMUEL LEBENS



Lakish turned his back on a career as a gladiator.”

Judaism is of the opinion that not all times are alike. The past has already been written. The future, by contrast, is a blank book that awaits our actions. And the present is the only time in which we can actually do anything. To do *teshuvah* is to be sensitive to the fierce urgency of now. It is to recognise that in this moment, we have the power to re-shape our past and to chart the course of our future. It is to realise that, in the midst of a “now”, all of our genetic predispositions and the psychological conditioning that has shaped us until this point, aren’t the final world. In the midst of a “now”, Rabbi Sacks insists, “the fear of heaven is as live an option to us as it was to Moses”.

We are living in the shadow of a traumatic year, and we’re living in anticipation of a very uncertain future. Rabbi Sacks insisted that one of the most powerful messages of the high holy days and this period of *teshuvah* is that we can live in ways that do honour to the past, and that, despite the obstacles in our way, we get to decide who we’re going to be in the future. All of this is true if we can seize upon the power of just one “now”. And though he wrote these words 39 years ago, they still call upon us now.

• Rabbi Professor Samuel Lebens teaches philosophy at the University of Haifa. His website is www.samlebens.com

**THE PAST HAS
ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN.
THE FUTURE, BY
CONTRAST, IS A
BLANK BOOK THAT
AWAITS OUR ACTIONS.**

A year of prayer like never before

OPINION

As we embark on a new year, it’s no exaggeration to say that we are living in historic times. The past 12 months have included a level of pain and loss unlike anything we have experienced since the end of World War II.

Yet, beyond the pain and tragedy, it’s worth recognising the remarkable emergence of hope and faith, serving as a source of optimism for the future. In the face of death and fear, a distinct power of community and communal strength has shone through. Certainly, the bravery of our soldiers stands out, but no less important was the spirit of volunteerism that was witnessed across all aspects of Jewish society.

Diaspora Jewry’s solidarity was expressed in so many ways, even as we were confronted with the disturbing rise of the latest wave of antisemitism. Once again, when Jews were faced with the worst of humanity, we chose to show that dignity and solidarity must prevail.

When comparing the Jewish world with other nations, it’s worth looking at the difference between how we celebrate and usher in the new year. Rosh Hashanah isn’t simply turning to a page on the calendar, an event marked by parties and celebrations. Rather it’s a day of spiritual change, calling to the heavens, asking that through the actions of *teshuvah* (repentance), *tefilla* (prayer), and *tzedakah* (charity) we should be blessed to reverse any evil decrees.

Critically, while every one of us asks for heavenly intervention on an individual basis, we are just as importantly asking G-d to bless us on a communal and national level.

The power of prayer on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is similarly magnified exponentially when it is in the presence of others.

From a practical perspective, we can internalise this increased power



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

May the pain and tragedy of the past year turn into strength and hope in the new year

through the emotion of the song and prayer which define these days. As more voices join in harmony, we can literally feel the strength of our prayers moving higher and higher towards heaven.

My prayer and blessing to our friends around the world is to hold on to and harness this power of community and Jewish unity.

Our prayers are certainly multifold, but must take into consideration the historic place we find ourselves in:

- We pray for a year where social justice creates a better, more tolerant, and more loving world;
- We pray that the shofar blasts will be accompanied by shouts of joy and celebration to drown out the cries of pain that have become all

too common over the past year;

- We pray for a year in which our people in Israel and around the globe will find the path to embrace our Jewish identity more quickly and warmly, and where our faith and traditions will become a source for unity, never division;
- A year where our songs and prayers will reach deep into our hearts and souls to inspire a heightened connection to our peoplehood;
- A year where we will be sure to turn to our neighbours with smiles and an outstretched hand, and promise that we will allow love to overcome any twinges of animosity or discord;
- A year where those searching will find their mates and be blessed to meet under the chuppah and begin to build a Jewish home; and
- A year where *simcha* (happiness) becomes the standard bearer for all Jewish homes, families, and communities.

May these, alongside so many other individual, communal, and national prayers be answered. As all too often in centuries past, our prayers come from a position of pain, loss, and uncertainty. But just as we have been redeemed throughout history, let us believe with our full hearts that once again, out of that pain will come growth, peace, and prosperity.

From Israel, we wish everyone *Shana tova*, not only a good new year, but a year inspired by change that will ensure a brighter future for Israel and the greater Jewish world.

• Rabbi Yuval Cherlow is the director of the Tzohar Center for Jewish Ethics.

RABBI YUVAL CHERLOW





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On behalf of the Hold team, we wish you and your families a ketiva v’chatima tova. May we, and all of Am Yisrael, be written in the Book of Life for a year of blessing, fulfillment and peace.



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120 years of telling it like it is
120 years of getting to the bottom of things
120 years of engaging government officials
120 years of interacting with foreign envoys and ambassadors
120 years of working with political parties
120 years of meeting with university vice-chancellors
120 years of making sure we can practise our religion without prejudice
120 years of supporting dignified burials
120 years of upholding the rights of Jewish students
120 years of ensuring the right to vote
120 years of rising above hatred
120 years of remembering the heroes whose shoulders we stand on
120 years of showing up for South Africa and the world
120 years of interfacing with international Jewry
120 years of standing up to bullies
120 years of sharing our own personal journey to freedom
120 years of reaching out during riots, floods, fire and pandemics
120 years of speaking up
120 years of getting our voice out
120 years of squashing misconceptions
120 years of remembrance
120 years of fighting for the truth
120 years of serving the community

120 years together

Making sure that each and every Jewish South African can survive and thrive in this beautiful country that we call home.

Don't count time, make time count

OPINION

RABBI MOTTI HADAR



I've been counting the days. Have you?

Since Shemini Atzeret, 7 October, together with millions of Jews around the world, I have been counting. Five days, 100 days, 250, and as I sit here typing these words on my screen, it has now been 345 days since that horrific day. We write it on a piece of tape stuck to our clothing as we pray.

I'm not sure I have ever been so conscious of time, so acutely aware of its fleeting passage, knowing how much can happen in a day, a week, a month, or 345 days. Every day is another day of families torn apart, of entire communities displaced, of babies held hostage, of husbands and fathers on the frontlines, away from their families. Every day, every moment matters.

Everything that happens in life is meant to teach us a lesson, to give us tools and insight to become better people. But what do we learn from this agonising counting of time while we wait and pray for miracles?

Many view time as linear – a straightforward line stretching out into the distance, moving us further from our past and into the future. But in Jewish thought, time is not a line. Time is a spiral, cycling back to the same moment each year, but just a little higher and deeper. This is the spiritual rhythm of the Jewish calendar. Every holiday returns us to the same spiritual energy as the year before, but we experience that energy in a new way, with the insights, tools, and growth we accumulated over the year.

Rosh Hashanah is a time to reflect on the year that has passed, an opportunity to ascend the spiral and look back on the full circle of yet another year. And as we count time, we must ask ourselves, are we making time count? Are we making the most of every day, every hour, every moment?

So much can happen in a year. So much has happened this past year. And yet, sometimes, we let time slip by without truly noticing its passage. What can you do in one minute? It may seem like not much. But those seemingly insignificant moments accumulate into something profound – 525 600 minutes, to be exact, which make up an entire year.

Rosh Hashanah isn't just the beginning of a new year. It's the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, the first human beings and therefore, the birthday of all of humanity. It's the day G-d decided that human beings are essential to His master plan.

And every year on Rosh Hashanah, G-d looks at us to see what we did with the past year He has given us. It's a time

when Hashem looks at how we've used the precious gift of time and asks: have we used the time well? Have we fulfilled our potential? Have we made the most of it? Have we filled each day with meaning and purpose? Have we used our time to uplift others and make the world a better place for those around us?



We all have regrets, missed opportunities, and moments when we didn't live up to our best selves. But Rosh Hashanah isn't about feeling guilt or shame for what we didn't accomplish. It's about recognising that every moment is an opportunity to do better because every moment counts.

One of my favourite Rosh Hashanah messages is that we are given a new chance each year. Hashem offers us the opportunity to leave behind anything in the past year that we don't want to carry into the year ahead. All those wasted moments, my lack of appreciation for the preciousness of each moment, I can let that go. Time is a gift, and it's never too late to start making it count.

In today's fast-paced world, we often become so consumed by our to-do lists, jobs, and the constant stream of obligations that we forget to pause and ask ourselves: what am I doing with my time? Am I using it in a way that aligns with who I am, my values, and what I want to be doing here in this world?

Rosh Hashanah reminds us that life is more than just crossing tasks off a list. It's about how we show up at each moment. Are we kind? Are we compassionate? Are we making the time for the things that truly matter?

The shofar's blast is a wake-up call. It pierces through the noise of daily life, calling us to attention and urging us to pause and reflect. It's a sound that demands that we reconnect with the present, the now.

As you stand in shul this Rosh Hashanah and listen to the shofar this year, ask yourself, how has this past year changed me? What did I do with the time I was blessed with between last Rosh Hashanah and today? Did I live intentionally? Did I strive to make a positive impact on those around me? Did I grow, learn, and become a better version of myself?

And focusing on the year ahead, ask yourself: how can I make my time count? What will I do with this time that Hashem has given me? How will I use it towards the purpose for which G-d created me?

We have to realise that each moment is packed with potential, and each new year brings infinite opportunities to start fresh. But it all starts with us asking ourselves how we can make every moment count. We need to be mindful of how we engage with every moment and infuse it with purpose.

Life is busy. It's filled with obligations, distractions, and countless demands. Rosh Hashanah is a reminder that we can – and must – create sacred space within the flow of time. We must carve out moments for connection, prayer, reflection, acts of kindness, and growth. Not just in the moments that we designate for holiness when we go to shul, light Shabbat candles, or put on tefillin. But every moment of our day is an opportunity, a chance to align ourselves with our higher purpose, to use our time in a way that makes the world a better place. When we view time through this lens, every minute becomes meaningful.

As we reflect on a year where, as a Jewish nation, we counted, let's commit not just to counting time but making time count. Let's pray for a year when we count simchas and celebrations, moments of meaning and connection, days filled with growth and purpose, and time filled with peace and security for *Am Yisrael*.

• Rabbi Motti Hadar is the rabbi of Pine Street Shul.

Father and king: finding Hashem in our struggles

OPINION

REBBETZIN TEMMI HADAR



Sometimes, I bring my children to tears. Not joyful ones, either. Recently, one of my children needed a minor surgery. Understandably, he was upset about going into theatre and receiving a general anaesthetic. On the way to the day clinic, he begged me, "Mommy, please don't let them put me to sleep. I don't like it." I nodded but didn't make any promises that I knew I couldn't keep. However, he took my silence as agreement.

After the short surgery, he woke up disoriented, angry, and in pain. He sobbed, "I told you not to let them make me go to sleep!" I nodded and held out my arms. He climbed into my arms, laid his head on my shoulder, and sobbed.

He was sad and angry. I was the person he was furious with. And yet, from his anger and sadness, he turned to me for comfort. Because I am his mother.

Beginning on Rosh Hashanah and continuing through Yom Kippur, we will recite the beautiful prayer of *Avinu Malkainu*, where we refer to G-d as our "father" and "king". This dual relationship of being both a child of Hashem, our father in heaven, and a subject of Hashem, our king, can be both comforting and daunting.

Like my child, who was upset with me but still sought refuge in my arms, we may struggle with the pain and challenges of life, yet we instinctively turn to our father

in heaven for comfort.

But where does this prayer come from, and why do we recite it from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur? The Talmud recounts a story of a devastating drought in which Rabbi Elazar declared a fast and recited 24 blessings, yet the drought persisted. But when Rabbi Akiva cried out, "Our father, our king! We have no-one else but You! For Your sake, have mercy upon us," the heavens opened, and rain fell. Why was Rabbi Akiva's prayer answered and not Rabbi Elazar's? The key lies in Rabbi Akiva's deep recognition of G-d's dual role as father and king. He knew that G-d desired both to help us as our dear father, and had the power to do so as the king of the world. Rabbi Akiva's prayer spoke to the essence of G-d's relationship with us. G-d's desire to help His children is always present, and His power as king ensures that He can.

The phrase *Avinu Malkainu* (our father, our king) encapsulates our dual relationship with G-d. On the one hand, He is the caring, compassionate father, always willing to embrace us when we are hurting, just like my child sought me for comfort after his surgery. On the other hand, G-d is the sovereign king who runs

We are all children to G-d and we must remember that his love is boundless



the world in ways we struggle to make sense of.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that Rosh Hashanah is like a divine game of hide and seek. G-d hides, and we seek. But how can G-d hide when He is everywhere? "There's no place void of Him," says the Zohar. The Baal Shem Tov's teaching isn't about G-d hiding in a way that He is absent. Instead, G-d conceals Himself behind the veil of the natural world in

the guise of a distant king. He challenges us to seek Him out and realise that even when He seems hidden or inaccessible, He is still near and our loving father.

Have you ever played peek-a-boo with young children? It's fun for them because they haven't developed the concept of object permanence. At first, they don't understand that even when something is out of sight, it's still there. But as they grow, they learn that the parent's face behind the hands is still there, still smiling. This is the lesson Hashem wants us to learn on Rosh Hashanah. Even when we feel distant and the struggles and hardships of life mask G-d's presence, He is still present. He hides so that we will seek Him out, so that we will call to Him, not just as a king, but as a father.

This past year, we have cried tears of pain. We have faced unimaginable pain and suffering, both individually and collectively. And yet, in these moments of anguish, we are called to turn to our father. He waits for us to strip away the mask and say, "Father, we need You. We can't do this alone."

As a parent, there are moments when I want to help my children, but I am limited. I can't shield them from every pain, every

challenge. But G-d, our king, has no such limitations. His power is boundless and His love for us, His children, is infinite. Like Rabbi Akiva, we must approach G-d with reverence and trust, knowing He can and will help us.

This year has been marked by so much pain. Many of us have felt the weight of suffering, of loss, and of uncertainty. But in these moments, we are reminded that G-d, our father, wants us to turn to Him. Just as my child, in his pain, came to me for comfort, we can turn to G-d with our burdens. G-d hides so that we will seek Him and remember He is with us even in our darkest moments.

As we enter Rosh Hashanah, let us remember the powerful message of *Avinu Malkainu*. G-d is our king, and runs the world, but He is also our Father, always ready to embrace us, heal us, and bring us closer to Him. We may be hurt and injured, but from that place, we can call out to our father. And when we do, we'll find that He was never truly hidden, He was waiting for us all along.

This Rosh Hashanah, show up to G-d in your pain and tears. We have questions for G-d as our king running the world. But we mustn't forget that G-d is holding his arms out to us, ready to embrace us.

• Temmi Hadar is the rebbetzin of Pine Street Shul.



ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Yad Aharon & Michael's overarching theme for this year's yom tov campaign, Giving is Receiving, acknowledges the unique blessing that each chag carries: Rosh Hashanah's promise of renewal; Yom Kippur's gift of forgiveness; Sukkot's offering of Hashem's peace; and Simchat Torah's height of rejoicing. By giving tzedakah to those in need and ensuring that they can celebrate all the yom tavim with dignity, we open ourselves to receiving these blessings in return.

The theme not only conveys the spiritual essence of the chag, it mirrors the essence of our organisation, which in turn mirrors the unique spirit of the community we represent.

In these challenging times, the call to support one another becomes even more vital. Your generosity has always

been the lifeblood of the organisation, enabling us to provide sustenance and nourishment for 750 families in our community.

These are families who, without your help and donations, would struggle to find joy in these days of celebration as well as in their daily lives.

This year, with the yahrzeit of 7 October upon us and Israel continuing to face turmoil, the call for renewal and peace is more urgent than ever. We are taught in Gemara that "Anyone who gives tzedakah in secret is greater than Moshe Rabbeinu." (Bava Batra 9b). This is the power of giving, it not only supports those in need but elevates the giver to a place of spiritual greatness.

Before we usher in the New Year, I appeal to you to donate to Yad Aharon & Michael, and I pray that

our collective acts of tzedakah help hasten the coming of Moshiach, when true peace will embrace us all.

On behalf of my team, I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a ketivah v'chatima tovah.

**Lauren Silberman, CEO
Yad Aharon & Michael**



It gives me great pleasure to update you on the remarkable achievements and successes we have experienced at Yad Aharon over this past year.

The continued support and generosity from each donor play a pivotal role in enabling us to make a significant impact in the lives of over 750 Jewish families in our community, throughout the year, who rely on us for food assistance.

Our donor dinner - Behind the Silhouettes - held in April this year, was a spectacular event which showcased the incredible work of our organisation and shed light on the inspiring stories of some of our recipients. The event not only celebrated our mission, it propelled our organisation to new heights.



The Yad Aharon & Michael team



The foyer area of Sandton shul hall replicated Yad Aharon & Michael's food distribution area, accommodating 750 food boxes.

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Our Ohr Natanel fundraising appeal successfully resulted in us securing the funds required annually for food for school lunchboxes, ensuring that 220 children in our community have food to take with them to school daily. The excitement and gratitude on these young faces when we distribute "happiness in a box" is heart-warming to witness.

Purim and Pesach were special occasions where our recipients were able to partake in the festivities and traditions, thanks to the unwavering support of our donors. Our Shavuot-box activation initiative, in collaboration with all the Jewish day schools in Johannesburg, was a resounding success, once again demonstrating the immense generosity

and compassion of our community.

Yad's Soup for the Soul, our winter fundraising drive, appealed to donors to "add some 'vooma' to

our soup kitchen". We are grateful for the funds raised, which allow us to continue to welcome more than 350 recipients into our soup kitchen every

Tuesday and Wednesday to shmooze and enjoy delicious soup with hot ready-made varied meals.

Yad's trendiest division, Y.A Young Ambassadors, targets young professionals and first-time earners, encouraging them to get involved and make a difference in the lives of those in need. To date we have had two sold-out successful events, a testament to the growing interest and engagement of the new generation of donors who now assist in sustaining our organisation.

Each year, we transform the function venue at the Genesis centre into a magnificent Jewel & Jem Re-Loved pop-up shop, which is a dignified shopping experience for recipients who select new and gently worn clothing, linen, and accessories at no cost to them, all of which are generously donated by the community.

Additional highlights include our ongoing



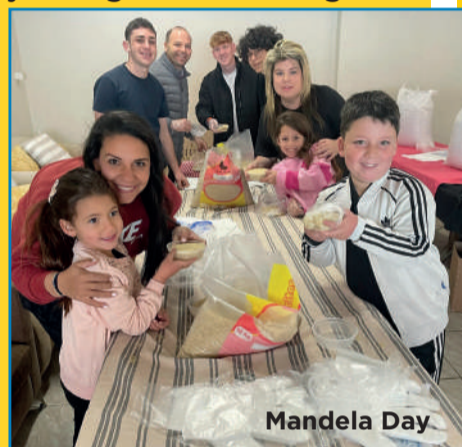
Ohr Natanel packing

involvement in community partnerships such as the Lag B'Omer parade and school chesed programmes. Our calendar for the remainder of 2024 is filled with additional events and fundraisers all for the benefit of recipients. Our latest innovation is our GoFeedMe portal, our virtual food drive, which celebrates giving by providing community members with the opportunity to turn simchas and milestone birthdays/anniversaries into meaningful occasions, all of which will be revealed after this mammoth season of giving. Watch this space for the launch of this

amazing initiative.

Every contribution from our donors and the community at large makes a tangible

difference to the lives of so many, who are truly grateful for your unwavering support. On behalf of all the families we serve, we express our deepest gratitude for your continued generosity.



Mandela Day



Shavuot food collection



Grade R volunteer packing



KDVP Sandwich making



Ohr Miriam



Yad's Purim Crayola Party



Yad's Lag B'Omer Float

Giving is Forgiving



The Jewish Food Fund

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Giving is Embracing



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Annual Food Budget

750 Families	220 Children
<i>Fresh Produce Food Parcels</i> R13M	<i>Ohr Natanel School Lunchboxes</i> R480K
<i>Dry Goods/Non-Perishable Foods</i> R1.6M	<i>Soup Kitchen</i> 350 Recipients
<i>Chaggim/Yom Tovim</i> R2M	R7K per week R315K per annum

Annual Food Spend R17M

One of our brave recipients shared her story with the audience at our Behind the Silhouettes event.

"I was shattered when I couldn't feed my children," she said. "I felt broken, hopeless. It makes one feel like a useless parent. I'm a single mom with two challenging teenagers, and I'm not working due to chronic illnesses, such as epilepsy and heart problems, panic, and anxiety.

I knew about Yad Aharon for a while before I called because I felt too ashamed and guilty to approach them. The first time I went there, I hid behind a huge pair of glasses. But they made it so easy. They accepted me, my glasses were removed, and Yad became my other family. I know if ever I have a problem, there's always someone at Yad to speak to me.

I want to thank all the donors as I wouldn't get through a single week without your assistance. We would go hungry. I would feel like a hopeless person without you. Thank you for helping me with food, clothing, and stationery. And for all the yom tov food so I can celebrate the Jewish holidays in the most special way with my family."

A TRUE MASTERPIECE UP FOR AUCTION

We are honoured to collaborate with internationally acclaimed artist Taryn Treisman, renowned for her vibrant urban, street-style pop art.

Taryn has generously donated a stunning perspex masterpiece to Yad Aharon, aptly named Renewal, which vividly encapsulates Yad Aharon's deep commitment to Judaism, tradition, and tzedakah.

The piece also pays tribute to Israel, marking the first yearzeit of 7 October.

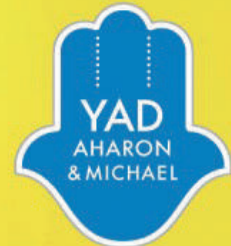
To own this magnificent, one-of-a-kind piece, join the bidding, which opens via our website www.yadaharon.co.za on Tuesday, 24 September, running until Friday, 27 September, at 09:00.

Dimensions: 80cm x 67cm with wooden backing for safe hanging.



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Giving is Rejoicing



The Jewish Food Fund

DONATE

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This yom tov, we are assisting 1 200 adults and 220 children with all the food items required for the month of the chagim. If you haven't yet donated, it's not too late as we are providing multiple food parcels to see recipients through from Rosh Hashanah to Simchat Torah including all Yamin Tovim meals, Shabbosim, and Chol Ha'moed days.

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Remarkable women who represent hope in tough times



WENDY HENDLER

Rosh Hashanah marks a new chapter in the journey of our lives, not only on a personal level but on a macro level. As we reflect on our individual experience of the past year, we also look at the overall national landscape of our country and the impact it has had on us over the past year.

In the aftermath of the tragic events of 7 October, we cannot help but grapple with our country's refusal to acknowledge the suffering of Israeli citizens and the Jewish world in any meaningful way.

As we know, it has taken the lead globally in attacking Israel. It's easy to become despondent and to believe that the entire country is against Israel and the Jewish people. However, as we usher in the sacred days of Rosh Hashanah, we must be cognisant of the power of renewal and deep significance of hope. The Jewish New Year isn't just a moment to reflect on the past, but to look forward with faith and resilience to the future.

This sentiment of optimism is mirrored in the steadfast pro-Israel advocacy led by extraordinary women across South Africa and beyond, who, despite adversity, continue to shine a light of unity and strength. Their work serves as an inspirational beacon during this season of introspection, reminding us that hope isn't just vital but deeply achievable.

Cassandra Mayekiso, the executive director of StandWithUs South Africa, has been a strong and compassionate advocate for Israel. She is a true voice for truth and reconciliation. As a black South African who has lived in Israel, her journey is one of bridging divides and educating her fellow citizens about the truth behind the Israel-apartheid narrative. Mayekiso has been vocal in denouncing the misuse of apartheid terminology in reference to Israel, a comparison that seeks to demonise the Jewish state. Her leadership

in combating misinformation and fostering meaningful dialogue represents the resilience and truth-telling that is essential in difficult times.

Mayekiso's efforts go beyond advocacy. Just as she has committed to fostering understanding through education, her work embodies the spirit of Rosh Hashanah, which is a time to commit to truth,

reconciliation, and hope for peace. Her belief in the power of dialogue echoes the theme of *teshuvah* – returning to one's values and taking the right path. "Israel stands as a beacon of diversity and innovation," she has said, and through her work, Mayekiso has ensured that this truth is known, not just in Jewish circles, but throughout South Africa.

Marie Sukers is an inspiring example of a brave parliamentarian's unwavering support. A Christian parliamentarian from the African Christian Democratic Party, Sukers has also been a remarkable advocate for Israel. In a political landscape in which the South African government has often taken an antagonistic stance against Israel, Sukers has stood firm in her defence of the Jewish state. She publicly asked for forgiveness on behalf of South Africans for the government's recent actions in taking Israel to the International Court of Justice, reflecting a courageous and deeply moral leadership.

Her stance isn't just political but profoundly spiritual, rooted in her Christian faith. Sukers emphasises the shared values of South Africa and Israel, particularly the pursuit of peace, unity, and reconciliation. This is a message that aligns perfectly with the essence of Rosh Hashanah – an

opportunity to repair the world, to seek understanding, and to look ahead with hope. Her advocacy for dialogue and her rejection of the apartheid narrative highlights the importance of integrity in leadership, offering an example of how individuals can work to unite divided communities.

Vivienne Myburgh is a Christian Zionist with a loud call for unity. A leading voice within the South African Friends of Israel, Myburgh has also made profound contributions to the cause of Israel in South Africa. Her work as a Christian Zionist activist underscores the deep spiritual connection between South African Christians and the Jewish people. Myburgh's advocacy highlights the importance of unity, not only between Christians and Jews, but between all people of faith who seek peace and coexistence.

Her message of unity is particularly important as we enter Rosh Hashanah. The New Year is a time for coming together, for bridging gaps, and for finding common ground. Myburgh's work reminds us that the pursuit of peace and justice isn't only a Jewish value but a universal one. Her ongoing efforts to foster dialogue and to build stronger relationships between South Africa and Israel offer a hopeful vision for the future, one in which communities can work together toward shared goals.

Tshegofatso Motaung is a committed advocate for Israel, driven by her deep Christian faith and understanding of biblical teachings. Initially a supporter of anti-Israel views during her studies in the United Kingdom, she later embraced a pro-Israel stance through personal reflection and the study of scripture, emphasising biblical mandates such as Genesis 12:3, which speaks of blessings for those who bless Israel. Motaung promotes reconciliation and dialogue, believing that South Africa should

model peaceful conflict resolution. She founded Israel Matters, leads weekly prayer meetings for Israel, and advocates against political isolation of the nation. Motaung emphasises Israel's spiritual significance, and fosters solidarity between Jewish and Christian communities.

As we celebrate Rosh Hashanah, let the stories of these remarkable women serve as a reminder that even in the face of adversity, we can stand firm in our beliefs, seek truth, and advocate for justice. Their dedication to Israel and to the cause of peace provides a hopeful vision for the future, not only for the Jewish people, but for all

who seek a better world.

This Rosh Hashanah, may we all look forward with renewed faith and optimism. Let us be inspired by the strength and resilience of those who advocate for peace and unity, and let their example guide us as we seek to repair the world, to build bridges, and to foster understanding in our own communities. We know that on Rosh Hashanah, the whole world is judged, nation by nation, for the coming year. May Hashem bless South Africa not on the merits of its government but rather in light of the goodness and unwavering support of the many wonderful people of this country who steadfastly stand by the Jewish nation. May the New Year bring with it blessings of peace, health, and hope for a brighter future for Israel, South Africa, and the world.

Shana tova umetuka. (May you have a good and sweet new year.)

• Wendy Hendler is the co-founder and director of Koleinu SA, the helpline for victims of abuse in the South African Jewish community. The helpline number is 011 264 0341, operating from Sunday to Thursday, from 09:00 to 22:00, and after Shabbat until midnight.



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Finding support and solace in 'books of life'

TALI FEINBERG

Over the high holy days, we do our utmost to ensure that we are inscribed in "The Book of Life." While it may feel like an overwhelming time, we can look to memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies – all "books of life" – to inspire and comfort us, especially between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

"Receiving someone's story makes us a witness and often gives us permission to tell our own stories. Other peoples' courage gives us courage," says South African expat Joanne Fedler, who has written 15 books. Some, about motherhood and immigration, are autobiographical.

"The writing experience allows us to name and own our experience, and in so doing, we are often able to let it go," she says. "There's a huge amount of research on the therapeutic benefits of writing our stories. The Native Americans ask four questions when someone is ill, including, 'When last did you tell your story?' It's one of the most powerfully cathartic exercises we can undertake to make sense of our experience."

"Stories save us," says memoirist Ronit Plank, who wrote her memoir *When She Comes Back* about her mother's choice to follow the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, essentially abandoning Plank and her sister during their childhood. Host of the podcast *Let's Talk Memoir*, Plank says, "Stories help us hold on during painful experiences and go on afterward. Though we might not be able to change what has occurred, processing,

exploring, shaping, and framing it into a story is a proactive and constructive act.

"We may not have had control over what happened, but we can go back, trace, and even rebuild the narrative and understand why it had an impact on us," she says. "In doing so, we can free ourselves of old stories and create new narratives, like allowing fresh, healthy blood to get to an injury and help heal what is wounded.



Joanne Fedler

Writing my memoir showed me that we can evolve and so can our relationships. Excavating events in my family and in my parents' families of origin helped me to see the ways in which my parents loved me, and how they were broken.

"Writing *When She Comes Back* grew my empathy for them and for myself, and helped me appreciate what I have built in my own life despite not having a blueprint," she says. "Writing my memoir showed me that we can change and evolve and so can our relationships. My family and I are stronger for it."

Memoir can also be a gift to others, which is how Fedler feels about the memoir she is writing about the death of her mother. "I hope it serves as a little handrail to others who are navigating this pain," she says.

Nando Parrado, who survived a plane crash and months in the icy Andes mountains before walking for 10 days to find rescue, says he wrote his memoir to show that "everyone has their own Andes". Essentially, he recognised that his miraculous story of survival could inspire anyone to overcome their own mountain of despair.

After a freak skydiving accident left her paralysed, Emma Carey recalls in her memoir that as she lay unmoving in hospital, she came upon the idea that "if you can, you must". Dreaming of a run she had planned to take the day before but skipped – and now could never do – she wanted others to know that if they have the ability to do something, they must grab it with both hands, for who knows what tomorrow will bring.

Johannesburg autism expert, Ilana Gerschlowitz, says that writing her memoir *Saving My Sons: A Journey with Autism* was empowering.



Ilana Gerschlowitz

"My story is one of staggering heartbreak, searing honesty, and monumental victories. I was able to make sense of the grief and find meaning through sharing my journey. It was empowering to unmask the true make-up of autism and highlight the desperate need for access to appropriate treatments. My tears soaked the pages, and I

gained much healing.

"Readers draw inspiration from the hurdles we overcame, even though the odds were stacked against us," she says. "The book sends a powerful message to choose healing and hope instead of defeat and despair."

Memoir can also be a way to bring secrets and mysteries out into the light. In his memoir *The Foundling: The True Story of a Kidnapping, a Family Secret, and My Search for the Real Me*, Paul Fronczak uncovers heartbreaking questions in the stories of two families, inviting readers to join him in finding a kidnapped child and a missing sister, and to uncover what really happened in the home of a troubled Jewish couple.

When South African author and now expat Joanne Jowell told Capetonian Lynette Langman's incredible life story in her biography *On the Other Side of Shame: An Extraordinary Account of Adoption and Reunion*, she showed that the choices of the past can be overcome, leading to healing and even tremendous joy.

Jowell, who has also written biographies of Holocaust survivor Ella Blumenthal and renowned rugby referee Jonathan Kaplan, says, "On the Other Side of Shame showed me that sharing a long-held secret gives permission to others to do the same. When Lynette Langman told the world about the



Ronit Plank



Joanne Jowell

baby she had given up for adoption as a timid 17-year-old in a conservative time, she opened the floodgates for others – and there were many – who shared her experience.

"The same happens in stories about mental or physical illness, joy and pain, love and betrayal, and the outcome of human endeavour," she says. "Biography is a gateway to reconciliation – of the self and with others – and forces us to tap into our empathy. Readers are drawn to these stories because of our shared humanity.

"A full-bodied biography affords us that most precious things – real insight," says Jowell. "That's why I prefer a 'warts and all' approach, which doesn't shy away from the tough questions. My favourite aspect of writing biography is the interview process, primarily with the main character, with whom I build the closest relationship.

Then there are the secondary characters who round out the story and share different perspectives. Secondary characters can be quite the gift. I never know what surprises I might discover when they unwrap their sides of the story."

However, "There comes a point in almost every biography at which the protagonist gets cold feet. My challenge is to keep us focused on the objective – why did they want to share their story in the first place? Who are they trying to reach? What's the broader purpose and greater good? Lynette Langman described the process as 'walking naked down Adderley Street'. My challenge is to help my characters push through, because the reward of sharing a story is immense."



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What's the buzz about dates versus honey?

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Honey is "big" over Rosh Hashanah. From being a symbol of a "sweet" new year, to actually being the viscous fluid that you dunk apples in and then wonder how you're going to get it off your fingers, it has an outsized presence at the table.

But consuming bee honey seems to be a relatively "new" and a particularly Ashkenazic practice that commenced only with the Maharil (Rabbi Yaakov ben Moshe Levi Moelin in Germany) around 1500, according to Q&A site *Mi Yodea*. Perhaps it's because that was what was available in the areas in which Jews lived at the time – northern Europe. Ancient Israelites, on the other hand, were more likely to get their sweetness from dates.

"The Hebrew word for 'honey' [*dvash*] means more than just the ambrosial product we borrow from bees. In antiquity, it meant the sweet juice of almost any fruit," says an article in *Ha'aretz*. It refers to the fact that in the Torah, the term is juxtaposed with all the other agricultural products grown in the field.

"That explains how honey was included in the 'seven species' of the land of Israel: 'wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive-trees and honey'. (Deut. 8:8). Since honey is obviously not a plant like the other six, scholars believe the reference was to the sweet viscous fluid of dates."

In fact, according to Rabbi Julie Zulpan, writing in *JewishBoston*, the description of the land in the Book of Exodus promised by G-d to the Jewish people: "A good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey", refers to goat's milk – and could even refer to white wine – and date syrup, not cow's milk and bee honey, although there's archaeological evidence of a bee-keeping industry in ancient Israel as well.



"Rashi tells us that it means the land is so lush that the goats grazing will be extremely plump, and the milk of the new goat mothers will leak causing a literal flowing of milk. And the dates will be so sweet and full that streams of honey flow from under the date trees," *Mi Yodea* writes on this subject.

On the other hand, the rest of Tanach clearly alludes to bee honey, associating the term specifically with bees and honeycomb. Some examples include, "When Samson walked past the carcass of a lion he had killed earlier, in it he saw a swarm of bees and some honey. He scooped out the honey with his hands and ate as he went along." And, "In Psalm 19, David says that the decrees of the Lord are 'sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb'."

But maybe the phrase "land flowing with milk and honey" doesn't actually refer to any literal agricultural products at all – or even to a particular geographic area – but to achieving a greater spiritual connection in the promised

land.

And it's in this symbolic realm where bee honey is more "on the money". According to *Mi Yodea*, commentators on Jewish law write that bee's honey is more aligned to judgement and renewal – bees sting, but they also produce sweet honey.

Date honey also generally doesn't take much effort to obtain as the nectar often flows out of the fruit and coats each one with a sweet and sticky outer layer. Honey, on the other hand, takes a lot of work, organisation, and protection of the hive to make, which may be more attuned to the symbolism of what we are actually seeking in the new year: a successful life achieved through hard work, determination, and some pain, rather than something merely easy and pleasant.

Of course, there's the question why bee honey is kosher in the first place if it's made by bees, which aren't kosher.

According to the Gemarah, honey is kosher since it's not an actual secretion of the bee; the

bee functions only as a carrier and facilitator. But we now know that bees have enzymes which break down the nectar to turn it into honey.

This is a much debated topic, but the bottom line, it seems, is that honey has been decreed kosher through Talmudic exegesis.

Ultimately, if it's a toss-up between using honey and date syrup, dates win hands down when it comes to health benefits.

A tablespoon of date syrup contains more than twice the potassium, calcium, and magnesium levels of maple syrup or honey, with up to 10 times the antioxidants.

Honey has less fibre, copper, potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin B5, magnesium, phosphorus, manganese, iron, and vitamin B3 than dates, and dates cover your daily need of fibre 31% more than honey.

The pectin in date skins is full of fibre, and has antioxidant and antidiabetic properties, according to ScienceDirect.com

So, this holiday, you may choose to go dark with dates for a golden new year.

Song of creation praises interconnectedness of life



ILANA STEIN

Hayom harat olam. (Today the world was created.) Rosh Hashanah is considered the anniversary of creation. But the first of Tishrei isn't the first day of creation rather, according to tradition, it's the sixth day, the day of the creation of the human being. Why would this be? Because the human being, the last of G-d's creations, has the ability to understand that there is a creator and consequently, we are subjects to that creator. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks puts it, "G-d made the universe. Therefore G-d owns the universe. Therefore G-d is its ultimate sovereign, since he can specify the terms and conditions under which we exist within the universe. And this applies to all humanity." (Koren Sacks Rosh Hashanah Machzor)

But every Shabbat and festival, we recite a poetic prayer that turns this around, where instead of it being all about us, we look to the animals and the planet itself to show us how to praise G-d. This is the prayer known as *Nishmat Kol Chai*, and it's a spectacular poetic expression of gratitude and praise for G-d's creation and ongoing providence.

The opening line, "*Nishmat kol chai*", means "the breath of every living being". This phrase sets the tone for the entire prayer, emphasising the interconnectedness of all life and the divine source of existence. Each line is filled with vivid imagery and metaphors, with the seemingly inanimate elements of earth and living creatures offering praises as a tribute to the creator. By doing so, the poet acknowledges that, despite being those who speak, human beings would need to be as endless as the waves of the sea to fully praise G-d, as these lines attest:

"If our mouths were as full of song as the sea; And our tongue with jubilation as its myriad waves; If our lips were full of praise like the spacious heavens; And our eyes shone like the sun and moon; If our hands were outstretched like eagles of the sky; And our feet as swift as gazelles, still we could not thank You enough, Lord our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, or bless Your name for even one of the thousand thousands and myriad myriads of favours You did for our ancestors and for us."

(Translation: Koren Sacks Rosh Hashanah Machzor) In this, we can see that even with all the elements and beings of nature on the planet, we would not be able to praise G-d for divine redemption. More, by using these images, we are also praising G-d for the amazing elements of creation. This mix of nature and history is alluded to in the first mentions of this prayer. The Talmud in Taanit states that it is one of thanksgiving said when rain comes after a drought, but it is also mentioned as something we say on the

seeder night in the tractate Pesachim. The first idea echoes the natural elements of praise, while the second references the historical aspect.

Interestingly, the Talmud calls this prayer "*Birkat Hashir*" (the grace or blessing of the song). Considering that there is no blessing of "*Baruch Ata*" at the beginning or end of it, why would it be called a blessing? If we look at how Rabbi JB Soloveitchik considers what a *bracha* is, perhaps this will become clear.

Rabbi Soloveitchik argues that *bracha* signifies a continuous process of renewal and creativity that goes both ways – from G-d to human, and from human out to the world, and thus back to G-d. Just as G-d blessed Adam and Eve at the creation of the world, G-d's ongoing blessing is essential for sustaining existence. Humans, too, are called to participate in this process by actively engaging with the world and contributing to its renewal. G-d's presence is not static but dynamic, requiring human involvement to reveal and activate it. When we "bless" G-d, as it were, we're bringing G-d's presence down into the world.

The name *Birkat Hashir* therefore shows that this prayer is a combination of song and blessing. By praising G-d for every being and element in this world and by acknowledging that all living organisms do the same, we reveal G-d in every phenomenon and in that way, we release more blessing into the world around us.

Thus, the *Birkat Hashir* is a profound and moving prayer that celebrates the beauty and wonder of G-d's creation. Its poetic imagery, historical references, and themes of interconnectedness and redemption offer a rich meditation on the meaning of life and the divine purpose behind the world's existence. Saying it on Rosh Hashanah adds a layer of significance, as it invites us to reflect on the creation itself, on our role on earth in activating blessing in the world, fulfilling our mandate to partner with G-d in bringing about a future filled with hope and renewal.

• Ilana Stein is head of education of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning, and a writer for African Parks, a nongovernmental organisation involved in conservation.

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Blowing the shofar an awakening for every generation

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Stirring our souls and reminding us that it's never too late to change and repent, hearing the shofar during the month of Elul is an important precursor to Rosh Hashanah.

From students who blow the shofar for the elderly to rabbis who awaken a love of Jewish tradition in the next generation, we examine the impact of blowing and hearing the shofar.

Having honed his shofar-blowing skills from a young age, Grade 10 Yeshiva College pupil Gadiel Rogoff has blown the shofar for the school for the past three years. This year, appointed as Yeshiva's head of shofar-blowing, Rogoff decided to arrange shofar blowing not only around the school's campus, but to take it to the wider community. Together with his classmates, he did so during the first of the school's annual Elul visits to Sandringham Gardens. The teens were inspired by the reactions of the residents to their shofar blowing.

"So many people eating in the Nosh Bar commented on how it really touched them and told me how amazing it was to hear the shofar again," Rogoff says. "I then blew it in one of the home's residential corridors and a man came out." Praising his shofar-blowing skills, the man asked what Rogoff's name was.

"He said that he was actually good friends with my great uncle, which is quite cool. We spoke for a bit about how he knew him, and I found out that he also knew my grandfather a little. He mentioned that they hadn't been very religious and said it was really great to see that I was now a *Yiddishe* boy blowing shofar."

Wherever he went, Rogoff saw how struck the residents were by the sound of the shofar. "While we were blowing the shofar by the ladies' wards, I saw a woman smiling," he says. "She wasn't able to move her body, but she was smiling, and it was really moving – it shows the power of the shofar."

Robyn Levin, who runs the volunteers' programme at Sandringham Gardens, and accompanied the shofar blowers, was also touched by this moment. "Her whole face lit up. She was just so excited. It was amazing to see. The boys brought so much happiness to the residents in the wards, it was really special," she says.

Levin tells how deeply one new resident in his 80s was impacted by the sound of the shofar. "We went into his room

and one of the boys blew the shofar for him. In preparation, the elderly man stood up and got his yarmulke out. He was visibly moved, his whole demeanour changed – it was amazing to see. He hadn't heard the shofar in a long time and he so appreciated it and asked the boys to come back."



Rabbi Yehuda Stern blowing the shofar for the children at Sydenham Pre-Primary School

Even the staff at the home were intrigued by the shofar blowing, Rogoff says. "Two of the workers came up to me and asked me what the blowing was for. They said it sounded like a reminder for something and I said that's exactly what it is. I explained that the shofar blasts are a call to look at where you are now and to realise that you must start improving on yourself during Elul, which leads up to Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgement."

Rogoff says he'll be returning to the home before Rosh Hashanah. "I want to go and blow it there as often as I can, it was really amazing to see their reactions." Expressing the joy he gets from blowing the shofar, he says there's nothing like the feeling

of helping a person get to the right place in their lives in this way. "Just by blowing a shofar, a simple ram's horn, you spread a beautiful message that one can't explain in words."

Ari Levin, also in Grade 10 at Yeshiva, blew the shofar alongside Rogoff. "I first grabbed a shofar at around the age of 12 and just tried to blow and eventually, it just worked," he recalls, "Nobody taught me, I just figured it out." While the deep meaning behind shofar blowing cannot be denied, its pitch is not to everyone's taste. "Some people are annoyed by it, but I just like the sound of the shofar and the message it brings," he says.

The Yeshiva boys visited other residential facilities run by the Chevrah Kadisha. "It was nice to see the Selwyn Segal residents happy and smiling," says Ari. "Making people happy through blowing the shofar – and in general – is very important to me."

Levin says the shofar blowing is undoubtedly beneficial for the young men themselves. "I think it's very important to see how much the boys get out of doing this *mitzvah* by blowing for the residents."

On the other side of the generational divide, seeing how children light up when hearing the shofar is also heartwarming. "When I blow the shofar for the Sydenham Hebrew Pre-Primary School kids, they're so excited, they bounce up and down, they can't wait to hear it," says Rabbi Yehuda Stern of Sydenham Shul. "They especially love the *tekiah gedolah* [the extra-long shofar blast]. They want to see how long I can hold my breath for," he laughs.

Stern says he sees blowing the shofar as a way of providing an awakening. "It awakens the heart of the people who listen to it," he says. "I've seen adults who leave a room and when they see someone walk in with a shofar, about to blow it, they turn around and walk back in. Their hearts ignite when they see the shofar. To get people to introspect, to dig deep, and to reflect is very difficult today, but the moment the shofar comes out, that's what happens."



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From the pens of our youth

There is nothing usual about this Rosh Hashanah, almost one year after the 7 October massacre and Israel being forced into a war to defend the Jewish state. We called on our youth to give their views on what this Rosh Hashanah means to them. We were inundated with responses. Here is a selection of the most insightful pieces.

When will they be free?

**Joshua Woolf, Grade 10,
King David High School Victory Park**

Rosh Hashanah. A time of the year filled with reflection, shofar blasts, and sweet apples in honey. This time last year, we were happily sitting in our sukkahs celebrating the freedom of the Jewish people after 40 years of wandering in the desert following slavery in Egypt. Today, we wonder when our brothers and sisters in captivity will be free. Will they get to celebrate the new year with a hearty family meal? Will they get the chance to *daven* with their communities in shul? We don't know.

The high holy days have always been a time of excitement and adventure for me. In South Africa, we're greeted with spring's warm sights and smells: jacarandas blooming, bees buzzing, and sparkling blue swimming pools on our minds. However, this year is different. Someone, somewhere far north, is experiencing the exact opposite. Hidden deep underground in icy tunnels remain 97 living hostages, kept in captivity by Hamas far from civilisation and comfort. There's a feeling of guilt that tugs at my thoughts. Why during such a holy period on our Jewish calendar does such tragedy exist?

These conflicting feelings – pain and peace – are deeply troubling. On the one hand, here we are, surrounded by our loved ones, preparing our Rosh Hashanah meals at full speed and gathering *schach* for our sukkot. On the other hand, we know of the great suffering experienced by our own people.

Golda Meir, Israel's prime minister during the Yom Kippur War, famously stated, "Pessimism is a luxury no Jew can allow himself." I admire this resilience. Through one of Israel's toughest wars, she took many blows but remained strong and victorious. Although we're not prime ministers, we're still Jewish. We still have the ability to enact change.

Acts of *tzedakah*, *teshuva*, and *tefillah* are key aspects in any conversation about Rosh Hashanah. As we approach one year since the 7 October massacre, these concepts take on added significance. It's amazing to see how we're all involved in writing notes to soldiers, joining *tehillim* groups, or learning Torah in the name of a hostage. We know that when we're united, our enemy becomes weak. May Hashem hear our prayers of repentance, hear the cries of the hostages, and bless us with peace this coming year.



Seven October

**Brurya Katz, Grade 12,
Yeshiva College**

The monster bites,
across oceans, the cries are heard.

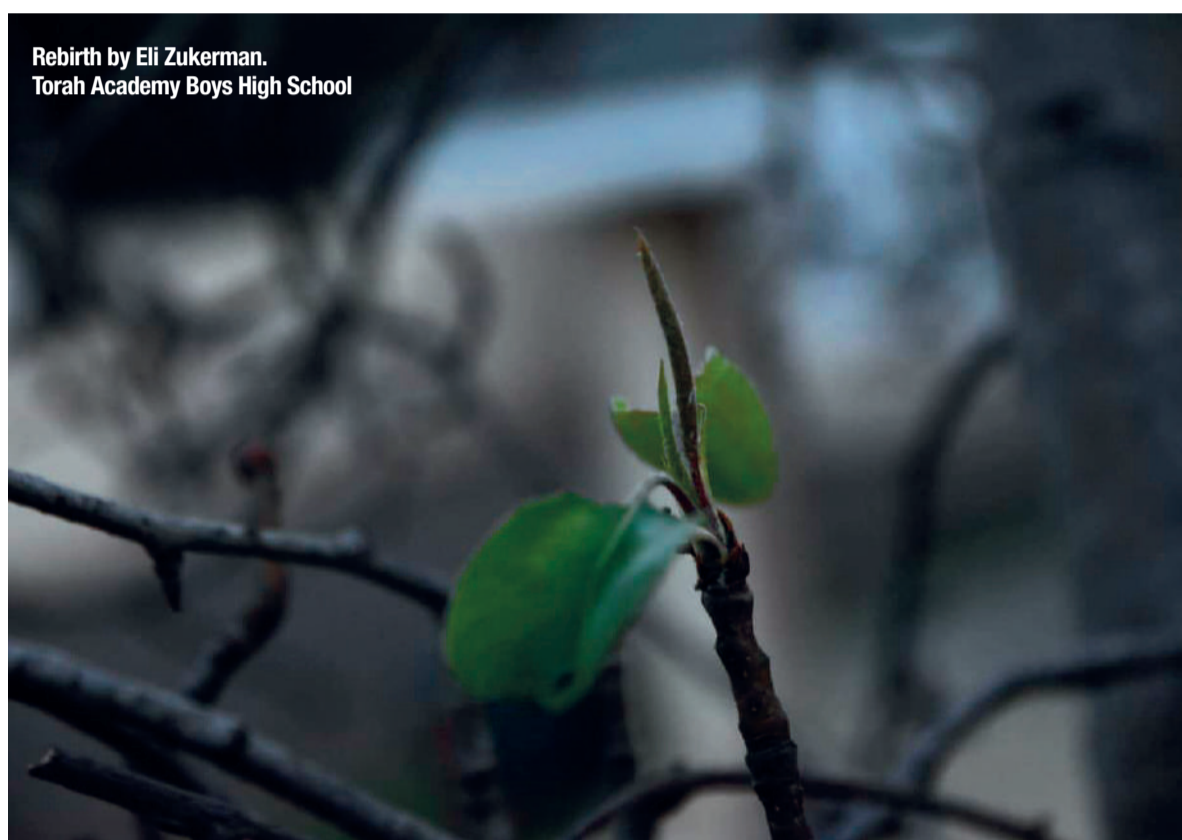
A mother sobs for her soldier,
as her town strokes her hair
and feeds her children.
A bride and groom
dance into battle
on the shoulders of their brethren,
leaving their wedding behind.
A child of four darkens a room,
hoping for the sound of a saviour,
as the Eiffel Tower lights up
surrounded by song.
They surrounded a baby,
hoping for blood,

but his saviour is a
retired white beard.
An Israeli captive
begs for his life,
So his sister in
South Africa cannot
sleep,
his brother in
America prays,
his mother in
Australia weeps.
Darkness descends,
but song rises.
Kindness lifts up
what cruelty knocks down.
Dispersion was aspired,
but unity was achieved.
So we cry,
Sob,



Wail,
For the ear you have
bitten off,
But it is just an ear,
And it has only made us
angrier.
You have stirred forces
thousands of years old
thousands of miles
bigger than you.
And soon
the full force of the body
will hit back
because when you hit the
head the heart cries.
And when the heart cries,
we all rear our heads
to defend
what was lost.

**Rebirth by Eli Zukerman,
Torah Academy Boys High School**



Don't take a second for granted

Itta Bacher, Grade 10, Torah Academy Girls High School

One of the stories that touched me deeply from 7 October is that of Yehuda Becher, who sang the beautiful song of *Elokai Neshama* on his way to the Nova festival where he was murdered. He eerily sang the words "G-d gives us each a soul, that is pure, He safeguards it in us, and then eventually takes it back, as long as it is within us, we thank Him gratefully."

This song is a beautiful prayer that we say every single morning when we thank G-d for returning our soul, for the daily rebirth that we are granted.

We need to understand how significant it is to wake up. Just the very fact that you woke up this morning means G-d has a purpose that He needs you for today. Each day that you wake up you are reborn, with new opportunity and potential. Sadly, 1 200 people lost this good fortune on 7 October when they were murdered. But they did not die for nothing, they died in the holiest way, in the name of being a Jew.

This year, when Hashem transcribes us in the book of life, we have to reflect on the sacrifice of our fellow Jews and take this opportunity for renewal, to grow personally, and

sacrifice ourselves in small ways in their merit and in the merit of the safety of our fellow Jews still suffering. The bottom line is, if you are a Jew, you are a target regardless of where you live, thus each of us is a survivor. Although the war is not over, we will continue to survive and grow in many ways individually and as a nation.

This month of Elul leading up to Rosh Hashanah is a perfect opportunity to tap into personal growth and expansion. And as we do it, we carry the responsibility of the chance to achieve a new level of self-magnification. This year, we have a reinforced mission to stand strong for those who cannot, and to live out the dreams that they did not have the option to accomplish. I am entering Rosh Hashanah with a different mindset – that no second should be taken for granted – and with a sense of gratitude for every time I get to eat, sleep, and laugh with my friends. I do this in the memory of the many who lost this opportunity, lost their friends or family, and lost the lives they once knew.



Our stories are intertwined

**Ethan Slavin, Grade 9,
King David High School Linksfield**

As we approach 7 October 2024, I think about the hostages.

Every morning as I put on my *tefillin*, I can't help but think of you. I've become accustomed to counting the days and thinking about how long it has been since you were stolen. We are almost at day 365. It's unimaginable. It's impossible to comprehend the depths of your anguish and the unimaginable suffering you are experiencing.

Nearly a year has passed, and we still count the days since you were stolen. It's almost a year since you have felt the sun on your skin, seen your family, your friends. How long since you have felt loved? How much longer will it be before you come home?

We have never met, yet I feel like I know every one of you. We are somehow connected. Our stories have become intertwined. I have watched your families share details about your lives, who you are, what you do, and how you were taken. I have got to know you so well. I have seen your families fighting tirelessly, begging and pleading for your freedom. Your faces on posters haunt me. When will there be an end to the suffering? How much longer will it be until you come home?

If I could tell you anything, it would be that despite the unimaginable suffering you are

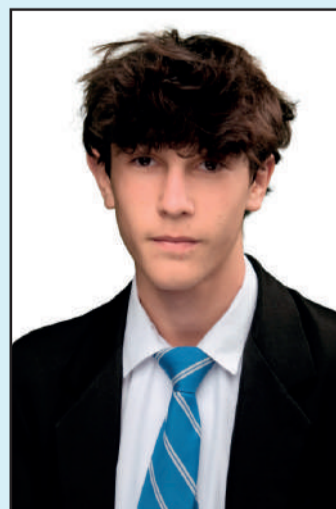
enduring, you have become a symbol of unity, a rallying cry for the broader Jewish community to come together. Each of you represents more than just the unimaginable suffering you are enduring. You represent resilience, hope, and the strength of our shared values, our love for being Jewish, and our beloved state of Israel.

In the past year, my worldview has shifted in ways I never expected. Up until 7 October, I believed that antisemitism was a remnant of the past and that the world had evolved beyond the Holocaust. I never believed that "never again" would be now. In my naivety, I thought that the global antisemitism that is so tangible today was something abstract, a lesson from history books. Something that we would not see playing out in front of us. How wrong I was. News, radio stations, people with one-sided opinions – the world is predominately antisemitic and anti-Zionistic – sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly, but consistently corrosive and divisive.

Within my realisation is a lesson: it's not enough to acknowledge antisemitism, we need to confront it. We need to stand proudly in our Jewish identity. We have a duty to speak out and to educate others. I've come to understand that our strength as Jews lies in our unity, and that no matter how much darkness tries to surround us, we will continue to stand together, defiant and unbroken.

So, to those precious souls that were stolen, I pray that peace will embrace your families again, and that the day will come when we can stop counting the days since you were taken.

Don't lose hope. *Am Yisrael Chai*. Bring them home!



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From ashes to flowers

Mila Liat Krost, Grade 10, Torah Academy Girls High School

In the crux of sadness, growth emerges, transforming the end of one year into a rebirth. The Nova festival site, where the lives of many individuals were tragically taken, has undergone a profound transformation. Once a scene of immense sorrow, it now stands as a memorial site adorned with vibrant flowers and resilient plants. This shift from a site of profound loss to a symbol of renewal resonates deeply as we approach Rosh Hashanah – a time traditionally dedicated to reflection, introspection, and self-improvement.

As we enter Rosh Hashanah, the contrast between the site's previous desolation and its current state of beauty underscores a profound lesson. The flowers growing amidst the markers of those who perished serve as a reminder that even in the face of overwhelming sorrow, there is hope for regeneration and healing. The memorial's transformation becomes a metaphor for our own personal journey. Just as the plants have adapted and thrived in the wake of tragedy, so too can we find ways to grow and evolve despite our own struggle and heartache.

The tradition of Rosh Hashanah encourages us to reflect on our personal and communal challenges, but it also inspires us to envision a future marked by improvement and hope. By acknowledging our vulnerabilities and embracing opportunities for growth, we honour the memory of those we have lost and ensure their legacy endures through our actions and decisions.

Entering the new year with this mindset, we are reminded that life's most profound lessons often emerge from the darkest moments. The flourishing memorial site becomes a living testament to resilience and a beacon of hope. While the war is still ongoing, it is almost impossible to embody this mindset. However, as we embark on this new year, let us carry forward the spirit of renewal, drawing strength from our experiences and finding comfort in the potential for a brighter future. Through reflection and growth, we honour the past and shape a hopeful path forward.

"The wound is the place where the light enters you." – Rumi



Shine G-d's light into the world

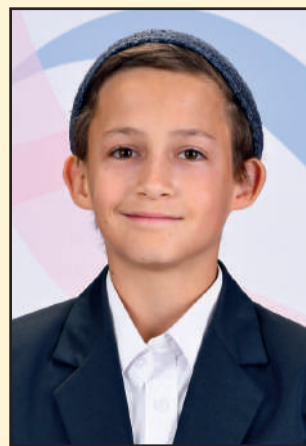
Zev Apfel, Grade 7, Torah Academy Boys High School

When the children of Israel are compared to the moon. The moon has no light of its own but gets it all from the sun. Imagine if the moon was split up into a million different pieces. Yes, the sun would still shine as brightly, but its light wouldn't be shone into the world.

We are the same. When we aren't united, the light, no matter how strong, cannot be seen in the world.

The light is G-d's light, and our job is to reflect that light into the world. The only way to do that is by being united. Yes, the moon has craters and hills but from afar, you don't see that.

You see only the light, and this light shines brightest in the night. In these dark times, we must shine G-d's light into the world. On Rosh Chodesh Tishrei – Rosh Hashanah – the light of the moon is at its fullest.



There are people that hate us. They try to bring us down and destroy our unity. But it's this very hatred that brings us together. People davening, people sending letters and supplies, a soldier who won't leave his fellow soldier behind. But this is only half of what we have to do. We have to spread light all around the world.

The holy temple was destroyed because of hatred for no reason, and the third and final holy temple will be brought through love for no reason. Why did Aaron become the *kohen gadol*? Moshe seemed more fitting – he was holier and had a closer relationship with G-d. Aaron was known for his love of peace. It turns out it's not how holy you are, but how much love you have for G-d's creations that brings you closer to G-d.

The numerical value of *ahavah* (love) is 13. G-d's name has a numerical value of 26. It takes two people that love to bring G-d's presence into the world. This name of G-d refers to two things: first, kindness; second G-d's eternal being.

Kindness is eternal, love is eternal, unity is eternal. So, on Rosh Chodesh Tishrei we must be united and bring G-d's presence into this world.

Prayer is our greatest weapon

Rivky Zwick, Grade 9, Torah Academy Girls High School

A new year is an opportunity for a new start, an opportunity to turn over a new leaf, and begin writing on a new page. An opportunity to refresh our old stubborn ways and beliefs and embrace new ones.

The fire of antisemitism was burning long before 7 October. To this day, it is an influential and powerful sense of loathing.

As a nation as spiritual, powerful, and innocent as ourselves, our voices are sure to be heard. However, the world still sees the demons that persecute us as heroes. And it still gives in to the most unjustifiable lies.

A year since such unimaginable horror was committed against our people and our country, and now we find ourselves celebrating the new year.

As much as Rosh Hashanah has always been about shul and family, prayer, and icky sticky honey and apples, it has also been about refreshing my character and values.

Imagine if the entire world woke up on Rosh Hashanah with a new perspective on the Jews. With a new moral compass and understanding of what is right and wrong. The war would end, and all people would live together in harmony.

This new year is a perfect opportunity for us to convince the media that it has got it all wrong.

The year is new, and you can be too. Along with soldiers and grenades, you need prayer to win this war. Let's have empathy and not sympathy for our nation's suffering, and do everything we can to bring about peace. Because we are a year in and we have never been this desperate.

Let us stay strong and not spiral into a depression. For hundreds of soldiers did not lose their lives for you to live a life of fear and distress.



A cynic's hopeful wish

Shira Ephron, Grade 12, King David High School Victory Park

How can I talk about what I believe Rosh Hashanah means to me this year without being insensitive? It means new beginnings, but this year, I've become a bit of a cynic. In war, a new beginning for an Israeli soldier or a Gaza civilian may spell death. We need to introspect as history is unforgiving and paints multiple truths. I understand that this is the present, in which each reader has a battle with grief, glimmers of hope, and utter confusion. My personal battle is to be hopeful, and I wonder how history is going to rewrite this war over and over again. Each with a new beginning.



Clara Stein and Zahava Hadar, Torah Academy Girls High School



A chag of new beginnings

Julia Levine, Grade 7, King David Primary School Linksfield

Ever since 7 October 2023, *chaggim* have taken on a new meaning for the Jewish people. As we approach the start of the new year, we must once again take time to reflect on the devastating impact this past year has had on the Jewish people.

As we welcome the new year with all the chaos of the world today, we must never forget that Rosh Hashanah will always bring new beginnings, new stories, and new opportunities. This month is a time to connect to our Jewish values, spreading as many *mitzvot* and acts of kindness as we can.

It's difficult to see the light amidst the dark clouds of pain for the Jewish people. Many families are sitting *shiva* for loved ones who have been taken away from them. Mothers and fathers are calling out their missing children's names. Even though we remain anxious as antisemitism spreads rampantly across the world, we must search for positivity this Rosh Hashanah, as we have Hashem by our side and the power of Jewish prayer.

At this time, we need to understand what it means to be a Jew. We must regain our strength and continue believing in Hashem. It's essential



Artwork by Liat Lees, Grade 7, Torah Academy Girls High School



to perform *mitzvot* every day and do whatever we can to support fellow Jews and Israel in every way. We need to continue to acknowledge Hashem and what a privilege it is to be Jewish. We have to believe, and we must pray.

During this Rosh Hashanah, every Jew around the world should spread as much light and kindness in the world as they can. In doing so, we will protect our Jewish identity and show what a difference we can make as proud Jews. We should continue to be resilient and show our enemies once again that our nation will get through this and will be stronger. I pray that Hashem hears all our prayers and brings peace to Israel and the Jewish people. May our beloved hostages return home, and may this Rosh Hashanah be the *chag* of new beginnings.

Love over rage

Tzipi Kievman, Grade 8, Torah Academy Girls High School

As the year begins to age
We wish for a new page
For the war continues to wage
And loved ones are still in their cage
Though I'm no sage
I think this strange
We must choose love over rage



Reflections in the shadows

Shaya Unterslak, Grade 10, Torah Academy Boys High School

The tragedy of 7 October has brought about a very sombre tone to Rosh Hashanah this year. Instead of being a time of renewal and repentance, it has become a time of mourning and a time of reconnection.

The massacre has affected all Jewish communities. The mourning is tangible, and the need for communal mending is imperative. But in the sadness, there has been an amazing sense of togetherness and strength. From the worldwide Jewish communities, the reaction has been truly amazing, with people and organisations reaching out to help, to comfort, to assist the victims. Whether it be through fundraising, volunteer work or solidarity rallies, the support shown has only reaffirmed the strength and unity of the Jewish community.



This New Year, the issue is how to move on in a way that honours the memories of those who passed away, yet, at the same time, respects the growth and renewal that are the basis for the high holy days. The way we have reacted to this tragedy is a testament to a will and unity much greater than myself, something that will be necessary as we move through these times. This is not merely about remembering the past but also using that memory to build a more secure and united future.

These days are a time of introspection, repentance, and renewal. This year, these themes are especially poignant. As we gather for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we do so with a deep sense of both remembrance and purpose. From 7 October we must learn that our strength lies in our unity, and that we can build a world founded in love, justice, and the strength of our resilience.

We must keep on and support one another, and try to improve ourselves, as individuals and as a nation. This is not just remembering those who have died, but also committing to doing things that make people feel safe and united. As we light the *yomtov* candles, listen to the voice of the shofar, and unite in prayer, we must learn to accept the lessons that this terrible event has taught us and use them to help create a world in which our people continue to flourish.

In this season of reflection and renewal, may we find the strength to move forward, honouring the past while working together to build a brighter and more unified future.

Grief

Miriam Benami, Grade 10, Torah Academy Girls High School

Since 7 October my view on life has changed completely. I have heard various stories about people who were taken hostage, were soldiers or survivors who hid for hours in safe rooms or ran for their lives.

This tragedy has caused tremendous grief and loss and sadness within the Jewish people. I have learned from personal experience that grief forces us to put a wall up in order to be able to move on with our lives, which ultimately makes us bottle up our feelings. When those feelings are eventually released, they can completely destroy us.

I cannot even begin to imagine how all the children who have become orphans, adults who have become widows, and parents who have lost children are going to continue with their lives after the atrocities that they experienced. But what I do know is that from all the stories I have heard, many people's outlooks are unbelievably

positive and forgiving.

One particular story that resonates with me is the story of Yotam, a victim who escaped the tunnels after being in captivity for a number of months. He and a few other hostages were on the run for three days when the Israel



Defense Forces mistakenly took them for terrorists and tragically shot them. When the general came to tell Yotam's family, his mother, Irit, said all she wanted to do was go to those soldiers who killed her son and give them a hug and comfort them. To me this is so incredible and admirable that I aspire to have a similar mindset.

"Out of pain emerges a new strength; from the ashes of suffering; we find the seeds of our rebirth."

Finding hope and faith amidst horror

Sarale Shishler, Grade 11, Torah Academy Girls High School

Rosh Hashanah is a deeply significant holiday for us. It is time of reflection, renewal, and introspection. It is a time to examine our past deeds, seek forgiveness, and set intentions for the year ahead.

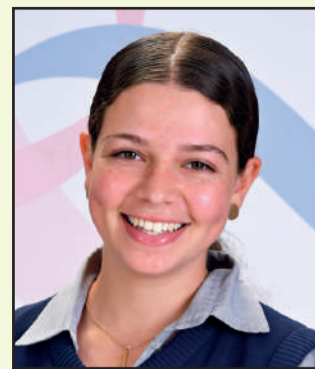
October 7 fell just after the holiest days of the year. After days of *teshuvah*, *tefilla*, and *tzedakah* we were feeling a sense of closeness to Hashem, happy and relieved and hoping we would all be inscribed for a good year. This made the shock and horror of the attack even harsher.

This unwavering commitment to our beliefs and values, even when confronted with immense hardship, becomes a testament to the enduring spirit of the Jewish people. It is through these trials that we find deeper layers of hope, demonstrating that our faith is not merely an abstract concept but a living, breathing force that guides us through the darkest times and into the light of renewed hope and strength.

In the face of profound trials, Hashem's testing of our faith is a recurring theme in Jewish tradition, embodying the belief that challenges are opportunities for spiritual growth and reaffirmation. The process of enduring and overcoming difficulty often brings us a heightened awareness of Hashem's presence and influence in our lives. This reflects the concept of Elul, where the king

(Hashem) is in the field so he is more accessible to us. We should take advantage of this time to *daven* to connect with Hashem.

This Rosh Hashanah will be almost a year since the horrific day and it is our duty to focus on our *teshuvah*, *tefilla*, and *tzedakah* because ultimately Rosh Hashanah reminds us that through hope, we can transform our challenges into sources of strength and renewal, embracing the new year with optimism and a renewed sense of purpose. This special time provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge these past struggles while simultaneously looking forward with hope and determination.



From Guesswork to Insight: Leveraging Feuerstein's LPAD to Understand and Address Learning Difficulties

What if you could know the cause and extent of a child's learning struggles and find out how to intervene effectively? It is never too late to help a child, but it is close to impossible to do so without the right information. Schools and parents need to know and not guess the answer to the question, "Why does this child struggle?" Children struggle to read and learn for a reason. Until you get a better understanding of what the reason is, you will play 'hit and miss' with the solutions and interventions, costing the school and parents time, money and emotional energy. Will it be a new tutor? A different school placement? Accommodations or concessions? The introduction of an assistive device? An alternative way of doing school? Therapy? A reading programme? Further medical investigation? Until educators and parents know WHY, they can't know WHAT to do and how best to find the right help.

Feuerstein's LPAD - Learning Propensity Assessment Device - can identify positive learning potential.

Feuerstein's LPAD (Learning Propensity Assessment Device) is a cognitive assessment used in a dynamic fashion to determine how an individual thinks and learns. This assessment differs from static assessments, such as IQ tests, in that the assessment seeks to understand an individual's learning process, rather than measure their current knowledge against that of their peers. The LPAD uses a test – mediate – retest model, which incorporates learning throughout the process in order to understand the learner's cognitive functions. Learning is the most important part of the procedure and growth is continually measured against previous performance.

During the administration of fourteen varied tasks in the LPAD, an assessor presents the learner with a variety of tasks to solve. The assessor observes the learner's progress, taking special note of difficulties and errors.

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Who is the LPAD for?

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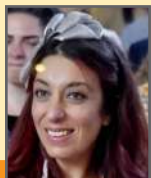


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A time of reckoning and reconciliation



RABBI ADINA ROTH

OPINION

My chevruta Miriam sent me a book she thought I would relate to called *We Were the Newmans*. This fictional novel by Beverley Lester tells the story of a Joburg Jewish family in the 1970s that meets a tragic end. The protagonist Ruth's father runs into business trouble and, in a fit of insanity, kills his wife and two young sons. Ruth leaves South Africa to return only many years later, during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where she helps victims of apartheid's violence prepare for the truth and forgiveness process. Ruth rallies against glib forgiveness and asks difficult questions about justice. She burns with anger towards her father and is unable to find any equanimity or forgiveness. So corrosive is her anger that she ends up stabbing her father. But what brought me to tears at the end of the book was that after the stabbing and the moments of reckoning and justice, there is a deep, authentic reconciliation between her and her father as they take a trip together to the Karoo.

role. It tricks G-d into shifting from justice to compassion and can open up an even deeper level of divine mercy in G-d. For Rav Tzadok, Hallel is not a diversion from the themes of the day, it's just that the shofar does what Hallel would do, and more.

Rabbi Abbahu's claim that this time of year is serious aligns with what we know of Rosh Hashanah. It's a time of reckoning, a period of serious reflection where we contemplate our year ahead. When we consider that Rosh Hashanah last year preceded a Simchat Torah that has changed our Jewish world, we may well be inclined to sit with Rabbi Abbahu and tremble as we move to Rosh Hashanah. We never know what awaits us. But Rav Tzadok did not live in an easier or less complex time, yet he insisted that Rosh Hashanah is about compassion. We don't have Hallel because the shofar is our Hallel.

This brings me back to Ruth Newman. She so wisely shows us that there is no simple line from violation to forgiveness. When we mess up – in relation to

another human being, in relation to G-d, in relation to ourselves – we need to take steps to redress. We can't just melt into sugar and sweet-nothings. Forgiveness is not maple syrup! Ruth takes us into anger and her longing for vengeance, which she actually acts out. However, even for Ruth, beyond the longing for justice, behind that curtain, there is something else, the longing for reconciliation, love and deep connection. Therefore, to my mind, Rabbi Abbahu and Rav Tzadok are both right. There is deep reckoning. And beyond that, there is great love.

It has now been two years since I left my beloved South Africa and built a new life in a new community. In that time, I became a rabbi

and the Jewish world has erupted into a new kind of sorrow. The deeper reason that *We Were the Newmans* moved me so much is that South Africa remains a place with lessons for me and for Jewish people, soul lessons that uncannily mirror the stories of our Jewish people. The current government's attitude to Israel has made it difficult for Jewish people to embrace and feel embraced by South Africa right now. But it would do us well to remember that the essential story of apartheid being overthrown and the questions of racial equality, justice and forgiveness are poignant, profound and rich soil in which to grow Jewish life and meaning. South Africa's story enriches the ethical and spiritual fibre of our community. Let us remember this influence of the deeper South African story on our Jewish *neshamot* this Rosh Hashanah.

• Adina Roth is a South African rabbi and director of Jewish Life at Emanuel School in Australia.

Drunk on myself or devoted to the king?



ESTHER HECHT

OPINION

One of my favourite places to visit in Israel is Shiloh – the place where the Mishkan stood for more than 400 years. The holiness and spiritual energy of the spot are tangible, and when I stand there, I feel connected to something deeply spiritual. It's the place where Chana pleaded with Hashem for a child. It's as though you can hear her sobs echoing in the air and feel her deep desire for a child.

The Haftorah reading for the first day of Rosh Hashanah introduces us to this most incredible story in the Tanach. The narrative centres on a woman, desperate for a child, pouring her heart out to Hashem in prayer, only to be mistakenly rebuked by the high priest, Eli, who assumes that she is drunk. What unfolds isn't just a poignant personal drama, but a powerful lesson on faith, prayer, and the deeper meaning of Rosh Hashanah.

Chana's story seems straightforward: a woman in deep pain, yearning for a child, is misunderstood by Eli, who eventually retracts his judgement and blesses her. She later conceives Shmuel, who grows to become one of the greatest leaders in Jewish history. Yet, a closer look at the story raises questions that reveal its deeper significance.

First, it's interesting that Eli, the high priest, would mistake Chana's heartfelt prayer for drunkenness. Shouldn't someone with his spiritual stature and sensitivity have been able to discern the difference between a woman in deep emotional pain and one who was drunk? His misjudgement seems, at first glance, surprisingly out of place, especially given Chana's obvious distress.

But Eli's misunderstanding goes beyond a simple mistake. It leads us to reflect on a broader issue: the relationship between human needs and divine service. This seemingly awkward interaction opens the door to a discussion that is at the heart of Rosh Hashanah. Why does the Torah include this episode at all, if not to teach us something profound about our own relationship with prayer and Hashem?

Rosh Hashanah is a day filled with dual themes that, on the surface, seem paradoxical. On the one hand, it's a day of judgement – Yom Hadin – in which our fate for the coming year is decided, to be sealed 10 days later on Yom Kippur. We pray for all our needs, from health and wealth to spiritual growth. Yet, it's also a day where we crown Hashem as king, focusing on surrendering ourselves to His rule, celebrating His kingship over us. How do we reconcile these two seemingly opposing themes: our personal requests and the grand act of coronating Hashem?

It would seem that on the day we are coronating the king, it would be an inappropriate time to start asking for our own personal requests.

Chana's response to Eli offers insight into this question. When Eli accuses her of being "drunk" he isn't just referring to alcohol. He's suggesting that perhaps her prayer is too focused on herself – her own needs and desires. "Is your relationship with Hashem only about what you can get from Him?" Eli's challenge isn't without merit, as too often, we approach prayer from a place of personal need. However, Chana's response is the key to understanding the balance between personal prayer and divine service.

"I'm not drunk," she tells Eli. "I have poured out my soul before Hashem." She teaches Eli – and us – that personal prayer isn't selfish. It's not about being "drunk on ourselves", but about expressing our deepest yearnings to fulfil our unique role in Hashem's plan. Chana's prayer

for a child wasn't just about her desire for motherhood, it was an expression of her mission in this world, her role in bringing holiness into the physical realm.

On Rosh Hashanah, we declare Hashem as our king. But what does this really mean? Is it just about submission, or is there something deeper? When we crown Hashem, we aren't only acknowledging His rule over the world, we are recognising our own role in His kingdom. We ask for health, livelihood, and peace not merely for personal benefit, but because these are the tools we need to fulfil our divine mission.

The story of Chana reflects this idea. She wasn't just asking for a child; she was asking for the ability to contribute to the world in a meaningful way. Her request wasn't about selfish desires; it was about participating in Hashem's plan for creation. And Eli, recognising this, blesses her, understanding that her prayer is an extension of Hashem's will.

The Baal Shem Tov famously taught that even our physical needs are spiritual in nature. When a person feels hungry, it's not just their body seeking sustenance, it's their soul yearning to elevate the sparks of holiness hidden in the food they eat. In this sense, our mundane needs – our physical well-being, our financial stability – aren't separate from our spiritual lives. They are, in fact, integral to our mission of making this world a dwelling place for Hashem.

On Rosh Hashanah, when we ask Hashem for our needs, we're not simply asking for comfort or security, we're expressing the soul's deep desire to fulfil its purpose in this world. Every Jew has a corner of the world they are meant to elevate, and the resources we request, whether they be health, wealth, or peace of mind, are the means through which we carry out this mission.

As we stand in shul on Rosh Hashanah, we ask for many things: health, financial success, a new cleaning lady, a shidduch, happiness. It's easy to feel conflicted. Should we really be focusing on our own needs on this day of coronating the king? But Chana's story teaches us that these requests aren't selfish. They are part of the divine plan. By asking Hashem for what we need, we are actually affirming His kingship. Our personal prayers are an extension of our role in Hashem's world, a way of manifesting His will in the physical realm.

Ultimately, Rosh Hashanah is about both themes – the individual and the king. We crown Hashem not only by proclaiming His rule, but by using our physical lives to serve Him. Chana's prayer wasn't a contradiction to Eli's reprimand; it was a deeper understanding of it. Her request for a child wasn't merely about her personal desires, but about fulfilling her part in Hashem's grand design.

When we stand before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah asking for health, livelihood, happiness, or whatever other "selfish" request we bring before Hashem, we're not detracting from the majesty of the day. Rather, we're fulfilling its essence. We're asking for the tools we need to make the world a dwelling place for Hashem. May we, like Chana, have our prayers answered, and may we merit to see the ultimate purpose of creation fulfilled in our lifetimes.

• Esther Hecht is the Programme Director at Chabad of Sandton, Director of the Sandton Hebrew Club, and Director of Professional Development at Chabad of Sandton Nursery School.



On Rosh Hashanah, we stand before Hashem and ask him to fulfill our prayers, just like Chana did



Rosh Hashanah is a time for reconciliation

In the Gemara of Rosh Hashanah, our rabbis explore why we don't recite Hallel on the new moon of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah. In an answer that opens up the themes of the day, Rabbi Abbahu reminds us that Rosh Hashanah is not a day for frivolity. He exclaims: G-d is sitting on the throne of justice and opening the book of life and death and the Jewish people are reciting songs of praise around him? Rabbi Abbahu is sensitive to tone – he makes it plain that Rosh Hashanah is a time of seriousness, grave matters hang in the balance. It's not a time for the Jewish people to be having a party. However, in the Resisei Layla, the 19th century Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin makes an alternative claim. He says Rosh Hashanah is the time when we use the shofar to shift G-d from the throne of justice to the throne of compassion. He says we do this through the shofar. We usually think of the shofar as that which awakens humans to Teshuvah, but according to Rav Tzadok, the shofar plays another

The strength of a G-d-given edict

HOWARD FELDMAN

One would think that considering all the praying we are about to do over Rosh Hashanah and then Shabbat, someone might remember to ask G-d for a very slight amendment to the whole three days in a row thing.

Maybe He could consider granting us like 20 minutes between Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat for “odds and ends”. Or “miscellaneous” things. I know that my wife would use the opportunity to call the boys in Israel to check in with them. My daughter would wash her hair and, of course, check her phone. I would certainly catch up on the news, after which I would pop over to Twitter (now X) to see how many people I could annoy in record time.

Of course, this is all theory because although there are around 16 million Jews in the world, not one of them is going to remember to ask for this. And so we will, as we have done before, spend three consecutive days in isolation.

Which might not be a bad thing. It always amazed me when our children were young, and we took them to a shop, how relentless their nagging was if they wanted something like a balloon. In contrast, if they asked for a treat and we explained that it that was not kosher, the begging would stop, and the conversation would end. Somehow it was easier to accept a G-d-given edict than a parental one. One was negotiable. The other was not.

Last week, in desperation, we took some time to go to Mauritius. Ahead of the trip I made the decision to limit my phone time. I knew it was what I needed. I knew it was what we needed as a couple and that if I didn't do it, I would not achieve the benefit of the week away.

Perhaps being cocooned for three days is G-d's way of gifting us the extra time. His way of recognising that this year we could do with the extra care. So that when we emerge, we will be slightly more healed, slightly more rested, and ready to begin the year afresh.

I needn't have bothered. I didn't limit my phone usage, I tweeted the hell out of the island, got myself into all sorts of bother, and only had a break when, finally, the sun set on Friday afternoon and Shabbat began. Because the best of intentions stood not a chance when they were self-imposed.

I might be weaker than others. But I doubt it.

Which is probably why three consecutive days of *chag* and Shabbat might not be the worst thing in the world. It doesn't mean it will be easy. And it doesn't mean that by the end of the third day I won't be a wreck. But it also might be the element of the Mauritius holiday that I had denied myself. It might be the non-kosher sweet at the supermarket and not the balloon. It might be that we haven't forgotten to ask G-d for the amendment, it's just that we know we don't need it. Even if we want it.

We have all had a hard year. Unspeakably difficult in many respects. Perhaps being cocooned for three days is G-d's way of



gifting us the extra time. His way of recognising that this year we could do with the extra care. So that when we emerge, we will be slightly more healed, slightly more rested, and ready to begin the year afresh.

I wish us all a year of healing. I wish our hostages are brought home. I wish our soldiers safety, and the families of those lost, comfort. I wish us sweetness, love and fulfilment. I wish us a *Shana tova umetuka*.

• Howard Feldman writes a regular column for the SA Jewish Report and hosts the Morning Mayhem show on Chai FM.

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Dishy ways to deliver family togetherness

SHARON LURIE

Honey glazed beef with caramelised onions and julienne carrots

This meat dish is one of those dishes that isn't just packed with flavour, it's a reminder of how meat should taste on Rosh Hashanah. From the moment I start cooking, I'm immediately transported back in time, memories start flooding back, and I get to relive the warmth of family togetherness. As Oscar Wilde said, "Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us."

Ingredients

- 2½ kg brisket
- 1kg baby onions (to make peeling easier, place into a bowl and cover with boiling water for five minutes, then pour off water)
- 1 tsp crushed fresh garlic
- 1 tsp freshly grated ginger
- 3 Tbsp honey
- ½ cup chutney (hot or mild)
- 500ml red wine (merlot or cabernet sauvignon)
- 100g tomato paste
- 1 beef stock cube dissolved in one cup boiling water
- 3 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 500g carrots cut julienne style
- 1 extra-large cooking bag

Method

- Preheat oven to 170 degrees centigrade.
- Brown the meat in a large pot or large frying pan – big enough to hold the whole piece of meat – over medium to high heat on the stove.
- Place a cooking/roasting bag into a roasting dish.
- Remove the meat from pot/pan and place into roasting bag. I prefer cooking brisket in a roasting bag as it keeps the meat moist.
- To the same pot/pan used to fry the brisket – do not wash – add a little more oil, and fry the onions until lightly brown.
- Add garlic, ginger, honey, and chutney, and give it a good stir.

- Add wine, tomato paste, bay leaves, and beef stock, bring to the boil, then reduce heat to a simmer, and simmer for five minutes.
- Pour the sauce over the meat, place the carrots on the side of the meat in the roasting bag, and cover the roasting dish with tin foil. Roast for three hours, then remove the tin foil, leaving the meat still in the roasting bag, and cook for a further hour, which will allow the onions to caramelise.
- Carefully remove from the bag, slice, and place onto a serving platter with the onions and carrots on the side. Serve with rice.
- Should there be any leftovers, shred the meat, and serve it on challah the next day with mustard pickles and pickled cucumbers. If you find that there isn't enough gravy for the next day, add a little of your favourite barbecue marinade.



Cinnamon and honey infused babke

Ingredients

- 1 cup cream (250ml) or coconut cream to keep it *parev*
- 10g active dry yeast
- 2 tsp honey
- 2 eggs
- 10ml vanilla essence
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 flat tsp salt
- 4 cups all-purpose flour (level cups)
- 225g butter at room temperature (divided into four)
- 1 cup raisins (optional)

Cinnamon butter

- ½ cup soft, room-temperature butter or plant butter to keep it non-dairy
- ½ cup treacle sugar (soft brown sugar)
- ½ cup honey
- 2 heaped Tbsp cinnamon
- Pinch salt
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- Combine all the cinnamon butter ingredients.

Method

- In a large bowl – I used my bowl from my Kenwood machine as I'm going to knead it in my machine – place warm – not hot – cream, yeast, and honey into a bowl and mix. Then set aside for 10 minutes to allow yeast to activate.
- Add sugar, flour, salt, and eggs, and mix with a wooden spoon to form a "scraggly" dough.
- Using a dough hook in your machine, start kneading the dough on low speed for about five to seven minutes. This can also be done by hand.
- Add the first quarter portion of butter. After two



minutes, add the next portion of butter until you've incorporated all four portions.

- Stop machine, and scrape down sides after each butter addition. Knead for a further 10 minutes on low speed.
- The dough may be a bit sticky to touch. Don't worry, as the oil on your work surface will make it more manageable.
- Oil a work surface lightly and turn the dough out onto the oil. With the heel of your hand, shape the dough into a large single tight ball. Rub a little oil – one tablespoon – over the dough, and place it back into a lightly oiled bowl. Cover – I like to use a large plastic bag – and allow to double in size.
 - Turn dough out, and press it to deflate gently. Roll dough out lightly to form a large rectangular shape. Spread the cinnamon butter over the surface of the dough. Roll up tightly along the long side of the dough, then slice about 5cm wide and place them flat side down in a loaf pan, with the spiral facing you.
 - Depending on the size of your loaf pan, you'll probably have enough dough for two loaf tins. Cover the dough with plastic wrap, and let it proof at room temperature for about one hour or until it has doubled in size. Egg wash the babke.

- Meanwhile, preheat oven to 170 degrees centigrade. Bake the babke in the preheated oven for 30 to 35 minutes until golden brown.

Optional topping extra

Combine one cup sifted icing sugar and three tablespoons of boiling water to make a pourable icing. As you remove the babke from the oven, pour the icing over.

LAUREN BOOLKIN



Simanim salad

Some Simanim include leeks, pomegranate, gourds – any type of squash – dates, black eyed peas or green beans, beets, carrots, and a fish head. These specific foods are eaten because their Hebrew translation relates to specific blessings that convey our wishes for the coming year.

Ingredients

- 600g butternut
- 1 Tbsp sunflower oil
- 1 Tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 1 Tbsp honey plus 1 tsp honey
- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds
- 500g green beans boiled or steamed
- 150g mixed rocket and watercress leaves
- 6 baby beetroots lightly covered in olive oil
- Pomegranate seeds for garnish
- 2 Tbsp sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp rice vinegar (or red wine vinegar)
- 2 Tbsp water
- ¾ tsp salt

Method

- Preheat oven to 200 degrees centigrade, and line a baking sheet with baking paper. Slice the butternut into thin pieces, and toss with the sunflower oil, the sweet chilli, and one tablespoon of the honey. Roast until the butternut is soft and slightly charred on the edges.
- On another baking tray, roast the unpeeled beetroot until it is soft.
- Layer a large platter with the rocket and watercress, add the cooled green beans, peeled and quartered beetroot, and roasted butternut. Sprinkle on the pomegranate seeds and toasted sesame.

Dressing

- Whisk together the rice vinegar, sesame oil, the extra teaspoon honey, the water, and salt. Taste and add more salt if necessary. Drizzle on before serving. If the dressing is thick, add a little more water.

Soya honey chicken with orange quinoa

I like to cook this chicken on the braai, basting every so often with some of the reserved marinade. It works almost as well on a grilling rack in the oven. Serve it with some rice or maple orange quinoa. Chicken portions work too, as do schnitzels. In fact, the schnitzels could be sliced and added to the butternut salad for Shabbat lunch.

Ingredients

- 2 spatchcock chickens
- 1 cup honey (wipe the measuring cup with oil so the honey plops out easily)
- 4cm piece of fresh ginger
- ½ cup soya sauce or liquid aminos
- 4 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- ⅔ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 small red onion
- 2 tbsp Italian parsley

Method

Blitz all the ingredients except the chicken in your food processor. Pour three quarters of the marinade into two Ziploc bags – one for each chicken. Place the chicken into the bags, one bag per chicken, and shake it around to make sure the chicken is well coated. Marinate the chicken overnight. Braai the chickens for 45 to 60 mins until cooked through, basting every 10 minutes with the reserved marinade.



Orange quinoa – adapted from Whisk by Ami magazine

This can be made a day ahead of time.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 red onion
- 1 clove of garlic
- 2 cups quinoa
- 4 cups cold water
- ¾ tsp salt

- Zest of one orange
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- Chopped dates (optional)
- Chopped parsley
- Raisins (optional)

Method

Heat one tablespoon of the olive oil, and cook the chopped onion and garlic until translucent. Add the quinoa, and stir it into the onions. Add the water and salt. Bring to the boil, and then reduce the heat to medium. Cook until all the water is absorbed – 15 minutes. While the quinoa is boiling, whisk together the orange zest, maple syrup, vinegar, mustard, and the remaining three tablespoons of olive oil. Add to the quinoa, and garnish with chopped parsley, chopped dates (optional), and raisins (optional).

Compassion and consequences

OPINION

Music is powerful, and the high holy days are filled with majestic tunes to make the liturgy soar. There's a line from the machzor that we sing again and again throughout the high holy days. It comes from the Torah, and it's a powerful text with a powerful story to go with it.

This is the scene: Moses is up on Mt Sinai a second time. Why a second time? This after he came down with the first set of tablets, and seeing the Israelites dancing around the *egel hazahav* (golden calf), he smashed the tablets to the ground. G-d invites him back up, and explains that He plans to destroy the children of Israel. After all, what would one think when, after all the miracles of the exodus from Egypt, at the first big challenge, the absence of Moses for 40 days, they go back to idol worship!

But Moses isn't a "yes man". He challenges G-d and urges a change of mind, eventually negotiating/persuading G-d to relent and let the Israelites continue their journey to the promised land. And then Moses, seeing a possible moment, makes his most essential request, asking the Holy One to show Herself to him. A bold ask!

But G-d refuses, reminding Moses that no-one can see G-d's face and live.

That could be the end of the story, but instead, G-d nestles Moses in a cleft in the rock and protects Moses with His hand, and so Moses is allowed to see G-d's back as She passes by. And it's then that Moses hears these words,

"The eternal G-d who was, is, and will always be, a G-d compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and truth, offering love in reward for your goodness to the thousandth generation, forgiving sin, mistakes, and transgressions, and granting pardon." (Ex. 34:6)

It's one of the most powerful moments in Torah, and powerful words spoken by G-d Himself. No wonder the rabbis wanted to include them in the high holy day machzor. They are perfect inspiration for us – G-d is compassionate, slow to anger, filled with *chesed* and *emet*

Rosh Hashanah is a time to show compassion to others



(kindness and truth), granting pardon. Just what we want to hear as we stand in shul on *yom tov*.

But I'm afraid to tell you that the editors of the machzor were quite intentional here with their cut-and-paste from Exodus. You see, if you look at the Torah, the verse continues, but they chose not to include the rest. The machzor stops at the end of "forgiving sin, mistakes, and transgressions and granting pardon", but the Torah continues, "yet G-d doesn't cease from all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations". The Torah doesn't just present a totally cuddly Holy One forgiving us for anything, but insists that bad actions do bear consequences.

So why did the rabbis cut the hard stuff out of the machzor? They took out half the verse, and in doing so, changed the whole meaning of G-d's proclamation to Moses. In the Torah, G-d is filled with mercy and forgiveness, but no-one escapes the consequences of their deeds. And the rabbis cut that off!

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



In times of crisis, call a friend. At such moments, our first call is to Rashi. Helpfully, the medieval French wine farmer and rabbinic commentator resolves the apparent contradiction in this verse with the following commentary, "G-d punishes, but with compassion; G-d administers consequences, but as kindly as possible and without anger."

According to Rashi, we need to take responsibility for our actions, because although G-d is compassionate and loving, if we go astray and move away from the path that we're supposed to be on, there are consequences for our actions.

Are we supposed to be using language in a way that is hurtful, spiteful, petty, and filled with gossip? No.

Are we supposed to be living lives that are so busy, we can't carve out an island, a sanctuary in time once a week to spend with our family and community over Shabbat? No.

Are we supposed to tell jokes or stories that rely on demeaning others for their humour and interest? No.

And so, we come to shul and sing of G-d's mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. But when we study Torah, we're reminded that G-d isn't just about mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. G-d also wants us to take responsibility for our actions. If there's unfinished business between ourselves and G-d, between ourselves and other people, we need to make good and bring them to resolution, as difficult as they might be.

As we prepare for these *yom tovim*, may we allow ourselves to see through the compassionate eyes of G-d and look with love into the faces of each other. May we also be able to find the tools, the patience, and the love to repair what's broken, to make good what's still outstanding, so that we can leave shul with the final shofar blast signalling the beginning of a sweet new year for us and for all.

Shana tova umetuka.

• Rabbi Greg is one of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.

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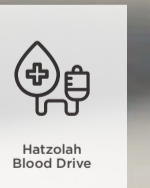
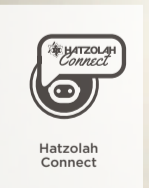
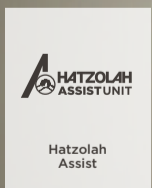
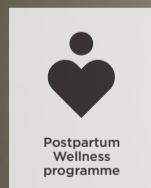
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Standing in judgement – no easy task

LEE TANKLE

At this time of year, the Jewish community around the globe is judged in the hope of being inscribed in the Book of Life, sealed on Yom Kippur. Judging can be an impossible task, however. Judges from the Jewish community explain what it takes to make a judgement that will affect someone's future.

The decision plays on a judge's mind, says Dennis Davis, a legal academic, jurist, and retired judge, who was judge president of the Competition Appeal Court between 2000 and 2020. Judges deal with different cases and so, their thought processes when making a judgement are dependent on the situation.

"In a criminal case, the consequences are different because you may be sentencing somebody to a term of imprisonment for a very long time. In a civil case, all sorts of other consequences occur," says Davis. "The thing about being a judge in all of these cases is that you know what the parties want. There's not a stream of consciousness whereby you don't know what the results should be because you have a menu of options."

Similarly, retired Judge Ezra Goldstein, who was appointed as a judge in 1987 and served until 2008, says there are two main things a judge considers, one is the law and what the law says, which means researching and listening to the arguments in court, and the other is the facts of the case.

"As a judge, you deal much more with the facts than the law," says Goldstein. "That's a big challenge – finding where the truth is."

For Goldstein, the story is the important thing.

"If a witness is lying then he won't know all the details you know about the story. The person who is telling you the truth will know all the details. So, the greater the detail, the greater the credibility," he says. "I don't believe that whether you look at the witness or not makes much difference. There is a view that you need to see the witnesses, but I think it's more what the witnesses say and the detail of their story."

Davis says the personality of a judge has an impact on a case. "Judges are human beings. We aren't infallible," he said, "If you're a high court judge, you've always got the comfort that there are courts above you that make a right to a mistake, and very often, you can't agonise beyond a certain level."

"Not every case is about the 90-10, meaning the merits are 90% on your side and only a maximum of 10% on the other side," he says. "You get what I call 50-50 cases, which are when you can see both sides of the argument, and you've got to make a call. Sometimes those are very difficult to make."

"Often you have the view that parties have the option to have security by going to a higher court. When you're in the highest court, of course, you have this advantage that you're not on your own," he says.



Judge Dennis Davis

Goldstein says he cannot agonise over whether he has made the right judgement or not, and despite the pressure he may have felt to make the correct judgement, he never does a post-mortem of a case after it has concluded.

However, Davis asserts that if there are any doubts in the judgement of a case, that

judgement can be changed by being reversed on appeal. You learn as a judge how to look at your decisions critically, he says, especially when they are taken to a higher court, and realise where you could have gone wrong.

"It's always a learning experience. You never know it all. But when you make that kind of mistake, sometimes it can be embarrassing," says Davis. "Generally, if I was overturned on appeal in circumstances whereby it was a debate, meaning they would argue that your judgement has a point but the better point is the other side, that's fine."

"Where it's incredibly embarrassing for judges is when you read a judgement on appeal and the judge got it wrong, everything was wrong," he says. "That's a shocker. Then, you have to think deeply about what it was that you got wrong so that you don't do it again, and you should be

embarrassed."

"The work is demanding and stressful," Goldstein says, "but I don't see the point of analysing the decision after it has been made. I never worry about it because I did my best, and that's it."

Both Dennis and Goldstein don't take their positions as judges lightly, and are aware that the decisions they make often change the lives of those on both sides.

"It's a big responsibility. I took it very seriously," Goldstein says. "I knew my judgements were able to change the lives of both parties, so I tried my best to reach the right decision."

For Davis, his most difficult cases were custody cases. "It isn't because they were posing complicated legal questions, rather it was because if you are asked to decide whether the father or the mother should have the child, you're making incredibly important decisions for other people's children."

Davis would ask advocates who came into his chambers in those cases how he could presume that he would know what would be better for someone's child rather than the client.

"I used to find these cases – not always, some of them are quite clear – but many of them were amazingly emotionally difficult for me to deal with," he said.

Kaluki, a game for all ages

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When we hear of people playing the card game Kaluki, we automatically assume they are Jewish. That's because, like Klaberjass, Kaluki is a game Ashkenazi Jews in Johannesburg and around the world have been playing for many decades.

In fact, it has been said that probably every Jewish child with Polish war-survivor parents knows how to play Kaluki. For example, American writer, musician and geophysicist Stuart Rojstaczer, the son of Polish-Jewish immigrants, fondly remembers playing Kaluki more than 25 years ago. He said children at the time grew up playing the game on Shabbat, even though you're not supposed to play cards then, because it was their best way to pass the time.

Kaluki has apparently been played in Johannesburg for more than 50 years. Former Joburg Kaluki teacher Shirley Baum taught it to her Rummy-playing mother and hairdresser, Andi Kerr, who followed in her own mother's footsteps by playing the game.

Kerr's mother, Pepe Tobin, played cards from the day "that my husband and I got married a long time ago. We played games like Canasta and Rummy. Kaluki wasn't in fashion then. About 20-something years ago, a friend of mine started playing Kaluki at The Links in Linksfield." The Tobins started to join in the games, and it seemingly grew in the community from there.

Over the past two years, word of mouth about the great social environment the Kaluki mornings offer at Linksfield Shul spread, and more and more players came to take part.

"We started off with about four tables in the small hall downstairs," says Sharon Sneider, who began the Kaluki mornings with Shardi Matthews as a *chesed* initiative. "Today, we fill up to 20 tables in the main shul hall and get women in their 30s right up to their 80s. So many people looked forward to a Wednesday morning, when they met their friends, that they then started to make their own games at somebody's house or at a restaurant independently."

Kerr, who has been playing Kaluki for about 15 years, says, "I think women play today just to have the experience of doing something fun, but you're not spending huge money and you're in a safe environment. People learn how to play and then find a group to play with, which you call a school, and you start playing. We become friends from it."

Kaluki is a game from the 'Rummy family'. While Rummy is believed to be a spin-off of a game called Conquian, which originated in Spain or Mexico, Air Jamaica flight attendants created and taught the original game of Kalooki (preferably spelt as Kaluki in the Johannesburg community) in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, the game is played with

different rules in different countries. Kaluki is popular in Jamaica and Britain, for instance, with Jewish players reportedly being in the majority in the latter.

As early as 2003, people in Israel have been playing Kaluki, with Telfed organising card mornings of bridge, Klaberjass, and Kaluki in Kfar Saba.

On top of this, the book *Kalooki Nights* includes a mother from a Jewish family in North Manchester with memories of the Holocaust who played Kaluki obsessively with a small circle of friends and admirers, except on high holy days.

"My friends and I can scream and shout at each other if everyone takes the card that the other one wants," says Sneider. "We yell at each other, but still love each other. We play at our home or sometimes we play at Three Roses Café near Selwyn Segal. We are experienced and can talk on the phone, eat popcorn, and drink tea while we play, and we catch up on the week's news."

Sneider formed part of a regular school with her friends for about 20 years. She took up the game as she has a flair for cards, and learnt to play it with three friends.

Kerr, who helps fundraise for Edenvale Shul through Kaluki tournaments there, got into the game as "my mom was playing about four or five times a week and, as time went on, my friends and I decided to teach each other, and we formed a school and started playing weekly".

Baum, who taught Kaluki to people of all ages prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and still plays about six times a week, says that, "It's easier than bridge and is basically seven rounds of Rummy." She taught the game to her own daughter, who was seven at the time. "The game involves getting three or more consecutive cards of the same suit."

Kaluki is played as a series of seven hands with different

qualifying criteria in each hand. The person who fares best overall wins the Pushka, a central pot in which each person puts coins to play and coins to buy additional cards, according to Sneider.

She, Baum, and Kerr have all played in tournaments, particularly at Hunters Rest in Rustenburg.

"Bernice Bloom organises a tournament once a year," Kerr says. "We play the whole weekend. The top three get prizes. I actually won this year, funny enough. We win money. We're hoping to have another tournament towards the end of the year. The buy-in to the tournament is about R500."

When Kerr plays socially, the buy-in is usually R5, and the win about R30 or R40.



Charmion Kaye, Shardi Matthews, and Sharon Sneider playing Kaluki at Linksfield Shul

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with Data Science



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Victory Park sad to see Principal Baker go

SAUL KAMIONSKY

King David High School Victory Park Principal Andrew Baker has "terribly mixed emotions" to be leaving "this very special campus" after nine years.

"I feel a big tug on my heart with great sadness," he told the *SA Jewish Report* following the school's 60th birthday celebrations. "I'm very involved with the families here at Victory Park and leaving is going to be very difficult. But at the same time, I look forward to the new challenges that lie ahead. I'm excited and a little nervous at the same time."

Baker, who is heading to Dainfern College on 16 October to serve as its executive head and high school principal, says one of his biggest achievements at Victory Park was rebuilding a large section of the school. "Previously, there were eight prefab classrooms, and we rebuilt in brick and mortar 10 new classrooms, a new art centre, and a big double classroom. That was quite a big milestone."

They also set up the Centre of Educational Excellence, where pupils go for additional help, and an educational support department, which includes a social worker, an educational psychologist, and two face-to-face support specialists.

Another of his big achievements, he says, was "securing the school again after it had been through quite a rocky couple of years prior to my arrival in 2016. We helped settle the campus and the community of King David Victory Park again."

He hopes the legacy he leaves behind is one of kindness, tolerance, and mutual respect. He has done his best to create a warm and homely environment in which scholars and teachers are respectful of one another.

Baker joined Victory Park from Redhill School in January 2016, having become acquainted with Rabbi Craig Kacev, the school's general director at the time, while sitting together on a committee at the Independent

Examinations Board.

"After six years of headship of Redhill, I felt this was an opportunity for a new challenge. As a non-Jewish head of a Jewish school, I was quite concerned about that aspect. But my concerns were very quickly allayed. The community of Victory Park really embraced me completely.

The moment I stepped onto the campus, the reception I received from the parents and family was very warm. I felt included straight away."

What further helped him integrate into the school was having been born and raised in the popular Jewish area of Sea Point in Cape Town. "My late father was a hairdresser who worked largely with the Jewish community."

One of his biggest challenges was getting to know about *chaggim*, Shabbat, and Kashrut. He was helped by the school's campus rabbi, Rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz, and Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the primary school head at the time. "They guided me very carefully into the appropriateness of the different festivals and protocols."

Mandy Gruz, deputy head of the school, describes Baker as an amazing leader, educator, incredibly special person, and inspirational mentor. "His warmth, humour, and calm demeanour helped us all get through challenging times," she says. "He believes in people and always tries to get the best out of them. Mr Baker certainly helped nurture me

and helped me grow as a teacher and deputy at the school. I will miss his advice, guidance, and decisiveness."

Barbara Wolf, who with her husband Jeffrey, has been associated with the school for many decades, said that, "He has definitely brought stability to the school, which went through a very rocky period of having a number of heads who served the school for just a year or two. We are truly sorry to see him go."

Baker matriculated at Sea Point Boys High School. "My matric class was 50% Jewish boys. After matriculating, I went to the University of Cape Town, where I studied botany and zoology for about 11 years. I then went on to do a teaching diploma, and my first teaching post was at Camps Bay High School, not far from where I grew up."

Baker was a founder of Reddam House Constantia, the very first Reddam school, opened in 2000. "In 2004, I moved to Johannesburg to St Sithians College, where I became deputy headmaster. After that, Redhill was my first headship, and that was just before coming to King David."

The role of executive head at Dainfern College tempted him as "it's more an overarching role, looking after the whole campus. I will be the de facto head of the high school, which is what I'm familiar with, and will also be looking after the nursery school and the primary school. It's a new stretch, and a new challenge, a new area of growth for me."

Baker has enjoyed many memorable moments at King David Victory Park during his nine years. "One of the highlights that stands out for me is our annual musicals, the wonderful productions that Renos Spanoudes directs every year.

"One of the sporting moments that stood out was the year we won the Pirates B league rugby. We had an evening final, a real nail-biter of a final, at Pirates Club down the road, attended by lots of students and parents," says Baker, who himself played first-team hockey at school.

Other highlights include Victory Park pupils winning the Israel Quiz, the unique way the school celebrates its matric results every year, and the exceptional matric results of pupils who came to the school from a remedial background.

In the short term, Baker will be succeeded by Gruz. The permanent successor is likely to be announced within the next month or so.

Gruz says Baker leaves a legacy of infusing the school with his warmth, optimism, and energy. "He has nurtured the Jewish ethos, traditions, and close family atmosphere of the school and has certainly left his mark. We will miss him dearly and wish him all the best as he starts his new chapter."



Outgoing principal of King David High School Victory Park, Andrew Baker

Seat of resistance: Goldreich's furniture honours activist parents

STEVEN GRUZD

It's never easy to grieve for one's late parents.

Israeli-born architect Amos Goldreich, the son of South African struggle hero Arthur Goldreich and Israeli designer Tamar de Shalit, has found a unique way to honour their prodigious life's work.

Among hundreds of other projects, Arthur designed the sets for the iconic 1950s South African musical *King Kong*, featuring Miriam Makeba. Tamar was part of the team that created the courtroom for the Nazi Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in 1961. Amos has used his parents' designs to produce a range of stylish, high-end furniture in a tribute to their love story and creativity. The new brand is called TAMART, made up from the first letters of Tamar and Arthur's names. It was named best new brand at the Monocle Design Awards, and made its international debut at an exhibition in Milan.

The British-based Amos has now opened his permanent showroom for the furniture in Shoreditch, London.

"My mom passed away in 2009, and my dad in 2011," Amos said. "The grieving process took quite a long time – 12 or 13 years. As part of it, I decided to form this company, TAMART, and the work feels like the final stage of the grieving process. It's the end of one cycle, and the beginning of another. It's a way of me honouring them and, strangely, wonderfully, it feels like I'm now collaborating with them."

Photo: Tom Mannion

Amos Goldreich with the TAMART Central Stool

This wasn't something he was able to do when they were alive.

Arthur was born in South Africa, and fought in Israel's War of Independence in 1948. He returned to South Africa, and became heavily involved in the struggle against apartheid. He rented Liliesleaf in Rivonia as a secret base for the then banned African National Congress (ANC), and moved his family there. He was captured in a police raid on the property in 1963, but managed to escape from custody with Harold Wolpe and two others. He made his way to Israel, where he settled, to become a major figure in the architecture, art, and design world in the fledgling state. He continued to work on theatre productions.

De Shalit was born and raised in Tel Aviv and studied in London, where she met Arthur. They collaborated throughout their lives. She was an accomplished designer in multiple genres including interiors, lighting, textiles, fashion, and jewellery, and also an influential interior architect.

Amos didn't know that his parents had saved their design drawings in a shed they used as a studio. After their deaths, he found more than 10 000 items, plans, and projects. Nothing was properly archived in this treasure trove, but Amos set out to preserve this vibrant collection.

"I grew up knowing about a handful of their projects," Amos said, "but I found hundreds more." It took about five years to catalogue the archive, consisting of many hundreds of drawings, sketch books, letters, photographs, and negatives.

Amos gifted the collection to the Israel Architecture Archive, which closed down recently. Amos retrieved his parents' archive and brought it by boat to him in England, where he has lived since 1993.

"The collection has value as an historical document of the formation of Israel," Amos said, "because they were very involved in the design scene from the late 1950s till the 1980s." They designed public buildings on kibbutzim, Shimon Peres's office, institutional buildings, and exclusive residential projects.

Amos hopes to sell the TAMART pieces in South Africa. "Although I wasn't born in South Africa, I have a strong connection because of my father and growing up with his story." African art ideas featured prominently in Arthur's work.

"He was excited to go back to South Africa when Nelson Mandela was released. He was given back his passport. And he was happy that Liliesleaf was to become a museum, driven by Harold Wolpe's son, Nic. But I know that the ANC had an issue with him because he chose to remain in Israel."

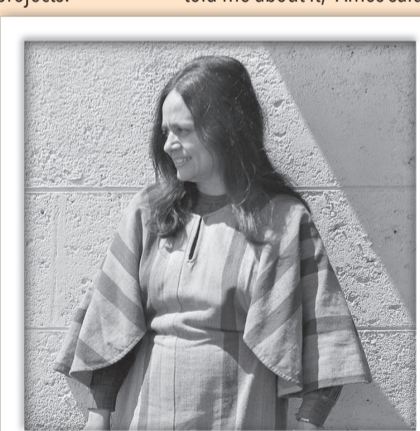
Amos fondly remembers coming to South Africa in 2011 with his half-brother, Paul, to receive a posthumous human rights award to his father from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

"Sadly and shockingly," he said, "my father worked on some of the kibbutzim in the south that were attacked on 7 October. I don't know if the public buildings survived the attacks or not."

He's been asked whether the timing of the launch might provoke adverse reactions due to the war in Gaza. "It wasn't an issue at all," he said. "We're a British brand with deep South African and Israel connections. I didn't hide this."

As a young architect, De Shalit was on the team

that designed the courtroom and all the furniture for the Eichmann trial. The notorious Nazi had been kidnapped in Buenos Aires, Argentina, by Israel in 1960, and went on trial in Israel in 1961. This mesmerising trial laid bare the horrors of the Holocaust for Israelis. The modified courtroom was in a theatre – an apt setting for a grand performance of political drama. De Shalit designed the glass booth that Eichmann sat in, facing the witnesses. "She had told me about it," Amos said, "but I had never seen the sketches, and that was kind of shocking. There is a 'top secret' stamp on them. My mother was a very private person who didn't seek the limelight. My father was the opposite."



Tamar de Shalit

An exhibition showcasing the archive was held in 2018. The idea of bringing their furniture designs to life began percolating for their son, especially during

the COVID-19 pandemic. He gave up his architecture studio to pursue TAMART full-time. "Their designs were never mass produced. They were always designed for specific projects. So it felt like an opportunity to manufacture them so the public could enjoy them."

The TAMART collection made a splash in Milan, to critical acclaim, especially with its intriguing back-story. In the initial collection of 10 pieces, eight are from Arthur and Tamar's designs, classical 1950s chairs and tables that remain in fashion, and two are Amos's original designs, called the "Highgate Chairs".

Further designs are to be released in the near future. And so, this creative family venture continues.

Rap artist speaks to unconverted about Israel

LEE TANKLE

Before 7 October, American Israeli rap artist Rami Matan Even-Esh, otherwise known as Kosha Dillz, wrote and sang love songs, but that has all changed. Now, his aim is to create art that connects people, and to try to get people to understand Israel and the Jewish people.

In the months since the Hamas attacks on the south of Israel, Even-Esh has collaborated with Jewish artists like Matisyahu, an American reggae singer, rapper, beatboxer, and musician; and Kaskade, an American DJ and music producer.

Even-Esh has released six songs since 7 October, singing about the complexities of the conflict in Israel and Gaza. One song, *Bring the Family Home (Free the Hostages Now)* has amassed 57 000 views since its release. In the chorus, he sings, “Bring the family home, we got the world sayin’/ Cry to death or can’t sleep, that’s the worst pain/ I’ll remember tonight, the night the world changed/ The lion just roared, y’all heard me.”

Even-Esh has also been travelling the world – from American college campuses, to the Olympics in Paris, to the streets of Israel – to try and get people to discuss the complexities of what’s happening in Israel and the world. He has filled his Instagram page with videos of himself engaging with anti-Israel protesters at rallies.

He spent time in Paris for the Olympic Games, where he wrote, recorded, and shot the music video for his new song, *Doomscrolling*.

“I just wanted to go out and talk to people and see what happens,” he said. “There’s a lot of spaces in the alternative art world where people are like, not only do we support Palestine, but we live in places that are nicknamed ‘Little Gaza’. There’s a lot of places that aren’t great spaces for us, but I go into these spaces knowing I can hold my own because of my career.”

For Even-Esh, releasing his music was his first reaction to the atrocities in Israel and the world’s reaction to them.

“*Bring the Family Home* was the first song I wrote after 7 October. Then I wrote a song called *Ceasefire* that was, like, sure, ceasefire, but free the hostages first.

“*With everything that’s going on, it was a check-in-on-your-mental-health type question*,” he said. “The opening lines are, ‘Jewish man is called an Aryan, but 2020, the humanitarian.’ What does it feel like when someone calls you a Nazi when your family was killed by Nazis? It’s surreal.”

Born and raised in New Jersey, Even-Esh grew up with an understanding of his Israeli roots. His parents grew up in the town of Kiryat Tivon, about 15km southeast of Haifa. As a child, he would spend summers in Israel visiting his grandparents.

When he began his rap career, he gave himself the name “Kosha Dillz” as a homage to his Jewish heritage. When people started making fun of the name, he changed it to “KD Flow”, which sounded less Jewish. Eventually in 2004, after a battle with drug addiction and being arrested, he changed his name back to Kosha Dillz.

“It just had a Jewish gangster kind of vibe. I was into all the Jewish gangsters and the Jewish guy in the Italian mob movies. At the end of it all, it was all about being a tough Jewish person,” Even-Esh said.

He said he started talking about and referencing Israel only in 2008 and 2009 when he would be in hip-hop circles and would bring up Israel to see the reaction of his peers.

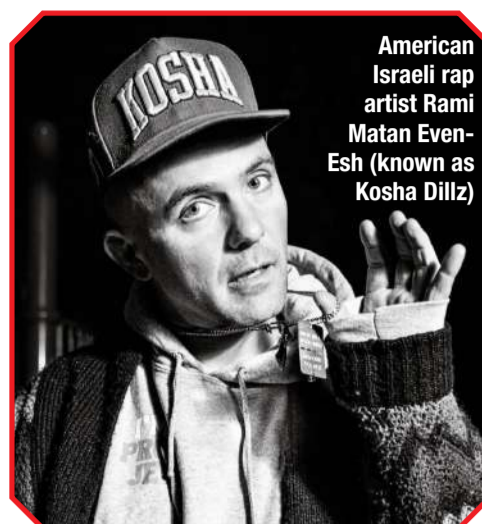
Even-Esh is the only Jewish rap artist featured on the rap television show *Wild ‘n Out*, where he can freestyle rap with others in the hip-hop community.

“Anything I do, especially in a Jewish context, needs to be high quality on an artistic

level,” he said, “so that I can get respect not only from people who are looking at the Jewish side of things, but also on an artistic level. Some people are fans just because of the Jewish stuff, they would just support you anyway. But I need to get artistic respect, make great music, and play high-level things.

“I need to be a successful songwriter, be successful in collaboration, have massive songs with big people, and have a lot of people support me because I’m a great rapper, not just because of the Jewish stuff.”

Even-Esh composed his song, *It’s Time to Have a Conversation* as a direct response to the song *Hind’s Hall* by Macklemore, a song praising the encampments of college students in support of



American Israeli rap artist Rami Matan Even-Esh (known as Kosha Dillz)

Hamas with the lyrics, “Claimin’ it’s antisemitic to be anti-Zionist; I’ve seen Jewish brothers and sisters out there and ridin’ in solidarity and screamin’ ‘Free Palestine’; with them organizin’, unlearnin’, and finally cuttin’ ties with a state that’s gotta rely on an apartheid system.”

The music video for *It’s Time to Have a Conversation* was filmed outside an anti-Israel rally in New York City. The song challenged Macklemore’s claims of genocide in Gaza, the fact that he didn’t address the need to bring home the hostages, and his overall ignorance about the subject.

Even-Esh hopes that one day, he can return to making albums about love songs.

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Police officer serves in honour of slain husband

ROLENE MARKS

"If I had an inkling of what was to come, I would never have let him go that day." These are the words of Israeli police investigator Hodaya Harush, whose husband, Eliyahu, was the first policeman to fall on 7 October in Sderot on the Gaza border.

days to come would reopen that memory. On the Thursday before Eliyahu was to start his last shift at the police station, he dropped Hodaya and their three girls off at her father's house in Petach Tikvah. He was going to collect them after Shabbat ended. They communicated via WhatsApp for the next two days, and one of the last messages Hodaya received from Eliyahu

the messages coming in. The news came in that Sderot Police Station had been taken over by Hamas terrorists. Hodaya had seen a picture of the white pick-up trucks with mounted guns on the back synonymous with Hamas that day. She tried to call Eliyahu. She sent messages. She tried another police officer, Mor Shakuri, and there was no answer from either of them. Shakuri was killed that day. Her father, Roni, was killed several weeks ago, when terrorists opened fire on a car he was in with two other officers.

for them. Two weeks later, she returned to work. "Even before they buried my Eliyahu, they came to me from the National Police Academy – I was still in training. They said, 'Listen, if you don't want to continue with the course, just tell us.'" Hodaya answered an emphatic no. "The first thing I said to them, without hesitation, was that it was Eliyahu who sent my resume. I told them, this is Eliyahu's will. Eliyahu made sure that I joined the Israel Police, and I am going to do everything possible to serve as a police officer", said Hodaya.



Hodaya Harush pointing at her husband Eliyahu who was the first policeman killed on 7 October in Sderot

Hodaya's daughter, Lia, just five years old at the time, told her that she had a dream that her father had been killed. Hodaya felt that the dots were starting to connect. The day passed without any word from Eliyahu or his whereabouts. Hodaya started to call anyone she could to try find out what happened to Eliyahu. She called hospitals, other police officers, and friends. Her heart couldn't reconcile what she knew logically, that something was wrong. She had seen that the district commander had given the order to demolish the police station and was frantic that he might still be inside.

Hodaya wrote her eulogy before she knew what happened that morning. She spoke of how he fought in Hashem's name with bravery and determination to save lives. At the funeral, two officers told her that Eliyahu had saved their lives.

Hodaya is a mother of three and still serves as an investigator at the Netivot Police Station in memory of her husband who fell in what has now become known as the "Battle of Sderot Police Station". This battle has become a seminal moment on that Black Saturday as a symbol of the heroism of Israel's police who fought valiantly against a ruthless enemy which threatened the civilians of their town.

was a sticker with the message "keep an eye out for children who don't have family". Her final words to him were, "Chag sameach."

It was at the shiva where Hodaya would find out what happened that morning. A police officer told her the events as they unfolded. Eliyahu was on shift with another officer when they received a call that there was an infiltration at nearby Zikim beach. Rockets were raining down on the south and other parts of the country. He told the officer to gear up – full gear, rifles, vest – everything. They were unaware that Hamas terrorists were already in Sderot. As the police officer exited the building, a pick-up truck arrived and opened fire. He managed to get to a nearby shelter, where he stayed for five and a half hours. Eliyahu ran out, drawing the fire to him as other officers ran to the roof where they were eventually saved. Eliyahu was the first to engage with the terrorists, and the first to fall. He saved the lives of his colleagues who managed to get to safety.

Hodaya told the SA Jewish Report that a few nights before 7 October, she had a dream. She was standing with Eliyahu's shift commander and she was crying. Hodaya tried to erase the dream from her mind, but the events of the

Saturday morning started with sirens and rocket fire. Hodaya gathered her children, and joined the rest of the extended family in the mamad (shelter). Hodaya, like most Israelis, is used to rocket fire and sirens, and tried to settle the children back to sleep. Her brother-in-law, who was also a police officer, received a message from his patrol unit and was called away. Hodaya understood that something big had happened. Hodaya, who had never broken Shabbat, opened her phone and saw

"On that Saturday, I didn't know exactly what was happening, and that uncertainty is something I wouldn't wish on anyone. His father and I ran backwards and forwards from the balcony looking for a sign of a patrol car, but none came. It was like a movie. His sister said that maybe he was hiding and without knowing, I told her, 'I know that Eliyahu would be the first to go out to defend and protect his comrades and the citizens,'" said Hodaya. "He's the first to save lives."

Hodaya has started a campaign to dedicate a Sefer Torah in Eliyahu's name: <https://my.israelgives.org/en/fundme/Harush> Ten police officers fell in the Battle of Sderot, 59 on 7 October, and 66 since 7 October.

Stop surrendering over hostages. We need a new policy

OPINION

DR EINAT WILF



Our country is being torn apart by a terrible struggle over something that doesn't really exist.

from their side, and through the mask of "negotiations" and flights to Doha and Paris, and Americans saying "right around the corner". It's clear that there really is no deal that returns all the abductees.

And instead of looking at the terrible management failure of the campaign from 7 October until today and at the determined enemy in front of us, we're tearing ourselves apart. We blame each other. The families of the abductees who are consumed by worry get bogged down in the discussion of an axis, instead of understanding that we now need leadership that will conduct a campaign and a determined policy – deeds, not talk like sand – that understands the magnitude of the hour and the threat, that won't lead us to the terrible choice between abandoning the abductees and Israeli surrender, and will produce another, new alternative.

A few months ago, one of the American negotiators in the peace process said in a closed meeting that, after 30 years, he had to admit that in fact, there was never a negotiation. According to him, "Israel offered, and Arafat said no. Israel offered more, and Arafat said no. Israel offered more, and Abu Mazen said no." And he added that, "In fact, there was never a moment when negotiations really took place in the sense that the Palestinians tried to reach an agreed and acceptable result."

The colossal failure in conducting the political, diplomatic, and military campaign led to the fact that 11 full months after the invasion and massacre by Hamas and its supporters in Israel, Hamas feels confident enough to insist on exactly the same position it presented after the invasion and massacre: full Israeli withdrawal. Hamas remains in full control of Gaza, including on the border with Egypt, and the billions that are flowing once again for "rehabilitation" – yes, exactly the same rehabilitation of every previous round. Given the lack of symmetry in the goals – this is Hamas's definition of "total victory", with all the implications of an overall inspiration to our enemies.

The enormous mistake from the beginning was to assume that the release of the abductees was contrary to the goal of destroying Hamas. It's exactly the same goal, precisely because for Hamas, keeping the hostages is a guarantee of victory, therefore subduing Hamas is the only way to release the hostages. But the destruction of Hamas relies on a combination of political and diplomatic campaigns, which, first and foremost, will make it clear that Israel has finished giving regular supplies to its enemy while at war, and that, at least on Israel's part, "nothing goes in until the hostages come out".

I add that as much as there was a negotiation during the "peace-process" years, it was conducted between the United States (US) and Israel. The US pressured Israel and Israel offered more. The US pressed, and Israel offered more. But in all these years of the so-called "peace process", we didn't really bother to find out whether the Palestinians in general accept the most basic condition for any peace solution based on two states – that is that one of the two states is the state of the Jewish people. We assumed that this was what was meant by the expression "two states", but it was only an assumption on our part. As much as this involved the internalisation of Palestinians who aren't refugees and don't have such a thing as "right of return" into the state of Israel, there was never a moment when they were really ready to accept a two-state solution with one of the two being the Jewish state.



And for those asking, until now, Hamas hasn't paid a price, certainly not one that it considers a price. Civilian casualties aren't a price, and the trained killers we eliminated are already being replaced by others. As long as Hamas controls Gaza – and Israel capitulates to bring in regular supplies to Gaza; there is complete blindness to the double game of Qatar and Egypt; and of course, American stupidity/naivety once again – it will be in a position to demand what it

This is a policy that makes it clear that Egypt and Qatar are invited to give supplies to Hamas through the border with Egypt and we won't prevent it – even if we sit on the border. We have a legal obligation to allow this, but not to do it ourselves and within our borders. As long as the enemy doesn't surrender and there's no conquest but only a continuous war, this isn't our obligation. We need a policy that works to cleanse the north of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City and pushes the population south with a clear statement that we will stop only when all the hostages are released.

That dynamic is happening again now. Apparently, there are negotiations for a deal to release the hostages, and there are outlines and stages, and the Americans are constantly pressuring the Israelis to agree to more, and Israel generally agrees, but there's really no deal from the Palestinian side. To understand this, you need to listen not to the Americans, not to our people, but to the Palestinians.

Even for those who say that this deal should be accepted with all its implications, it's not clear that it really exists either. Because as far as Hamas is concerned, the main thing is to ensure that Israel doesn't attack again and doesn't endanger its rule, and to that end, it's quite possible that it will keep hostages that allows a horrific and continuous trickle in the negotiations to ensure that Israel won't act against it. The enemy in front of us isn't stupid. It has studied Israeli society. Talk of "we'll make a deal, and then we'll do what we want in Gaza", shows that we still continue to underestimate the enemy, its determination, and its sadism.

We face a bitter enemy, which has believed for a long time that it now, finally, has an opportunity to bring to an end the insane attempt of Jews to have a sovereign state, and is working in the most brutal way towards this purpose. It's not an enemy seeking to achieve a limited goal of living alongside us in dignity or freeing a few murderers from our prisons. Faced with such an enemy, we must be no less determined.

• Dr Einat Wilf is a former member of the Israeli Knesset and the co-author of "The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream has Obstructed the Path to Peace."

Matchmaker, matchmaker – helping to find a life partner

JESSICA CONNÉ

Many in the South African Jewish community are decrying a *shidduch* (matchmaking) crisis in which single people are battling to find their *beshert* (predestined spouse).

"We're a small community, where most people think they know each other. So, people may make the decision not to go out with someone without looking into them or meeting them for themselves," said Cindy Silberg, a Johannesburg based *shadchan* (marriage broker). "This obviously applies to who people choose to date. They're looking for someone who has a similar plan, or who is already settled in the country where they want to move to."

Casey Shevel, a dating coach and matchmaker, said she didn't believe finding one's life partner was any more difficult here than anywhere else in the world. "The Israelis and Americans are complaining just as much about a *shidduch* crisis and meeting people as we are," Shevel said. "People have unrealistic expectations of what marriage is and what they're looking for in a partner. There's also a lack of self-awareness, which makes it difficult to find someone who is your equal and your partner. If you don't know who you are, or where you fit into this world, how are you going to find someone who is your equal?"

Shevel began helping couples find partners after grappling with the challenges of the dating world herself and recognising the inefficiencies in the process. "I was just a frum girl who got married at the ripe old age of 30. I hated the dating process. I found it difficult, and while I knew that there was a better way to do things, I didn't believe anyone would listen to me until I had my happily ever after."

As soon as she and her husband were married, they

began hosting singles events at their home. Their Friday night dinners grew into bigger parties. "We now host about 250 people at each of our parties," Shevel said.

The success of their gatherings sparked requests for one-on-one matchmaking, leading Shevel to take on the role of a dating coach and matchmaker and facilitating one-on-one connections. Having limited time to devote to making interpersonal connections, Shevel said she found the parties helpful in that they gave individuals a large variety of people to meet in one evening.



Shadchans (matchmakers) have helped to make the process of dating much easier for many prospective couples

Silberg said there was potentially a stigma surrounding *shidduchim* or matchmaking, with the belief that the couple didn't have control over their dating life, which isn't true. "It involves communication and consent, and you ultimately have the choice to accept or decline the introduction," she said. "Some people may also believe that *shidduchim* are for only desperate people. Seeking the help of a *shadchan* doesn't imply desperation. It's a proactive approach to finding a compatible partner."

Silberg said the role of a *shadchan* was merely to facilitate introductions and provide guidance, but the decision to marry ultimately lay with the individuals involved.

For South African Jews looking for a partner, Silberg believes it's important for those interested in taking on the services of a *shadchan* to take their questions to the *shadchan* first. She said it was important to get to community events and places to meet like-minded people. "Another approach is to establish a support network for singles within the community that can provide emotional support, guidance, and resources throughout the dating process," she said.

Outside of the formal *shadchan* services and meeting people through friends or community networking, there are also online platforms.

Ayelet Glatt, a former Bnei Akiva Cape Town *shlichah*, joined Shagririm Ba'Lev (Ambassadors of the Heart) when she moved back to Israel four years ago. The idea behind this web connector is that the best way to meet your soulmate is if someone close to you is looking out for you.

After the website spread in Israel and became successful, World Mizrahi joined the organisation to help spread it internationally. Recently, the Orthodox Union of America has also supported the website. Glatt claims it has a success rate "of an engagement every two days".

She got involved with Ambassadors of the Heart when she returned to Israel from South Africa, where she had lived in Cape Town for two years. "I got to work with a lot of talented and special young adults, and I really felt that there was a lack of options when it came to dating," she said. "Generally, in South Africa, you grow up in the circles you know, and there aren't that many other Jewish options. It's not about people being picky or choosy. When I heard that this organisation was looking

for someone to co-ordinate its activity internationally, I thought it really was what South Africa needs."

Glatt said the website looks like a "regular dating app or website, where you see profiles with details and photos of singles". However, instead of you being able to choose who you want, your friends – the ambassadors – choose from the profiles.

The website uses information supplied by a good friend whose preferences automatically generate matches. And the good friend or ambassador for the match then approves or disapproves of it.

Only after both ambassadors agree that it's a good match, will they suggest it to their friends. "The website," Glatt said, "is for anyone under the Orthodox banner – ranging from ultra-Orthodox to traditional, to formally observant. The most popular age is between 20 and 38, but you get much older singles, from divorced to widowed. All ages and backgrounds are welcome."

"Today there are more than 10 000 candidates and more than 2 400 ambassadors representing the candidates," Glatt said.

"When you're talking to someone on the other side of a traditional dating app, you don't know if they're honest, if they have given their right age, if their picture is true, or if they are even who they say they are. You get people who aren't serious, who aren't interested in dating, and sometimes who aren't relevant to you. Traditional dating apps are a hard journey until you find someone who is actually interested and serious about dating and finding the love of their life. Ambassadors of the Heart is the exact opposite, and I have no doubt it will be a significant factor in solving the *shidduch* crisis in South Africa. It would be an unbelievable solution as it would connect couples who wouldn't otherwise meet in any other way."

Having gone through the *shidduch* system herself, Shevel offers advice to those navigating the dating world. "It can be scary and lonely, and can make people feel down," she said. "It's not easy to put yourself out there, but you really just want to make sure that you're covering your bases and doing the things that are most necessary."

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1939 = R500 Up to R30 000
1949 = R400 Up to R4 000



60
1923 to 1964 = R10
1931 = R500 Up to R3 000
1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



30
1923 to 1964 = R5
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000

From heartbreak to hope – finding your way to fertility

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

For some couples, the path to parenthood is a long and difficult one. But thanks to the ever-evolving field of fertility, significantly more people are today able to welcome healthy children.

When Sherice and Garron Zlotnick began trying to conceive at the end of 2007, they could never have imagined the tumultuous journey that lay ahead. Sherice was 26 and neither she nor Garron had obvious fertility issues. “Every scan, every scope revealed that there was no reason that it took me nine years to fall pregnant with my daughter,” says Sherice.

Years of visits to fertility specialists, multiple rounds of artificial insemination, and trying alternative medicine, didn’t work. A later in vitro fertilisation (IVF) cycle was ultimately cancelled due to breakthrough bleeding.

“By the end of 2014, I was in a very bad place,” Sherice says. Feeling like the talk of the town, she found a fertility clinic outside the community and did a round

of IVF. While yielding viable embryos, it was unsuccessful. In mid-2016, she tried again and out of the three frozen embryos implanted, one took. To their delight, their daughter Eliana was born in May 2017.

A year later, the Zlotnicks began trying everything to conceive again, but to date have not been able to. “I always thought I’d have a big family,” says Sherice. “I face triggers all the time. It’s coming to terms with the fact that your right as a woman to choose how many children you want has been taken away from you.

“It’s a harrowing journey and it’s taken a huge toll on me. Yet through all the embryo transfer losses, the fact that Eliana stuck is unbelievable. She’s the biggest miracle walking around on planet earth.”

Dr Lawrence Gobetz, a reproductive medicine specialist and a medical director at Vitalab, a centre for assisted conception, says that, “If you’ve had unprotected intercourse for a year and you’re not pregnant, we define this as infertility.”

In general, 86% of patients will be pregnant in the first six months of trying, whereas only 4% will fall pregnant during the next six months, says Gobetz. An important factor, however, is the woman’s age. “Once you’re over 35, or even just in your 30s, don’t wait more than six months without conceiving to consult a fertility specialist.”

While a third of fertility problems can be

attributed to the woman, another third affect the male, and the final third is a combination of the two, says Gobetz. That’s why couples who battle to conceive should consult a fertility clinic rather than a gynaecologist.

While it’s not necessarily the solution for everybody and does not have a 100% success rate, IVF can greatly increase a couple’s chances of conceiving. IVF involves combining eggs



Garron and Sherice Zlotnick with their daughter Eliana

and sperm outside of a woman’s body, creating an embryo, which is then implanted in the uterus. If a woman’s uterus is compromised, a surrogate can be used to carry the foetus, which comes with numerous legal and halachic ramifications. The same is true of donor eggs or sperm.

While the worldwide incidence of infertility remains fairly steady, says Gobetz, the average age of women who want to start a family is increasing.

Freezing one’s eggs is an option. “Ideally you should be freezing your eggs in your mid to late 20s and not waiting,” says Gobetz. “If, at 45, you use the eggs that you froze when you were 25, your potential to conceive will be what it was when you first put those eggs in the freezer.”

The older you are, the less viable eggs you’ll be able to produce, says Gobetz. “Older eggs ultimately either don’t fertilise, or give rise to genetically abnormal embryos that either have no potential to implant or they miscarry. Then, to conceive, those patients have to use donor eggs, which ignites numerous halachic and emotional issues.”

“The chances of having an ‘aneuploid’, which can result in a child with serious or fatal chromosomal abnormalities, increases as a woman gets older,” says Adele Kazilsky, the chief executive officer of FutureGen Laboratories, the only lab in South Africa that

specialises in reproductive genetics. “We test embryos during an IVF treatment before they are reimplanted to make sure that we can optimise the genetic health of the unborn child.”

This testing is called PGT-A (Preimplantation Testing for Aneuploidies) and it looks for chromosomal abnormalities like Down’s

Syndrome. “If such issues are found, we will notify the fertility clinic, and they will exclude those embryos from implantation.”

Among their many other offerings, FutureGen is now providing carrier screening for the first time in Africa. This test is a proactive screening before you start your reproductive journey. The test scans up to 600 genes and can identify any potential genetic illnesses that may be harmful if passed on to the next generation. “Before you even start your fertility journey, know your reproductive genetic profile and health status,” says Kazilsky. “It’s a simple saliva test – a once-off test for life.”

“We can never guarantee a healthy baby, or that a spontaneous genetic defect won’t happen to the child during pregnancy. You’re as good as what you test, but today you can mitigate your chances of an unhealthy pregnancy and an unhealthy child in a much bigger way. The rate of healthy pregnancies has increased because of genetic testing.”

FutureGen Laboratories is also partnering with Jewish fertility fund Malka Ella, which will provide funding where needed to assist any Jewish person with carrier screening testing.

Founded more than 22 years ago, Malka Ella funds fertility treatment for married Jewish couples and provides them with emotional and spiritual support throughout the process. “Malka Ella was started in response to our personal fertility journey,” said one of the founders, Suzanne Sackstein.

“After being so grateful to have had children, I realised that there are many other couples in this situation and it’s often a very expensive, lonely, and hard journey.” Treatments range from around R80 000 to R250 000, she says, which is why there’s such a need for financial support for those not on top-tier medical aid plans.

• Visit malkaella.co.za for more information.

Starmer pledges to build Holocaust memorial and expand Holocaust education across UK schools

JACKIE HAJDENBERG – JTA

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced a new initiative to expand Holocaust education across British schools, and says the government will build a long-promised Holocaust memorial next to Parliament.

Starmer made the pledges at an event with 500 guests, including British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, hosted by the United Kingdom’s Holocaust Educational Trust. Starmer cited declining participation in Holocaust Memorial Day events as well as a rise in antisemitism following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war last year.

According to the Community Security Trust, which monitors antisemitism, incidents in the United Kingdom more than doubled in the first half of this year compared with the same period in 2023.

“You know, every year we say never again,” said Starmer. “Yet on 7 October, more than 1 000 people were massacred by Hamas for the very same reason: because they were Jewish. We say never again, and yet in the last year we’ve seen record levels of antisemitism right here in Britain. Hatred marching on our streets, the pulse of fear beating in this community.”

Starmer became prime minister in July, winning a landslide victory for his Labour Party after 14 years of Conservative rule. He took over Labour from former party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who faced repeated accusations of antisemitism. Starmer, whose wife, Victoria, is Jewish, worked to rid the party of antisemitism when he took its helm.

“We will fight this with everything we’ve got,” he said. “Just as I fought to bring my party back from the abyss of antisemitism, I promise you I will do the same in leading the country.”

Efforts to establish a British national Holocaust memorial have been underway for a decade. But the plans have been met with objections ranging from concerns about landscaping issues to concerns about overplaying Britain’s role in the rescue of Europe’s

Jews during the Holocaust.

“We will build that national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and build it next to Parliament, boldly, proudly, unapologetically,” Starmer said. “Not as a Jewish community initiative, but as a national initiative – a national statement of the truth of the Holocaust and its place in our national consciousness, and a permanent reminder of where hatred and prejudice can lead.”

Starmer said that Holocaust education would become mandatory in schools.

“First, the Holocaust will remain in the curriculum come what may,” he said. “And second, even schools who do not currently have to follow the national curriculum will have to teach the Holocaust when the



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the Holocaust Educational Trust’s annual appeal dinner on 16 September

Photo: Screenshot

new curriculum comes in. For the first time, studying the Holocaust will become a critical, vital part of every single student’s identity. And not just studying it – learning from it too.”

As part of the new initiative, pupils “should have the opportunity to hear a recorded survivor testimony”.

In addition, Starmer said his government would continue funding the Holocaust Educational Trust’s Lessons from Auschwitz programme, which sends students to Poland to visit the concentration camp, to the tune of nearly \$3 million (R51.9 million) next year.

He also pledged to encourage students to meet with survivors or interact with them using virtual reality, and said he would travel to Auschwitz personally.

“I know there is nothing quite as powerful as seeing it for yourself,” he said.

King David tops football league

The King David Linksfield Under-16 soccer team is the newly crowned champion of the Johannesburg Boys Football League after beating Roosevelt High School 4-2 in the final, which took place on Thursday, 12 September at Reddam House Bedfordview. The tournament started in July, with the team having to play catch-up games due to the tournament starting during the school holidays. Jake Orbach received the player of the match award in the final.



The King David Linksfield Under-16 soccer team who won the Johannesburg Boys Football League

In My Pocket project addresses refugees

Herzlia Weizmann Primary School in Cape Town launched the In My Pocket project in November 2023, followed by Herzlia Highlands, the four

King David schools in Johannesburg, and Sinai Academy and Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School in Cape Town.

Established the same year in primary schools and public libraries in Australia, the project is a two-hour book reading

and art workshop about Dorrit Sim’s inspiring story of being on the Kindertransport at the age of seven. It addresses the current issues of refugees and displaced people with themes of kindness and inclusivity. Each participating student receives their own free In My Pocket mini book.

Funding for the project for Herzlia was provided by the Eric Samson Legacy Fund, and for King David by King David alumni.

Sessions for educators were also held at the Cape Town and Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centres.



King David Primary School Victory Park students holding the pockets they painted

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Godwin writes about exile and goodbyes

Zimbabwe-born author and journalist **Peter Godwin** has just brought out his latest book called *Exit Wounds – A Story about Love, Loss and Occasional Wars*. The SA Jewish Report caught up with him soon after his latest memoir was launched.

In your second book, *When the Crocodile Eats the Sun*, you wrote about your father's revelation about being a Holocaust survivor and how his family were killed in Treblinka. What impact did that have on you?

Well it didn't change my *lived* life up to that point – I was already middle-aged by then – but it changed my perspective on my lived life. And it helped to explain my father, his depression, why he was somewhat distant, and why he never really talked about his family or his background.

At 15 he had been sent to England for the summer holidays to learn English and was supposed to return to high school in Warsaw in early September. But it was 1939. When Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September, my father couldn't get back, and his family couldn't get out, and he never saw them again. He eventually joined the Free Polish Army and had a very active war. He stayed on in England and met my mother when they were both students in London. At that point he was still openly Jewish, and she was from a rather posh Church of England family who disapproved of their relationship. After they married, he Anglicised his name, and they emigrated to Africa. He hid his Jewish identity from us, his children, until right at the end of his life, when he, in effect, reintroduced himself to us.



Peter Godwin and his sons in the United States

As a journalist, did you do research into what happened to your father's family? If so, what did you find out? Do you perhaps have any remaining Jewish family who survived the Holocaust? If so, what do you know about them, and have you tried to connect with them?

One of the first things my father asked me to do when he revealed his Jewish background to me, was to do a Red Cross search on his family members who had been killed in Treblinka. But, like for most people killed in Treblinka, there were no records of their deaths. However, we do have a few relatives, in Poland, in France, and in America. I contacted them, and I visited them.

I was eastern European correspondent for *The Times* in London in the 1980s, covering the rise of Solidarity in Poland – and had no idea at the time that I had any Polish heritage. My father drew up family trees from memory, and told me about his history, but it was obviously hard for him as he had kept it all a secret for 50 years. He knew I would write about it, and I had

his permission to do so. And I did, in *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*.

What have you told your own children about their Jewish heritage?

They are a quarter Jewish, and they understand that. It is incorporated into their identity, though they grew up in the complex cross-cultural mosaic of New York City.

As for most of us, your parents left scars. How did that impact on you becoming a parent yourself, if at all?

I found that it left me wanting to be a hands-on parent, to have a close relationship with my boys as they grew up, and by and large, I did. Often, you are tempted to try to become the parent you wish you'd had. But a friend of mine, a paediatric psychiatrist, warned me: parent the child you've got, not the child you were. Which is good advice, I think.

It took you a long time to return to writing another book. Why?

Stuff happened. My mother died, my marriage collapsed, the COVID-19 pandemic. Life intervened, you could say!

What drew you to writing about "emigres, exiles, and refugees"?

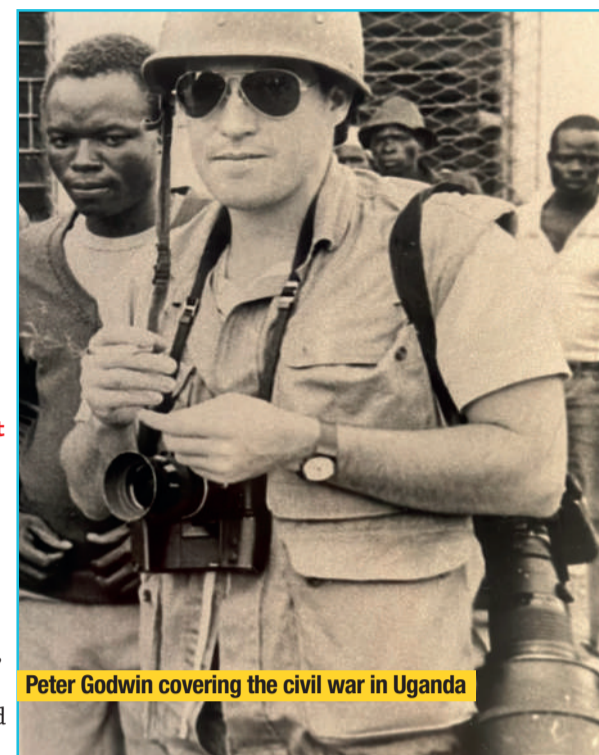
Well, I feel like an exile myself. I have lived in many places, on three continents, Africa, Europe, and America – a double-dipping *soutpiel* – and the experience made me interested in the themes of identity, family, and home. What it means to "belong". Almost anywhere I go, people ask me, "Where are you from?"

You give so much of yourself in your books, giving people information about you – with such vulnerability – that one rarely normally finds out about another person. Why did you choose to do that, and has it affected your life?

I think that – counterintuitively – the universal resides in the detail. My challenge in the past, in writing about southern Africa, was to write for two different readerships: southern Africans, who are familiar with what I describe, and those from somewhere like America, many of whom would find it difficult to find Zimbabwe on a map. How to write in a way that doesn't bore one or bewilder the other? My goal is to write well enough about the detail that aficionados get the thrill of recognition, while painting a detailed enough word picture for strangers to be able to imagine it. While this new book is set mostly in America and the United Kingdom, the spirit and essence of southern Africa infuses every page.

How do you feel about Zimbabwe now?

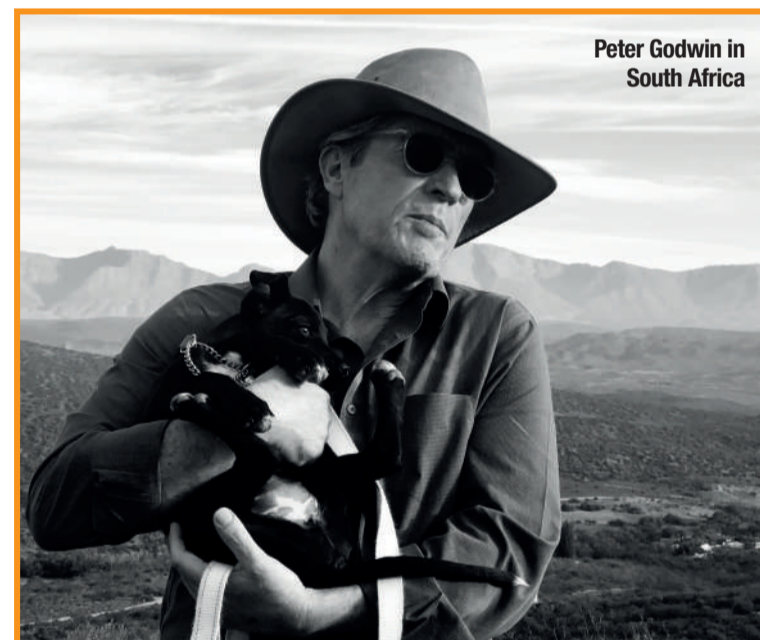
Just sad, really. Flat. I spent much of my adult life, first as a human rights lawyer, then as a journalist, trying to support democracy activists in Zimbabwe. And we are no nearer to it being a democracy. I don't think I helped to move the needle at all. That Zimbabwe's considerable potential has been wasted is tragic.



Peter Godwin covering the civil war in Uganda

What drew you to writing *Exit Wounds* now? What do you hope readers will take from it?

This is my most interior book. It's a kind of accounting, a reflection. It is, I hope, both funny and sad. But ultimately uplifting, I think. In the end I'm struck by how privileged we are to be alive, by the ecstasy of existence. The book is many things: an extended farewell to my mother, an examination of memory, a celebration of diversity, a love letter to New York. It is full of motifs drawn from natural history: bird migration, plant propagation. And



Peter Godwin in South Africa

poetry too. My mother in old age was suddenly able to declaim the poems of her childhood.

What inspired the title, *Exit Wounds*?

It was a training course on hostile environments and battlefield first aid that I was sent on when I worked for the BBC. One of the classes was taught by a Royal Marines combat doctor who described in excruciating detail, with accompanying slides, the way that a bullet kills you. That once it hits you, it tumbles, so that it's not usually the entry wound that kills you, it's the exit wound. The book bears an epigraph by Dickens: 'Life is made of ever so many partings welded together.'

What are you doing now, other than writing books?

I teach at university, and occasionally I still commit to journalism. But writing books is mostly what I concentrate on now.

What can we expect from you next?

I think I'm done with memoirs! I'm planning to write a novel next.

• *Exit Wounds – A Story about Love, Loss and Occasional Wars* is available at all leading physical and online book stores.

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No fury like a mother scorned

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman



Adriaan Basson, News24 editor, is fortunate that my mother is no longer alive. So too is "Hogarth" who crowned me "Mampara of the Week" in the latest edition of the *Sunday Times*. Especially Hogarth, as they not only insulted her favourite son, but called into question her parenting skills by suggesting that perhaps I am such a "Mampara" because she didn't play enough games with me when I was a child.

She would not have been impressed at all. My mother was the parent who would walk up to the teacher's table at parents' evening and open with "Isn't Howard too wonderful?" before explaining to the teacher how fortunate they were to have had an opportunity to educate me. In case the teacher took it for granted. She was the mother who when I was in Grade 4, went to the principal's home, stormed into his bedroom and beat him over the head with a pillow because he hit me with a belt in front of the school (it was brutal back then). She was the mother who taught me to see the positive and to know, without a shadow of a doubt, that if she and G-d were on my team then the result was guaranteed.

She was formidable on earth. It's hard to imagine what she is capable of from up above now that she has G-d's ear.

My week ended very differently to how it began. Desperate for a break from the madness of the last 11 months, my wife and I decided to take a week off and spend it in Mauritius. What we couldn't have known was that Israel was about to launch an outrageous attack on Hezbollah operatives by detonating their communication devices.

I was genuinely blown away (if you would excuse the expression) and I tweeted so. I don't believe that I glorified violence or that I celebrated death, but I did voice my awe. Within a few hours I had

received an email from Basson saying that News24 could no longer be associated with me. Africa4Palestine was quick to issue a press statement supporting News24's decision to get rid of me, especially considering that I am an "unrepentant and belligerent Zionist".

My mother would not have been impressed. The *Sunday Times* missive was so short it was almost insulting. Surely, at a minimum, they could have given more coverage to my mother's son. They could have promoted the piece and made sure not to have lost an estimated 340 000 of their 400 000 customers.

Basson is fortunate that he lives in the Western Cape. Were that not the case, and she was still alive, he would have found himself at a Shabbat dinner in no time at all. The poor man would have stood no chance as he would have been over-fed, watered, and lectured on the history of the family and of Jews simultaneously. He would have left humming the tune *Shalom Aleichem* and pondering if it was possible to erect an *eruv* around Stellenbosch.

Alive or not, my Jewish mother left me with a gift. A precious inheritance that she and others like her have bestowed on us all. They have taught us the real meaning of resilience and strength. They have taught us how to stand up as a Jew when there are those who work so hard to push us down. They have taught us when to celebrate, when to feed, and that when all else fails, to bash someone over the head with their bedding.

They have taught us that so long as Jewish mothers exist in this world, those who try and silence us stand no chance.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Jewish voices being stifled in SA

ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner



Over the past week our community has witnessed a number of events that have shown a level of hostility to Jewish voices that differ from the mainstream narrative.

Firstly, following the pager and walkie-talkie bombings on Hezbollah, fellow *SA Jewish Report* columnist Howard Feldman shared a tweet that was interpreted by News24 as endorsing violence, leading to the termination of his column. While we respect the right of independent media outlets to decide their staffing policies, we find this decision both harsh and hypocritical in its application of a double standard.

News24 previously published an opinion piece by Ronnie Kasrils justifying the indiscriminate killing of civilians during the 7 October attack. The piece glorified violence, the indiscretion Feldman was accused of. This inconsistency is alarming and reveals a troubling double standard. Such actions, by a major media platform, point to a growing intolerance towards Jewish voices, particularly in relation to the Middle East.

The narrowing space for discourse was further underscored when pressure applied by the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign led to Constitution Hill cancelling its hosting of a conference titled "Narrative Conditions Towards Peace in the Middle East", organised by the New South Institute.

The event was intended to foster dialogue, bringing together diverse perspectives for a critical examination of the Middle East narrative in academic spaces. While we may have deep disagreements with and, frankly, concern regarding some of the viewpoints represented at the conference, the decision by Constitution Hill to capitulate to BDS's bullying tactics is deeply problematic and reflects a disturbing trend where debate and free expression are censored to appease anti-Zionist agendas.

Further compounding this hostile climate, *City Press*

editor Mondli Makhanya published an article titled "SA's Jews must draw a red line". Its central thesis was that the Jewish population was once a producer of many anti-apartheid fighters, yet our community has become "unremitting" in its support for Israel, which Makhanya labels a "genocidal regime". He then called on the South African Jewish community to sever its support for Israel, referencing the recent attack on Hezbollah.

Makhanya's article is incorrect on two major grounds. Firstly, it's hypocritical in its call for only the Jewish community to distance itself from the actions of an external player. Certainly, the Muslim Judicial Council would never be asked to distance itself from Bangladesh over the Islamic country's persecution of Hindus, or to renounce Hezbollah, which, only two months ago, indiscriminately bombed a soccer field, killing 12 Israeli children.

Secondly, the article grossly misrepresents Hezbollah, portraying it as a benign actor when, in fact, it is a terrorist organisation responsible for countless rocket attacks on civilians and with a history of violent terrorism internationally.

Calling out a single population group and demanding that it changes its political or conscientious standpoint is blatantly bigoted. It's akin to saying that only Jews whom the writer deems palatable are acceptable in South Africa, and, in this Heritage Month, deeply endangers the fabric of our multiracial society.

As this will be my last column before Rosh Hashanah, I wish all readers, and the community as a whole, a *Chag Sameach* and a *Gmar Chatima Tova*. I hope that the new year will bring peace, and the safe return of our hostages.

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

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

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Better Together. Stronger Together.

Our goal is to support, strengthen, and nurture our community and its connection with Israel through the collaborative philanthropic and professional efforts of our dedicated organisations. Our teams work tirelessly to ensure the protection and continuity of the values, culture and traditions of the South African Jewish community.

The threats and harassment of global Jewry post October 7 have also impacted the South African Jewish Community. Our four communal organisations have united in a fight back campaign that has challenged the hostile narrative conveyed by the ANC and has ensured that Jewish life has continued to thrive in our country. We did this by uniting and making sure that we are 'Better Together. Stronger Together'.

Help the United Communal Fund to provide the resources for this pivotal work.

SAJBD

Taking on the government, political parties, the media, universities and civil society, we have ensured that the rights of South African Jews have been upheld and that antisemites are held to account.

SAZF

We are the bridge between the South African Jewish community and Israel. As proud and vocal supporters and defenders of Israel in South Africa, we ensure our community remains strong and protected. We've been at the forefront of advocating for and defending Israel in public, in the media, and in the political arena, amidst a hostile political and media climate.

SAUJS

Supporting Jewish students on campus to ensure that they feel welcome, included and that there are 'safe spaces' for them at South African Universities where they can express their Judaism and their connection to Israel.

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Creating and building relationships with the Christian Community and developing joint solidarity initiatives for Israel. Holding regular solidarity church events, rallies, protests and Yellow Fridays.



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