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SA expats strong after Amsterdam pogrom

TALI FEINBERG

"As Jews, we don't feel safe in Amsterdam and Europe. We already hide our Jewish symbols, and many of us are thinking about moving somewhere safer for Jews," a Jewish South African expat living in Amsterdam told the SA Jewish Report on 8 November, the morning after Israelis were brutally attacked on the streets of Amsterdam. She asked not to be identified, fearing for her safety in the aftermath of what experts and world leaders have described as a pogrom.

The violence occurred in the aftermath of a Europa League match between local team Ajax and Israel's Maccabi Tel Aviv. The day before the match, Israeli fans reportedly chanted provocative anti-Palestinian slogans and tore down a Palestinian flag. After the match, on the night of 7 November, there were numerous attacks on Maccabi supporters. Footage showed masked men seeking out, chasing down, and beating Maccabi fans and others whom they suspected were Jews.

Witness accounts and screenshots show that the attacks were a pre-planned "Jew hunt". Fans were targeted, and asked if they were Jewish or to show their passports. The attacks sparked further unrest a few days later, as hooligans set an empty tram on fire on 11 November. A partial state of emergency was declared in Amsterdam and the surrounding area, giving police the right to carry out stop-and-search operations. Extra police were drafted, security stepped up at Jewish buildings, and protests banned.

"When I heard that Israel was sending rescue planes on Friday, I was lost for words," says Andy Golding-Dickinson who, like all the South African Jewish expats who spoke to the SA Jewish Report, lives in Amsterdam.

"I grew up knowing that when Israel sends planes to come get you, you ask no questions, you just go. When I heard that was happening here, it felt like the bottom dropped out of my world for a few moments. This incident will make me think twice about wearing a Magen David or placing a mezuzah on my door. I wonder if I will ever again feel comfortable to do those things without a second thought," Golding-Dickinson says.

"Since 7 October, I've felt increased concern for my safety, and these events have only heightened that feeling," says Georgina Katz. "Living here has brought reminders of the Holocaust into sharper focus. I'm deeply proud of my Jewish heritage, and want to show more visible support for Israel and Judaism, but right now, I don't feel secure enough to do so."

Tanya Kovarsky says though her children went to school on 8 November, "more security was put in place by the Dutch military and security personnel. I was sad and horrified by the attacks. What struck me was

the Amsterdam Jewish community rallying to help any Israelis in need – whether by offering their homes for safety, lifts out of problematic areas, or mobilising assistance to where it was needed."

Golding-Dickinson woke up on the morning of 8 November to messages and calls from family and friends all over the world.

"Ever since 7 October, I've been more cautious about my safety and conscious about 'public Judaism'," she says. "The extreme protest action and outpouring of misplaced hate that we have seen in Amsterdam and other places really breaks my heart."

Golding-Dickinson says she feels fortunate "to live in a very Jewish area". Though she's not observant, "on Shabbat morning, I walked past the shul because I wanted to see if there was more security than usual. I saw a father and his sons going to shul, but in place of kippot they wore caps, and their tallis bags were inside conventional shopping bags. This scene hurt me – the

fact that they felt the need to conceal their Judaism. My grandparents and great-grandparents lived through this, must we now do so too?"

"As a Jew who is a descendant of Holocaust survivors, living in Europe and particularly in Amsterdam, where two-thirds of the Jewish population was wiped out, it feels important to be here and to practice Judaism here, so the aftermath of Thursday's pogrom was extremely saddening," she says. "I greeted the father and sons with a warm 'Shabbat Shalom!' and their smiling response reminded me why I love being a Jew and being part of this community."

The pogrom "reminded me that there's so much misplaced hate around me", says Golding-Dickinson. "It has definitely made me wary of large groups of the population here, and extremely wary of ride-share apps and their drivers," she says, in light of revelations that drivers played an active role in the pogrom.

"There was a strong response from the government after the attacks, so I don't think there's any ongoing risk to anyone. We all hope that they can protect us and ensure that those responsible are held accountable," Kovarsky says. "My perspective hasn't changed because of these events. I know that just like in many places, antisemitism exists here. What makes me positive is the strong sense of camaraderie within the Jewish community. There has also been a strong reaction from other communities against the attacks, which is heartening."

Katz says when she moved to Amsterdam, "I was cautious about being open about my Jewish identity. For example, while it's typical here to display your full name on your front door, I chose to use only my initials, concerned that my Jewish surname might make me a target. After recent events, I'm even more grateful for that decision."

Following 7 October, Katz adjusted her Uber profile to avoid disclosing her

Looking back to look forward



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

UK Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis and South African Jewish Board of Deputies President Mary Kluk peruse the artwork of local Jewish icons at the Board's 120th anniversary dinner this week

See story on page 4

Continued on page 4>>



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Trump taps evangelical Christian for Israel ambassador

President-elect Donald Trump named Mike Huckabee as his ambassador to Israel, picking an evangelical Christian who favours Jewish sovereignty in parts of the West Bank and who, if confirmed, would be the first non-Jew to fill the role in 13 years.

"Mike has been a great public servant, governor, and leader in faith for many years. He loves Israel, and the people of Israel, and likewise, the people of Israel love him. Mike will work tirelessly to bring about peace in the Middle East," Trump said on announcing the appointment on 12 November.

The nomination may be seen in Israel as a boost for long-delayed plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to annex parts of the West Bank. In 2008, Huckabee said, "There's really no such thing as a Palestinian." In his run for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, Huckabee said he saw the West Bank as an "integral part" of Israel, and vowed to back settlement expansion there.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's far-right national security minister, tweeted Huckabee's name alongside images of the American and Israeli flags with a heart emoji between them. Bezalel Smotrich, the far-right Israeli finance minister whose portfolio includes West Bank settlements, has in the wake of Trump's election victory launched plans to annex parts of the territory, though former Trump administration officials have reportedly warned that the incoming



Former Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee

Photo: Spencer Platt - Getty Images

president may not support annexation.

Christians United for Israel (CUFI), the pre-eminent evangelical pro-Israel movement, welcomed the pick. "There's no better person to represent the American people in Jerusalem at this time," said Sandra Hagee Parker, the chairperson of the CUFI Action Fund. "Governor Mike Huckabee believes in Israel's right to self-determination and defence, not because it's politically convenient but because these are immutable tenets of his core beliefs."

J Street, the liberal Jewish Middle East policy lobby, said the pick portended a turn away from peace making. "The

mask is off," its president, Jeremy Ben-Ami, said. "This announcement is further proof that 'pro-Israel' for Trump is totally disconnected from any concern for Jewish values, safety, or self-determination."

Ben-Ami urged the outgoing Biden administration to take action in its lame-duck session to mitigate the changes coming. "Biden has a narrow window of opportunity to blunt the impact before he leaves office. He must use it," he said.

A pastor by training who frequently leads evangelical Christian tours of the country, Huckabee once described his relationship to the country as "not so much political as it is visceral, personal".

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Love, light, and faith



Rabbi Gavriel Abramson Sandton Shul

What a privilege it was to be among the hundreds who came out in support of the event hosted by the Jewish National Fund and The Base Shul at Sandton Shul last week to honour and support freed hostages Moran Stella Yanai and Noa Argamani!

These two incredibly brave women inspired the South African Jewish community. I was overcome with humility and awe, not only from hearing the details of their harrowing ordeal – which no-one should ever have to endure – but by witnessing their courage and tenacity to raise awareness of the 101 remaining hostages through a message of love, light, and faith. From where does this inner strength and powerful resolve to motivate people originate? The resilience of ordinary people, just like you and me, doing extraordinary things to make a difference in the world around us?

Our recent Torah readings have returned to the narrative of our first patriarch, Abraham, and his life partner, our matriarch, Sarah. The Mishnah (Avos 5:3) teaches that Abraham endured 10 defining challenges. Through these tests, he revealed to Hashem, to the world, and to himself his strength of character. All the commentaries agree that one of these 10 major trials was the call to Abraham to leave the comfort of his land, birthplace, and father's home to teach the world the concept of monotheism. This was done together with the values of kindness and compassion, for which Abraham and Sarah would become renown. Most commentaries explain that this was, indeed, the first of his 10 tests. However, Rashi reminds us that before Abraham was charged

with revolutionising the world, his formative years included two major challenges. His pagan nemesis, King Nimrod, placed a bounty on Abraham's head, forcing him to hide underground for no less than 13 years in fear. Eventually, he was captured and tormented until he was flung into a burning furnace from which he was miraculously spared. Only then, says Rashi, did the task of influencing the world for good begin. They were faced with extraordinary challenges. In spite of, or perhaps because of their ordeals, they understood the importance of inspiring the world with a message of peace, love, and faith, bringing the light of morality and dignity to a world steeped in suffering and chaos.

These are our forebears. This is the Jewish heritage from which we descend. Our spiritual DNA comes from Abraham and Sarah, who passed it on to Isaac and Rebecca, then to Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, and the 12 tribes of the Jewish people, eventually reaching us. We're the nation in this world still charged with the mission of teaching love where cruelty dominates. We're the people who bring righteous values and morals to a world beset by vindictive malice, motivated by selfish gain at the peril of others.

Moran and Noa left me feeling proud and inspired to be part of *am Yisrael*, to have brothers and sisters who can, like our ancestors, find the inner determination to light up the world from the depths of darkness.

Torah Thought

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Board sues Cape politician for toxic hatred

TALI FEINBERG

"Jews have been trying to take over the world for thousands of years. This is why they have been kicked out of 109 countries over 1 000 times. This is why people write entire books calling out Jews in ancient times, medieval times, and modern times. Not Zionists. Jews."

This statement, accompanied by an image of a Barmitzvah boy reading from the Torah, was tweeted by local extremist Mehmet Vefa Dag on 11 November, on the day he was officially served papers by the Equality Court on charges of hate speech.

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) is taking Dag to court for a plethora of antisemitic social media posts disparaging Jews.

"Jews have ruined SA"; "Jews are looting SA"; "Jews are dogs, they should be burned"; and "One hundred thousand Jews control the entire economy of South Africa," are some of the statements that Dag made on X, all just in July 2024. On 2 August 2024, he said on X,

"Jews, your ancestors came to this country [South Africa] as refugees and robbed the whole country. Now take your bags and go to Israel. Don't let me lose my coolers."

"Dag's comments and posts are toxic, blatant, antisemitic, and unapologetic hatred, reminiscent of Nazi Germany," says Cape SAJBD Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson. "This isn't only deplorable in an historical context, but unconstitutional and completely

unacceptable in a South Africa which places such high value on equality, enshrined in our Constitution.

"The Cape SAJBD refuses to tolerate this in any form," she says. "Dag claims to be the leader of a political party which presumably has some membership. Therefore, he's representative of these members and may influence their decisions. Dag's comments can – and perhaps are designed to – incite violence and influence those around him to act on the lies he spreads."

Also in July, Dag tweeted, "The fact that the Jews publicly attacked Christians at the opening of the Olympics yesterday [possibly referring to a Christian scene in the opening ceremony] is proof of how dangerous the Jewish faith is for all people of the world. It is time to stop the cruel Jews. Those who disregard the religious values of the three billion Christians in the world who have no place in the world. If you want to live humanely in this world under the same conditions as us, you will respect the religious beliefs of Christians and Muslims. Otherwise, it will not end well."

Also on 2 August 2024, he posted that Jews "plunder the Congo", and "Jews steal Congo's gold and cobalt at

the expense of our soldiers' lives." Also on that day, he tweeted, "Under the leadership of the DA [Democratic Alliance], Jews will rob our country."

The next day, he tweeted, "Jews are robbing people of Argentina blandly [sic]." Also on 3 August 2024, he tweeted, "The centre of Cape Town was suddenly filled with Jews," and "Jews are kidnapping our little girls to Israel ... I am deeply concerned about the kidnapping of Joslin Smith to Israel."

Smith is a six-year-old girl who went missing from her home in Saldanha Bay on 19 February 2024. One X user responded to Dag saying, "This is such a disgusting attempt at trying to be relevant, fuelling your own political agenda. You have no respect for Joslin or her family."

The next day, Dag engaged in Holocaust denial, tweeting an image of an overweight man in a striped concentration camp uniform, surrounded by men of average weight, saying, "If there were famines in Nazi concentration camps, why are these Jews so well fed?"

Also on 4 August, he tweeted, "Stand united against Jews"; "Jews are burning [the] UK"; "Muslims and Christians blacks [sic] are united against Jews in UK"; and "Anyone recognise these Jews scumbag [sic] in Leicester?" with a picture of individuals doing the "Heil Hitler" salute.

On the same day, he continued to tweet, "Jews are now burning and destroying London. We need to be very careful in Cape Town. Hundreds of thousands of Jews live

in Cape Town. Millions of Jews are coming to Cape Town. Cape Town is about to explode."

The next day, on 5 August 2024, he posted a picture of Helen Zille with the words, "The Jewish origin mother of all problems in South Africa." When a follower agreed with him, he added, "Devil in human form." That day, he also tweeted, "Jews have bought 92% of the land in the Western Cape. What is the purpose of these disgusting people?"

That day, he also wrote on X, "The people of England are hungry, thirsty, and unemployed. The main reason for this is they help Ukraine and Israel. Jews are the people who brought England to hunger." On 8 August, he wrote, "Jews control the international media ... Jews are the biggest problem on this earth."

These are just a small sample of Dag's antisemitic comments spouted on X and TikTok. Dag is representing himself in the Equality Court case.

In the summons, the Cape SAJBD says Dag's statements describe Jewish people as "evil, morally corrupt, and wicked", and that "Jewish people should be forcibly removed from South Africa." The statements

also describe Jews as "illicitly and unjustly controlling the South African and global economy", and imply that Jews "furtively use money, power, and influence to further their own interests and undermine the interests of others".

The Cape SAJBD says Dag's comments demand that Jews "be killed, harmed, or otherwise suffer reprisals", and describe Jewish people as "illicitly, by force, and without consent, kidnapping the children of non-Jewish people".

Dag's social media also demands that "Jewish people and their businesses should be boycotted or otherwise made to suffer reprisals", and spreads beliefs that "the Holocaust never occurred; Jewish people were not victims of genocide during the Holocaust; and Jewish people fabricated the Holocaust to pursue their own interests".

The Cape Board states that Dag's words "could

reasonably be construed to demonstrate a clear intention to be harmful or incite harm and to promote or propagate hate".

The Cape Board asked the court that Dag's statements be declared "harmful, inciting harm, and propagating hate amounting to hate speech". It also asked that Dag tender an unconditional apology to the South African Jewish community, donate R25 000 to the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and pay the costs of the legal application.

"We trust that our legal system will enforce whatever ruling it passes, and that it ensures that those found guilty abide by the rulings," says Jacobson. "If Dag falls foul of a ruling or order of court, he will be in contempt of court, which could lead to his arrest."



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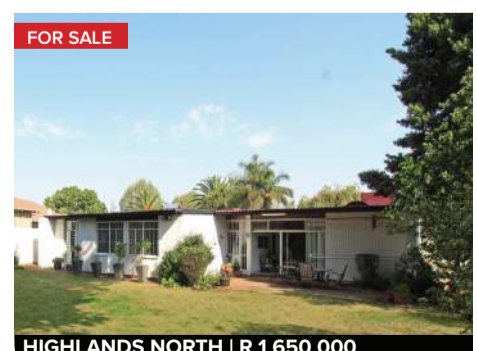
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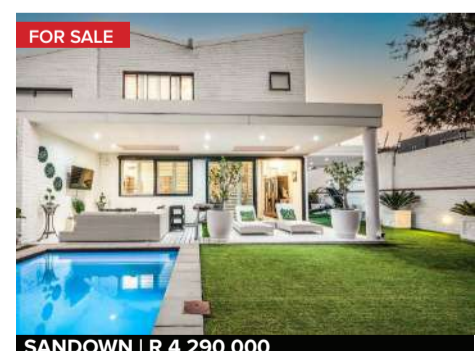
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UK chief rabbi praises 'outstanding' SA community

LEE TANKLE

The South African Jewish community stands as a beacon of hope in the face of the international rise of violent antisemitism over the past year, says the chief rabbi of the United Kingdom (UK) and Commonwealth, Sir Ephraim Mirvis.

Mirvis told the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) 120th anniversary gala dinner on 11 November that, "This community is envied throughout the Jewish world, saluted for outstanding achievements, and now under exceptionally

trying circumstances, has shown resilience and fortitude."

It continues to maintain the "heart of Jewish values", Mirvis said, despite what



Zev Krengel and Helen Zille

others say about it, and it continues to care for and take responsibility for the broader

community. "This is always how we have conducted ourselves, and how we will continue to conduct ourselves – even in light of a rise in hatred worldwide after Hamas attacked the south of Israel on 7 October 2023," Mirvis told the packed audience at the Wanderers Club.

"The date, 7 October, was a day in which G-d opened the eyes of all of humankind, some of whom responded, others who haven't yet. It was the day which taught us of the deep evil that exists," he said.

The conflict isn't about Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic State (ISIS), or Boko Haram, Mirvis said, rather the terror organisations being the "tentacles of a giant, monstrous, evil being, the head of which is Iran, and Israel, therefore, is on the frontline, fighting the battle for all of civilization".

"There are people out there who are

saying, 'We've been doing so much for the sake of those in need around the globe and right now, they're throwing it back in our faces. It's not appreciated anymore. They're demonising Israel.' I say to them," Mirvis said, "that's not going to make us stop. This isn't a time for Jews to draw in and say, 'Let's just be here for ourselves.' We should be doing quite the contrary."

Hatred will always exist, Mirvis said, but "that shouldn't stop us from being that blessing. The sun shines and often causes shadows to emerge. There's darkness as a result of the sun. But the sun continues to shine, and so do we".

He spoke about how Jews around the world have "a responsibility, particularly right now, to reach out with love and affection and show who we are. We look forward to a time when once again, people will appreciate what we are".

Mirvis said that the most telling days were those in the immediate aftermath of 7 October, when world Jewry discovered who its friends were. It also demonstrated how amazing its friends were.

"We have some amazing friends. We should never overlook this. We should forever appreciate them," he said. "It was extraordinary how on 13 April and 1 October, when Iran intended its attack on Israel to be as deadly as possible, that the British Royal Air Force together with the United States Air Force were there to support the state of Israel."

Mirvis said that even in the UK, he had been shown the love of those who were friends of the Jewish community. He said he had held meetings with King Charles III six times in the past year, and on every occasion, the king would reach out and ask how the community was doing with empathy and concern.

Mirvis said he knew that it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows, and that though we have amazing friends, the rise in antisemitism is staggering. He has witnessed a change in the way people relate to Jews, with a global rise in antisemitic attacks and a violent pogrom on the streets of Amsterdam last week on the eve of Kristallnacht.

Engrained in every part of Jewish culture is the love of giving, and there's no greater

example of the Jewish love of giving than the South African Jewish community that he grew up in, Mirvis said.

"We are defined not by what we've received or what we have, but rather by what we give. It's always been part of our natural DNA, our Jewish way of life," he said.

Mirvis emphasised that empathy is at the core of Judaism. "Throughout our history, wherever we've been, we've empathised, we've seen the pain of others. And we've always acted on our feelings, as a result of which we have made and continue to make a contribution to our wider communities."

He highlighted the massive contribution the South African Jewish community had made in the struggle against apartheid,



Wendy Kahn, Mary Kluk, and Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis

saying that he had a personal connection to the struggle as he has several family members and close friends who contributed to it – his parents and his uncle, Ben Eidelman.

Mirvis recalled how his father would give sermons criticising apartheid, and how some nights, he would come home and could barely see because of the tear gas sprayed at him at the demonstrations he attended. Similarly, as a nursery school teacher, his mother became principal of the Athlone Teachers Training College, the only teachers' training college in southern Africa for non-white nurseries. He recalled that it was controversial for his parents to bring their black friends to his Barmitzvah, which they did in an attempt to set an example for the community.

"It feels terrible explaining that this is something special. But that was part of the evil of apartheid."

His story is by no means unique, he said, as nearly every Jewish family has a story like his. "It's something we're immensely proud of. And this is because right at the heart of our Jewish responsibility to be enlightened to the nations, we have particular values."

Story of tenacity: Board honours great South Africans

LEE TANKLE

If there is one thing that South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) chairperson Karen Milner says she knows as a Jew and a South African is: "You cannot move forward without knowing where you come from".

Addressing the SAJBD 120th anniversary gala dinner at the Wanderers Club on 11 November, Milner said that because of that fact, as Jews, and as South Africans, "we understand the importance of storytelling to keep a people's memory and culture alive".

The story of the South African Jewish community is "a story of tenacity, resilience, family values, entrepreneurial spirit, and the value of education", Milner said.

Milner was addressing the many dignitaries present, including South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein; Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, Sir Ephraim Mirvis; Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie; Deputy Minister of Transport Mkhuleko Hlengwa; Deputy Minister of Small Business Development Raesetja Jane Sithole; Member of the Executive Council Mbalu Hlophe; African National Congress Treasurer General

inclusivity has left a mark on the values of this nation," Phosa said.

He said that though things may seem tense in terms of the community's relationship with the current government, the bonds that the Jewish community forged with the wider South African community at the time of apartheid wouldn't be forgotten.

Phosa said that in recent years, the voice of the Jewish community in political and civic spaces had been less prominent. This absence had at times allowed radical elements to step into the void, distorting the narrative and misrepresenting our nation's greatness. "This doesn't represent the heart of South Africa," he said.

He fondly recalled those who stood shoulder to shoulder with black South Africans in the battle against apartheid such as Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Arthur Goldreich, and many more.

"Those heroes and heroines were living proof that the South African struggle was a struggle for all people, irrespective of race," Phosa said.

He recalled the close relationship many prominent members of the Jewish community had with the late Nelson Mandela, particularly lawyer Lazar Sidelsky. "Sidelsky not only gave Mandela a chance, but a foundation upon which he could build a vision of justice," he said.

Phosa said that looking at the many faces who were honoured at the venue reminded the community that justice was never simply given, but must be fought for.

The gala event honoured 100 remarkable Jewish South Africans who had improved the country around them, from Johnny Clegg to Ali Bacher, Raymond Ackerman, Helen Suzman, Irma Stern, and many in between.

The SAJBD gave three prominent members of the South African Jewish community special awards. National president of the South African Zionist Federation, Avrom Krengel, received one of the prestigious Eric Samson Mendel Kaplan Awards for Communal Service; and Lester Hoffman was awarded the other for his countless years of service in various Jewish organisations in Cape Town.

Hoffman has been a member of the Cape Board since 1999, and was the chairperson of the Cape Board of Deputies from 1995 to 1997. He has held the positions of chairperson of the Herzlia board of governors; chairperson of the Community Security Organisation; chairperson of the Cape Jewish Chronicle; and chairperson of the Cape Bursary Foundation. He's now treasurer of the Cape Board.

"In my years of involvement, we have had many debates and many successes," Hoffman said on accepting his award. "I remain steadfast in the belief that whatever they do, with the challenges facing Jewry worldwide and particularly in this country, we will come out stronger."

The Chief Rabbi Cyril and Ann Harris Humanitarian Award was presented to Stanley and Marion Bergman, the founders of the American Jewish Committee African Institute. Their award was presented by SAJBD President Zev Krengel and the vice chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, Professor Zebulon Vilakazi.

On accepting his award, Stanley Bergman emphasised that it was more important than ever to stand together as a Jewish community with Jewish values. "The South African Jewish community will go on for decades, if not centuries," he said.



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis was the keynote speaker at the SAJBD 120th anniversary gala dinner

Gwen Ramokgopa; and politicians Helen Zille, Herman Mashaba, and Mmusi Maimane.

Along with the South African politicians, the event was attended by ambassadors and diplomats from Israel, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Austria, India, and the Czech Republic.

Milner told the distinguished audience that the stories of most – if not all – Jewish South Africans were of fleeing poverty, the pogroms of Eastern Europe, and the Nazi war machine to make a life for themselves in which they not only survived but thrived.

She said nothing signified this story of integrity and courage more aptly than the way that Jewish South Africans helped to fight apartheid.

African National Congress stalwart, anti-apartheid freedom fighter, and former premier of Mpumalanga, Dr Mathews Phosa, agreed with Milner, saying that the story of South Africa was a tapestry of countless voices, acts of courage, and unwavering conviction.

"The South African Jewish community's embrace of justice and

SA expats strong after Amsterdam pogrom

>>Continued from page 1

surname, "fearing the potential of encountering someone who might wish to harm me solely because I'm Jewish. The other day, I wore a *chai* necklace to work, and a Jewish colleague jokingly commented that it was a 'brave choice'. Though we laughed to lighten the mood, it struck us both how wearing a visible symbol of our Jewish identity can feel like an act of defiance.

"From what I've read, it seems that pro-Palestinian groups sought permission to protest outside the soccer stadium, but the Amsterdam authorities denied the request," says Katz. "That gives me some hope that the city is aware of the potential for unrest and is prepared to intervene to prevent violence when possible. I trust there will be significant consequences for those involved, and I hope for further preventative measures to help keep our city safe.

"Amsterdam has always felt like an open, welcoming city, where people are naturally polite and trusting," she says. "It's

disheartening to see tensions like these disrupt that sense of community. My Jewish friends and I rely on each other greatly during this time. Some are feeling the impact more than others, but for all of us, it's a deeply stressful period. I'm grateful to have this circle of support."

After the tram attack, Golding-Dickinson said, "With levels of vandalism and rage like this, my hope is that it lights a 'proverbial fire' under the Dutch government to take strong action."

"While these are undeniably challenging times for the Jewish community, they also offer us a profound opportunity," Katz says. "We can choose to respond with grace and accountability, engaging in thoughtful dialogue rather than fuelling unnecessary division. With the world's eyes on us, we have a chance to set a powerful example, one that reinforces our community's resilience and unity, creating a legacy of strength for generations to come."

Local poet silenced for “defending Zionism”

TALI FEINBERG

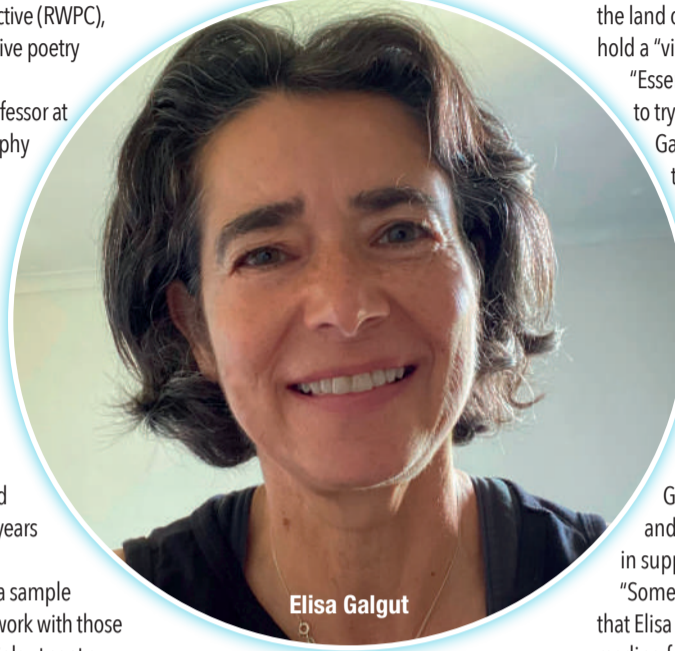
Cape Townian and King David Linksfield alumnus Elisa Galgut had always felt welcome in the poetry scene in Cape Town as one of the few Jewish poets in the Mother City. But all that changed when she was recently disinvited from reading her poetry at an event hosted by The Red Wheelbarrow Poetry Collective (RWPC), which calls itself “an inclusive poetry space”.

Galgut, an associate professor at the department of philosophy at the University of Cape Town (UCT), has published a book of poetry and often contributes to poetry journals locally and internationally. About a month ago, friends who are the founders of The RWPC asked her to do a reading at the end of November. She had read for the organisation a few years before.

They asked her to send a sample of her poetry to share her work with those who may want to attend. Galgut sent a short poem about the Holocaust. A few days later, the organisers disinvited her from reading, saying it “wasn’t a good time”. When she pushed them for their reasons, they responded, “It’s because you’re a Zionist,” and said it was “political, not personal”.

After a few local poets expressed dismay at this decision, The RWPC made a statement on 31 October saying, “We reject the recent

allegations that a poet was disinvited from our platform based on their Jewish identity. We rescinded an invitation due to an individual’s defence of Zionism. We don’t conflate Judaism with Zionism. The RWPC stands against genocide and discrimination of all kinds, and pledges to continue to maintain a safe and accountable space for poets.”



Elisa Galgut

Galgut has never made any official statements about her political views, but she’s proudly Jewish. When a new volunteer at her poetry group, Off The Wall (OTW), suggested a 7 October event to mark the “genocide in Gaza”, Galgut told her it would be highly inappropriate. Galgut also expressed dissatisfaction with anti-Israel rhetoric and resolutions during a faculty

board meeting at UCT. She believes these could be the reasons she was disinvited.

She also thinks it could be because of her poem about the Holocaust, or because she has a yellow ribbon as her background image on Facebook. A few weeks after disinviting her, The RWPC told her it was because of a tweet she wrote five years ago referring to the Jewish people’s history in the land of Israel, and because OTW didn’t hold a “vigil” for the people of Gaza.

“Essentially, they went out of their way to try to find out if I was a Zionist,” says Galgut. “They made the decision to disinvite me, then scrambled for evidence to support it. They say they are inclusive, but they are anything but. Meanwhile, a local poet recently wrote a pro-Hamas poem that wasn’t censored.”

In the poetry space, many individuals and organisations applauded The RWPC. However, Galgut’s own group, OTW, met her and then bravely released a statement in support of her.

“Some in our community will be aware that Elisa Galgut was disinvited from a reading for The RWPC on the basis of political views attributed to her by others,” wrote Julia Smuts Louw, on behalf of OTW volunteers. “As we understand it, The RWPC made no attempt to give Elisa an explanation for its decision or to discuss the views in question. We, the committee of OTW, of which Elisa is a member, think this is an unconscionable way to treat a fellow poet.

“We believe art, expression, and free

thought can thrive only in an environment where open dialogue on difficult issues is accepted and, indeed, encouraged, and where people need not fear censure on the basis of their beliefs, actual or perceived. OTW has always striven to create such a space, and we will continue to do so.

“For her part, Elisa has done nothing but serve our small community, including offering her own resources to create a gathering place when our regular venue became unsafe. This is a fraught time in history. As poets and lovers of poetry, part of our role is to cherish nuance and retrieve the personal from the flattening force of political rhetoric. OTW will continue to uphold these values.”

After the SA Jewish Report sent questions to The RWPC, founder Jacques Coetzee wrote to Galgut, saying, “The RWPC would like to extend a sincere apology to you for the way you were invited and then disinvited. We are aware that this decision has hurt you personally and caused distress and confusion in the poetry community. The RWPC recommits itself to creating an inclusive space for all poets, and will consider such matters more carefully in future.”

It was signed by “The Red Wheelbarrow Poetry Collective”, and Galgut notes that this means that no-one took direct responsibility. “I don’t accept it – they didn’t invite me back to read, nor did they apologise for disinviting me, only for the way they disinvited me,” she says.

Responding to the SA Jewish Report, Coetzee says, “The RWPC is privately engaged in seeking a peaceful resolution with all relevant parties. We have recommitted

ourselves to maintaining our focus on providing an inclusive platform for poets.”

He refused to answer the SA Jewish Report’s questions, including how it was determined that Galgut “defended Zionism”, and why that was problematic; if Jews in South Africa, most of whom are Zionist, would be barred from reading for The RWPC how banning people from reading poetry is helpful in bringing peace to the Middle East; and how The RWPC can call itself inclusive in light of this decision.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner recently noted that “deplatforming a Jewish poet by replacing the word ‘Jew’ with ‘Zionist’ because she has failed to meet some ideological purity test – one she didn’t know she was being subjected to – is really just antisemitism in its latest guise.”

Says Rolene Marks, spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation, “The RWPC has demonstrated a clear lack of understanding regarding both Zionism and Judaism as well as Jewish identity. The vast majority of Jews identify as Zionists, as Zionism is inextricably linked to Judaism.

“Furthermore, making libelous accusations of genocide, which are unequivocally false, reveals the bias and ignorance inherent in The RWPC,” Marks says. “This situation exemplifies an alarming trend in which Jews and Zionists are increasingly marginalised within society, particularly in the literary world. Prominent figures have denounced this practice not only as appalling but also discriminatory, warning that it harkens back to a dark time in history.”

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Amsterdam's flood of hatred

When I think of the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, I picture beautiful canals, people cycling around safely, neat rows of tall narrow homes, and a peaceful life. I also have thoughts of a slightly more bohemian lifestyle, where those who fancy the fragrant weed have been able to buy it openly and smoke what was against the law here for decades.

Never in my worst nightmares would I have had pictures of people chasing Jews to harm, humiliate, spit on, force them to say, 'Free Palestine', and worse. However, from here on in, I will never forget those images of Amsterdam following the violence against Jews this past week.

I'm well aware that the Netherlands hasn't always been a happy place for Jews. Our most important child icon of the Holocaust, Anne Frank, and her family, were hidden from the Nazis in the attic of an Amsterdam house for more than two years, from 1942 to 1944. They were then betrayed and sent off to be killed in concentration camps.

During the Holocaust, when the Netherlands was occupied by Germany, more than 70% of the Jews who lived there before the war were murdered by the Nazis and their Dutch collaborators. This percentage was far higher than in Belgium or France. Before the Holocaust, there were more than 142 000 Jews in the Netherlands. Today, there are somewhere between 29 800 and 45 000, with about 15 000 in Amsterdam.

But World War II was a long time ago, or so we all believed, and antisemitism seemed to be something of the past, something we learnt lessons from. Or so we thought ...

Last Thursday night was a wake-up call to the whole Jewish world that violent antisemitism is alive and well and living in Amsterdam.

The videos of people being chased, beaten, spat on, and kicked, were shocking. Why did this happen? I understand and have witnessed football hooliganism. It exists and is ugly, but what we witnessed after the Ajax versus Maccabi Tel Aviv match wasn't that. It was hunting, trapping, and harming Jews because they are Jews.

I do understand that before the match, the Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters were obnoxious, badly behaved, and deserve censure. But they didn't deserve what they got. This disgusting philosophy that when Jews get beaten and brutalised, they must have brought it on themselves, is pure antisemitism. More than a year after the 7 October massacre, no matter how much proof there is, there are way too many people who swear that Israelis brought it on themselves.

Never mind that the very people who were massacred, raped, and burnt alive were the same people who were fighting to build bridges across the borders, helping Palestinians in Gaza and supporting a two-state solution. They were the Israelis who did what they could to break down barriers between Palestinians and Jews, but somehow, it's made out that they asked for it.

I guess, it's the same thing as saying that when a woman wears a short skirt or a form-fitting outfit, she's asking to be raped. Or perhaps was just in the wrong place at the wrong time ... Really? It's despicable logic, if you can call it logic at all.

However, the violence, blamed by some on Jewish sports fans, didn't stop on the night of the match. On Monday night, four nights later, Jews were still reeling from the ongoing attacks.

News reports spoke of masked rioters throwing firecrackers at a tram, shouting, "Jews are cancer", igniting the empty tram and causing its windows to be blown out.

Dutch leaders were clear that this antisemitism was unacceptable. Dutch King Willem-Alexander told Israeli President Isaac Herzog last Friday, "We failed the Jewish community of the Netherlands during World War II, and last night, we failed again."

Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema said the violence brought back memories of pogroms. "It's deeply damaging to the city. Jewish culture has been deeply threatened. This is an outburst of antisemitism that I hope never to see again," she said.

There's no doubt this behaviour is devastating and unacceptable in the extreme. Though so many people around the world are concerned about the Jewish community in South Africa, we don't have that kind of antisemitism. Thank G-d!

We have horrible people like our page three disgrace, Mehmet Vefa Dag, who says the most despicable things about Jews right under our noses, but in truth, not many take him seriously, if at all.

It's not to say that we don't have haters, we do, and we have a real problem in that the most powerful political party in our country has taken sides against the Jewish state. However, we walk around freely with our Jewish insignia, and live a wonderful Jewish life here. Generally speaking, we live among the general population, which we treat with respect and get that same respect in return. South Africans are good people!

We don't know that level of antisemitism around the world, and our community continues to thrive.

This will be so evident this weekend when we celebrate the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards on Sunday. It's at this incredible annual gala event that we truly see the calibre of the people in our community. What an absolute treat! We have so much to be proud of, and so much to celebrate.

In truth, every person nominated in the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is an achiever because that's why they were put forward in the first place. However, there can really only be one winner in every category every year, which is unfortunate. I salute every single nominee for having the courage to put themselves forward. *Kol hakavod* to you!

This year, we celebrate not just one year of achievers, but 25 years of icons of our community.

This weekend, we'll also participate in the Shabbos Project, an annual event that has spread across the globe. Launched in 2013 by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, it has grown exponentially around the world. Today, Jews everywhere look forward to special Shabbos Project events, discussions, and most importantly, the Shabbos itself that they will share with those in their community.

We have lost so much, and have had a year of sadness and pain. But all of it has only brought the Jewish world closer together. And with the Shabbos Project and Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, we recognise just what we have.

May it be a special Shabbos Project Shabbat, and we salute all the Absa Jewish Achievers!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



Rumours swirl around Netanyahu's firing of Gallant

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



The image of now former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant saluting the fallen, soldiers, hostages, and their families will go down in Israeli history as one of the most poignant and iconic images of the war. The dignity and grace of Gallant as he addressed the Israeli nation, shortly after being axed for the second time by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, knew no bounds.

Once again, on his firing, Israeli citizens took to the streets in protest, albeit in smaller numbers than the uprisings of March 2023, in a display of dismay, anger, and solidarity.

What happened that the prime minister saw fit to fire his defense minister during a war?

While the eyes of the world were on the elections in the United States taking place on the same day, 5 November, Netanyahu sent Gallant a letter, firing him with 10 minutes warning before it went public.

It's no secret that the two men, both Likudniks, didn't always see eye to eye. Last March, Netanyahu fired Gallant, who had publicly warned that the internal rift over the government's plans regarding judicial reform was so deep, it would embolden Israel's enemies and pose a tangible risk to national security. Two weeks later, amid vast public protests, the prime minister reversed the move. This time, Netanyahu didn't budge, instead appointing Foreign Minister Israel Katz, more malleable to him, as his replacement.

Netanyahu's reason for firing Gallant was that "there were significant gaps" in how they saw the prosecution of the war. Netanyahu wants what he calls "total victory", and Gallant, backed by his security chiefs, advocated for a deal to ensure the release of the hostages, now that Hamas had pretty much been defeated.

security of the state of Israel and the people living in Zion. In this campaign, we have lost hundreds of soldiers, we have suffered thousands of wounded and disabled, and the war is continuing. Under these circumstances, there's no choice, everyone must serve in the IDF and participate in the mission to defend the state of Israel. We must not allow a discriminatory and corrupt law to pass in the Knesset that would exempt tens of thousands of citizens from bearing this burden. The time for change has come."

At the time of writing this, 375 soldiers have fallen in Gaza and Lebanon. This number excludes the hundreds who fell on 7 October.

In his speech, Gallant emphasised the priority of bringing back the hostages, saying, "Our moral obligation and responsibility is to bring our kidnapped sons and daughters back home as quickly as possible, with as many alive as possible, to their families."

"Based on my role, experience, and the military achievements of the past year, with a clear-eyed view of reality, I state that this is achievable, but involves painful compromises that Israel can bear and the IDF can deal with. We cannot bring back those hostages who have died. There is and will not be any atonement for abandoning the captives. It will be a mark of Cain on the forehead of Israeli society and those leading this mistaken path."

Gallant has also repeatedly called for an investigation into the failures that led to 7 October. This is another area of conflict with the prime minister, who has rebuffed any inquiry, saying the time isn't right during a war.

"When it comes to the national level – political, security, and military – there's a name for

uncovering the truth and learning from it: a state commission of inquiry," Gallant said. "I have said and I repeat, I am responsible for the security establishment over the past two years, for the successes and failures. Only sunlight and a truthful investigation will allow us to learn and build our strength to face future challenges."

Rumours swirled that perhaps IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and Shin Bet Head Ronen Bar could be the next to go, but the prime minister's office swiftly put out a statement refuting it.

A fatigued Israel has endured war for more than 400 days, fought on seven fronts – nine if you count global antisemitism and the lawfare waged at us at the International Court of Justice. We still have 101

hostages languishing in the terror tunnels of Gaza, and they remain our absolute priority. For Israelis, Yoav Gallant was a safe pair of hands, a man with an impeccable military record, and a former general. We are now in uncharted waters with the less experienced Katz. We have faith in our military and security apparatus, and hope that this far into the war, our prime minister knows what he is doing.

Gallant ended his speech with a salute, saying, "On this occasion, I wish to salute the fallen and their families, the wounded and the disabled, the captives and their families, and the IDF fighters wherever they may be."

A grateful nation salutes him for his service and unwavering commitment to our security.

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



Former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant

This wasn't the only area where the two clashed. Gallant, who enjoys a high approval rating in Israel for helping to restore faith in the military at a time when confidence in institutions like the government has been low, was adamant about the importance of calling up ultra-Orthodox of conscription age. Before his firing, Gallant insisted on the call-up of 7 000 from the Haredi community. This put him in direct conflict with coalition members who joined the government on condition that military exemption continued. It had many angry Israelis wondering if Gallant had been sacrificed on the altar of Netanyahu's political expediency.

Gallant addressed this in his speech, saying, "The first is my firm stance that everyone of conscription age must serve in the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and defend the state of Israel. This issue is no longer just a social matter; it's the most critical matter for our existence – the

Centenarian celebrates 110 years with large, loving family

LEE TANKLE

Turning 100 is a great innings, but South African-born Adele Samuelson turned 110 on 1 October this year, which is truly remarkable. Samuelson attributes her longevity to sheer determination, having fun, never procrastinating, and always being surrounded by family.

And she was surrounded by family in Michmoret, Israel, for her birthday this year. She lives there with one of her two daughters, Ilana Gorfil, while her other daughter, Gail Drutman, lives in Netivot in the south of Israel.

"Without determination, I can promise you, you'll get nowhere," said Samuelson in a speech to her family on her 100th birthday 10 years ago. "I've had many disappointments in my life, but thank G-d, many, many blessings. The second thing is to have a happy family life. My sister, Phoebe's, motto was, 'Do it now!' If you use this motto, suddenly your life becomes more organised. You don't put things off. Finally, life isn't always serious. Have fun!"

Gorfil says these three mottos still keep Samuelson going.

"It's a blessing to be able to see and be with her every day," she says. "I've learned so much from her about family. We have a wonderful, large family, which she has taught us all comes first."

Samuelson was born in 1914 at the beginning of World War I, and was the eldest of seven children. She is the only surviving member of her immediate family.

She spent her early childhood in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, and then moved to Cape Town, where she would spend most of her life until finally making aliya in 1979.

She married Skea (Yehezkel Samuelson) in 1945 at the Rosettenville Shul, after meeting him on a hike at a Zionist youth camp. They went on to have two daughters, many grandchildren, and even more great-grandchildren, which they say number too many to count.

"We have four generations living under one roof," says Gorfil. "She has her own little granny flat under our house. Her life is very quiet, very different from the life she grew up with, obviously, suited to her age. She's surrounded by lots of loving family, lots of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And everyone comes to visit all the time."

Gorfil says that although her family officially made aliya almost 50 years ago, they wanted to move to Israel in 1943 before they got married when the country was still Mandatory Palestine. They tried to get permits to move there, but only Samuelson was successful initially. So, she left first and Skea was meant to follow once his permit came through.

Gorfil says her mother and three young women from Durban travelled on a Polish ship named *SS Kosciuszko*, which was carrying Italian prisoners of war, that went via Egypt. Samuelson and these three women spent three weeks on board the ship in standard conditions in order to live their Zionist dream. They had to disembark at Port Said in Egypt, and they travelled by boat and train to get to Haifa. She went on to spend a year on Kibbutz Kfar Blum, which was still being established.

"She spent a year in Israel, accumulating lots of exciting and interesting stories," Gorfil says. "Unfortunately, my father couldn't join her because his mother was ill, and she eventually had to go back to South Africa, and then they got married."

The Samuelson couple made aliya following their two daughters, who moved to Israel in 1979. In Israel, Samuelson worked as the English secretary to the president of Tel Aviv University for 18 years and three presidents. She also did all the English work for the legal department of the university.

"My mother was always extremely hard-working," Gorfil says. "She had to leave school early before her matriculation to help earn money for the family. She went to a college to learn shorthand, typing, and office work and that's the work she did until she retired at the age of 84."

Samuelson came back to South Africa as often as she could to visit her family. The last time she returned was to celebrate her late sister's 98th birthday, more than 15 years ago.

Gorfil says her parents always



Adele Samuelson

loved to be in nature, and passed that love down through the generations. "My parents were campers," she said. "As children, we used to go camping and hiking all the time together. There were no hotels in our childhood. That was a central part of her life – being out in nature and hiking."

"Climbing up Table Mountain was one of her favourite things to do," she says.

Gorfil says her mother was the most amazing dressmaker, and loved to make dresses for herself and her children for any and every

occasion.

Samuelson also loves to spend time in her garden in Michmoret, though she cannot work in it the same way she did before.

Gorfil says that her mother always emphasised the importance of family. "She taught me and my sister that family comes first," she says. "That's always been it. Family comes first – dedicated and devoted. Her whole family was like that, all the brothers and sisters. A big, warm family. That's how we all grew up."



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What Trump 2.0 portends for SA and Israel



STEVEN GRUZD

OPINION

Donald Trump's resounding shellacking of Kamala Harris at the polls on 5 November took many by surprise, including me. Trump won 312 Electoral College votes to Harris's 226, much more than the 270 needed to become the 47th president of the United States (US). I was expecting a much closer contest, especially in the seven swing states. Trump easily swept them all. As the world prepares for a second Trump presidency in 2025, what does this mean for South Africa and Israel?



United States President-Elect Donald Trump staged a historic comeback to win the 2024 US elections

I thought Trump's chaotic first term, his crassness, his criminal conviction, and his age would have counted against him. Nope. It seems most American voters have short memories, and much to the consternation and confusion of many around the world, delivered a Trump landslide. His emphasis on illegal immigration and the economy turned up, well, trumps. Harris couldn't shake off the shortcomings of the Joe Biden administration, even when Biden dramatically dropped out of the race on 21 July after a disastrous televised debate against Trump.

In his first term (2017-2021), Trump showed little interest in South Africa or indeed Africa. He never visited the continent, but neither did Biden, to be fair, and Trump infamously referred to "shithole countries" when describing African states. He publicly referred to Namibia as "Nambia", and tweeted about white farmers being murdered in South Africa. That was about it, apart from supporting the fight against ISIS (Islamic State) in Africa's vast, sparsely governed Sahel region.

This time around, I don't expect Africa to feature much in Trump's presidency either. He has two major wars raging – in Ukraine and the Middle East, and has boasted that he could quickly end both once in office again. These conflicts are likely to draw his foreign policy attention, along with a looming resumption of a trade war with China. He will also focus on getting Europeans to chip in more for their defence under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as he did in his first term.

A huge question, however, hangs over Africa's future trade with the US. In existence since 2000, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is an American law designed to allow sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen economic relations with the US by increasing exports on favourable terms. It's not a mutually agreed free trade agreement, but a unilateral act of Congress. South Africa has benefited tremendously from AGOA, especially in the automotive, wine, and fresh-produce industries.

AGOA comes up for renewal in 2025, and may fall victim to Trump's vision of himself as the ultimate dealmaker. In his first term, he killed the North American Free Trade Area as too skewed towards Canada and Mexico, replacing it in 2020 with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. He's likely to try win more trade concessions and market openings for American goods from Africa in the reauthorisation of AGOA. With the Republicans taking back the Senate and predicted to retain the House of Representatives, it gives Trump far more power than he had in 2017 on the trade front to squeeze Africa.

Another area where Pretoria may feel the heat from Washington is on its case of "genocide" against Israel at the International Court of Justice and its perceived support for states like China, Iran, and Russia. There have already been a few attempts

in Congress to link AGOA privileges to a thorough review of the US-South Africa relationship. These might gather steam in the new Congress.

As for Israel, it will definitely be on Trump's radar. In his first term, he was steadfastly pro-Israel (or rather, pro-Benjamin Netanyahu). He moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem; recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights; and shepherded Israel's normalisation with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates under the Abraham Accords. Trump unveiled his peace plan for the Middle East, which didn't go far.

As he enters office for the second time in January 2025, Trump will need to contend with Israel's war on Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Will the dealmaker extraordinaire be able to secure the safe release of the 101 remaining Israeli hostages in Gaza and a lasting ceasefire? Can he bring Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states into the Abraham Accords? In part, it was the prospect of peace between Riyadh and Jerusalem that led to 7 October.

In recent years, the Republicans have become more staunch Israel supporters, while the left-wing of the Democratic Party – and some in the centre – have spoken out strongly against the Jewish state. American voters have clearly supported the former at the expense of the latter, as the new Congressional map shows the Republicans' ascendancy.

Netanyahu was one of the first world leaders to congratulate Trump on his victory as he hopes to overcome Biden-era misgivings and tensions over the way Israel is conducting the war in Gaza and Lebanon. He will expect the new Congress to support Israel's pursuit of its enemies, including Iran.

So, while Africa and South Africa may suffer from benign neglect or a shakeup of trade ties, support for Israel is likely to be a much higher priority for the Hill and the Trump White House. One thing's for sure, it's unlikely to be a dull four years.

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

Trump's foreign policy as unpredictable as election victory



HARRY JOFFE

OPINION

Donald Trump's election victory in the United States (US) this week completes a massive swing away from incumbents in elections around the world so far. In the United Kingdom (UK), France, and South Africa, the ruling parties had their share of the popular vote slashed, with Conservatives in the UK recording their worst election results since the 1830s and going into opposition. Ruling parties in France and South Africa have managed to stay in power only by virtue of shaky coalition governments. Even in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was expected to win in a landslide, didn't manage to win a majority and had to rely on coalition parties to stay in power, although his party was still comfortably the biggest after the election. Finally, even in neighbouring Botswana, where the ruling party had been in power uninterrupted since independence in 1966 and held a large majority in Parliament going into the election, it was swept away in a major shock, with the main opposition alliance taking power with a large majority.

Why did Trump win?

Articles will be written and detailed studies done, but the simple reason is that the Democratic Party has lost its way. It no longer commands the working-class voter and, indeed, has lost "middle America" almost in totality. It has focused too much on "identity politics" and ignored bread-and-butter issues like inflation and illegal immigration, which is of such importance to working and middle-class Americans. According to the *Financial Times*, the high cost of living and inflation are the major causes of high levels of anger among electorates around the world. This issue wasn't adequately addressed by the Democrats.

What does Trump's win mean for Israel?

Trump's win is a double-edged sword. Based on his history and public statements, he's more instinctively pro-Israel than his Democratic opponents, and there's also no doubt that the majority of his Republican base – barring a few extremists on the hard right – are solidly behind Israel, but things are never that simple in international geopolitics. Trump and Vice President JD Vance have repeatedly stated that they want to end the US's involvement in wars abroad and its role as the world's policeman, and focus more on US domestic matters – an "America-first" policy. It's also worth remembering that when drone attacks struck two key oil installations inside Saudi Arabia in 2019 and damaged facilities that processed the vast majority of the country's crude output and raised the risks of a disruption in world oil supplies, apart from offering support for Saudi Arabia's self-defence, then President Trump did very little. In fact, he seems to have an aversion to using military force abroad.

In addition, his unpredictability and attachment to personal relationships is well known, with his relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu being especially tempestuous. Although it does seem that Bibi has been making a great effort since the election to get back on good terms.

This raises the following questions: if the Israel/Iran trading of blows escalates to something akin to a full-scale war and Israel requires active assistance, will Trump allow US pilots and planes to participate and put them at risk? Or will he just offer Israel weapons/

diplomatic support and little else? Given his hostility to the US being involved in overseas wars, how far will his support go? Second, given his unpredictability and love of drama and glamour, might he decide that now is the time to bring peace to the Middle East and force a settlement on Israel that it might not want, be ready for, or feel is appropriate?

On the other hand, his base and Republican congressmen are unlikely to allow him to do anything to prejudice Israel too much, and the majority of Republican congressmen and senators are solidly behind Israel, which must reduce the risk to an extent. In addition, never forget that for all Trump's unpredictability, he was the one who finally moved the US embassy to Jerusalem and landed the major deal that brought the Abraham Accords to the Middle East. He might be the one finally to conclude an Israel-Saudi normalisation deal.

What does Trump's win mean for Africa?

Although there's great concern that Trump will simply ignore Africa, the Biden administration was also criticised for not giving Africa enough "airtime". President Joe Biden will visit Africa only in the final weeks of his presidency, when he visits Angola in December. It would be his first trip to the continent since taking office in January 2021. However, Biden did at least host Kenyan President William Ruto in May, the first African leader in more than 15 years to make an official state visit to the US. In addition, first lady Jill Biden visited Kenya last year, one of a series of high-profile visits by US dignitaries to the continent, and the Biden administration won praise for investing in the Lobito Corridor, a railway line linking Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia that will be used to transport critical raw materials.

The election victory of US President-Elect Donald Trump bodes well for a stronger relationship between the United States and Israel



Many doubt that Africa will feature highly on Trump's agenda, given his desire to focus more on local than international affairs, but Africa's strategic importance cannot be ignored, given its possession of critical minerals for "green" energy, and the fact that many other world powers have been showing great interest in the continent recently. This might force Trump to engage more with the continent.

In short, at this stage, no-one can forecast how Trump will turn out, which regions will benefit, and which will be worse off as a result of his term in office. The man's unpredictability makes it impossible to foretell what he'll do in the week following his inauguration, never mind for the full term of his presidency. Everyone waits with bated breath!

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.

Activists slam Lithuania's coalition with 'antisemitic' politician

NICOLA MILTZ

The decision by Lithuania's Social Democrats to form a coalition government with a populist party whose leader is standing trial over antisemitic statements has attracted local and international criticism.

The Social Democrats, the winner of last month's parliamentary election, has defended its decision to join forces with controversial politician Remigijus Žemaitaitis, the leader of the Dawn of Nemunas Party.

Žemaitaitis has been accused of antisemitism, something that the politician has denied, insisting that he was criticising the Israeli government and not Jews.

Zev Krengel, the national president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We're extremely concerned by this, and will be formally engaging with the Lithuanian government."

Antisemitism charges against Žemaitaitis are centred on vile statements he made in May and June 2023 about Israel and Jews, at least five public statements mostly made on social media.

In one on Facebook on 8 May last year, he posted a comment on a news story about Israel having demolished a European Union-funded school in the West Bank. "Apparently, there are animals in this world besides Putin - Israel. One has to state that this school was built thanks to EU funding. After such events, no wonder there appear sayings like this: 'A Jew was climbing the ladder and accidentally fell off; take a stick, kids, and kill that little Jew.' [this is a well-known Lithuanian antisemitic rhyme]. What else must happen for Israel to realise that such provocation and such actions only stir more anger and hatred against Jews and their people."

This isn't the only time Žemaitaitis has referred to the Lithuanian rhyme, known for being antisemitic.

Michael Kretzmer, a British director of Lithuanian

descent known for the documentary *J'Accuse! A Cry From The Killing Pits of Lithuania*, said he was dismayed, considering that Lithuania had made progress in recent times. In a recent *Times of Israel* blog, he wrote about how Lithuanians were finally ready to tell the truth about the Holocaust, and Jews should support them. However, this latest development has enraged him.

"What's happening in Lithuania threatens to invalidate all the good work that has happened over the past year," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "In choosing to work with the disgusting Dawn of Nemunas Party, the government is showing its contempt for the Jewish people and solidarity with the antisemites that still have such influence in Lithuania. They shouldn't be allowed to get away with it."

Grant Gochin, born in South Africa to a Jewish family of Lithuanian descent, who continues to expose Lithuanian Holocaust revisionism, said this week that "zero" progress had been made in Lithuania.

"This comes as no surprise, Žemaitaitis is just a symptom of Lithuanian society," Gochin said. "He's a product of the Lithuanian Genocide Centre. His statements echo the official narrative about Jews and the official Holocaust denial, fraud, minimisation, and inversion by the Lithuanian state. The president and all levels of government and Lithuanian Courts have defended this ideology. All Žemaitaitis did is say the quiet part aloud."

The Lithuanian Parliament, Seimas, appointed a commission to assess Žemaitaitis's antisemitic



Remigijus Žemaitaitis, leader of the Dawn of Nemunas Party

Photo: Remigijus Žemaitaitis Facebook page

utterances. The commission then turned to the Constitutional Court to give a ruling on whether Žemaitaitis's statements constituted a serious violation of his oath of office, thus giving grounds for impeachment.

The Constitutional Court ruled last April that Žemaitaitis's statements violated articles in the Constitution on hate speech and discrimination on the basis of nationality. According to the

court, this was a gross violation of the Constitution and a breach of his oath as a Parliament member. Žemaitaitis then resigned from the Seimas, arguably in order to avoid impeachment which would have barred him from running for elected office. There's still an ongoing criminal investigation over his statements.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC), which advocates for Jews globally, has urged Social Democrats leader and likely next prime minister, Gintautas Paluckas, to reverse his plans to enter into a coalition with Dawn of Nemunas.

It said in letters to Paluckas that inclusion would "strengthen those with antisemitic views in Lithuania and the region; endanger the Jewish communities of the region; and severely damage Lithuania's reputation as a beacon of democracy and freedom".

"If these plans go forward, Žemaitaitis's views

will become synonymous with those of Lithuania's Social Democrats and therefore the new Lithuanian prime minister. His hateful antisemitic and anti-Israel statements will come to represent the governing coalition, leaving would-be Prime Minister Paluckas to preside over a government unlike any that has preceded it," said Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC director of International Jewish Affairs. "It would be a government that AJC and many of our friends in the United States and around the world cannot support or defend. It will surely do irreparable harm to Lithuania's international reputation at one of the most consequential times in world affairs."

Žemaitaitis won't serve in the Cabinet himself, but his party will lead three of the government's 14 ministries, among them the justice ministry, said Social Democrat deputy leader and designated Prime Minister Paluckas.

Paluckas told reporters that joining forces with the party was the only way to have a "sustainable" coalition, and said his party was ready to explain its decision to the country's international partners.

"Some claim the whole Dawn of Nemunas Party is antisemitic. We don't see it like that," Paluckas said. "There's no place for antisemitism, neither in the Social Democrat party nor its government."

The Social Democrat-led alliance, which includes the For Lithuania Party, would hold 84 seats in the 141-member Parliament, above the 71 seats required for a majority.

Dawn of Nemunas, which won 20 seats in the election, defines itself as a centre-left and nationalist party. It's widely referred to in Lithuania as populist.

During the election campaign, both the Social Democrats and the second-placed centre-right Homeland Union said they would refrain from forming a coalition with Dawn of Nemunas, which came third in the election.

The new government is expected to be sworn into office in December.



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Gruzd makes history as first female head of KDVP

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Mandy Gruzd, recently named the first official woman principal of King David High

School Victory Park (KDVP), always aspired to be the head during her 16-year journey at the school.

"I didn't think the role was going to be at this stage of my journey, but it definitely is a dream," says Gruzd, who has taught history at King David for 16 years while climbing the ranks over that time.

Rabbi Ricky Seeff, formerly the principal of KDVP Primary School and the current general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, reached out to Gruzd after the selection process for the new principal. "We went from there in terms of announcing that I was going to take over from Mr Andrew Baker," Gruzd says.

She says she stood out in the selection process due to her many years at the school

and her journey with her daughters, also at the school. "I joined the school just before my daughters came here to start Grade R and Grade 1 respectively. My oldest daughter, Lauren,

and my youngest, Megan, had very happy and fulfilling years at Victory Park, and it was wonderful to have them with me," she says.

Born and raised in Greenside, Gruzd says the teaching gene is part of her DNA. She followed in the footsteps of her dad, Leon

Lever, in becoming a teacher. Lever also served as the headmaster of the primary school, while her two brothers have gone into some aspects of education.

"Teaching is just part of me, a calling," Gruzd says. "I loved being the teacher in the games we played growing up. When I was studying at school and university, I always wanted to teach. I also danced – not that I have done that

at all over the past 30 years."

The door opened to a teaching career for Gruzd while she was a student at Greenside High School, having attended Emmarentia Primary School. Bursaries for teaching were being offered to high school students and those interested would go off campus for the day to do some tests.

"My good friend said to me, 'Let's go, we'll get a day off school,'" Gruzd reminisces. "I always smile and tell my classes that I got a day off school, but I'm at school every day! But I wouldn't have done anything differently."

Gruzd enjoys working with young minds, especially in the high school space, hearing their perspectives and points of view. "Very often, I learn just as much as I teach every day," she says.

She started off teaching history at KDVP High School part-time, before taking on the role full-time and being given other opportunities such as becoming head of the history department; a grade head looking after a particular grade each year; and the head of academics.

"I've been deputy head of the school for the past nine years plus, so taking on the principal role is a wonderful opportunity to move into a new position at Victory Park," Gruzd says. In doing so, she follows in the footsteps of former principals such as Eddie Tannenbaum and Jeffrey Wolf.

Highlights of Gruzd's time at KDVP include the excellent results achieved by past students.

"Within my subject, history, we've had some really incredible results over the years," she says. "There was a year that we had eight students in the top 1%."

Gruzd herself received the World ORT Beatrice Wand-Polak Educators Award a few years ago for her dedication to her profession and for inspiring students to go above and beyond expectation during the lockdown period.

"The awards and the achievements are important, but it's more about the kind of unique institution that Victory Park is, and being able to help and guide students," she says. "I love working with both students and staff at the school. They are the best staff to work with because they are so talented and passionate. That's really why I've loved the place so much. I hope to do much more in this space."

Gruzd aims to build on the school's traditions and carry on working towards excellence in academics and the many other spheres of school life.

"We're a strong arts and culture school, so I aim to carry that on as well as focus on sport and ensure that our offerings are strengthened. Also looking to 2025, we're setting up a new makerspace in which we intend to take creativity to the next level. We'll be introducing various aspects of 3D printing and coding, robotics, and lots of initiatives regarding exploring the arts, culture, and technology.

"Challenges will crop up, but we have an incredible community with a strong passion for this campus. Many of our children have parents and grandparents who went to the school," she says.

Gruzd says being principal is a "huge responsibility" as the position is all-encompassing, covering social-emotional aspects, ethics, discipline, and new trends like social media. "It's an ever-changing position and job. It's nerve-racking, but I've got a good support team."

She describes Margie Solomons, who served as the acting head of the school for a few months in 2008 and then between January and May 2011, as an incredible woman and "a special mentor in my journey".

Gruzd says it's wonderful that her school and King David High School Linksfield now have women principals, pointing out that both she and Lorraine Srage are history teachers.

Srage says she wishes "Mandy the best of luck as she leads with the wisdom, strength, and vision that no doubt led to her appointment as principal. It's clear that her dedication and experience in the King David system will continue to inspire and uplift the staff and pupils at KDVP. Wishing her much success in this exciting journey ahead as a principal and leader."

Gruzd has known Srage for many years, and says she looks forward to continuing to build on the good relationship between the two schools.



Principal of King David High School Victory Park, Mandy Gruzd

Grandfather's Nazi past raises more questions than answers

LEE TANKLE

It's never easy for young Germans to confront their family's World War II past, but German author Lorenz Völker decided 20 years after his grandfather had passed away that he needed to know if he was a Nazi.

Völker, speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on 6 November, said that when he was growing up in the 1970s and asked questions about the war, the responses he got were inadequate. "That was when children [in Germany] were questioning their parents for the first time, and those answers were unsatisfactory," he said.

Völker embarked on a six-year journey of researching his grandfather's past, knowing that with no information to start with, it would be an arduous task. He battled for answers to what his grandparents did during the war, particularly in the light of the fact that three out of four grandparents were members of the Nazi Party and the war years hadn't been discussed.

After all his research, he knew that the man he loved and saw as a warm and caring grandfather had been a card-carrying Nazi, but he couldn't determine whether he actually believed in Hitler's ideology or used it as a means to improve his career.

Völker's maternal grandfather, Johannes Adolf Wilhelm Dombois, was a state prosecutor from 1935 to 1947 in Potsdam, Germany. "Like many other law officials working with the National Socialist state, he was a member of the National Socialists, but he was someone who could disengage

from the system of justice," said Völker.

He said his grandfather voluntarily joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP or Nazis) in 1937. That same year, he was given a permanent prosecutorial position.

Völker said he felt angry to find out that his grandfather was an NSDAP member. However, his personnel records, his denazification papers, and a report detailing his experiences didn't make his beliefs about Nazi ideology any clearer.

"He was trying to build a career," said Völker. "He started in 1933, finding himself in that different political situation."

In photographs, Völker saw his grandfather wearing his Nazi membership badge as well as being the loving grandfather that he remembered him to be.

In his personnel records held by the State of Hesse, a German province, there is a quote from the chief public prosecutor saying, "Dombois [his grandfather] has fully grasped the essence of the new era," and he found out that his grandfather had participated in a one-week training course on new anti-Jewish laws for prosecutors.

Among his papers, Völker found court documents of one of the 33 cases his grandfather prosecuted in which he took on a prominent Nazi, Max Schettler. In 1935, a 17-year-old Jewish girl named Susanne Busse and her boyfriend were looking for some private space in a park when Schettler caught them being intimate, and threatened

them. Schettler then attempted to rape Busse, and was subsequently sentenced by Völker's grandfather to one and a half years in prison.

The Schutzstaffel (SS) attacked the court and the judgement, saying, "One can hardly imagine that six national socialists can be outwitted by a 17-year-old Jewish girl." However, Völker explained that the state supported this judgement. Busse was allowed to emigrate to the United States after this ordeal.

In the reasoning for this judgement, Völker said his grandfather was said to have been "defending the law against the party", which meant a lot to him.

The case gave Völker hope that his grandfather was a good man, a fact he felt was reiterated by his denazification documents that claimed he was a bystander or follower, not a perpetrator.

His role wasn't so innocent in another of his cases, however. Völker said his grandfather played a significant role in the judgement and sentencing of a young Jewish man, Alfred Lehmann.

Lehmann was the same age as Völker's grandfather, and they were on a similar path in that they were trained in the same court in Potsdam. Though Völker's grandfather was able to become a prosecutor for the state, Lehmann wasn't able to practice at all because he was Jewish.

In 1938, Lehmann was caught in "violation of the racial laws in a particularly serious case", meaning that he had a love affair with a non-Jewish woman.

Lehmann was sentenced to two and a half years in prison by Völker's grandfather for this. After his imprisonment, he was sent directly to Sachsenhausen concentration camp without further trial and from there to Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where he died on 9 September 1941, at the age of just 32.

After all his work, Völker found it difficult to picture the man that he saw as a warm, cosy lovable man at 63, to be what he was raised to believe a Nazi was – a cruel person wearing the brown shirt and going about the destruction of others.

He said when he tried to bring it up with his mother, she was reluctant to dig too deep as she didn't want to believe that he was a Nazi.

"Yes he was a Nazi, he was a member of the NSDAP, and had the badge," said Völker, "but did he have the ideology? I still don't know."



Lorenz Völker, the grandson of card-carrying Nazi Johannes Adolf Wilhelm Dombois

How to win the gaming battle with your kids

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

If it feels like you're always the loser when it comes to your kids' gaming and its impact on their behaviour, you're not alone. But there's an informed and healthy way to manage it, said Sarah Hoffman of Klikd, a company that helps teens, parents, and teachers navigate social media and the digital world safely.

"Wherever you are on your child's gaming journey, remember that as a parent, you have choices," Hoffman told a webinar on 5 November. "It's not too late." A social media lawyer, Hoffman runs Klikd, which hosted the webinar, together with co-founder, clinical and forensic psychologist Pam Tudin.

Before deciding how to handle gaming, understand that every child is different so your approach should be tailored to your child's unique needs and personality, Hoffman said. "Game designers are experts at developing games which release just the right amount of dopamine to keep your child completely hooked."

Ultimately, though there are numerous parental controls you can put in place, your children's relationship with gaming is ultimately determined by their relationship with you.

"The most important thing that will help your child to emerge from these challenges well is parents who are connected and engaged," said Hoffman. "This means that you're able to have conversations with your children about gaming in a way that's not hysterical or judgemental. It means that you're able to put boundaries in place, and your child is able to talk to you about what's going on in their online world."

It's not all bad news when it comes to gaming, she said. For example, for some kids at a stage of exploring their identity, some games provide a safe space for role playing. Many games also have significant educational value, honing kids' problem-solving abilities and fostering opportunities for critical thinking. Others encourage creativity and collaboration, which kids argue is their version of socialising. Yet it's important to remember that nothing can compare to the real-life equivalent.

"When children are gaming, there's an immediate chemical reward in the form of a dopamine hit, which is what makes it so addictive," Tudin said. "Your child's brain is wired for that reward." It's in-the-moment satisfaction that you cannot get from most things in the real world, making it much harder to derive that same level of pleasure.

"Interrupting their gaming process ruptures this strong chemical process, which explains their often-dramatic response when you force them off their device," Tudin said. "Over time, the dopamine cycle creates a lowered tolerance for frustration," she said. "This lowers their capacity to push through difficult things in real life as there's no reward that comes with it that matches the dopamine hit they get from gaming."

The social repercussions can also be considerable. "While gaming, children often feel a level of social acceptance that they don't always feel or know how to get in the real world," Tudin said. "We

need to guard against gaming becoming the only area where they feel good about themselves." Children will never get all they need in real life from the online realm, she points out, especially when it comes to creating real connections and building the consciousness that underpins emotional intelligence.

In an increasingly digital world, cultivating emotional intelligence in our children is more important than ever. "Especially with the advent of artificial intelligence [AI], people who are going to survive in the working world are those who are able to tweak what AI can produce, who will read the cues in a room," Tudin said. "The capacity to recognise and name other people's feelings is everything that gaming takes away in large chunks."

Another danger is that gaming becomes a hiding place for many children who may be having a hard time at school. They therefore don't develop a strong sense of self beyond gaming experiences.

The battle over "just one more game" and the mood swings that come with that is exhausting for parents. To manage the resulting power struggle,



Hoffman stressed the importance of giving your child a certain number of games they're allowed to play rather than a time limit. This eliminates the dopamine interruption that causes such discord when a child is forced off the game in the middle of a round.

Tudin suggested an emotional vaccination – preparing children for something that they may not like. This involves having a conversation at a neutral moment before the gaming session where we explain that there will be a time when we

ask them to stop gaming. "Explain that it's going to feel hard to stop because there are many things happening in their brains that make them want to carry on," she said.

When the conflict starts, you can remind them that you've already reached an agreement on this. If they won't listen, de-escalate the situation by keeping your tone calm. Explain that you know that it's hard for them, but until they can honour the agreement you have made, they cannot have access to gaming devices. Don't respond to the meltdown, and they will soon see that you mean business.

Tudin also stressed the importance of having consistency around when, where, and for how long they're allowed to game. "Talk about gaming without giving it the focus and the huge currency that they do. It's just another part of the day." She also suggested having "switch out" activity after gaming, whether it be helping you prepare supper or going for a walk. This helps them to come down gently from the dopamine hit.

In this power struggle, you are the boss, Tudin said. "You cannot be held hostage in your own home." You have to set the ground rules, making gaming expectations clear and predictable. The only time there are exceptions to this is when your child has true moments of connection with you or family members, and you want to reward and reinforce that behaviour with some extra gaming time.



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Proudly South African: project brings Shabbos home

SIMON APFEL

At a time of great difficulty and uncertainty, this year's globe-spanning Shabbos Project, dubbed the "Shabbos of unity", will bring Jews of all backgrounds together in 1 500 cities and more than 100 countries.

The local community is gearing up for this year's Shabbos Project, with shuls across the country hosting dinners and lunches, learning programmes, Shabbatons, *havdalah* concerts and other initiatives, and with challah bakes in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg.

What started years ago in 2013 as the brainchild of South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein as a local project is now massive around the world. This Shabbat will herald celebrations co-ordinated by a team of thousands of city partners worldwide, alongside tens of thousands of volunteers on the ground.

Israel continues to be the global hub of the Shabbos Project, with 10 000 apartment buildings across the country participating, representing almost half a million people.

This year's Shabbos Project comes at a historic moment in time, as Israel fights a war on multiple fronts following the brutal attack of 7 October, and as Jewish communities around the world face a tide of antisemitism that hasn't been experienced in decades.

"Since 7 October, Shabbos has emerged as a source of strength and comfort, a fortress of faith and family, a shining light of inspiration and meaning amidst the pain and uncertainty," says Goldstein, pointing out that this year's event will be the most important since the project began.

"Now especially," Goldstein says, "the Shabbos Project is a chance for Jews everywhere – in Israel, the United States, and throughout the world – to rally together, to unite around Shabbos, to stand proud and say, 'This is



The Challah Bake in Brazil



The Challah Bake in Buenos Aires, Argentina



The Israel Defense Forces taking part in the Shabbos Project

who we are. We will not be defined by those who hate us, and with G-d's help, we will not allow our enemies to defeat us."

On Thursday, challah bakes in Johannesburg and Cape Town, featuring international celebrity chef Jamie Geller, known for her bestselling cookbooks and viral cooking videos, were expected to draw more than 5 000 women. Rachel Goldberg-Polin, whose son Hersh was murdered by Hamas, delivered a live virtual address.

Shuls around the country will be running special Shabbos programmes and initiatives, including Sandton Shul, which has booked out two hotels for families to keep Shabbos together.

"Our objective this year, as in previous years, is simply to enable as many people as possible to keep Shabbos together," says Goldstein, "drawing people to the full, immersive, 25-hour Shabbos experience."

"Over the past year, our deep Jewish instinct to seek out Shabbos in moments of difficulty and uncertainty has kicked in. There are countless inspiring stories of how Shabbos has held us, giving us the courage we need."

This year's Shabbos Project launch captures some of those stories: a hostage captured by Hamas and freed after 55 days in captivity; a Nova festival survivor; a college student at Columbia University.

As Goldstein puts it, "They and so many others have turned to Shabbos for hope and connection."

This year, the Shabbos Project also released the first ever Shabbos "commercial", produced by award-winning local filmmaker Jordy Sank.

For Sank, who won Best South African Documentary at the Durban International Film Festival for "I Am Here", a moving portrait of Capetian Holocaust survivor Ella Blumenthal, capturing the beauty and meaning of Shabbos was an entirely different challenge.

"The chief rabbi approached me with an idea to create a more poignant, narrative-based video for this year's Shabbos Project, exploring new media as a means of promoting the project and Shabbos in general," says Sank. "He wanted me to tell a story about Shabbos."

Sank did exactly that, with a two-minute video showcasing the peace, joy, and sense of purpose Shabbos offers. And tying it all together is an incredibly moving song by local singer-songwriter Jesse Clegg. *I've Been Looking*, suggested by South African advertising guru Brett Morris, is the only track Jesse Clegg and his iconic father, Johnny Clegg, have sung together.

"The Shabbos Project began right here in South Africa, and we wanted a proudly South African song for the international campaign," Sank says.

He says the lyrics, "These are the things I can't replace" perfectly encapsulate Shabbos.



Shabbos Project activity in Israel

Global campaign picks up steam in Israel

Israel continues to be the global hub of the Shabbos Project – or Shabbos Olamit as it's called there. Ongoing partnerships including those with the ministry of education, nongovernmental organisations such as Keshet Yehudi and Zehut, and various municipalities will result in this year's project reaching more than 750 000 Israelis across the religious and political spectrum in more than 250 towns and cities.

One of the big innovations this year is to have a volunteer in each apartment building in Israel driving events, creating awareness, and distributing Shabbos-themed educational materials and items among residents. Thanks to a high-profile social media campaign, more than 10 000 "building captains" have already been recruited, driving events for close to half a million residents, while a Shabbos picnic kit will be distributed to 6 000 families.

About 40 000 high school students and 55 000 elementary school

community members host their own Shabbos meals while matching others up with host families. First-time participants Summerlin (Nevada) are organising a Shabbaton for students and their families. And Savannah (Georgia) is hosting a city-wide Shabbos lunch in a central location and arranging accommodation for those who live too far away to walk.

In Phoenix, families who sign up to keep a full 25-hour Shabbos, whether in their own home, as guests in another home, or at a local hotel near a synagogue, will receive a \$100 (R1 805) Amazon gift card towards Shabbos essentials. In New York, Chabad on Campus is running a massive Shabbaton for 1 700 students. And a Shabbos dinner in Palo Alto run by the Z3 project for Israel-Diaspora relations is expected to draw more than 1 200 people.

Meanwhile, San Diego is rolling out a "Shabbos shuk" with more than 30 local Jewish vendors providing an array of Shabbos-themed delicacies, art, and Judaica, among other offerings. NCSY Canada is organising a community challah bake, Shabbos educational workshops, and student accommodation. And a rabbi in Tampa Bay Florida will be hosting a Shabbaton for young families, and learning Rabbi Goldstein's book, *Shabbos – A Day to Create Yourself*, with a group of 12 boys from a local public school, one of more than 150 such learning groups happening across the US.

Across Europe, hundreds of events are happening in cities such as Prague, where a guest rabbi and rebbetzin from Israel will oversee a full programme including a challah bake, kids concert, challahs distributed to elderly members of the community, a musical Havdalah, and a Shabbos workshop for Barmitzvah boys.

And a special international Shabbaton in Switzerland will bring together students from Paris, Lyon, and Geneva, and will include a challah bake, Shabbos dinner, learning, and activities throughout the day, and a post-Shabbos "melave malka" party.

In France, the focus is on youth, with Shabbatons and learning events organised at university campuses across the country, while hundreds of schools will be running challah bakes, Shabbos dinners/lunches, and educational programmes for kids and their families.

Among dozens of events in Strasbourg involving every synagogue in the city, 20 young Jewish refugees from Ukraine will attend a Shabbaton along with local youth.

New cities participating in this year's Shabbos Project include Casablanca (Morocco); Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire); and Tahiti, a small island in the middle of the south Pacific Ocean, which is organising a gala *seudah shlishit* (third meal) to join its celebrations with Jews around the world.



A bus in Eilat, Israel advertising the Shabbos Project

students, along with their families and teachers, will be participating in special Shabbos meals and other events, while special Shabbos learning programmes will reach more than 175 000 Israeli kids.

The mayor of Eilat addressed the Israel launch of the project. Last year, Eilat set the tone for the Shabbos Project in Israel, holding events even while absorbing 50 000 evacuees – the sum total of the population – and this year, the coastal city will be going all-out with four open-invitation mass Shabbos dinners among other city-wide events.

Hundreds of Jewish communities in North America are participating in the Shabbos Project. In Los Angeles, Aish will be helping non-observant

"Our modern lives are so chaotic, and especially with the year the Jewish people have endured, we wanted to highlight how Shabbos offers us irreplaceable gifts – precious time with family and friends, a sense of community and Jewish identity, a sanctity and serenity at the end of every week. The song really captures this."

The video has already reached more than 2.5 million people, spreading awareness and creating excitement in the build-up to what might be the biggest Shabbos Project yet.

"Let the word go forth that this year's Shabbos Project will be a Shabbos of global Jewish unity," says Goldstein. "Let's unite as South African Jews like never before. Let's gather together in our homes and our shuls. Let's join hands with family, friends, and neighbours, with our brothers and sisters throughout the world, one people with one heart."

"We have the gift of Shabbos. Let's keep it together."

'Get tested', say doctors, as diabetes lurks

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

With more than four million South Africans said to have diabetes – the highest prevalence in Africa – it's unsurprising that many in our community are also affected. Though the incidence of diabetes among Jews isn't disproportionate, we are far from immune from the condition and its life-changing impact.

Though diabetes can be effectively managed, it requires commitment, a dramatic shift in your daily routine, and a new mindset. A chronic metabolic condition, diabetes occurs when the body is unable to produce or use insulin properly, causing elevated blood sugar levels which, left untreated, can cause serious health problems. World Diabetes Day on 14 November has brought attention to this topic.

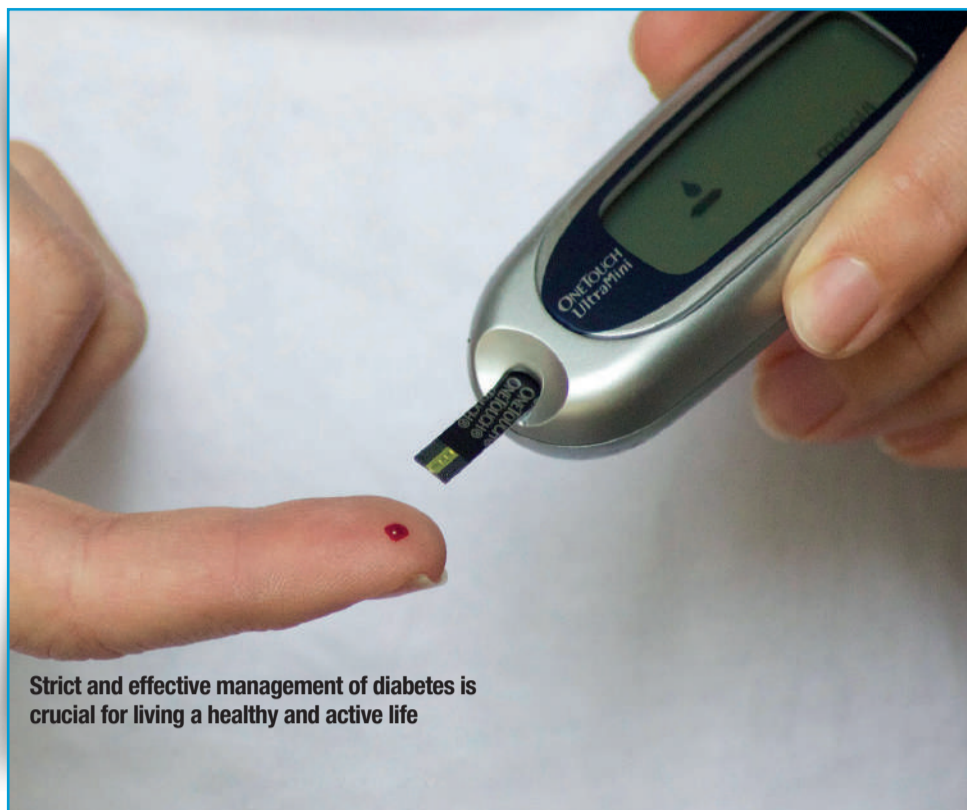
Dr Daniel Israel, a Johannesburg-based diabetologist and family practitioner, who himself has Type 1 diabetes, says the overall incidence of diabetes today is astronomically higher than anyone anticipated. Yet there's no increased prevalence in the Jewish community as opposed to the non-Jewish community, he stresses. However, in keeping with the demographics of his practice, a good percentage of both his Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes patients are Jewish.

"Type 2 diabetes, which represents 90% to 95% of cases worldwide, is partially genetic," Israel says. "You can have a susceptibility to Type 2 diabetes because of family history, but most importantly, it's a sedentary lifestyle disease that you activate with your genetic predisposition." So, if your *bobba* and your father have it, you're more likely to get it too, especially if you're inactive. "I feel that these multiple, full meals every Shabbos and *yom tov* aren't particularly helpful in stopping sedentary lifestyle diseases," he says.

One's culture and the lifestyle make a big difference in the development and management of diabetes, Israel says. For example, though the rate of diabetes among South Africa's black population is high, those who work as labourers or walk long distances and eat conservatively effectively control the lifestyle aspects of the condition.

"However, in Jewish communities, where many are white collar workers and eat tons of food every weekend and drink alcohol, it makes a massive difference. We have to own our lifestyle to adjust our diabetes risk."

Israel also stresses the importance of having regular diabetes screenings, especially since one can live with the condition and not be aware of it. "It damages a person's body in that time and makes them feel acutely unwell," he says. "And they think, 'I'm just tired, I'm normal.' The average Jewish man or woman in our community with a sometimes healthy and sometimes unhealthy lifestyle, who may be a bit overweight, really should be screening for diabetes."



Strict and effective management of diabetes is crucial for living a healthy and active life

Screening through a haemoglobin A1c test (HbA1c) should become as routine as, for example, pap smears are for women, he says.

With the advent of new technology like continuous glucose monitoring and integrated insulin pumps, diabetes has become much more controllable, Israel says. "Diabetes isn't a disease, it's a condition, and if it's a controlled condition, it's unlikely to affect a person in the long run. If it's uncontrolled, it's an absolute disaster, causing microvascular and macrovascular complications. Ultimately, diabetes is a call to a healthier lifestyle."

In the case of children, Israel says, a diabetes diagnosis can be harder for parents than having the disease themselves. "Adults can feel when they have low blood sugar, but there's a lot of guesswork as a parent, especially with very young children."

When her daughter Lital, now 18, was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at the age of nine, Lindie Novick was terrified. "It's such a trauma and a shock initially," she says. "In the beginning, I didn't sleep through the night because inevitably, her sugar would go too low, which can be life threatening."

Novick, her husband, and their son were connected to Lital's continuous glucose monitor which would send them alerts if her sugar dropped. "I had to wake up and treat her, which had a huge impact on the family because I was exhausted," Novick recalls. She would often lie in her daughter's room to check she was okay. "The next morning, I'd be so tired, that at one stage, I lived on Concerta – generally used to treat attention deficit disorder – to wake me up during the day so that I could function."

The impact on the entire family was significant. Novick recalls how her youngest

daughter once told her she had become the invisible child. "You get all consumed by the diabetes," she says. "It's a trauma for the whole family."

Novick also recalls a heartbreaking moment when she had to tell Lital that she would have the condition forever. "About two and a half weeks after she was diagnosed, she looked at me and said, 'Mommy, when am I going to get better?'" Novick recalls. "It was so hard to say to her, 'This is the story from now on.'"

Yet, after 18 months or so, managing the condition became a normal part of everyday life. Later, getting an integrated insulin pump that automatically adjusts insulin delivery based on blood sugar levels was also a game changer.

Support is also key. Novick lives in Cape Town, but she's part of an online group which consists of 46, mainly Joburg-based, Jewish mothers whose children have diabetes. "There are so many people in the Jewish community," she says. In the street where the Novick family takes its holiday in Plettenberg Bay, she says, there are four Jewish children with diabetes.

Stacey Waner*, a medical professional who has Type 2 diabetes, was diagnosed after the birth of her second child. While she had gestational diabetes during both her pregnancies before that, the permanent diagnosis came as a shock.

Today, she manages the condition with medication, insulin, exercise, and stress management. Yet she stresses prevention is better than cure. "I don't think doctors are aggressive enough about treating glucose intolerance," she says. "Managing lifestyle from a young age is also so important, because as soon as things slip, the risk is huge."

* Name has been changed.

Pro-settler Yechiel Leiter next Israeli ambassador to US

LUKE TRESS – JTA

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appointed Yechiel Leiter, an American-Israeli former settler leader whose son was killed fighting in Gaza, as the next Israeli ambassador to the United States (US).

The prime minister announced the appointment of Leiter, a former Netanyahu aide, on Friday, 8 November, saying that Leiter was "a highly capable diplomat, an eloquent speaker, and possesses a deep understanding of American culture and politics".

His appointment signals that Netanyahu expects the incoming Trump administration to take a friendlier approach to Israeli West Bank settlements than President Joe Biden's administration. Trump unveiled a peace plan in the final year of his first term that would have left Israel in control of vast swaths of the West Bank, and Trump's ambassador to Israel during his first term, David Friedman, was also a supporter of settlements.

Leiter was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and moved to Israel in 1978, according to Hebrew media reports. Decades ago, he was among the leaders of the Israeli settlement in the West Bank flashpoint city of Hebron, and later served in the Yesha Council, an umbrella body for the settlements, or communities built on land mostly controlled by

but not annexed by Israel. He lives in the West Bank, and has long been involved in the settlement enterprise and Netanyahu's Likud party.

Leiter was appointed Netanyahu's chief of staff in 2004 when Netanyahu was finance minister. He also served in the education ministry and the Israel Ports Company.

Leiter has been affiliated with right-wing policy groups including the Shiloh Policy Forum and the Kohelet Policy Forum, a key player in the Netanyahu coalition's controversial judicial overhaul. He has a doctorate in political philosophy from the University of Haifa.

His son, Major Moshe Yedidya Leiter, was killed in combat in Gaza in November 2023.

In 2020, in an open letter to American Christians, Leiter hailed Trump's presidency and encouraged US support for settlements. He called the first Trump administration "the best three years in US-Israel relations ever", and praised Trump's Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

Current Israeli Ambassador Michael Herzog, who was appointed in 2021 by Naftali Bennett, a Netanyahu rival, ends his term in January. Trump will be inaugurated on 20 January, and Leiter's term is expected to begin around the same time.

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Budget friendly adventure – a sea change for travellers

ELKA COHEN

December's typically fast approach is always punctuated by an interest in "who's going where for the holidays". Yet even with the dark days of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions well behind us, many cash-strapped South Africans still consider travel a luxury.

"This year, I have personally had hardly any bookings for overseas destinations," says independent travel agent Sharlene Lifschitz, who has been booking holidays for the past 45 years. Although Thailand remains popular because of its cost-effective exchange rate, Mauritius and Zanzibar are also of interest for their all-inclusive hotel packages. "The very few international exceptions are bookings for people travelling to Israel or Australia to visit family," she says.

With a peak in interest in bookings for Mozambique, Lifschitz says she anticipates cancelled bookings because of the recent rise in civil unrest following the election in that country.

From August, she reports hotels have been mostly full in Cape Town, Durban, Umhlanga, or Plettenberg Bay, but believes this is because there have been so many international visitors. "Locals who can afford it are choosing to travel off-peak, with many taking advantage of timeshare."

Tracy Jay (54) is a so-called "Joburg Jewish Mommy" and avid traveller, who says the bug bit 21 years ago with adventure travel that extended across Europe, the United States, and South Africa. Her wealth of experience spans across countries before, during, and after having her two daughters, now aged 18 and 21, respectively.

Umhlanga is still a popular holiday destination for locals



"My travel inspired a strong desire to offer cost-effective destination advice and accommodation options to anyone interested," she says. In fact, she's ready to sell her business to pursue her passion for personalised travel.

"Travel is the one thing that offers an invaluable return on investment, she says, with unforgettable experiences, great memories, and an unmatched education for any child."

Her best kept travel secret is to do a road trip away from city centres and destination hotspots. "There's so much to do and see that one shouldn't limit one's scope to places considered 'popular'," Jay says.

"It's all in the research and planning," she says, using one or two "very reliable" online booking platforms that offer the benefit of discount vouchers, loyalty rewards, and free cancellation policies for local and international travel.

Jay emphasises the importance of reading traveller reviews and ratings before booking. She says social media platforms are a great resource "enabling one to lock into first-hand perspectives from fellow travellers for any given destination around the globe".

Through the years, her family has kept refreshing its travel plans to make the most of their time and budget and to suit the changing needs of their growing children.

"Eventually, we took a more blended approach to our holidays when we had to accommodate the social lives of two teenagers. Splitting our time between the big cities and smaller beach towns close by was a good compromise and saved us on costs."

Many local holidaymakers are choosing to split accommodation costs by sharing with other families, which affords them the luxury of staying in the beautiful big beach house in Hermanus over the cramped apartment in Camps Bay.

Locally, there's a big trend toward adventure destinations over stereotypical holiday hotspots of the past. Places like Addo Elephant National Park and Storms River Mouth offer cheaper and more diverse accommodation in an area that offers more things to do like hiking, tubing, and bungee jumping. Others like the Tsitsikamma National Park and Keurboomstrand also offer more for less, with the advantage of being just 40 minutes outside of Plettenberg Bay.

Hotspots like Umhlanga and Ballito can either be visited briefly or sidestepped altogether, with stopovers at more affordable country hotels through the Midlands, where farm life can offer more of a quality experience for kids. The campsites and caravan parks of Scottburgh and Amanzimtoti, all the way up that coast to Pongola, may offer more excitement than the Kids Club at The Sands Hotel in Umhlanga can.

"The rule is that you'll always find better value further out. The smaller towns have friendlier people who are more eager to help and accommodate. Plus, it's more personal and interesting," Jay says.

She believes the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal is completely underrated, with St Lucia and the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a World Heritage Site, rated as a firm family favourite.

"Exploring the salt pans and estuary is an experience full of abundant birdlife and animals of all kinds. You'll also find the most magnificent beach there, with a unique range of lodges, small boutique hotels, guest houses, and cabins," Jay says.

According to local travel and lifestyle magazine publisher, Justyn Spinner (40), "The South African tourism market is back in full swing, and hotels are at full occupancy for the festive season."

"Although many locals are still choosing Cape Town and other popular coastal destinations, they're also focused on getting maximum value for their spend, with many opting for 'apart-hotels', Airbnbs, and rental apartments over hotel accommodation."

The exchange rate has made international travel unaffordable, Spinner says, "DINKS [Dual Income No Kids] are just about the only ones still able to afford overseas travel. And the trend among local families is to cut back their two-to-three-week holidays of the past to a week or 10 days at most."

"More people are looking to add value to their holiday experience by doing research and making a greater effort to explore more of nature's free offerings. It's become more appealing than blowing the budget on entrance fees to overcrowded tourist hotspots," says Spinner.

When prophecy and morality clash, faith intervenes

OPINION

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN



Abraham's journey introduced two fundamental traditions. For nearly 2 000 years, G-d had seemed remote and withdrawn from humanity. Dwelling in the heavens, He rarely conversed directly with people. As humanity fell into moral decline, He responded with severe judgements. Yet, during this period, communication with the divine remained limited.

Abraham revolutionised humanity's relationship with G-d. Unlike previous generations who had little direct contact with G-d, Abraham not only received multiple prophecies about his future, but also engaged in direct conversations with G-d. He prayed fervently, received oaths and promises from G-d, and even hosted G-d in his humble tent while he recovered from circumcision. Abraham succeeded in transforming a distant, transcendent G-d into an immanent presence, making G-d a tangible, direct part of human experience. Abraham established the tradition of prophecy, confirming that G-d speaks directly to man.

Abraham also established a legacy of moral consciousness. He discerned a moral spirit embedded within nature, and assumed that there must be a moral architect to this grand machine. He recognised that G-d's will wasn't present only in the upper cosmos, but also in the moral fabric of life. With this understanding, he shaped his own personality to reflect these values, becoming an agent of moral welfare for others. He ended military conflicts, negotiated peace with enemies, and settled disputes graciously. He liberated his nephew, Lot, from captivity, hosted anonymous travellers, and defended the sinners of Sodom. Every action was driven by ethical standards, establishing a moral tradition of behaviour.

Throughout Abraham's life, his prophetic conversations with G-d and his moral actions seemed aligned. Prophecy and morality were synchronous. Until they weren't.

At the end of his life, Abraham received a chilling prophecy to sacrifice his son. Had he not already been convinced of the reliability and authenticity of previous prophecies, he couldn't possibly have carried out such a command. However, the divine voice he heard was one he had come to recognise, and, as he had done countless times before, he responded with "Hineni" (Here I am), ready to follow G-d's will without hesitation.

However, this prophetic command directly contradicted his moral principles. It implied that G-d desired human sacrifice, a practice Abraham had long rejected as part of the pagan cultures he renounced. How could he, a father, take the life of his own child? This divine instruction tested the foundation of his moral framework.

As a deeply religious individual, Abraham accepted the prophecy. He recognised that though human morality may clash with divine command, ultimate submission to G-d's will was essential. Religious faith sometimes requires placing human moral reasoning beneath divine instruction. Human understanding sometimes fails to grasp the full moral reasoning behind G-d's command, and religious commitment means trusting that divine decisions are inherently moral even when they appear incomprehensible. This is the hallmark of a devout personality, where faith and submission take precedence over personal moral judgement.

Yet, despite his practical submission to divine mandate, Abraham's approach to the *Akeidah* (binding of Isaac) wasn't one of emotional detachment or robotic obedience. Rather, he maintained a deep, personal connection with his son throughout the ordeal. Instead of viewing the act as an impersonal command, Abraham referred to Yitzchak repeatedly as "his son", never allowing himself to depersonalise his child. While his obedience to G-d was absolute, he refused to sever the natural, instinctive love he felt as a father.

The midrash paints a poignant picture of Abraham's internal moral struggle during the *Akeidah*. Despite his willingness to submit, he prayed fervently for G-d to rescind the decree, unable to quell the natural love and sorrow he felt for his son. The midrash further describes Abraham crying tears of a mournful father, even though his heart was overjoyed to obey divine instructions. This emotional complexity reveals the depth of Abraham's character: he didn't abandon his human emotions or moral spirit. Believing that prophecy and morality could, in the end, be reconciled, he also acknowledged that such reconciliation was beyond his immediate grasp. Facing this quandary and unwavering in his faith, he submitted to divine expectation while still acknowledging the moral moment.

We stand today, like Abraham, atop the mountain, facing the delicate challenge of reconciling morality and prophecy. After millennia of exile, we have returned to fulfil ancient prophecies in the land granted to us by G-d. We have acted morally both in settling this land and in striving for peace with our neighbours. We have tried repeatedly to avoid war and conflict, yet violence and war have been mercilessly and ceaselessly thrust upon us.

The baseless accusations against us of apartheid and genocide are nothing more than venomous lies, reminiscent of the many falsehoods we have endured for more than two millennia. These pervasive and toxic lies bear no semblance to reality.

Yet independent of this cacophony of lies and libels, we do face our own moral conscience. Unfortunately, our just war has caused the death and suffering of innocents. Sadly, we still aren't welcomed peacefully into our prophetic homeland by those who also live in this region. Like Abraham, we shouldn't quiet these questions, but like him, we shouldn't abandon prophecy simply because we can't solve the entire moral calculus.

Like Abraham, we know that ultimately, our adherence to prophecy is also a moral crusade. Our return to the land of Israel is part of a divine prophecy meant to bring about a better world, spiritually and materially. Redemption for the Jewish people isn't just a narrow, parochial aim, but is designed to usher in an improved world for all.

Unfortunately, the world is still broken and unwilling to recognise or accept this prophetic vision. It struggles to comprehend the morality of our return, caught in scepticism and cynicism. See through the confusion. Our presence in Israel is both a spiritual and moral imperative, meant to benefit not just Israel but all of humanity. Don't abandon prophecy, and don't abandon moral spirit.

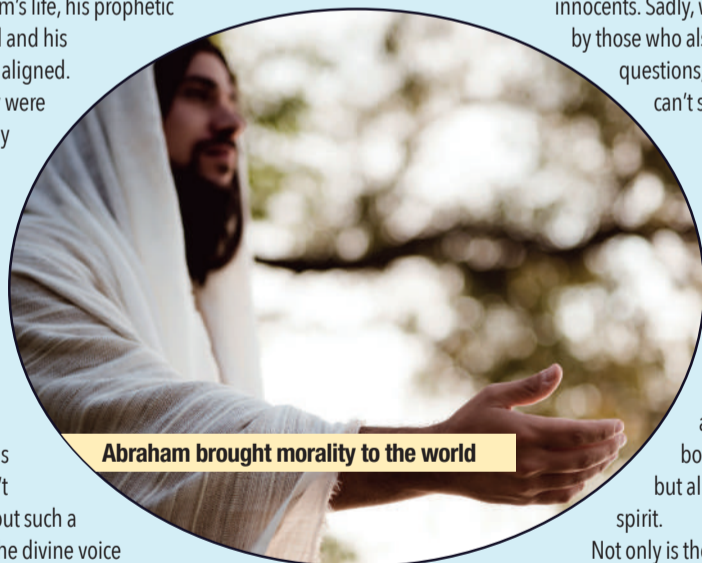
Not only is the world uneasy, certain Jews also remain morally unsettled. Biblical Jews, though not classically observant, still believed in ancient prophecy and our divine right to the land of Israel. They framed our return to Israel within the prophetic promises that guided it. On the other hand, Jews who don't identify with Biblical prophecy face a more difficult time justifying our presence in this land and our efforts to defend it. Without a prophetic context, the spiritual significance of the return appears more ambiguous, impeding and complicating their understanding of its legitimacy.

Their inability to view our current condition through a prophetic lens also makes antisemitism more bewildering. For a prophetic Jew, the hatred and antisemitism, while tragic and evil, are somewhat comprehensible. As we strive to fulfil ancient prophecies and return to this land, those who oppose G-d's presence in this world forcefully resist us. Their opposition isn't just a political stance, but a spiritual conflict, intrinsically tied to the divine plan that they reject.

For those who don't frame our return in prophetic terms, the disproportionate hatred directed toward us is baffling. Why the double standard? Why the rabid violence? Why are we the only country whose right to exist is challenged in international courts of law?

We remain the children of Abraham. Like him, we blend prophecy and morality. Even when their union isn't immediately logical.

• *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.*



Abraham brought morality to the world

Beware the gift horse who 'rides' the room

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Clever Hans was never on Twitter (or X). He didn't have Instagram or Facebook accounts, and amassed no followers on TikTok. The likely reason is that Hans lived in the early 1900s, which meant that he was unable to leverage off the opportunities presented by social media. He was also a horse. But given the range of four legged account holders on these platforms, that would have been unlikely to have been a limitation.

Clever Hans was German. As indicated by his name, as far as horses went, Hans was no fool. In fact, anyone who met him was apparently amazed by him, in particular his ability to be able to perform complex maths, answer questions, and even spell words by tapping his hoof. His owner, Wilhelm von Osten, was convinced – or claimed to be convinced – that Hans could understand and solve problems, communicate, and perform logical tasks just like a human.

He was also a bit of an influencer back then. Crowds would gather to watch Clever Hans answer questions by tapping out the correct number of hoof beats, seemingly confirming his intelligence. People believed they were witnessing an extraordinary phenomenon: a highly intelligent animal.

questioners.

Hans could read the room. And so, when his audience held their breath, looked up, or moved a certain way when he reached the correct answer, Hans would stop tapping. It wasn't the "facts" that he understood. Just people.

This discovery shocked his early 1900 followers. What they believed was proof of a horse's intellect turned out to be a simple reaction to human signals.

More than that, Pfungst revealed how easily observers could be misled by their expectations and assumptions, a phenomenon that is now known as the "Clever Hans Effect".

We can only speculate that if Hans was alive today, he would probably be employed by the United Nations (UN). As a minority – horses are terribly under represented – he would have been a shoo-in. He would be outspoken in his support for the Palestinian cause because he is a crowd reader and pleaser; his saddle would be green and red; and he would feast only on the finest watermelon. Hans would no doubt have discovered the power of social media – @CleverHans – and would acquire millions of followers who would hang onto each proclamation as the source of truth.

He would appear weekly on CNN, and become a columnist for News24.

The story of Clever Hans is an interesting one. Interesting because it was no different in 1907, when people chose to see what they wanted to see rather than

what was truly happening.

I don't know what happened to Hans after the facts became known. I don't know if he went to the glue factory or hung around and waited for the UN to be formed. But I do know that in every generation, there are those who stamp their hooves pretending to be smart when all they are is beautifully adorned horses.



Clever Hans with psychologist Oskar Pfungst

In order to make sense of Clever Hans, psychologist Oskar Pfungst conducted a series of controlled experiments to understand Hans's abilities. The result was disappointing. Hans, it turned out, wasn't as smart as he was crafty. Pfungst found that Hans was in fact not responding to the questions themselves, but to the subtle, unconscious cues given by his human

Letters

GALLANT'S FIRING NEITHER DRASTIC NOR UNUSUAL

Your article, "Netanyahu fires Defence Minister Gallant" (*SA Jewish Report*, 7 November 2024) described Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's firing of Yoav Gallant as "a drastic step while Israel is fighting on multiple fronts".

In fact, dismissing a senior military official in wartime is hardly unusual. President Harry Truman fired General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of United States forces in Korea, at the height of the Korean War because MacArthur disagreed with Truman's war strategy. President Barack Obama fired the United States commander

in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, for disapproving of aspects of Obama's war policies, and the officials implementing them.

Not surprisingly, Yoav Gallant's criticism of Prime Minister Netanyahu's policies led to a similar outcome. Netanyahu deserves to be judged by the same standards that are used to judge Truman, or Obama, or any other elected leader, not constantly disparaged for making decisions that are neither "drastic" nor even unusual.

– **Moshe Phillips, national chairperson, Americans For a Safe Israel, New York**

Friday 15 November

• Sandton Central Shul hosts a plethora of engaging activities for the Shabbos Project. Contact: 072 801 7491 or batya@chabad.org.za

Saturday 16 November

• Greenside Shul hosts a talk by Ivor Chipkin on *Israel, Gaza, and the South African public domain*. Time: 09:00 shacharit, followed by lunch. Contact: 011 788 5036

Sunday 17 November

• Watch the live broadcast of the 2024 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. Time: 17:30. Register: bit.ly/jaa24register. Contact: editorial@sajewishreport.co.za

• New Beginnings hosts a talk by Benji Shulman on *The ICJ case, one year since 7 October 2023*. Time: 10:00. Donation: R50. Contact: lynarch@worldonline.co.za

Thursday 21 November

• Beit Emanuel hosts the Franz Auerbach Interfaith Memorial Lecture with guest speakers Anton Harber and Irwin Manoim. Time: 19:30. Contact: director@beitemanuel.co.za

Sunday 24 November

• Seconds Innings hosts a talk by Dr Sian Tiley-Nel on *The Curious Curator*. Time: 09:45. Cost: R50 (R20 members). Contact: 082 561 3228

Tuesday 26 November

• Photographer Ilan Ossendryver hosts the launch of his book *Israel After 7th Oct*. Time: 17:30. Contact: 072 368 9344



A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Building on history



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

On Monday evening, 11 November, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies celebrated its 120th anniversary with a gala dinner attended by more than 300 guests, including ministers; deputy ministers; the heads of parliamentary portfolio committees; representatives from eight political parties; members of the diplomatic corps; a 16-person delegation from the American Jewish Council; two chief rabbis; more than 40 journalists; student leaders; interfaith community representatives; industry leaders; and prominent figures within the South African Jewish community. The broad spectrum of attendees underscored the Board's continuing significance in South Africa, highlighting its mandate and its role as a pillar for the community and a bridge to wider society.

The hall featured stunning portraits of influential South African Jews who have made iconic contributions to South Africa. The more than 100 portraits served as a tribute to the powerful legacy that the Jewish community has cultivated in South Africa.

The evening also marked the launch of *Jubantu 2*, a book showcasing impactful social projects that the community has initiated or supported. In a meaningful gesture, the tables were decorated with fresh vegetables, later donated to three of the community projects featured in the book.

In my address as the national chairperson, I described my initial scepticism toward the history-focused theme of the event. I had hoped that the event would be forward-looking and optimistic. But if there's one thing I know as a Jew – and a psychologist – you cannot truly move forward without knowing where you come from. It's a sentiment expressed in the Torah, in which Moses urges the Israelites to share the story of their liberation with future generations. As Jews and as South Africans, we understand the importance of storytelling to keep a people's memory and culture alive.

The first keynote address of the evening was delivered by Dr Mathews Phosa, titled, "The South African Jewish

community: recognising past contributions and envisioning a shared future," in which he praised the Jewish community's remarkable contributions to South Africa's history and its commitment to justice. Dr Phosa underscored the profound relationships between Jewish mentors and South African leaders, including Nelson Mandela. He closed with a call to action, urging all to continue the legacy of courage and resilience. "The fight for a fair, just, and united South Africa continues. Let's walk this journey together, as one nation, in the spirit of unity, courage, and hope."

The second keynote address was delivered by South African born chief rabbi of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, Sir Ephraim Mirvis. Mirvis highlighted the important role that the Jewish community had played in the struggle against apartheid, and how proud he was to have come out of this vibrant community. The rabbi went on to discuss the importance of being a light unto the nations, especially in these most trying of circumstances.

The event concluded with the presentation of three awards. Mazeltov to our awardees, Avrom Krengel; Lester Hoffman; and Stanley and Marion Bergman. Stanley and Marion had flown in from their home in New York especially to receive this award. In their acceptance speech, the honourees acknowledged that despite more than four decades in the United States, their roots have always remained in South Africa and within the South African Jewish community.

And so, here's to another 120 years, fighting for the Jewish community's civil rights and liberties, and building on the legacy of those icons who have come before us.

• 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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APPLY TODAY

Jewish boxers and friends meet on fight card

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South African Jewish boxing history will be made on 23 November, when Doron Zinman and Joshua Feldman fight at the same boxing event at the Box Camp in Booyens, Johannesburg.

The Johannesburg-based 20-year-olds Zinman and Feldman, who are best friends, will become the first two Jewish fighters to feature on the same fight card since Alfie James and Dave Katzen achieved this feat 76 years ago.

At the Olympia Ice Rink in Johannesburg on 26 June 1948, James retained his South African welterweight title on points, beating Gillie van der Westhuizen, while Katzen was stopped in the third round against Jimmy Toweel in a lightweight contest.

Promoter Larry Wainstein, who brought Zinman and Feldman together on the same fight card, says the nine-bout fight card at the Box Camp starts at 19:00 and will be broadcast live around the world on British sports streaming platform, DAZN. Due to Shabbat ending at about 19:00, Zinman and Feldman will be pushed up the bill to accommodate their supporters who observe Shabbat.

This event will be Zinman's first professional boxing fight. "I don't know too much about my opponent, but I'm excited," he says.

Feldman, meanwhile, will be contesting his first six-round fight, and his fifth professional fight in total.

"We've been preparing for our fights by

training really hard, training twice a day, six days a week, sparring, going to the boxing gym every day, running, and studying the game, just trying to improve," Zinman says.

"We became friends at school. We were together at primary school, and then year on year, we became closer, and we both fell in

many rounds this year.' So we planned it so that Doron could have his first fight on our bill, and the two of them are on the bill together."

The duo's opponents have been picked by a matchmaker. "Doron is fighting a fighter who is also having

his debut so that they can put on a good fight," Wainstein says. "Josh has been doing well with his fights, so you've got to be looking to push him up a bit, from four rounds to six."

Feldman has won his two fights this year by knockout and says, "It's been going very well so far."

Feldman and Zinman aspire to become world champions in their respective weight categories. "Josh is much bigger than I am," the latter says, "but of course, to be world champion is a dream. That's what we

work towards every day."

They both started boxing at about the same time. "It was something we were doing as an extramural, and we just carried on going. It just took us from one step to another," Feldman says. They began their journey in the amateur ranks with top Cape Town trainer Felix Venganayi at the Blood, Sweat and Tears Gym in 2016. Both have since relocated to Johannesburg, where they rent an apartment together and train under the watchful eye of the award-winning Nathan at his Hot Box Gym in Savoy Estate.

Feldman says it helps to stay with

another boxer as, "We support each other as friends."

Being the first two Jewish boxers to appear on the same fight card since James and Katzen may be a good omen for Feldman and Zinman. James, who won 49 fights in a career of about 10 years, was described as one of the most colourful characters in South African boxing, and Katzen boasted a professional record of 21 wins as well as the South African bantamweight and lightweight champion titles.

Raised in Cape Town, Feldman and Zinman were born a month apart. "We started boxing when we were 12," Zinman says. "I went to Herzlia up until Grade 10, Josh until Grade 9, and then we did home schooling, the Cambridge system."

Wainstein says, "There aren't too many Jewish boxers around in Gauteng. In Cape Town, there are a few. It hasn't been the sport of choice for a lot of Jewish boys."

The son of a boxing enthusiast father, one of Wainstein's five brothers, Morris, won the South African bantamweight title. Wainstein aims to continue his family's legacy in boxing. After 18 months in promoting, Boxing 5 had its first world champion, who won his fight in Japan a month or so ago.

Wainstein himself played professional football, giving up boxing as an amateur many years ago. "When I turned 16, I signed professional forms with Highlands Park as a soccer player. I couldn't box then because I was a professional." He played in the 1973 Castle Cup Final and did a lot of coaching. "I've got a long history of football with the likes of Martin Cohen."



Josh Feldman and Doron Zinman at the Hot Box Gym

love with boxing, so that also was a big reason we spent a lot of time together. We trained together at the Blood, Sweat and Tears gym in Cape Town."

"Last year, we had Josh fighting in our tournament through Colin [Nathan]," says Wainstein, who started Boxing 5, a promotion company, which works with Colin Nathan's management company, No Doubt Management. "Colin said, 'I think it's time to give Doron a fight, so we can put him on our next bill.' It just so happens that Josh already had two fights that hadn't gone quite the distance. Colin said, 'Maybe we've got to put Josh on again because maybe he hasn't had too

WIZO crowns year of giving with Garden Day

A record crowd turned out for the 20th Johannesburg WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organisation) Garden Day on Sunday, 27 October, held at one of Johannesburg's most beautiful privately owned gardens.

Helen Maisels Trisk, the vice-president of WIZO South Africa convened the event, together with the committee of WIZO Johannesburg. This year, WIZO was pleased to welcome co-Vice-President Barbara Flax, from WIZO's Cape Town federation.

Dominique Enthoven opened her beautiful gardens for the event. The Enthoven family are known for their commitment to many worthy causes in South Africa.

Renowned landscaper Elizabeth Steyn and her son, Tim, established and tend the classic garden, which surrounds the Herbert Baker House. Patrick Watson established an indigenous garden for the family across the road, where



Helen Maisels Trisk

guests were served tea.

A talk followed by landscaper Andy de Wet, the winner of the 2023 award for South Africa at the famous Chelsea Garden Show in London.

Maisels Trisk told her guests about the indispensable services WIZO provides in Israel. The war had made the many projects WIZO funds more necessary than ever, she said, including schools; day care centres; foster homes; shelters for abused women; and training colleges.

In South Africa, WIZO's outreach project Wheelchairs of Hope

donates state-of-the-art wheelchairs made in Israel to youngsters in institutions throughout South Africa.

WIZO has launched an emergency appeal to support its beneficiaries. Donations can be made to: WIZO Johannesburg; Nedbank code 150115 account 1511028858; reference your name and e funds; email wizojohannesburg011@gmail.com

Congrats to Yeshiva's junior city councillors

Yeshiva College is proud to announce its Johannesburg

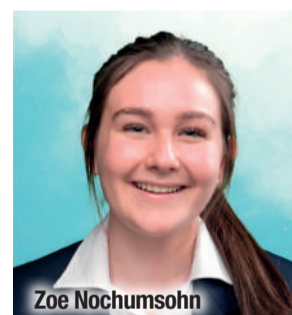
mini and junior city councillors for 2025.

Mazaltov to Levi Richard and Liora Hummel on being selected as mini city councillors, and to David Fox and Zoe Nochumsohn on being appointed

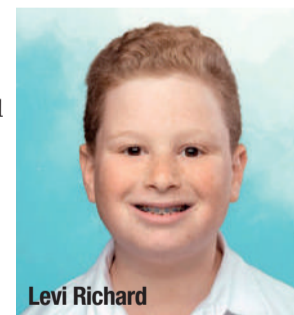
councillors to the junior council for 2025. Yeshiva has no doubt that they will be excellent ambassadors for the school, and will make a valuable contribution to society in their roles.



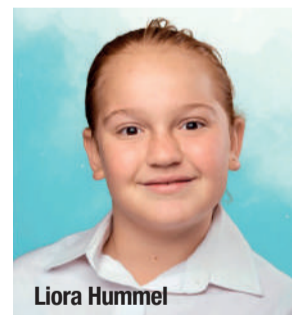
David Fox



Zoe Nochumsohn



Levi Richard



Liora Hummel

Yeshiva's painted tallis shows art of life and unity

Yeshiva College Pre-Primary School painted a tallit for use in the Yeshiva College shul on Simchat Torah for the Kol Hane'arim aliya.

Created a year after the Jewish world was shaken, the tallit embodies *am Yisrael's* fighting spirit to live. It has artwork by each child in the school, with each piece symbolising the beauty of our Torah, *am Yisrael, eretz Yisrael, and Yiddishkeit*. The Union of Jewish Women partnered in the project by sewing the artwork.

A year after so much pain, the children were blessed under the tallit on Simchat Torah. *Yachad nanetzach* (together, united, we'll succeed).



Bespoke tallit created by Yeshiva College Pre-Primary School

King David builds friendship with Orange Grove Primary

King David Ariel and King David Primary School Victory Park have successfully hosted two collaborative events with Orange Grove Primary School this year. The first focused on building friendships and teamwork between Grade 2 pupils from all three schools, while at the second, on 31 October, senior pupils created games and activities for younger students. These initiatives, supported by the King David Schools' Foundation, have fostered relationships between the schools and provided valuable learning experiences for all participants.



A collaborative event with Orange Grove Primary School hosted by King David Victory Park



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