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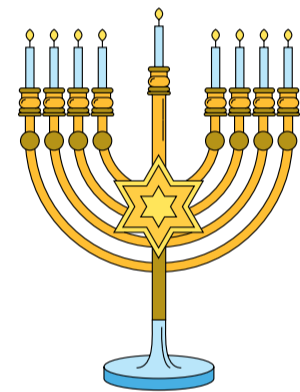


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South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

Volume 27 – Number 41 ■ 12 December 2024 ■ 11 Kislev 5785

This is our last edition for 2024. We will be back on 16 January 2025.

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Attack on Cape Jewish offices – ‘terrorism’

TALI FEINBERG

Cape Town Jewry was exposed to what experts have called “terrorism” for the first time in many years when an improvised explosive device (IED) was thrown into the Jewish community offices precinct in Gardens, Cape Town, last Friday, 6 December 2024.

The IED was discovered undetonated on the property at 10:30. The property contains offices for most Jewish community organisations, including a women’s group, a youth movement, a fundraising organisation, and a Jewish newspaper.

A protest was planned to take place outside the same address on 9 December, highlighting the building as a target. The South African Police Service (SAPS) has now handed the case to the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (the Hawks) for further investigation.

“We have evidence showing the perpetrators committing the act, and all available evidence has been handed over to the authorities,” says Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) Executive Director Daniel Bloch.

Terrorism expert Professor Hussein Solomon said, “Given developments in Gaza, Israel, and the Middle East, there has been a rise in antisemitism, but this is at a completely different level. It’s definitely terrorism. Much of the militant antisemitism has been in Cape Town, so it doesn’t surprise me that this happened in Cape Town.”

He believes South African Jewry needs to be even more

vigilant. “There’s a need for the South African government to watch its tone when responding to developments in the Middle East to ensure that it doesn’t stoke the fires of antisemitism,” he says.

Solomon says the South African security establishment needs to take these threats seriously, and work with the Jewish community to ensure its safety.

Ryan Cummings, director of analysis at Africa-focused risk management company Signal Risk and an expert in terrorism, agrees that the IED is “a concerning development for South Africa’s Jewish community. While extremism has been less pronounced in South Africa compared to other areas of the continent, South African

Jewry has previously been targeted by acts of violence by fundamentalist groups such as the Qibla-sponsored PAGAD [People Against Gangsterism and Drugs] movement which, albeit in a reformed guise, remains active today.

“Within the context of heightened antagonism towards Jewish interests as a result of developments in the Middle East, there are serious concerns regarding the security of the Jewish community in the country, which could be held accountable for geopolitical developments over which it has no control,” says Cummings. “To this effect, South African authorities should be taking threats against the community seriously and seek to reassure, rather than downplay the

safety concerns of Jewish citizens during this time of heightened tensions.”

However, News24 downplayed the incident, reporting just before Shabbat on 6 December that the item found wasn’t an IED. This was possibly because an official SAPS statement said “SAPS responded to a possible explosive device” and that it was “too soon to speculate what the object is and who placed it at the location”. The news website later corrected its statement, but extremists pounced on the mistake, saying that the Jewish community and its leadership were spreading fake news to gain sympathy.

Professor Glen Segell, who has written about terrorism in Africa, says an IED thrown

at a Jewish site, whether it exploded or not, “is an act of terrorism”. He says the South African government needs to make a strong statement against all forms of terrorism, and “government and police need to show that they are in control”.

As soon as the IED was discovered, law enforcement was notified. “SAPS K9 and Bomb Disposal Unit members investigated the discovery, and after the object was declared safe, it was removed for further investigation,” says SAPS spokesperson Colonel André Traut.

Bloch says that since 6 December, the SAJBD and the Community Security Organisation (CSO) have been working closely with the SAPS and City of Cape Town law enforcement. “Their support has been greatly appreciated, and they have taken this attack extremely seriously,” he says.

He says for more than two years, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions coalition, the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, and other organisations have been standing outside the Jewish community centre and other Jewish facilities “spewing hate speech, spreading misinformation, and calling for the death of Israel and death of Zionists.”

“The antisemitic hatred we have seen on social media – the use of classic antisemitic tropes and Holocaust inversion, and lies and mistruths spread by anti-Israel movements – only inflame hatred towards the Jewish community, our supporters, and friends,” Bloch says. “This could well have led to this disgusting act of terror on our community. It further justifies our actions in already taking four individuals to the Equality Court for hate speech and antisemitism. Words matter.”

In a message to the community, Cape SAJBD Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson

Continued on page 3>>

Off to camp

Elana Freinkel bids farewell to her son, Aron, as he leaves for Bnei Akiva Machaneh 2024



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

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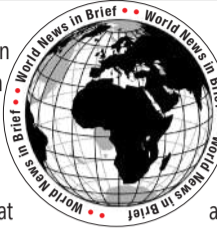
Jewish U Mich official's home vandalised

A Jewish trustee of the University of Michigan awoke on Monday to find his window broken and pro-Palestinian graffiti on his wife's car, the third time he has been the victim of vandalism related to the Israel-Hamas war.

Jordan Acker, an attorney and Democrat from Huntington Woods, Michigan, shared on Instagram that he and his family were awoken by the sounds of two heavy objects being thrown through their home's front window. Acker's wife's car was graffitied with an inverted red triangle, a symbol Hamas uses to mark its targets in propaganda videos that has been adopted by pro-Palestinian activists, as well as "divest" and "Free Palestine" written in red.

In his post, Acker called the vandalism "Klan-like". "Like we always do in this great nation when we're confronted with terrorism, I won't let fear win," he wrote. "All this does is harden my resolve to continue to do the right thing for the university and the Michigan voters who elected me. I call upon members of the Michigan community to publicly repudiate this vile antisemitic intimidation, and offer full support to law enforcement to root out these bigots so they see the consequences for their actions."

The university called the vandalism "a clear act of antisemitic intimidation".



"The University of Michigan condemns these criminal acts in the strongest possible terms," the school said.

The vandalism comes after the university's new student government threatened to withhold funding from all student groups until the university agreed to divest from Israel. The school's regents have said they won't divest, and the student president leading that effort was impeached last month.

The attack also marks the third time Acker, a former Obama administration official who has served as a board member for the Jewish Federation of Metro Detroit, has been targeted by pro-Palestinian activists.

San Francisco Hillel graffitied with battle slogan

Vandals spray-painted the Hillel building at San Francisco State University with a slogan referencing an ancient battle in which Muslim troops defeated a group of Jewish fighters.

The perpetrators in San Francisco also tried to break into the building, according to the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Bay Area.

The sign on the front of the San Francisco Hillel was spray-painted late on Sunday, 8 December, or early Monday with the word "Khaybar", which is chanted at protests against Israel around the world, according to the Anti-Defamation League. The word refers to a battle between Muslims and local Jews on the Arabian Peninsula at the dawn of Islam that ended with the slaughter of Jewish tribes. Underneath the word, vandals

drew symbols for communism and anarchism.

The centre's garage door was covered with graffiti in large capital letters reading, "Death to Western imperialism!"

Tyler Gregory, chief executive of the local Jewish Community Relations Council, called the incident an antisemitic attack, and linked it to what he described as a pattern of hateful acts against Jews at universities.



San Francisco Hillel graffitied with the word Khaybar, which refers to an ancient battle between Arabs and Jews

"Hillel House is a vibrant community centre and should be a place where Jewish students feel safe and comfortable, especially as antisemitism continues to soar on campus," he said. "It's imperative that our elected officials and education leaders dramatically curb the antisemitic rhetoric at campus protests and in college classrooms that inevitably leads to attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions."

Pro-Palestinian protesters at a number of college campuses have targeted Hillels, which are the centre of Jewish life on many campuses, owing to their support for Israel.

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The eternal flame



Rabbi Ryan Goldstein - Muizenberg Shul

"And the impure were defeated by the pure."

Throughout Chanukah, this line rings out through our prayers three times a day. We remember how a small group of Kohanim, the Chashmonayim, took on the formidable Syrian-Greek army and won. Jews all over the world celebrate this festival. Even the most distant, assimilated Jew with his Christmas decorations in one corner of his home will still celebrate Chanukah and find a prominent place in his home to display his menorah.

This is perplexing. If one delves into the historical context and background of events that transpired leading up to Chanukah, one finds that Greek culture started entering Jewish life. There were no concentration camps or pogroms. The Greeks were "merely" trying to Hellenize the Jewish people. Trying to make them more modern and "civilised". Exactly what our assimilated brethren with the Christmas trees are advocating in the Western World today.

To the bystander, the band of Kohanim who fought this wave of Hellenism must have appeared to be no more than a band of crazy, radical, ultra-Orthodox, "frumy-terrorists". If that's the case, then why do these same secular Jews today celebrate this holiday and the Maccabees' victory? If these so-called modern Jews were around then, would they not have been on the opposing side? Would they not have

gone to their liberal university campuses showing support for the "poor" Greeks who were being killed by the "fanatic" Kohanim? Yet here they are today proudly lighting their menorahs.

The answer lies in the concept of the *pintele Yid* (holy spark) that's always alight in every Jew. No matter how far he falters, somewhere deep down in his psyche, there's a calling. Many have tried to silence it, but it's always there, a deep desire to connect to Hashem and His Torah.

Chanukah isn't just about

lighting little coloured candles, Chanukah represents that flame that threatens to die out very quickly but has lasted for thousands of years beyond all expectations. Chanukah has and always will represent the eternal flame in every Jewish soul. Hashem let the light burn miraculously in the Temple all those years ago because He is showing us that, even though we have been in exile for so long, the flame of hope and connection to something greater than ourselves still burns and will miraculously continue to burn within all of us, no matter how far we stray.

Torah Thought

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Multi-million rand anti-Israel junket sparks outrage

NICOLA MILTZ

A contentions R95 million in tax payers' money spent on a diplomatic trip targeting Israel has drawn widespread condemnation after it was revealed in Parliament's Special Appropriations Bill last week.

The funds, retrospectively allocated, were used to finance what critics have dubbed an "anti-Israel junket" to Geneva, where South Africa is pursuing a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The expenses, which included multiple airfares, luxury hotels, and fancy dining, have infuriated South Africans, many of whom are grappling with poverty, unemployment, and failing public services.

An Appropriations Bill is a legislative tool that allows the government to allocate public funds for specific purposes such as maintaining essential services or paying off debts. In this case, the Bill included retrospective authorisation for funds already spent, including the R95 million for attendees at the ICJ case.

Without the Bill's approval, the government would be unable to account legally for these expenses, potentially causing financial and operational disruptions.

The Appropriations Bill bundled other critical expenditure, such as debt for SANRAL (the South African National Roads Agency) and e-tolls, making it difficult for political parties such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Patriotic Alliance (PA) to vote against it without risking a national political and economic crisis.

The R95 million issue, which took up a mere one line in the lengthy Bill, has become a flashpoint for broader frustration with the government's inability to prioritise the needs of its citizens over ideological foreign policies.

The DA and the PA, part of the government of national unity (GNU), came under fire for approving the Bill.

Critics argue that the DA enabled the misuse of public funds. In response, the DA explained that rejecting the Bill would have destabilised government operations and potentially jeopardised national unity.

"As a member of the GNU, the DA was compelled to participate in the single permissible amendment to the Appropriations Bill, as failing to do so could have destabilised critical government operations and potentially threatened the GNU's stability," said DA MPs Michael Bagraim, Glynnis Breytenbach, and Darren Bergman in a joint statement.

"The question before us wasn't whether



Photo: Democratic Alliance Facebook page

Democratic Alliance Chief Whip George Michalakis speaking on how national priorities need to be weighed up against the ICJ case

we support the court case, but rather whether we, as a country, should pay debt already incurred," they said. "The aim of the Bill was to deal with the debt already incurred by the African National Congress [ANC], and not to allocate additional funds. Naturally, refusing to pay such debt would have serious consequences for our credit rating and economy."

However, the DA maintained its opposition to the ICJ case, stressing, "At no point did we approve any additional funding for this case." It added that some of its MPs left the House during the vote to express their disapproval of the R95 million allocation.

DA Chief Whip George Michalakis said this week that future expenditure on the government's genocide case against Israel would have to be carefully weighed up against national priorities.

With a constrained fiscus, Michalakis said the R95 million spent so far on the ICJ case could have addressed many of the country's pressing needs.

"If the trade-off has to be at home or abroad, I do think charity begins at home, and we would most certainly advocate for funds to be spent towards South Africa and growing our own economy than to fight a battle overseas," he said.

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) strongly condemned the R95 million allocation, calling it "a disturbing misuse of public resources" all in service of a nefarious agenda to delegitimise Israel.

SAZF spokesperson Rolene Marks said, "While South Africa grapples with an unprecedented 41.9% expanded unemployment rate and severe domestic challenges, the government seems more interested in undermining Israel's fundamental right to self-defence against Hamas, a recognised terrorist organisation

responsible for the 7 October atrocities."

Marks also highlighted the hypocrisy of the ANC government's foreign policy, pointing out its ongoing ties to regimes like Syria's former government under Bashar al-Assad. "This selective morality, condemning Israel while embracing regimes responsible for mass civilian casualties, reveals the profound hypocrisy behind the ICJ case," she said.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) criticised the lack of transparency surrounding the funding. "The deceptive linkage of this funding to the SANRAL bailout represents a devious political tactic designed to place political parties in a no-win situation: support the critical rescue of the rail network while endorsing the ICJ funding; or oppose the ICJ funding at the risk of further straining

South Africa's collapsing rail infrastructure," it said.

The retrospective nature of the funding has also sparked concern. "This highlights a troubling lack of transparency in the government's budgeting process," the SAJBD noted. It commended opposition parties like ActionSA, Freedom Front Plus, and the African Christian Democratic Party for refusing to support what it called "an outrageous misuse of public funds".

The controversy has struck a nerve in a country where basic services are collapsing and citizens face worsening socio-economic conditions. Political commentator Kenneth Mokgathe called the expenditure "nonsensical", given South Africa's pressing domestic challenges. "The country is battling to keep the taps running, faces crippling electricity cuts, and has an

underfunded educational sector," he said. "Diverting funds to fight another country's battles while our own people suffer is a betrayal of South Africans."

Mokgathe also criticised South Africa's alignment with Iran-backed groups like Hamas, calling it a move that benefited no-one. "There's no strategic value in dragging Israel into courts. This is political theatre at best, and it won't bring peace to the Middle East," he said.

Geopolitical experts like Terence Corrigan from the South African Institute of Race Relations noted that the DA and other GNU members such as the PA face an ideological impasse. "You're dealing with a deeply held worldview that prioritises foreign political agendas over domestic crises," said Corrigan. "To preserve the GNU, they may have had to hold their noses and acquiesce."

The DA, however, emphasised its focus on holding the government accountable. "We will drive this issue going forward, especially given that Minister [of International Relations and Cooperation] Ronald Lamola previously assured Parliament that 'not a cent of taxpayers' money would be spent on this litigation,'" it stated.

"This expenditure represents not just a financial misallocation, but a moral failure to recognise Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against extremist threats," Marks said. "South African citizens deserve to know why their government is spending their money to advance a foreign agenda that undermines regional stability and democratic values."

Attack on Cape Jewish offices – 'terrorism'

>>Continued from page 1

said the Cape SAJBD, together with the CSO in Cape Town would "take every action to protect our community physically, politically, and to the full extent the law allows", and that they were "working together with all sectors of the security cluster to secure the safety of the Jewish community in Cape Town. Every South African should stand together with the Jewish community and all peace-loving citizens to condemn this attempted action unequivocally."

This was echoed by Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis, who released a statement on 10 December saying that Cape Town Metro Police assisted SAPS with analysis of CCTV footage "to get to the bottom of the incident, with the city's support for the investigation being co-ordinated by the Safety & Security Information Management Services. While SAPS has not officially confirmed the nature of the device, it has handed the file over to the Hawks, indicating that they view the matter with great seriousness.

"Should the SAPS investigation confirm that this was an attempted attack on the Jewish community, I know I would speak for all Capetonians in condemning such an attempt in the strongest possible terms," said Hill-Lewis. "Our city has a long and

proud history of being a safe city for people of all religions. Let's all commit ourselves to defending that history."

In response to the event, CSO Cape Town heightened security protocols across the community. The measures are continuously monitored and adapted as needed.

"This disgusting act of terror against our community deserves the unqualified condemnation of all political and religious leaders in our city," says Bloch. "We trust law enforcement and the security cluster to deploy all available resources to apprehend the perpetrators, and for them to be dealt with to the full extent the law allows. The Cape SAJBD will continue to defend our community from those who seek to harm us."

Despite the incident, "our community remains resilient, strong, and united, and our Jewish way of life will continue to thrive", says Bloch. "We look forward to welcoming visitors and showing them what the Cape Town Jewish community has to offer. We ask our community and all visitors to remain vigilant while enjoying summer in our beautiful city."

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The Kiffness objects to silencing after Sooliman critique

TALI FEINBERG

The Kiffness (local musician David Scott) was disinvented from speaking at his alma mater, Pridwin Preparatory School (Pridwin) after challenging Gift of the Givers founder Dr Imtiaz Sooliman on social media for being a "radical Islamist under the guise of a humanitarian".

Scott, whose stage name is The Kiffness, is a religious Christian, known for his humorous, satirical songs often featuring cats. He was appalled at a recent clip of Sooliman speaking at a mosque in Cape Town.



Said Sooliman, "The Koran says to strike terror into the hearts of your enemies and Allah's enemies. [When South Africa took Israel to the International Court of Justice], it made 60 other countries not be afraid anymore. It's not what we achieved or what rule is passed. What is important is to tell the Zionists, 'We are not afraid of you.'"

Scott shared the video in a tweet on 28 November, and wrote, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly, they are ferocious wolves. Dr Sooliman is a radical Islamist under the guise of a humanitarian, and Gift of the Givers is the front for a far more sinister agenda."

The musician faced a massive backlash of abuse, threats, and calls for him to be "cancelled". Then, he was disinvented from speaking at his old primary school, Pridwin in Johannesburg. The Christian school has a small number of Jewish students. Scott contacted the headmaster to share why he wrote the tweet, and asked him to share this perspective with staff and parents. He was told that the staff and board of governors, who represent the parent body, would look at it, but he hasn't heard anything since.

"Two days before Pridwin's prize-giving ceremony, I was informed by the teacher who had invited me that the headmaster had received threats from some of the school's Muslim parents," says Scott. "These parents stated that they would boycott the event if I were allowed to speak. In response, Pridwin decided to cancel my appearance without any further explanation why."

Scott says he doesn't harbour resentment toward those who disagreed with his invitation, "not even the parents who threatened to boycott if I spoke. People are entitled to their opinions. What I find concerning is the headmaster's decision to surrender to the demands of a small group."

"While it may have seemed like an easy way to avoid immediate conflict, such appeasement often sets a troubling precedent. It risks fostering a culture where the loudest voices – or threats – can dictate decisions, even at the expense of open dialogue or fairness."

Pridwin Executive Headmaster Ross Grimley told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Some of Mr Scott's views were recently the subject of debate and comment, including among our school community. We took the decision to change the guest speaker at prize-giving to ensure that the focus of the entire Pridwin community remained on the extraordinary achievements of our senior primary boys. We didn't want anything to detract from the

celebratory nature of the occasion."

But Scott hopes that the school "remember[s] the foundational Christian values the school was built upon. If 'cancel' culture has taught us anything, it's that bowing to the demands of the loudest voices always leads to more harm than good. Schools need to remain constant in their principles, regardless of pressure from parents, the media, or any group that doesn't align with their core values. By standing firm, schools can foster environments that prioritise truth, character, and resilience – qualities essential for shaping the next generation."

Going back to why he criticised Sooliman, Scott says he has "always admired the incredible work of Gift of the Givers and Dr Sooliman's leadership. In the past, I even made a meme highlighting how much better off South Africa might be if our taxes went to organisations like theirs."

That's why he was so surprised to hear Sooliman's recent rhetoric, "which seems at odds with the values of compassion and unity his non-governmental organisation embodies. Several statements have raised red flags. For example, when the government of national unity was formed, he expressed disappointment that MK [uMkhonto weSizwe] and the Economic Freedom Fighters weren't included – groups associated with concerning ideologies and actions."

The real turning point for him, though, was when Sooliman openly stated in an interview that he prioritised Koranic law over national law, and when he called his audience to "strike terror into the hearts of your enemies and Allah's enemies". For Scott, "these words and their implications completely clash with the humanitarian principles that drew my respect for him in the first place."

Scott says that in the music industry, "saying something that sparks backlash can put a musician's livelihood at risk, so I think many artists choose to stay silent, even when they feel strongly about an issue". He's fortunate to be in a position where he has built a global audience through platforms like YouTube, which allows him to bypass the traditional "gatekeepers" of the music industry.

Because of this independence, he can speak his mind freely. "In fact, I believe it's my ability to express myself authentically that laid the foundation for my success on YouTube in the first place," he says. "As for the backlash, I understand it comes with the territory. Those who want to 'cancel' me don't know me or my intentions. I harbour no ill will toward them. I simply focus on staying true to myself and ultimately to G-d."

Scott says he also holds no resentment toward Sooliman's supporters and genuinely wishes them well. "I understand why some people might have been offended by my comments. It's not every day you see someone, let alone 'the guy who remixes cats on YouTube' critique an organisation as widely respected as Gift of the Givers. Its work has undeniably brought immense good to countless lives, and that naturally inspires loyalty."

However, his concerns weren't about its humanitarian efforts, "but about specific statements made by Sooliman that I felt warranted attention. The backlash reinforced for me how deeply people respect his organisation, but it also confirmed the importance of holding everyone – no matter how revered – accountable for their words. Constructive criticism and open dialogue are essential, especially when people have such significant global influence."

Scott has also received support, including from others who share concerns about Sooliman's rhetoric. "I'm grateful for opportunities like this interview, where there's a genuine interest in hearing my perspective," he says. "It stands in contrast to other media outlets that often seem more focused on catching people out than engaging in meaningful conversation."

I've learned to engage only with journalists who approach the conversation in good faith, as I believe there's little value in speaking to those with an agenda."

Finally, "I want to wish the South African Jewish community a wonderful Chanukah," he says. "My prayer is that you remain safe during this festive season, and enjoy cherished times with friends and family."

Mystery surrounds assassination of self-defence expert

NICOLA MILTZ

Self-defence instructor, Anthony Segal shared a poignant message on Facebook two days before he was murdered: "Life happens while you're busy making plans, but with IDefend Krav Maga, you're always prepared to face the unexpected and come out stronger."

The 52-year-old father of two was ambushed by several criminals, who shot him multiple times before speeding off in a white Mercedes. The brazen attack occurred outside the Wesleyan Church Hall in Craighall on Wednesday, 4 December 2024, at around 14:00.

The irony of Segal's death has left a community in shock, while the motive behind the brutal killing remains a mystery. Despite his hyper-vigilance, Segal was ultimately unable to escape the violence he spent his life teaching others to avoid.

The attack was swift and calculated. According to police, Segal was leaving a church hall when the gunmen struck. By the time emergency services arrived, Segal was already lifeless.

Lieutenant Colonel Mavela Masondo told the *SA Jewish Report*, "He was at Craighall Park in Johannesburg, consulting a client on 4 December, at approximately 13:30. When he left the premises approaching his vehicle, he was gunned down by a passing vehicle. He was shot several times."

He said the motive for the killing couldn't be confirmed at this stage. "Police have opened a case of murder and are on the lookout for suspects," said Masondo.

Segal devoted his life to teaching vigilance and self-defence, yet had no chance to defend himself in his final moments. His long-term partner, Melissa Cambier, received a frantic call to come to the scene. "I flew there. I knew it was bad, but I just needed to see what was going on and make sure he knew I was there for him in the end," she said.

For Cambier, the circumstances of Segal's death are incomprehensible. "Anthony was always super aware of his surroundings – he taught this, he was threat-aware. If he was going to die, it wasn't like this, he was almost invincible." She described feeling a "mix of emotions: anger, sadness, hurt, and shock", saying, "There are many rumours, but nothing I hear will change how I feel about him and the life we shared together."

Segal's life revolved around the art of Krav Maga, a self-defence discipline he used to teach people to protect themselves against violence. He was particularly passionate about combating gender-based violence, offering specialised training sessions to empower individuals and foster a culture of safety.

Segal's death hasn't only devastated those closest to him, it has left a community grappling with the loss of a man who spent his life empowering others.

"Anthony was community-driven, popular, well-liked, friendly, and fun-loving," Cambier said. "He enjoyed the outdoors and socialising with friends."

His passion extended beyond adults. Segal devoted much of his time to empowering children, offering family-friendly self-defence classes and working with kids in underprivileged schools. Larry Marks, a long-time friend, noted

that Segal's earlier volunteer work with the Community Security Organisation (CSO) helped shape his career.

"His work at the CSO awakened in him a passion for self-defence, which led to him going into that world in a professional capacity," Marks said. "He had a passion for empowering kids to defend themselves against schoolyard bullies, and became a sort of role model to many kids and teens in underprivileged schools by instilling confidence in them through self-defence. This line of work really resonated with him."

As police continue their investigation, the motive for Segal's killing remains unclear. The precision of the attack suggests it was a planned, deliberate act, but why someone would want Segal dead is unknown.

Some speculate it may have been an orchestrated attack carried out at the behest of someone with a personal vendetta or desire to have him silenced over information he may have become privy to.

"There is much speculation, but what the family needs is the truth and closure," said Cambier.

Sean Jammy, deputy chief executive of Community Active Protection, where Segal had previously worked, said, "Anthony was an ex-colleague of ours, and we feel the loss quite personally. He was a loyal, kind, and giving human being. We are actively working the case."

Police sources have indicated that the investigation is progressing, and there's optimism that arrests will be made soon. For now, the details remain shrouded in speculation.

Segal's murder is emblematic of a troubling rise in targeted assassinations in South Africa. Execution-style killings have become alarmingly common, with victims ranging from politicians to businesspeople and security professionals.

Experts point to the intersection of organised crime, political corruption, and a lack of accountability as driving this trend. "These aren't random acts of violence, they are calculated hits meant to send a message or settle a score," said a security analyst.

Friends, colleagues, and students have shared heartfelt tributes to Segal, painting a picture of a "good guy" whose life was dedicated to making others feel safe.

"Anthony was more than an instructor, he was a mentor and friend to his students," said Marks. "He had this ability to connect with people and make them feel stronger and more confident. He made a lasting impact on many lives."

The Krav Maga & CQC Academy, where Segal earned his second dan black belt, released a statement in his honour, saying "Anthony's legacy of strength, resilience, and generosity will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. May his memory continue to inspire us all."

While the motive for his murder remains a mystery, what's clear is the profound loss felt by all who knew him. Segal's life, though tragically cut short, remains an inspiration to many, and his memory will continue to empower others for years to come.

Police are appealing to anyone who might have information that can help in the investigation or assist in apprehending the suspects to call the nearest police station or call crime stop on 0860 010 111.



Anthony Segal

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver



Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Dr Sooliman is a radical Islamist under the guise of a humanitarian & @GiftoftheGivers is the front for a far more sinister agenda.



SA expats feel the heat of antisemitism Down Under

TALI FEINBERG

South African Jews who chose to make their home in Australia often went looking for safety and sanctuary, and many found it in the “the lucky country”. But now, in the space of 14 months, that rock-solid sense of security has been shaken in a wave of antisemitic attacks that some expats say their government has done little to stop.

For many expats, this came to a head when, in November, a car was set alight and vehicles were spraypainted with anti-Israel graffiti in Sydney’s Eastern suburbs – where many South African Jews have settled. Then, in the early hours of Friday, 6 December, the Adass Israel Synagogue, a major ultra-Orthodox shul in Ripponlea, Melbourne, another area where many South African Jewish expats live, was firebombed, with congregants escaping with their lives. The attack has now been classified as terrorism, and Australia has launched an antisemitism task force in response.

Australian Jews experienced a record number of 2 062 antisemitic incidents over the year following 7 October 2023, according to a new report from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. In light of this, South African expat and Melbourne resident Justine Pearl is hyper-vigilant everywhere she goes. “I’ve been told, anecdotally and by professionals, that this hyper-vigilance is a trauma response that has been activated in many South African Jewish expats. We grew up in an environment where hyper-vigilance was necessary for our safety, and although this has been quiet for as long as we have been out of South Africa, it has been reawakened by the trauma of the past 14 months,” Pearl says.

Her family moved to Australia nearly 22 years ago, and for the first 20 years, she never felt unsafe for a second. “That changed overnight for me on 9 October 2023, when a violent jihadi rally broke out on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, baying for Jewish blood and chanting, ‘Gas the Jews!’ The perpetrators of this violent behaviour went unpunished,” says Pearl.

She believes this has since emboldened similar radicalised Muslims and the extreme left to be “significantly more forthright in their antisemitic vitriol, both online and on the streets of Melbourne. For more than a year, I have no longer felt safe travelling into the city on the weekends because thousands of people have colonised our city with protests that often turn threatening towards police and anyone they deem remotely Zionist. I’m not willing to remove my Magen David to visit the city, so I avoid it as much as possible.”

Pearl says the Australian Jewish community is mostly made up of descendants of Holocaust survivors, and many are experiencing the awaking of generational trauma. Talking to a non-Jewish friend on 5 December, Pearl said, “We have a deep historical understanding that what starts off as a protest outside a shul today turns into the burning of a shul tomorrow.” When she subsequently heard the news of the burning of the Adass Israel Synagogue the very next morning, “I felt utterly horrified, but honestly, not shocked.”

Greg Dorfman, whose parents are South African expats, says he also wasn’t shocked by the attack.

“I feel quite numb to it, as it almost felt inevitable,” he says. “Obviously, it’s shocking, and nothing like that has happened as far as I can remember, but I don’t think anyone is shocked by it, which probably tells you all you need to know.”

“The government has shown no leadership, and there hasn’t been any meaningful action,” he says. “The government has tied itself in knots trying to appease both sides, and it ends up pleasing no-one. They know they need to crack down on antisemitism, but they’re scared to lose votes. And the police are scared to do anything because these people are intimidating.”

Israeli educator and former Melbourne resident, Ittay Flescher, says, “It’s important to understand that the Adass Israel building was much more than a place of prayer. Described by the community as ‘the jewel in the crown’, it was also a place of gathering, Torah learning, a library, and central hub of all community activities. That’s why there were

people there at 04:00. It’s a building that never closes.”

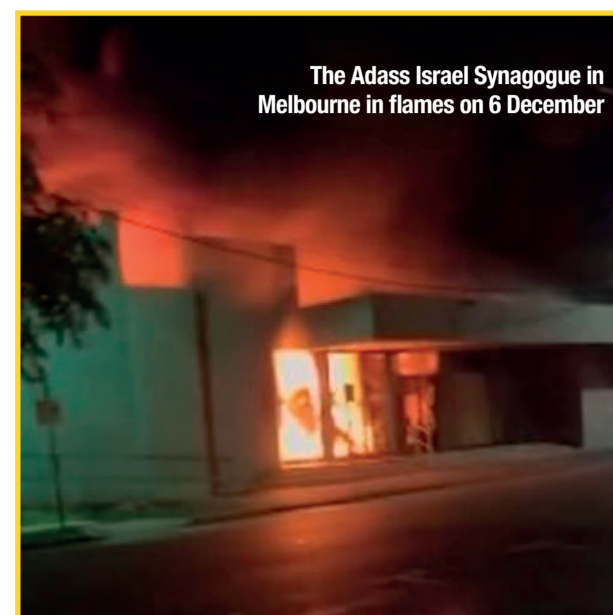
Former Capetonian and current Melbourne expat, Jann Blair, says, “Waking up to the devastating news of the firebombing of the Adass Israel Synagogue just 1.5 km from our house was completely surreal.” For her, antisemitism has moved from being something from the past, “to real life, day-to-day situations that force you to question the overarching safety of family and friends”.

She has found herself questioning decisions like sending her daughter to a Jewish pre-primary school next year, and then feeling guilty for these thoughts, including “Will she be safer among Jews in a Jewish school, or as a Jew among non-Jews?”

Like Pearl, she avoids going into the city on weekends, and “we no longer hang out on the north side of the city, which is polluted with anti-Israel stickers. Australian festive traditions, like the iconic Myer Christmas window in the city, has been threatened because the company is owned by Jews.”

However, these incidents have brought the community together. “We feel more united and stronger than ever,” says Blair. “I find hope in non-Jewish work colleagues who check in and remind me that this terrible behaviour is coming from a small group of extremely loud individuals. But the stark contrast to the safety we are used to makes us question if we can continue to live the beautiful life here that we have enjoyed until now.”

Liora Benater, formerly of Cape Town and Johannesburg and now living in Melbourne, says, “We felt disgusted that this level of antisemitism has been accepted in Australia.” Australia generally takes pride in its multiculturalism, she says, “However, since 7 October, there has been a gradual rise in antisemitism, and it’s not surprising that the Labour government’s inaction has



The Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne in flames on 6 December

resulted in these repulsive acts.

“We still attended a Friday night dinner at our community shul, and were encouraged by the rabbi to continue to spread light at such a dark time,” she says. “We didn’t feel unsafe to attend, but the gate and shul premises were manned by security.”

Pearl still believes that Australia is one of the safest places in the world for Jews outside of Israel. “While the current Australian government has repeatedly betrayed the Jewish community, the opposition party has showed a stronger backbone when it comes to standing against antisemitism and protecting the Australian Jewish community.”

“This is still a country comprised of mostly great people who are equally horrified by the chaos that these fringe movements have created,” she says. “Overall, I’m dismayed that the violent vitriol that became public on 9 October 2023 has been allowed to flourish to the point of a shul being burned, but I don’t believe that this level of violence will be the new normal for Australian Jews.”

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Chag
Hanukkah
Sameach

Wishing you a peaceful holiday season filled with joy.

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Hardliners undermine holiday plans

In planning this week's edition, our last of 2024, we had hoped to have an uplifting, lighthearted publication that would herald the beginning of our December holidays. We hoped to inspire a sense of relaxation and letting go of all the hardship and discomfort of this year.

We had it all set up, but hard news got in the way. Unpleasant reality kept biting us where it hurts this week, and in fact all year.

We have still managed to include things to do during the holidays: a lighthearted OpEd on Jozi moving down to the coast; a fun *sufganiot* (doughnut) tasting; and a piece on generational family holiday homes. We also give you our annual predictions for 2025; commemorate 50 years since *Ipi Ntombi* hit our stages; and an unusual friendship on page 12. We give you holiday reading suggestions, and talk to those who have hit their senior years but are by no means done (page 16). We have also secured a couple of insightful spiritual Chanukah pieces to inspire you (page 10). But, in essence, we landed up taking reporters off gentler features to cover unpleasant hard news.

While we would love to wish it away or dig a hole in the ground and do the ostrich thing, that would be denying our responsibility to you. We dare not turn our heads from truth and reality, even if it hurts like hell.

It's tough to accept that part of our hard-earned taxpayers' contributions is spent on facilitating our government in having a glorious time at The Hague while challenging Israel on fake genocidal claims. There are so many in our country desperate for food, a roof over their heads, and a job, yet our government feels happy to waste its money on this.

We cannot escape the fact that there was an attempted terrorist attack in the Cape Jewish organisations.

I know that I, for one, was hoping that there was some other way of looking at the explosive that was lobbed at their building, hoping it wasn't an attempt to harm Jews for no other reason than they are Jews. But I was unable to find one.

For so long, we have held sacrosanct the fact that although we had a government in this country that was clearly against the Jewish state in every way possible, South Africans, as a rule, weren't antisemitic. And, as Jews, we could hold our heads up high in this country.

The truth is still that most South Africans aren't antisemitic, they don't hate anyone. They generally don't think about Jews as anything but people.

However, our haters – a few of whom are born of Jewish parents – are so full of hatred, and clearly have no bounds in their animosity towards us. The more they say ugly and hate-filled things about us, the more they are capable of and the more their venom spreads.

And the more the government and powerful people in this country run us down, denigrate Jews, the more hatred spreads. We see it all over Europe, America, the United Arab Emirates, and in other parts of the world.

Frankly, I believe our government, as leaders, should know better because they should be out to protect all South Africans, no matter our background, religion, race, and so on. Unfortunately, they have made it clear that people who aren't South Africans and live in the Middle East are far more important to them than us, many of whom have been living in this country for generations. I don't think they want to acknowledge the fact that we, as Jews supporting a Jewish state – not necessarily its present government, are as much a part of this country as they are.

Unfortunately, our government has added to the stigmatisation of Jews, and it continues to add the horrific labelling of Jews as genocidal. Amazingly, you just have to know us to know that we are so far from that.

Unfortunately for us, though, this is what leads to terrorist attacks like the one which occurred last Friday. Thank G-d, nobody was hurt!

The national government hasn't said a word about this attack. A particular national news site did its best to dismiss this attack as fake when the evidence was there to prove it. Having said that, fortunately, the police and law enforcement agencies aren't dismissing it. They have launched a full-scale investigation into what happened because they are aware of the significance.

Hopefully, this means the perpetrators will be brought to book. It's vital that those who believe they can get away with hate crimes are made to realise they are wrong.

Once again, I'm grateful to Jewish organisations like the CSO, CAP, Hatzolah, and others that ensure our safety.

However, as we all head out for our holidays, we need to be cognisant that times have changed. We cannot just throw caution to the wind. We must be aware of our surroundings and ensure our safety. We must watch out for ourselves, and not put ourselves or our children in dangerous situations.

Don't let your guard down too much, and if you need to, call for help. Better to be safe than sorry!

As we count down to Chanukah, the festival of miracles and light and the end of 2024, I hope it will bring about change for good. I hope it will lead us to the end of the war, and the beginning of a time in which we can let our guard down.

I wish you all a *chag* Chanukah *sameach*, a relaxing holiday, and special family time!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor

We won't be publishing over the holidays, but we'll be back on 16 January 2025. See you then!



It's easier to wage war than peace

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



Hamas is decimated, reduced to a disparate ragtag insurgency in Gaza, Hezbollah has been neutered, the myth of Shiite power in Lebanon has been exposed, Syria has collapsed, with the "Butcher of Damascus", Bashar al-Assad, having fled to Moscow. Syria's military is today a scrapheap of metal, Iran has been humiliated, its air defences destroyed, its missile and nuclear facilities crippled, and the Shiite crescent that once encircled and threatened Israel has effectively been dismantled.

Finding peace is much harder than waging war. The American invasion of Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. When American forces withdrew from Kabul in 2021, they handed the country back to the Taliban.

Similarly, the American led invasion of Iraq in 2003, ostensibly to search for non-existent weapons of mass destruction, resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, leaving the Americans with nothing to show for it. Iraq descended into tribal and religious chaos, becoming a vassal state of Iran. The 2011 North Atlantic Treaty Organization attacks on Libya to support rebel forces and oust Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, as part of the Arab Spring, resulted in even greater chaos and instability in the region.

Since the carnage of 7 October, Israel has won a number of decisive victories, but mustn't allow an opportunity for potential peace to slip from its grasp. Concessions are difficult, but peace is made between enemies, not friends.

Ten lessons guide our thinking.

Lesson 1: Attempting to destroy Israel and massacre Jews doesn't end well for Palestinians. In 1948, seven Arab armies invaded Israel in an attempt to destroy the emerging Jewish state and commit genocide. Their invasion failed, resulting in the "Nakba", the refugee problem that has dogged the region ever since. Subsequent attempts to invade Israel have all failed. The events of 7 October 2023, were merely a continuation of the same theme.

Lesson 2: The West Bank and Gaza cannot legitimately be annexed by another country. The war of 1948 left the West Bank of the Jordan River, which was supposed to form the fulcrum for an Arab state created by the United Nations partition plan of 1947, under the control of Jordan and the Gaza strip under the control of Egypt. In 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank, an annexation recognised by only Britain, Iraq, and Pakistan but no-one else. The idea that the West Bank and Gaza could form part of neighbouring countries or be annexed by another country hit a major roadblock.



The Abraham Accords in September 2020 between Bahrain, the UAE, and Israel which were brokered by US President Donald Trump's administration

Lesson 3: The Palestinians aren't going anywhere. In 1964, an Egyptian engineer in the pay of the Soviet KGB, with the support of the Arab League, established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), not to liberate the occupied West Bank and Gaza from Jordan and Egypt, but to destroy the state of Israel. As renowned Palestinian academic Edward Said has explained, no attempt was made to establish a Palestinian state while under Jordanian and Egyptian control because Arab society was largely built around family and clan. The notion of Palestinian national identity was born only after the 1967 Six-Day War, where a genocidal war by Syria, Egypt, and Jordan was thwarted by a pre-emptive Israeli attack which resulted in Israeli control of the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Desert.

Lesson 4: Land and dignity are keys to peace. While on a trip to Egypt, I was amazed to see an exhibition in Cairo on the great Egyptian military victory of the Yom Kippur War, a war where Egypt was wholly defeated and Israel surrounded the entire Egyptian Third Army in Sinai. The 1973 Yom Kippur War led to the 1978 Camp David Peace

Agreements between Israel and Egypt, breaking the taboo of Arab peace with Israel and setting the precedent that Israel was willing to return land in return for peace.

Lesson 5: You make peace with your enemies, not your friends. To the surprise of the world, in 1993, Israel under the leadership of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was secretly negotiating with the PLO. The Oslo Accords marked the first time both parties formally recognised each other and outlined a framework for future negotiations. As a consequence, a year later in 1994, Israel and Jordan signed the Wadi Araba Treaty, ending hostilities between the countries.

Lesson 6: A complex deal is possible, but both parties have to be ready for peace. In the waning days of Bill Clinton's presidency, Israel, represented by Yossi Beilin and the Palestinians represented by Mahmoud Abbas negotiated a deal that would see Clinton walk away from the White House with a Nobel Prize. The deal was done, borders were decided, Jerusalem would be expanded, the west side would be the capital of the Jewish state, the east side would be the capital of a Palestinian one. Gaza and 96% of the West Bank would be given to the Palestinians as a state together with an additional 4% of Israel. On the day of signing, Yasser Arafat refused to sign the deal.

It's believed that at the final moment, Arafat was unwilling to give up on the Palestinian dream of achieving everything and destroying Israel.

Lesson 7: Never judge a book by its cover. The election after the collapse of the Camp David Summit was fierce. Hardline Israeli general Ariel Sharon would visit the Temple Mount and spark what became known as the Second Intifada, which claimed the lives of more than 1 000 Israelis. But Sharon was a pragmatist and against all predictions, he was soon making moves for Israeli withdrawals from Gaza.

Lesson 8: Unilateral actions don't work. Sharon decided unilaterally to withdraw from Gaza in 2005. In 2006, Gaza elected Hamas. Hamas massacred Fatah (PLO) supporters, throwing officials from buildings, torturing and murdering its opponents. Hamas turned Gaza into a military arsenal, causing Israel to impose a blockade on Gaza. Hamas fired more than 11 000 missiles at Israel, and invaded Israel on 7 October 2023, massacring more than 1 200 people, mainly civilians, and taking 251 people hostage. The Sharon plan failed.

Lesson 9: Without trust you go nowhere. In 2006, Sharon would suffer a massive stroke. He would be

succeeded as prime minister by Ehud Olmert. Olmert and Abbas held a series of negotiations in 2008, where a deal similar to the Camp David Summit proposal previously agreed by Abbas was presented. The two leaders didn't trust each other enough to exchange formal proposals, and the negotiations collapsed. Olmert was facing corruption charges, and would later be sentenced to six years in jail.

Lesson 10: Doing nothing isn't an answer. Benjamin Netanyahu followed Olmert for his second stint as prime minister in 2009. Netanyahu watched the collapse of all the peace efforts and decided to do nothing. His objective was to provide economic

prosperity to the Palestinians rather than political rights. He colluded with the Qatari government to pump a significant amount of money into the Gaza Strip, hoping that this newfound wealth would dissuade the Palestinians from attacks on Israel or demands for a Palestinian state. Netanyahu focused on curbing Iran and making peace with the Sunni powers of the Middle East, signing the Abraham Accords with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. But 7 October proved Netanyahu's strategy a failure.

Frustratingly I have all of the questions but none of the answers. But I do know that not seizing the opportunities that arise from an Israeli victory on the battlefield won't serve our interests in the long run. As we sit on the beach this December, may we be obsessed with how to bring peace to Israel and the world.

• Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report, but writes in his personal capacity. He has a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and a Master's in political advocacy and international conflict resolution.

Israel braces itself for Syrian fallout



PROFESSOR GLEN SEGELL

OPINION

Unpredictable Middle East geopolitical imbalances with many new threats and opportunities for Israel will be the focus of history books about 2024.

After the traumatic invasion from Gaza by Hamas in October 2023, Israel engaged in a 10-front war. The tactics and strategy for the defence of Israel included pre-emptive and preventive offensive land, sea, and air operations throughout the region.

By the end of 2024, Israel had succeeded in reducing the threat of Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon by targeted assassinations of their leadership, and by engaging in fierce hand-to-hand combat. The iconic terrorists who ubiquitously dominated television screens and social media – Hassan Nasrallah; Yahya Sinwar; and Ismail Haniyeh – will no longer rant about Israel's imminent destruction.

After Iran launched a massive ballistic missile and drone attack on Israel in October 2024, Israel responded by destroying most of Iran's air defence systems. Israel has also destroyed targets in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, from whence missiles and drones were launched against Israeli cities.

Israel knew that there would be consequences for weakening Iran and its linchpin proxies – Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthi and Shia Islamic groups in Iraq. Scenarios were constructed especially focusing on the Sunni Islamic groups that Iran and its proxies have been fighting for the past two decades – Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, as well as Kurdish resistance groups.

The challenge for Israeli intelligence organisations, including the Mossad, was the

difficulty and difference between forecasting and prediction. Exactly when and how the consequences would unfold and the ramifications for Israel would emerge only when these latent and freshly empowered groups acted.

The first signs of such action commenced on 27 November 2024, when rebel forces in Syria started a limited offensive against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Iran and Hezbollah, weakened by Israel, were unable and unwilling to provide the same support to Syria that they had since the onset of the Arab Spring in 2010. Similarly, a busy and weakened stalwart ally, Russia, at war in Ukraine, was nowhere to be seen. Turkey gave overt consent and support to the rebel forces.

On 8 December, the fall of Damascus marked the end of the Assad family regime, which had ruled Syria as a totalitarian hereditary dictatorship since Hafez al-Assad assumed the presidency in 1971 as a result of the Corrective Revolution. It has left a local power vacuum and a regional tinderbox indicative of broader realignments ongoing since the first Gulf War in 1990.

There were mixed feelings in Israel. On the one hand, there was joy and relief that at long last, the Iranian backed Assad regime that posed a constant danger was gone. That doesn't mean the rebels are an ally of Israel. To be sure, the potential for chaos on the Israel-Syria border and Sunni extremist terror is heightened. Israel followed a two-step process, military and political.

Israel's air force destroyed weapons arsenals throughout Syria to ensure that



Syrians celebrating the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime

the rebel forces wouldn't seize them. Israeli land forces crossed the border into the buffer zone between the Golan Heights and the rest of Syria, The Purple Line, as both defence and deterrence. The operation marked the first time in 50 years that Israeli forces have crossed the Syrian border fence, following ceasefire agreements on 31 May 1974 in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.

The political process included reaching out to the rebel forces through Druze communities in southern Syria, and Kurdish forces in northern Syria. The goal was to dissuade the euphoric rebels, lest they storm onward to Israel, as Hamas had done. While the processes worked, the longer term is challenging. It will depend on who controls Syria politically and economically. It's not clear who this will be.

It will be extremely ambitious for the Syrian rebel groups to agree on a new governing system in Syria. This in part is due to the diversity of the rebel coalition. Some groups are more structured, more organised, others are more local entities. Assad's fall could turn Syria into a battleground

dominated by jihadist forces, a collection of extremist organisations uninterested in dialogue or agreements. With winter approaching, the dire economic conditions are evident, and this could lead to intense unrest or civil war. About 90% of the population live below the poverty line, and many are in displacement camps.

Clearly then, the collapse of Assad's brutal regime places Israel in a complex situation, presenting new threats and significant opportunities. It will help with the battle in Lebanon. Syria is no longer a central link in the Shiite axis connecting Tehran to Beirut, serving as a corridor for transferring Iranian weapons to Hezbollah. The result is a greater isolation of Hezbollah.

The collapse of Assad's regime undermines Iran's influence in the Middle East and harms its plans to surround Israel. However, it also creates a difficult fine line for Israel with Assad's other main ally, Russia. Russia won't want to lose its strategic bases in Syria, the airbase in Khmeimim, and the naval base in Latakia. That would weaken its regional standing. The clear danger is that

Russia might step up its presence to mitigate the reduced Iranian involvement.

By itself, Russian presence in Syria wouldn't pose a threat to Israel. However, the chaos likely to emerge in Syria could tempt Turkey to intervene more aggressively. Its president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, views Syria, particularly its Kurdish minority in the north, as a threat to his borders. The dangerous scenario for Israel is that Syria and adjacent Lebanon could become a fierce battleground for domination between Turkey and Russia.

On an optimistic note, a new Syria could lead to the unification of the Druze communities in Israel and Syria, a promise that Israel has often expressed since 1967. It could also lead to a peace treaty if a stable regime emerges in Damascus with a permanent arrangement for Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

The bottom line is that Israel has no direct control over events in Syria. It cannot dictate broader or finer dynamics, and remains primarily an observer. Sitting on the sidelines, observing, and preparing for all potential scenarios and outcomes has been the preferred foreign and defence policy for Israel since 1948. This is no exception.

Israel joins the rest of the world and the Syrian population in wondering what's next. Events are still unfolding rapidly in Syria and the region. Trepidation isn't only felt in Israel, but by all those who have sought and relied upon Russia and Iran for support.

• Glen Segell is a professor at the University of Cambridge.

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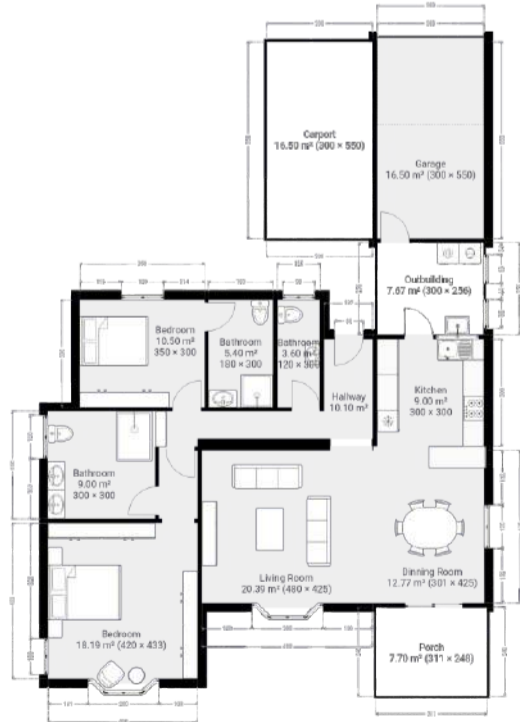


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Like Armageddon: survivors recall the Boxing Day tsunami

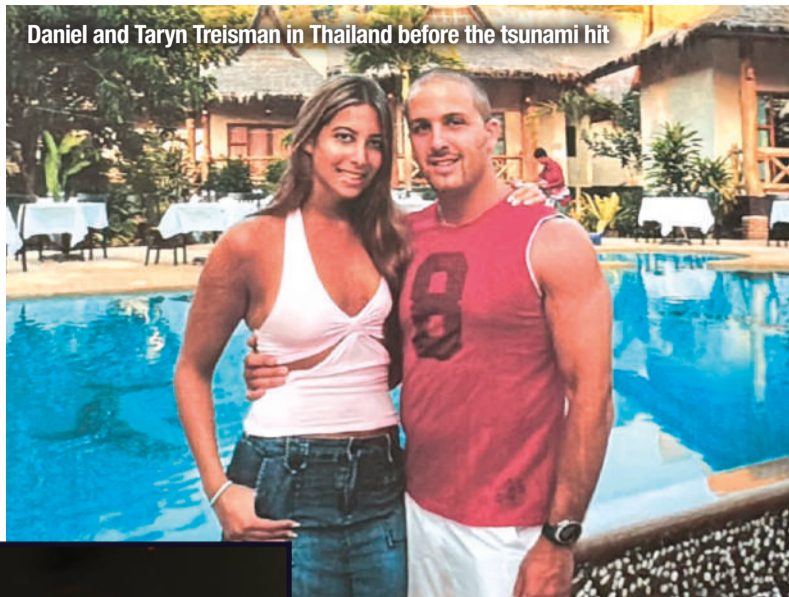
TALI FEINBERG

Dean Murinik took his parents to Thailand in December 2004, two decades ago this year, to recuperate after his father's attempted suicide. On their first day in Phuket, they saw a tsunami coming towards them. While helping his parents escape, "I felt incredible strength come over me," says Murinik. "I held onto them as we were swept into our hotel."

At the last moment, the waters miraculously receded, allowing them to swim to stairs, and walk six floors to the rooftop. "The tsunami was a great leveller – people from all walks of life helped each other," says Murinik. "You've never seen anyone fight harder to survive than my father. He never attempted suicide again."

According to a 2005 article by South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Associate Director David Saks, there were more than 2 000 South Africans vacationing in Thailand exactly 20 years ago this 26 December, when the tsunami hit. About 200 of those were Jewish. At least 10 South Africans died, including four Jews: Avadya Berman, Nicola Liebowitz, Paul Sender, and Morris Isaacson.

When Daniel Treisman welcomed a South African rescue flight to Thailand, he said it was "like Armageddon: a domestic airline coming into a war zone at 02:00 in the morning. It was possibly the first international rescue flight, an effort driven by South African Jewry." At



Daniel and Taryn Treisman in Thailand before the tsunami hit



Gabi Baron and Paul Sender

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

the age of 23, Treisman played a key role in bringing South Africans home, with the words, "Are you South African? Follow me," famously written on his t-shirt.

Treisman and his girlfriend, Taryn, now his wife, were on holiday on Phi Phi island and threw themselves from their bungalow into the tsunami, which carried them to safety on a mountain. "The most dangerous part of a tsunami is when it pulls back into the sea, taking everything with it," Treisman says,

which is why he jumped as it came in.

The couple got on a boat to Krabi, alongside bodies. There, Treisman visited chaotic hospitals to find South Africans. As he walked into a ward, the first person he saw was Gabi Baron. She had been with Sender, Berman, and Liebowitz the day before on a boat trip, and still can't believe they died the next day. They were staying on Phi Phi, where one in three died.

Baron (now Goldstein) says that Sender, her boyfriend at the time, thought the tsunami was a bomb, and pulled her into the bathroom for safety.

"It sounded like something that was coming to wipe you out," she recalls. The entire building crashed on top of them, and Sender died almost instantly.

"My head was pushed into the mud. I still don't know how my rescuer pulled me out of there," she recalls. Injured, terrified, and devastated, she lay on a door for eight hours before being airlifted to Krabi. She told Sender's brother that he had been wearing a new watch and a bracelet from his uncle, which was how he was identified. She believes it may have been an Israeli rescue team who found his body, as they "combed the islands for remains".

Surviving the unimaginable and leaving Sender behind was a "double trauma", and Baron had survivor's guilt, but managed to overcome it. "We will always remember Paul," she says.

Treisman also visited makeshift morgues. "It was harrowing seeing photos of the dead, knowing friends were among them," he recalls.

Berman and Liebowitz were two of those friends. Berman's mother, Ellen Berman, says there are signs

that have helped make sense of his death. For example, at a wedding before he went to Thailand, her son spoke about the couple's love being like "a tidal wave".

While he was travelling, he sent photos home with a friend – now a treasured keepsake. Just before the trip, he lost his passport and travellers' cheques, but still went. "He made so many choices that ultimately led him to that point. One of the biggest gifts we gave ourselves was not to ask why," says Berman's sister, Tal Berman-Howarth. However, she still grieves her "incredible baby brother", and how much her children would have gained from having him as an uncle.

Berman and Liebowitz's bodies were found by family who went to Thailand to look for them. They had been near the pool of their hotel when the wave hit. Ellen says she received "extraordinary" support from the community and beyond, for example, the couple's dentist came back from holiday to provide dental records which helped to identify them.

Rael Levitt was on holiday with Murinik, Isaacson, and his partner, Doloros Ribeiro, and David Gordon. "The ocean mysteriously receded as we gathered at the restaurant," he recalls. "Moments later, a towering wall of water crashed ashore. I fled to higher ground, driven by survival instinct. The reality hit when Morris and Doloros couldn't be found. Days of searching followed, culminating in the heartbreaking discovery of their passing."



Nicola Liebowitz and Avadya Berman

Levitt struggled with survivor's guilt and the enormity of the tragedy. "However, the tsunami taught me that every setback holds opportunity for growth," he says. Murinik agrees, saying that returning to Thailand to heal the year after the tsunami led him to meet his wife.

Shelly Gruskin was on holiday with her husband and young sons in Phuket when the tsunami hit. All four were separated, and almost died in the "black water", as she remembers it. Last year, they made a cathartic return trip, now with their youngest son, born after the disaster. "We visited the hotel where we had stayed, and I just sobbed," says Gruskin, realising the impact of the tsunami to this day.

Back in 2004, the SAJBD, Netcare, Discovery Health, and the department of foreign affairs chartered a Boeing 767 rescue flight, sharing the R2 million cost. Ezra, the Community Security Organisation's (CSO's) emergency medical response division, and Discovery Health sent five doctors, while Netcare brought 10 paramedics and five nurses, as well as equipment. The operation was named "Buyise Khaya" (Bring Home).

In Thailand, Treisman crossed paths with fellow South African survivor, Gavin Pearl, who was also looking for South Africans. "We put signs everywhere, telling South Africans where to meet," recalls Treisman. "We had only a few hours. A Canadian asked me where their rescue flight was – they hadn't had the same response."

Pearl had been inland when the tsunami hit, saving him. Like Treisman, he was a longstanding volunteer for the CSO. "When the flight arrived, we led a team of doctors around Phuket. When we found South Africans, it was an incredible sense of achievement," he says.

In South Africa, Michael Bagraim, SAJBD national chairperson at the time, recalls that at first, the government was unaware of the tragedy and it was the SAJBD that informed it. The CSO's newly-implemented incident management system "enabled the CSO to assist in Thailand immediately, getting help from the government, Netcare, Discovery Health, and hundreds of volunteers", he says.

"What the South African Jewish community did that December was nothing short of heroic," says Pearl. "I'm still proud to have been part of that team. The South African Jewish community doesn't know how lucky it is to have the CSO and Hatzolah."



T-shirt worn by Daniel Treisman on display at the office of the CSO

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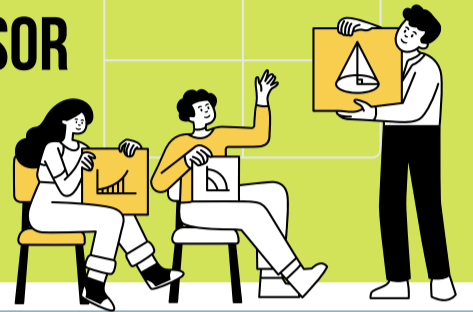
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Listen to the candles – dawn is near



RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN

OPINION



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

“Darkness will envelop the world, and a thick cloud the peoples.” (Isaiah 60) Is the prophet not describing, chillingly, the world today?

The Malbim, Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (1809-1879), expounds on the distinction between being gripped by darkness or in the midst of a thick fog. Darkness, he says, refers to people who have no faith, unable to see the light altogether. There are, however, nations who are believers, staunch monotheists. Though the sun shines on them it is clouded by a dense mist, blurring and clouding the light, obfuscating the clarity of their values and morality.



Darkness cannot be swept out with brooms. The only way to combat it is through light. A little light chases away a lot of darkness. And the darker it is, the more the light is appreciated.

2024 is a time where obscurity and confusion reign in the world, in which good and evil are confounded. World leaders and governments are choosing to place themselves squarely on the wrong side of history. Morality and justice have to fight against destruction, murder, and the worst forms of abuse. A prime minister and a defense minister are prosecuted for defending their own people. The victims of one of the greatest, systematic forms of genocide in the history of mankind, a people dedicated to preserving the sanctity of life, are accused of this most heinous crime. Suddenly, right and wrong have switched places, and no amount of decrying it is helping.

The night is always darkest just before dawn. As the world is preparing for a

new order, when truth and goodness will forever prevail, we are plunged into confusion and contradiction.

It's in this blackness and haze that we celebrate Chanukah this year. The candles of this festival of light are lit as night falls, intended to shine into the obscurity. They are placed in our doorways or our windowsills, facing out to the dusky street.

We are told that we must listen to the candles, to hear the tale that they are sharing with us. This year, we can hear so distinctly what they are saying, their message so clear and pertinent.

Darkness cannot be swept out with brooms. The only way to combat it is through light. A little light chases away a lot of darkness. And the darker it is, the more the light is appreciated.

This is the light that inspires us, the light that guides us, the light that comforts us. Lit, as tradition has it, in increasing numbers night after night, it sends us the message that in the end, it will prevail.

Indeed, dawn is near. In the past 400+ days, we have witnessed rays of hope and of salvation. The very light we have been praying and hoping for through many dark centuries is peeping through the cracks with increasing frequency.

Thus, continues Isaiah, addressing the Jewish people, “Arise and shine, for your light has dawned, the glory of G-d has shone upon you. G-d's presence will be seen over you. Nations will walk by your light. Whereas you had been forsaken, rejected. I will make you a pride everlasting. No longer will the cry, ‘Violence! [Hamas, in the original Hebrew]’ be heard in your land. Your sun shall set no more, for G-d shall be your everlasting light and the days of your mourning shall be ended.”

This Chanukah, listen to the little flickering candles, hear their message, and say ‘Amen!’.

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at Oxford Shul and the chairperson of the South African Rabbinical Association.

Don't give up – fight with light



RABBI LEVI AVTZON

OPINION

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference.” Robert Frost

What's more powerful – light or dark?

Darkness takes up more news time and brain space than light-filled tales. Open any news site, and you will inevitably find more sad and scary news than positive and uplifting stories. Bad news sells.

But is darkness more potent and more enduring than light? Is a gun more powerful than a heart of courage? Superficially, yes. But all we need to do is think about the history of the Jewish people and we'll realise the truth that although we were often the victims of evil done to us by people physically stronger than us, they are gone. Look at the past 14 months as exhibit A on this exact point.

Whereas we, the people of the book, the spirit, and the faith, thrive and grow until this very day and forever.

What will the world look like in 100 years? I have no idea, but I know that Jewish people will be there doing *mitzvot* and lighting up the world. Somewhere, someone will be a proud Jew practising their faith.

The Chanukah story about a small ragtag group of Maccabees taking down the mightiest army on earth – the Greeks – just by the power of their faith and courage is a perfect example of how a little light is so much more powerful than darkness. No military analyst would have predicted their victory, and 2 200 years later, millions of people would still celebrate their victory of light by lighting menorahs, eating latkes, and playing dreidel.

In short, in the second century BCE, the holy land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who tried to force the people of Israel to accept Greek culture and beliefs instead of *mitzvah* observance and belief in G-d. Against all odds, a small band of faithful but poorly armed Jews, led by Judah the Maccabee, defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove the Greeks from the land, reclaimed the holy Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the service of G-d.

When they sought to light the Temple's menorah – the seven-branched candelabrum – they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, they lit the menorah, and the one-day supply of oil lasted for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity.

The Maccabees took to heart the verse from the biblical book of Zecharia: “Not by might, and not by power, but by My spirit, said the L-rd of hosts.” Our strength is with our spirit (*ruach*), which we believe is infinitely more potent and consequential than the sharpest knife and the fastest fighter jet. Spirit always wins in the long term.

This isn't to say that physical prowess is unimportant. We're grateful every day that nations of peace and goodness such as the

Jewish homeland and Western democracies have armies that can stand up to tyrants and those who wish them harm. We owe these selfless soldiers a massive debt of gratitude. Peace through strength is a Jewish value.

Yet, we know that might not coupled with spiritual tenacity and a heart of light and love won't endure. You have to have a “why” as much as a “how” to win the existential war between good and evil that never stops. Strength alone is never enough.

There will come a day when G-d will show us His version and interpretation of history, and we will see a surprising tale. We will watch how a granny with a book of *tehillim* took down a dictator and saved a country. We will read of the voices of study and prayer that pierce through iron curtains and guns of steel. We will gasp at how an act of forgiveness between two feuding siblings brought the world one giant step closer to a messianic utopia.

One day, we'll see beyond the tapestry and discover that the inner power of the spirit was the ultimate shaper of history. We will see how our Shabbos candles and *tefillin* created ripple effects across time, space, and the cosmos to create the world we all dream of seeing.

Darkness can be fought by doing *mitzvot*

This message is essential when so many are anxious about the stressful news that seems to be overwhelming our social media feeds and TV screens. For a moment, we might feel powerless and terrified by the force of darkness that seems so much more potent than little me and the little *mitzvah* or act of kindness I've done.

That's why I hold onto the Jewish story and miracle of the Maccabees. I'll never forget the truth of life: light will win every time. *Yesh tikvah* – there's hope and promise that the arc of history will bend towards the spirit.

Don't give up. Don't give in. Fight with light. You're guaranteed to win.

• Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the rabbi at Linksfield Shul.

What's alive in 2025

OPINION

The year 2025 will be big for South Africa. What the government of national unity says and does will be under intense international scrutiny. The country will host hundreds of meetings in the run-up to the summit of the Group of 20 most important global economies (G20). We take a look at what next year is likely to have in store for Israel, South Africa, and the world.

Hosting the G20 will put South Africa into the international spotlight in 2025, and the country is determined to do a good job of it. Pretoria will push issues important to the "Global South", including climate change, economic development, and reform of the global governance system. It has also made "solidarity" one of its themes – expect attempts to rally the G20 to support the Palestinians, and pushback from some members that the principally economics-focused G20 isn't the platform for that issue. The government of national unity is finding its feet, but it hasn't changed its hostility to Israel. If anything, the spurious genocide case at the International Court of Justice has ratcheted up the African National Congress's loathing of the Jewish state.

The 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, in which 1 200 people were killed and more than 250 taken hostage into Gaza, is still having repercussions. Fourteen months later, peace remains elusive, despite the shaky ceasefire with Hezbollah in Lebanon. More than 100 of Israel's hostages remain in captivity, with many feared already dead. The fall of the Assad regime in Syria is sure to send the region into more chaos in 2025, in ways we cannot yet imagine. Israel will certainly have to be on its guard.

The Israeli electorate was likely to punish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the polls for allowing 7 October on his watch. The long war has, however, precluded elections or a commission of enquiry. If this government survives its full term, elections are scheduled only for October 2026.

The anticipated Trump-Biden electoral showdown in the United States (US) elections failed to materialise due to the latter bowing out of the race. Donald Trump trounced Vice President Kamala Harris in the November vote. The world is bracing for an ultra-nationalist, transactional, and unpredictable Trump second term. Israel can expect more solid support, but the Ukrainians are worried that backing for their fight against Russia will be abandoned by Trump's Washington. He is likely to try and squeeze Kyiv to make territorial concessions to Moscow, giving up the lands occupied by the Russians in Ukraine since 2014, including Crimea.

This time, Trump will have to pay more attention to Africa, which he either insulted or ignored in his first term, not least because of South Africa chairing the G20 in 2025, and the US taking over this multilateral club in 2026.

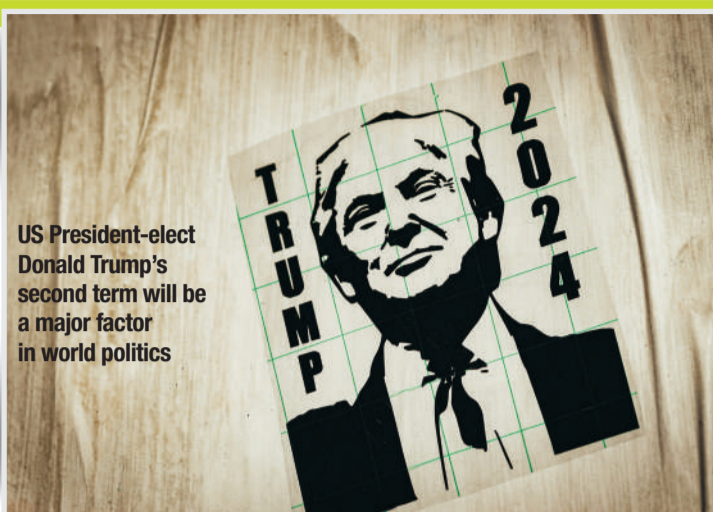
In 2025, the COP 30 United Nations climate conference will take place in Belém, in the heart of the Amazon in Brazil. I expect the environmentally conscious Brazilian government to push for more far-reaching and ambitious measures on the climate crisis, compared to the muted meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024.

The year is also the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), one of Africa's leading regional groupings. However, a string of coups ushering in military regimes with pro-Russian leanings have led to three states – Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger – announcing their intention to quit the institution due to ECOWAS's supposed interference in their internal affairs. This is sure to spoil the birthday celebrations.

2025 also marks the 70th anniversary of the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, where newly independent developing world states banded together to resist picking a side in the Cold War.

Elections will be held in Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and a host of other countries. In Africa, states including Cameroon, Egypt, Malawi, and Tanzania will go to the polls in 2025.

The year, the planet's best soccer clubs will battle it out at the inaugural FIFA World Club Cup in the US in June and July. Supporters are hoping that the mighty Springboks will continue their dominance on the rugby pitch. The Women's Rugby World Cup



US President-elect Donald Trump's second term will be a major factor in world politics

will be held in England in August and September.

The 22nd Maccabiah Games, the "Jewish Olympics", is slated to be held in Israel from 6 to 22 July 2025. Let's hope the war with Hamas will be over for this sporting showcase to take place.

This coming year is the 100th anniversary of the publication of F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The first television pictures were transmitted by John Logie Baird in London 100 years ago.

Fifty years ago, in 1975, Angola was granted independence by Portugal,

the Vietnam War ended with the fall of Saigon, and Bill Gates co-founded Microsoft.

The feeling that the world is at an inflexion point, what the Germans call a *Zeitenwende*, is inescapable. It will have to adjust to a second Trump administration and an increasingly bold China.

Happy New Year!

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



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Loyiso Bala celebrates 'unsung hero' Su Lubner

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

The connection between producer and music therapist Su Lubner and celebrated South African musician Loyiso Bala is proof that music has the power to transcend cultural boundaries. Now, they are planning to collaborate on a children's album in various South African languages.

"I had just turned 20, fresh out of school and barely stepping into the music industry, when a friend I had recently met introduced me to Su Lubner, a Jewish woman in her 30s at the time, who was a television music producer. Su welcomed me into her studio, and over the next decade, opened my eyes to an entirely new world of music."

These words, written on social media by Bala, now 45, were sparked by his reunion with Lubner at the recent 30th anniversary of social upliftment organisation, Afrika Tikkun. Founded by Lubner's late father, Bertie, and now run by her brother, Marc, Afrika Tikkun, where Bala served as an ambassador, was also integral to Bala's connection with the Lubner family.

"After the anniversary, I thought, we're not getting younger," Bala told the *SA Jewish Report*. "I really just want to give Su her flowers so people could begin to see the unsung heroes in my life. It took people like Su, who is totally different from who I am, to have an impact on who I am today, on the direction I've taken, and the family that I have."

Yet it all began with music. Lubner recalls when she first met Bala. "Loyiso and I just clicked," she says. "We found a synergy. He was this absolute delightful soul. He had come from the Eastern Cape, gone through church choirs, and got a scholarship to the Drakensberg Boys Choir School, which provided brilliant foundation training. He's also beyond talented."

Together, Lubner and Bala wrote more than 100 songs in various languages for *Takalani Sesame*, the South African co-production of children's programme *Sesame Street*, which began its run in 2000. In addition, they won a South African Film and Television Award (SAFTA) for their work on three seasons of educational drama series *Tsha Tsha*. The two also co-created music for TV series *Soul City*, and for several local and international documentaries, including many about Madiba.

Lubner has been making music since the age of five, and initially planned to hone that craft alone. Yet, she ultimately became a music therapist, working around the world in cities including Boston and Paris. While in Boston, she attended jazz school at the renowned Berklee College of Music. She later lectured music therapy at the University of Cape Town, and worked with street children in the area. Politically active, she moved to London, where she became the secretary of the African National Congress Women's League in the United Kingdom. Here, she also completed a postgraduate degree in radio, and worked for the BBC World Service.

"When I was in London, I met singer Brenda Fassie and her producer



Loyiso Bala and Su Lubner

at the time, Joe Nina, with whom I connected," Lubner says. "When I came back to South Africa, Joe and I did an album together. At that time, jazz and kwaito were pushing the boundaries in a way that hadn't been done before." Their award-winning album explored this development, and Lubner's production career took off

with multiple job offers to write and produce music for television and short films.

It was during this time that she connected with Bala. "There was so much laughter and joy, and he just had a brilliant work ethic," Lubner says. "We'd work hard, we'd commit, we'd put the energy in, and it was beautiful. He was soon a very well-known R&B star, and here he was doing television with me. He loved it, I loved it, and so we had an absolute ball together."

In addition to Afrika Tikkun, Bala has supported the Lubner family's other non-profit organisations including the Field Band Foundation, which empowers youth through music. "Over the years, I really felt like I became

the other child in the family, to the point where I used to join them on holiday at the family home in Plett," he remembers. He also stayed there with his then girlfriend and now wife, Jennifer, and later with their first daughter, the oldest of three.

"Su's experienced my milestones from the time when I was just this young, budding artist smoking and eating takeaways," he says. "Looking at who I am right now, the health conscious me, knowing how to love my children, a lot of the skills that were outside of music, I learned from Su. She taught me about natural, healthy living, the importance of meeting deadlines, and, most importantly, the power of generosity. A home for me is a place of giving, and it's a place where there's love. With the Lubners and within the wider Jewish community, I found that."

Today, Bala still performs, but he's also a business manager with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, overseeing two Eastern Cape radio stations, talk

radio station Umhlobo Wenene FM, and youth station Tru FM. "I call my radio my career, and music my calling," he says.

Now based in Cape Town, Lubner works as a therapist, focusing on movement in her work with people suffering from Parkinson's and neurological illnesses. She also teaches Tai Chi, and dedicates much of her time to uplifting underprivileged communities.

"The ethos we grew up with was that it's not just about the goodness of giving charity, rather it's your responsibility and your commitment to give back," she says speaking of the Lubner legacy.

Lubner is particularly excited about the possibility of a reunion with Bala. "Our children's album is built on the idea of exposing children to the rituals and practices of various religions through song," she says. "These days, that's so necessary – just a little bit of tolerance, understanding, and openness." Who better to teach the next generation about such principles than this formidable duo?

The two Jewish women behind legendary *Ipi Ntombi*

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Written by Bertha Egnos and her daughter, Gail Lakier, both of whom have since passed away, *Ipi Ntombi* was an internationally celebrated musical that first opened in South Africa in 1974. With a tribute website marking the show's 50th anniversary, Egnos's second daughter, academic Lucille Lakier, recalls how a play with an all-African cast became a global phenomenon amid oppressive apartheid restrictions.

Mama Tembu's Wedding; Ipi Ntombi. These are just some of the hit songs that underpinned the success of one of South Africa's greatest musical exports. However, these songs initially had a very different purpose. "In the early 1970s, a company approached my mom and Gail," Lakier says.

"This big American star, Eartha Kitt, was coming to South Africa, and they wanted some music that she would be able to integrate into her stage show." Up-tempo and distinctive, these songs didn't reflect Kitt's sultry style, so she rejected them. Yet that was just the beginning.

A record company really liked the music, and contracted the mother-daughter duo to write more songs, which led to the release of a successful album, *The Warrior*. "They then took a team of African dancers and singers to Australia, and performed the songs there," Lakier recalls. "It was very successful, but the impresario who brought them out took all the proceeds and skipped the country, a matter that went to court years later. Yet, at the time, my mom had to get the whole cast back to South Africa, and she actually mortgaged our house to do this."

Soon after their return at the end of 1973, someone suggested to Egnos that she and Gail further develop the show and so, *Ipi Ntombi* was born. Lakier, who moved to the United States with her now ex-husband in the late 1960s, was visiting South Africa during this period. "I was there the whole time they were writing, and Gail would say, 'Mommy, try this', and mommy tried that. My mom could do anything on the piano."

Hailing from a musical family in which she and all her brothers and sisters played different instruments, Egnos had played the piano since childhood. "She even played on the BBC in 1929," says Lakier. "She left school at a very early age, started a music studio, and began teaching."

Gail was equally talented. "She was always interested in music and musicals." Gail and Egnos collaborated on their first production when Gail was just 15 – she wrote the lyrics and her mother the music.

Their most notable success before *Ipi Ntombi* was *Dingaka*. It was staged at then well-known Brian Brook Theatre in the 1960s, and was later adapted into a movie by Jamie Uys. "The stage version was an all-black show, but I think at that time, apartheid wasn't that stringent so it wasn't that difficult to manage," Lakier says.

Yet when *Ipi Ntombi* came about, working with an all-black cast was far more of a challenge. "It was traumatic, because the 1970s was the deepest, darkest time of apartheid. They struggled to find places to rehearse, and used basements in different locations. Then they found a warehouse on the opposite side of Johannesburg. They had to arrange special transport for the cast as most of them lived in Soweto. Many could rehearse only after 17:00 because they had

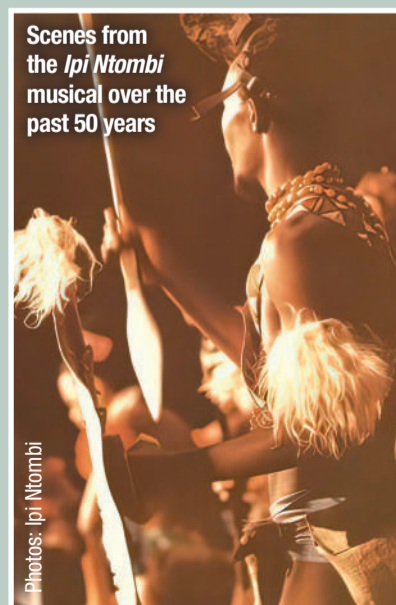
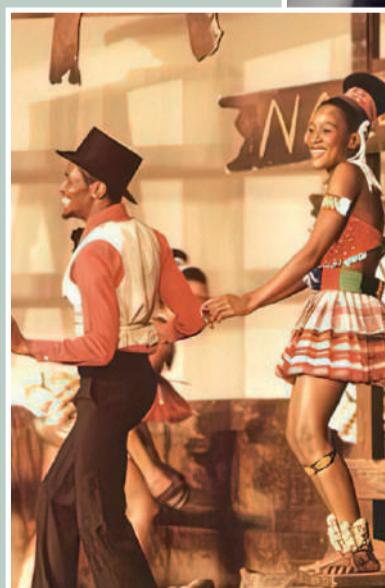
including Israel, Canada, parts of Europe, and in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. "But when they opened on Broadway in New York, there were all kinds of protests," Lakier, who personally witnessed this, says. "Protesters were standing outside with placards saying, 'If you buy a ticket, you're killing an African child'; that the show was an instrument of the government; and it was trying to mask the pain of apartheid."

Yet that couldn't have been further from the truth, Lakier says. Gail had, in fact, originally written a song with lyrics including, "I'm black, I'm so alone. This is my land, but not my home." Yet they couldn't include that in the play. "Gail and my mom absolutely knew that the only way it could be successful was if it didn't have a political overtone," Lakier says.

The show ultimately won multiple gold records – given to a song or album that has sold more than 500 000 units – and other international awards. "Not in their wildest dreams had the cast or my mom imagined they would be travelling around the world," Lakier says. "I still don't know how my mom managed to get passports for everyone at that time. Yet, it was the highlight of their lives." A number of cast members remained overseas. Many of those who returned

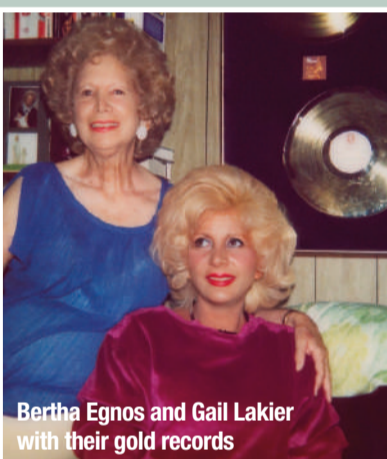
to South Africa became well-established in the theatre world.

The show was revived in 1997, and for the first time in South Africa, played to a mixed-race audience. "One reason why *Ipi* was originally so successful is that my mom had such a feel for African music," Lakier says. Yet when Egnos was invited to do a talk about how she could write music with such an African feel, she turned down the invitation. "She said to me, 'Intellectually, I can't describe how I do it. It's more instinctual – it's a feeling.'"



Scenes from the *Ipi Ntombi* musical over the past 50 years

Photos: Ipi Ntombi



Bertha Egnos and Gail Lakier with their gold records

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Indigenous nations recognise Israel's fight for legitimacy

ROLENE MARKS

For 14 months, Jews around the world have felt alone. Israel is demonised for fighting a defensive war in the wake of the 7 October attacks, and antisemitism has risen to an alarming level that hasn't been seen since World War II. Every day brings with it devastating news of another horrific incident somewhere in the world.

But, the reality is that Jews aren't



Israeli President Isaac Herzog with His Majesty, Xami Thomas, Regent of the Khoi tribe of South Africa

alone. There's a growing movement of indigenous nations around the world who are showing their support for Israel and the Jewish people.

Visiting southern Israel earlier this year, Xami Thomas, Regent of the Khoi tribe of South Africa said, "If the Jews aren't indigenous, then no-one is indigenous."

"Like the Khoi kingdom, there are numerous first nations who support the Jewish nation. There's a war of antisemitism and misinformation being fought, and the solution is simple – grassroots education and relationship building with Jewish communities. There are many synergies that can be pursued." Thomas is keen to work with Israel, and is concerned that the anti-Israel rhetoric on social media will influence young members of his community. He stresses the necessity for education.

Ateret Shmuel is the founder and director of Jerusalem-based Indigenous Bridges, a "non-partisan organisation dedicated to the advancement of indigenous communities globally".

"We started off as a small coalition of Jews, first nations, Kurds, and Native Americans," Shmuel said, "but we have grown to be a massive team of indigenous representatives from tribes spanning Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. By building relationships between indigenous peoples from various regions, we can foster a stronger, united front against the continuing legacies of imperialism, settler colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and violence."

Shmuel's words are echoed by Indigenous Bridges Executive Director Jason Watson. Watson, who is from the Chickasaw Nation, is married to a Jewish woman and lives in Jerusalem.

He's passionate about teaching about the reality in Israel, especially at a time when buzzwords like "colonial power" and "apartheid" are the norm. "As a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, I deeply understand the importance of sovereignty, self-determination, and protecting one's homeland. Indigenous

peoples worldwide share a bond of resilience and connection to their ancestral lands, and I see Israel as a fellow indigenous nation returning to its historic roots. Standing with Israel is standing with a people who have faced countless challenges yet remain determined to preserve their identity, culture, and rights. I stand with Israel because I believe in the fundamental right of a people to live in peace and security on their ancestral land."

Many indigenous leaders in the United States believe there are similarities in the historical experience of Jews and many First Nation communities.

Chief Joseph RiverWind is Arawak Taino from the island of his birth, Boriken (Puerto Rico). He was appointed by his tribal council as a Taino peace chief in 2014 and he serves his people as ambassador of the descendants of Puerto Rico's First Nations.

"Each person has their own story, their own history, and their own reason why they stand with Israel or why they don't," RiverWind

said. "I see a story of indigenous people returning home to their ancient lands and wanting to live in peace with all their neighbours. It's a story of coming back to your sacred places, where your ancestors walked, lived, prayed, and were laid to rest. Your Hebrew language is the language of the land, the speech of the trees, and the songs that the stones sing. The land has come back to vibrant life as her people began coming home to rebuild a place for all nations

to live in peace and in a good way. The story of reclamation and restoration for indigenous people is spoken about in many circles. The Jewish people must be a part of the conversation as indigenous people in their own right. There's no such thing as indigenous solidarity if there's no voice for the Jewish people. This is one of many reasons why I stand with Israel and her people.

"Resilience is built into your people's DNA. I see the deeply ingrained generational trauma that has been reawakened in the eyes of the people. I see the pain of feeling alone and rejected, and the haunting question on every Jewish face of 'why?'. For a brief moment, the world stood together with the Jewish people and for that micro moment in eternity, a pulse of the heartbeat of *tikkun olam* [healing the world] touched even the hardest of hearts. Through the resurfacing trauma



Jason Watson and Ateret Shmuel (back row) with leaders at the opening of the Indigenous Embassy in Jerusalem



Dr Quamaniq Suuqiina and Dr Iglahliq Suuqiina of the Cherokee nation

in the DNA; through the soul twisting heartache of the murdered, missing, and hostages; through the heart wrenching hurt of renewed pogroms in Europe; through the mental pain of surviving the horrors of war and seeing a world that hates you for being a light to the world, your people still believe this world can be a better place. Despite all that is thrown at your people during this war, you remain a beacon of shining light in this present darkness."

A concern expressed by all community leaders was the infiltration of anti-Israel rhetoric into

younger members of community. Every leader expressed the importance of greater education and bridge building.

Indigenous communities are showing their solidarity and love, but how can it be reciprocated?

Dr Quamaniq Suuqiina of the Cherokee nation said, "A lasting bridge must be a bridge of the hearts. It has to be established on true relationships in order to hold the cultures travelling across it

together. It starts with an act of protocol. Upon meeting with indigenous people, offer them protocol, which is honour through the act of going through their chief or tribal council. Set up an appointment with them, and come to their land with a gift from the heart.

Approach them with dignity and honour, asking to establish a relationship with them based on mutual respect. Ask to get to know them, be taught about their culture, and hear their stories. Be willing to take time to build something lasting. Allow them to meet and actually know a Jew so that they will know the lies told about the Jews are lies. Invite them to your homes for Shabbat, and to your feasts. It has to be done one on one, and the indigenous people need to know you are sincere. If they learn to trust you, you will have true friends and warriors who will fight with you and for you for justice."

Jews aren't alone. They have more support than they realise, all they need to do is reach out.

Don't make candles a fire hazard, experts warn

LEE TANKLE

Lighting candles is a commandment in Judaism, but it doesn't necessarily protect a household from fire. So, though we want our Shabbat, Chanukah, and yahrzeit candles to burn brightly, if not controlled, those flames can engulf a home.

"There's always a risk when it comes to open flames," says Josh Gava, a director at ZAKA South Africa. "There's the danger of having electricity in your house and leaving, so it's not just candles. The reality is that there's always risk. One should just be careful that the candles are left in an appropriate space."

Even though candles shouldn't be left unattended, Gava knows that sometimes this is unrealistic. "The reality is that people light their Shabbat candles and they go to shul," he says.

"It's just about having an awareness of what's around the candle, how long it will burn, and ensuring that there's some sort of a base for it that's not combustible. And that there's nothing around it that can catch alight."

Often people will put their candles on a counter near a curtain or near something wooden which can catch alight. It's therefore important that you put candles on a surface not near anything combustible, the ZAKA Fire Containment Unit (FCU) says.

Gava says he will always put a small piece of tinfoil

underneath a candle or his menorah to ensure that if it burns to the end, the fire gets extinguished and cannot spread.

Nicole Bartkunsky, a project manager, learning experience designer, and corporate coach, says she's so afraid of fire, she takes every precaution to ensure that her Shabbat candles are safe. Bartkunsky, now living in Johannesburg, grew up in Canada where she saw that houses could burn in minutes.

"Since we don't have a fire department near us, we have smoke detectors throughout my house, plus carbon monoxide monitors and fire blankets as well as extinguishers," she says. "We removed the burglar bars off the windows because I recall a couple burning to death as they couldn't get out of their house. Over and above that, I light my candles on a granite top, and remove anything nearby, in case they fall over or explode for whatever reason, so that nothing can catch alight."

Gava says Shabbat candles tend to burn for longer and are a bit safer and more controlled because they are often in glass cups on candlesticks, but that doesn't take away from the dangers they represent.

"Most fires start small, and they can get much bigger, much faster," he says. "An awareness of fire safety is the biggest gift to prevention."

Gava says ZAKA FCU has witnessed huge fires

starting from the smallest of embers.

Tammy Swisa, who experienced a house fire when the cottage on her family's property burned down in 2023, says there has been a change in the way her family reacts to having candles lit in the house.

"We've become even more mindful when lighting candles," she says. "We take extra precautions by ensuring that they are in a safe place – like the sink – if we leave the house, and keeping them away from fire-hazardous items."

Penny Swisa, Tammy's mother said, "If it's *yom tov* with many candles, I sometimes don't light candles at all. My brother who is a rabbi in Israel has told me that it's better to not light candles at all if there's the potential for any risk."

Penny also uses a metal tray and candle holders in an open space to prevent accidents, and avoids lighting them in glass cups with oil.

Chanukah candles are probably where the most danger lies, says Gava, because you are often burning more than one candle in a menorah that might have been made at school or is home made, and these tend to be made from wood.

"In a Chanukah candle, the wax drips down, so it tends to be a bit more dangerous as it becomes a candle itself," he says.

As well as smaller measures such as putting tinfoil under the candle, Gava suggests that all homes should have fire extinguishers and fire blankets to ensure that people can contain a smaller fire in the home.

"Fire safety plans must be put into place. With that comes the understanding that fire can spread very quickly and the smaller the appearance of a fire, the more chance you have of putting it out and limiting damage to the property."

ZAKA FCU also suggests that all candles be left on a stable, non-flammable surface, such as a metal tray or glass plate away from drafts such as open windows or fans, to prevent flames from spreading.



Candles must be left in an appropriate, safe space



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Reinvention after retirement pays off in multiple ways

ELKA COHEN

In a global demographic shift, 60% of individuals aged 55 to 64, and 12% of those 75 and older, remain active in the workforce. This growing trend, often referred to as the “silver tsunami”, reflects the determination and vitality of the baby boom generation (born 1946-1964). Many are redefining retirement as a time to reinvest their energy into meaningful pursuits. From founding new ventures to mentoring the next generation, their stories demonstrate that later retirement isn't an end, but a new beginning.

Dr John Lazarus: a lifetime of reinvention

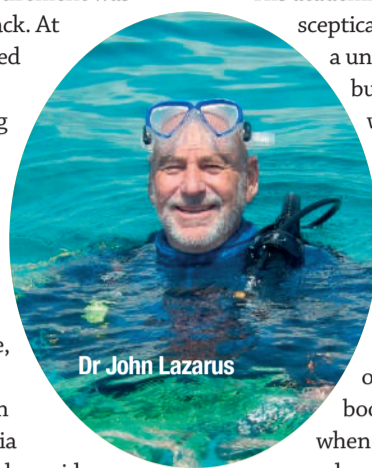
For Dr John Lazarus, retirement was never about stepping back. At 60, he left a distinguished academic career as a professor of engineering at the University of Cape Town to turn his attention to an entirely new field.

“I thought I was done,” he says, “but then this idea struck me, and I couldn't let it go.” The idea was to establish CityVarsity, a multimedia design school that would provide

students with practical, industry-ready skills in creative arts and media.

His academic peers were sceptical. “I ran it like a university, not a business, and that's why it worked,” he says.

The school's launch couldn't have been better timed. The year 1996 was the outset of the internet boom at a time when industries were desperate for skilled



Dr John Lazarus

professionals in web design, film, and other creative fields. By 2000, CityVarsity was thriving, eventually being acquired by Educor.

Lazarus's life didn't slow down after selling the school. Instead, he embarked on a series of personal challenges, pursuing his passion for extreme sports. At 87, he now divides his time between homes in Sea Point and Simon's Town, following the wind and chasing adventure.

A devoted windsurfer for more than two decades, Lazarus also kite-surfs, paraglides, power-paraglides, SUPs (stand up paddleboards), rows, and freedives in the icy kelp forests of the Cape. Remarkably, he also rides a uniwheel, and took up skateboarding at 82. “As soon as I get good at something, I like to switch to something new,” he says.

Humour and philosophy are integral to his approach to life. “Life is like a roll of toilet paper, the closer to the end you get, the faster it moves. So make the most of it,” he says. Another favourite motto? “Adventure before dementia.”

Lazarus's energy is contagious. “I don't do suits and ties. I prefer shorts and t-shirts,” he says. But beneath the humour lies a profound message: age is no obstacle to reinvention.

Lydia Abel: a lifelong passion for education

Lydia Abel, 79, has dedicated her life to improving education in South Africa. After serving as director of ORT SA, a non-profit focused on cutting-edge teacher training, she stepped down six years ago.

“I woke up one morning and thought, ‘This is it, time to let the younger generation take over,’” she recalls. Despite the uncertainty of leaving such a significant role, Abel found new ways to stay involved.

Today, she works as a consultant for Education Without Borders, a nongovernmental organisation that provides after-school support to schools in under-resourced areas like Gugulethu and Athlone. “The only real challenge is having to take meetings at 22:00 to accommodate colleagues in Canada and Australia,” she says.

Abel has also channelled her lifelong passion for knitting into empowering others. At the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children, she trained women to create hand-knitted products, which are now sold under the collective Made in Manenberg.

“I wanted to give them something sustainable, not just handouts,” she says. It's a passion project among many others that she pursued during and following the height of her busy career in education.

Abel's early career didn't come without challenges. As a woman in male-dominated fields, she often

faced resistance. “In my early days as research assistant at Groote Schuur Hospital, I made it clear: I don't type, and I don't make tea,” she says. Later, as principal of Boston House College, she recalls, “People would ask, ‘Where's the principal?’ It was inconceivable to them that the principal could be a woman.”

Although progress has been made, Abel notes, “Women still face resistance as they advance in their careers, especially those from rural or township backgrounds.”

Her advice to others approaching retirement? “Even when

you're done, you're not done. You always need something that drives your passion. Between my knitting and my education work, I wouldn't have time for a full-time job!”



Sandra Tarlie

Sandra Tarlie: closing a career with grace

Sandra Tarlie, 83, retired last year after decades as a speech and language therapist specialising in stuttering. “I loved my work, and continued past 60 because I enjoyed it and still needed the income,” she says.

Eventually, when she felt the age gap between her and her younger clients had become too wide, and with newfound financial freedom, Tarlie decided it was time to move on.

Now, she fills her days with walking, reading, and connecting with friends. But she misses the stimulation and fulfilment her career provided. “Helping children and adults find their voice was my passion. Watching them gain confidence in their speech was incredibly rewarding,” she says.

Tarlie's story is a reminder that retirement isn't the end of one's impact, but the beginning of new opportunities for growth and reflection.

South African law doesn't mandate a retirement age unless it's specified in an employment contract, says industrial psychologist Taryn Marcus. “Post-retirement contracts are common, allowing organisations to benefit from the knowledge of experienced employees, often in mentorship roles,” she says.

However, Marcus warns that organisations must balance experience with innovation. “Mentorship can close knowledge gaps, but it's equally important to embrace reverse mentorship, where younger employees share fresh perspectives with seasoned staff,” she says.

Marcus believes retirement offers opportunities not only for individuals but for organisations to grow. “The key is humility and openness – both the experienced and the novice have value to add if they're willing to learn from each other.”



Lydia Abel

HerStory: deafening silence on 7 October sexual attacks

OPINION

BLESSING MATHABELA



TRIGGER WARNING: PIECE CONTAINS GRAPHIC SCENES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“You wouldn't come out unscathed, or alive, if you went to Gaza dressed like that.”

This comment was made to me during my trip to Israel earlier this year as part of an educational programme for student leaders on the Israel-Palestine conflict. I was wearing shorts and a crop top – ordinary clothing in my world, especially in the Middle Eastern heat. But the comment unsettled me. It wasn't just about the judgement of my clothing, considering the cultural context of Gaza, where modest dress is often emphasised due to religious and societal norms. I respect that, but what shocked me was the response. It didn't make sense why my way of dressing could justify such violence. The comment sparked a deeper curiosity. What are the lived experiences of women in both Israel and Palestine, where violence from the ongoing conflict is an ever-present reality?

During the trip, I found myself increasingly drawn to the untold stories of women on both sides of the conflict. That comment forced me to confront a chilling truth: the violence women endure in conflict zones isn't just collateral, it's systemic, deliberate, and largely ignored. This realisation shifted my focus from the question of political sovereignty to the untold stories of women in conflict, especially the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, exemplified by the horrific events of 7 October 2023.

The scene of the Nova festival where Hamas carried out sexual violence attacks



Photo: Ian Oseendryver

What happened on 7 October 2023? In the early hours of 7/10 (as the massacre has become known), Hamas, a militant Palestinian group that controls Gaza, launched a surprise attack on Israel, firing rockets and infiltrating border towns. Civilians in their homes were brutally killed, and many were taken hostage. At the Nova festival, a gathering meant for joy and celebration turned into a massacre as hundreds were murdered or injured. Those who were spared were abducted as hostages and taken to Gaza. The scale of the violence was shocking, targeting innocent lives with deliberate cruelty. In response, Israel declared war, initiating military strikes on Gaza that left countless civilians caught in the crossfire.

This is the history often presented by the media and political actors, but what about “HerStory”?

This untold narrative of 7 October reveals the atrocious, deliberate, and systematic use of violence against women. Although they may not live to tell their stories, their bodies carry the scars of war. They endured rape, mutilation, and the most brutal forms of physical assault. The women of 7 October were found naked, some with broken pelvises, and others with physical objects forcibly inserted inside their genitals. They were raped even in death. They were found hanging on trees with their legs spread

open to publicly humiliate them and instil terror in those who would find them.

Ironically, these actions were committed by men whose religious doctrine emphasises the covering of women's bodies for sanctity and protection. They intentionally betrayed their own principles to dehumanise, brutalise, and break the spirit of those women and their community. It was an attack on dignity, a deliberate message of domination and humiliation.

This tactic of war is nothing new. We have seen the weaponisation of women's bodies in Rwanda, Syria, and many other war zones in the world.

And the world was silent. The brutality was overshadowed by political debates, military responses, and broader geopolitical concerns. There was no sense of urgency whatsoever. It was only in March, five months later, that the United Nations released a statement acknowledging these acts of violence. Despite there being evidence and a record of these violations by people on social media platforms, several media houses minimised the issue as propaganda or employed “whataboutism”, a rhetorical tactic that deflects criticism by pointing to the perceived wrongdoing of others rather than addressing the issue at hand.

In this context, when attacks of sexual violence were reported, some individuals and commentators redirected the conversation: what about the violence inflicted on Palestinians? While it's essential to consider the historical context of the conflict, such

deflections lead to a cycle of blame that obscures the need for accountability. This also diminishes the urgency of gender-based violence, and can minimise the experience of victims by suggesting that the violent experiences of Israeli women are less significant. These issues shouldn't be mutually exclusive. One can stand in solidarity with Palestine's pursuit of freedom and security while also unequivocally denouncing the atrocities of 7 October.

As we end South Africa's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based

Violence in December, we must remember the women whose suffering has been ignored, whether in conflict zones or at home. The fight for gender-based justice cannot be postponed. It must be fought every day, everywhere, and for every woman. We must hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure that the outrage against gender-based violence isn't selective. It must extend to all women, no matter their background or circumstance. Women in Israel, Palestine, or anywhere else shouldn't be reduced to tools of war. Their stories demand to be heard, and their suffering must compel action.

Let's remember the women of 7 October not as nameless victims, but as a powerful symbol of the work that remains. “HerStory” mustn't be forgotten.

• Blessing Mathabela is a gender justice advocate and a third-year Bachelor of Education student at Wits. She has held leadership roles as deputy chairperson of the School of Education, and as secretary to the All Residences Sub-Council. She has also volunteered at the Gender Equity Office. A dedicated feminist, Blessing is driven by her mission to empower others and advocate for social change.

Baby Batya's cancer recovery confirms faith in Hashem

LEE TANKLE

Batya Rivka Musiker's parents, Sean and Justine, realised their worst nightmare after her birth on 26 April 2024, when she was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare form of cancer, and had to undergo many surgeries and chemotherapy. Seven months later, however, baby Batya has had her last round of chemo and has a new lease on life.

After 13 rounds of chemo and more than 600 hours spent in the hospital, Batya finished her treatment, and her big brother rang the victory bell for her at the Donald Gordon Paediatric Cancer Ward on 4 December.

"It was extremely emotional to see that the doctor that initially diagnosed it came for this moment, and everyone had tears in their eyes," said Batya's father, Sean. "Just to see all the people who had helped us along the way was a special, emotional moment."

"Our little girl has gone through more in her seven months of life than most people do in a lifetime," he said. "If you looked at her, besides the fact that she has a scar on her bum, which not everyone would see, and she's bald, she looks like a normal baby."

Saul, Batya's older brother, ringing the bell on her

behalf signified that this was a family journey that had come to a happy conclusion, said Batya's parents.

Batya was born on the third day of Pesach, and was named after the biblical Batya who saved Moses from the River Nile and raised him as her own. "To be born on that day was auspicious. It was fantastic. And then, we went from naming her to putting her onto a list for *mi shebeirach* [prayer for healing] to be said at shul on Saturdays after the Torah reading, which was a knife to the gut."

In the delivery room when Batya was born, the doctors picked up a bump on her left thigh/buttock. After testing, she was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare and aggressive form of paediatric cancer which attacks the muscle.

Sean and Justine were horrified on hearing her diagnosis on 10 May. "I had been trying to stay positive and say, 'No, it's nothing, we'll deal with it,'" Sean said, "It's a benign growth, or whatever.' I was trying to think positive. So, when we got hit by that news, it was an absolute hammer blow."

"I can't even describe the emotions that were running through me at that moment," he said. "I felt like I'd been hit from nowhere. And obviously, lots of tears were shed,

tears of sorrow, pain, and anguish."

For the next seven months, both parents were determined to get Batya better.

She has since undergone numerous surgeries to get her to this point. She was just three weeks old when she had her first surgery to insert a port for chemo and begin her seven-month chemo journey. "She went through about four operations in a row every single Tuesday. We really went through the wringer," said Sean.

"The doctors obviously couldn't tell us at the time which way it was going to go, but thank G-d, it turned out the way that it did," he said.

The doctors couldn't remove the tumour when she was born because it was too big, Sean said. The tumour was on the left side of her bum, just below her lower back.

"It was probably three centimetres in length, breadth, and height.

In a newborn baby, that's almost 10% of her body size. So, they needed to let the chemo take effect. As she grew, we thought the chemo was making the tumour disappear, but it was her growing and her bum getting bigger and enveloping the tumour. When it was removed and tested, it wasn't much smaller than it had been, but it was dead, so the chemo had killed the tumour."

Since the tumour was in her muscle, the surgeons had to take the tumour out piece by piece – amounting to 40 pieces in total.

Despite the chemo and surgeries, Batya kept growing as babies do. "All the way through, she just kept growing and hitting all of her milestones," said Sean.

Sean was cautiously optimistic when the doctor said that they had managed to remove the whole tumour, but there was always a nagging sense of dread. Said Sean, "And then when they tested it, I think we kind of breathed a sigh of relief. The entire thing that they tested was dead. And that was a massive, massive relief. But we

still had to finish the course of chemo, and thankfully, we were able to ring that bell.

"Although it has been so hard, there are people who have come into our lives who will be part of our lives and friends forever. The best part is that she's healed. She's done it so well. She's inspired so many people."

Plenty of *tehillim* groups were set up in Batya's name, and people even sent letters to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. A few cyclists rode the

947 Ride Joburg on Batya's behalf to raise funds for non-profit cancer-support organisation DL Link.

A lot of good has come out of an extremely challenging situation, the Musikers said. "It's the medicine, combined with the best medical team in the world, combined with prayers to heal her, and keeping Shabbos and laying tefillin and all of those things that we did on her behalf that helped get her to the place we are today."

If there's one message Sean and Justine would like to give the community, it's that no matter how challenging a situation is, having faith and trust in Hashem goes a long, long way.



Batya Rifka Musiker

Herzlia sports master makes splash with SA selection

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Ross van Schoor, the head of aquatics at United Herzlia Schools, who is representing South Africa in the World Aquatics Cup this month, motivates pupils by setting an example as an athlete in his own right.

Van Schoor, who has always been involved in water polo, will be heading with the South African team to Istanbul, Turkey, to play for the country's men's water polo team in the World Aquatics Cup, starting on 18 December.

The centre incorporates two pools in one, 12 swimming lanes, and enables water polo matches to be played while swimmers are also in action. It includes changing rooms, a canteen, and other facilities.

Herzlia Executive Director Andries van Renssen says, "Our vision is for the pool to be alive with activity from morning to night. I envision bustling galas and water polo tournaments that bring multiple schools together."

As the head of aquatics and a sports co-ordinator at Herzlia, Van Schoor

never cut out for cricket. I much preferred a faster, quicker game in the pool on a nice hot summer day. My dad encouraged me to play the sport from a young age, and I took to it very quickly."

Van Schoor started playing water polo in Grade 3, and has been playing ever since. "It was my main sport at Rondebosch Boys' High School, and the sport I was truly passionate about. I captained the first team, in which we won numerous tournaments and were ranked the number one team in the country for two years. I then went on to study at the University

of Stellenbosch, and played for the Maties first team water polo side. When I moved back to Cape Town, I joined Rondebosch Old Boys, and I play for the Rondebosch Meerkats."

Van Schoor played provincially for eight years. "I captained the number one team in South Africa at school level. I have



Ross van Schoor, Herzlia Head of Aquatics

"I felt a huge sense of accomplishment and honour when I was selected to represent my country at the highest level," Van Schoor, a Rondebosch Boys' High School and University of Stellenbosch alumnus, says.

His selection comes soon after Herzlia opened its new state-of-the-art aquatics centre, the Mercaz Mayim.

Van Schoor says the centre, nestled in the heart of Herzlia's high school campus, "brings with it a huge opportunity and exposure to our pupils to all-year-round water polo and swimming indoors. It allows us to host tournaments as well as touring schools for games. This pool doesn't just benefit the pupils, but the entire school and the community."

ensures the smooth running of all sport at the school.

"I make sure that Herzlia sports has a programme and development strategy in place to grow and develop our athletes. I lead by example as an athlete in my own right. I also help to look after the gym and with strength and conditioning programmes for sports teams."

A highlight from his time at Herzlia is having a Herzlia team play in the Mazinter Cup Finals for the past three years in a row, and participating in the Knysna Chukka Festival for the first time and having an unbeaten tour.

Recalling how he got into water polo, Van Schoor jokes that his dad threw him into the pool and told him to swim. In actual fact, "I was

won two USSA [University Sports South Africa] gold medals [in inter-varsity tournaments]. I've also won the Currie Cup, which is the most prestigious men's tournament in the country."

The always-busy Van Schoor juggles water polo with his work at Herzlia and tertiary studies. "You cannot study and work all the time," he says. "Physical exercise is as important, and brings a lot of joy to my life. In order to be successful, it's important to live a balanced lifestyle."

He will be hoping to help South Africa, a country with three Olympic men's water polo appearances to its name, to have a good showing against Iran and Kazakhstan in their World Cup group.

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Home sweet holiday home

ELKA COHEN

Some South Africans go on holiday to different places every year, but a select few head to their traditional family holiday home that has been in their family for decades – or generations.

In 1982, architect Gerald Gordon

A year later, the family spent their first holiday there. "The windows weren't even in place, but my parents, in true gung-ho spirit, decided it was okay to stay," Leibowitz recalled. This had the neighbours raising concerns, claiming they were "camping on their property", and they received a letter of eviction from

chanukah to unexpected surprises, like the time baboons invaded the house and a snake appeared in a bedroom. Every corner tells a story – from hand-painted artwork by Julie's sister and father, to a timeline of family photographs.

"It's equipped for beach adventures, with canoes, surfboards, and umbrellas all stored, so we don't have to *shlep* too much from Joburg," says Leibowitz.

For Leibowitz and her family, taking on the costs of rates and maintenance makes more financial sense than the skyrocketing seasonal costs of coastal rentals. Plus, it's theirs all year round.

"The surrounding area has transformed dramatically, but the charm of Plettenberg Bay remains intact," says Leibowitz, who describes it as "a mix of natural beauty and modern convenience".

"Plett has always held a special place in my family's life," shares Marc Lubner, who has cherished memories of his family's home. "My late dad used to bring us here when we were teenagers, back when it was still a fishing village with just a few ramshackle homes overlooking the beauty of the bay.

"Our first holiday home had outside bedrooms with one shared inside bathroom, which made for a very real

shared family experience," he recalls. "But our evenings were spent together with none of the distractions of restaurants or movie theatres, and days were spent exploring the beaches, surfing, and hiking or biking in the mountains."

The Lubners' current family home in Plett was purchased 30 years ago, prompted by changes in their original cliffside property. "Our first house in the village became impacted by a neighbour who defied building regulations and disrupted our views and peace," he recalls.

Determined to find a new haven, Lubner and his brothers discovered a remote plot. Formerly a caravan park, the area was to be developed into a residential estate. "The caravan park itself held special memories for me as a boy – it was my refuge from the chaos of our original holiday home," he shares. The

Jesse Leibowitz at his family's holiday home in Plettenberg Bay



made a bold decision that would shape the future of his family. He purchased a stand on a mountain slope in Plettenberg Bay for R12 500. "It was considered a bargain even then," says Julie Leibowitz, his daughter. His vision to transform the site into a holiday home held firm. "Even though the location was believed to be unbuildable, my dad was undeterred."

the council. In spite of this, the house became a treasured home in which three generations still gather.

This year, they welcome nephews from New Zealand. "It's always served as the central meeting point for family who are spread across the globe," she says.

The home holds many memories, from simple joys like the annual lighting of the

family purchased the land in March 2006, and began building.

Together with other home owners, the family purchased adjacent land near the *vlei* to preserve it as a nature reserve. Brother, Tony, was instrumental in having the bay declared a marine reserve, and continues to educate the local township community on maintaining clean rivers.

"We spent every December, Pesach, and Yom Kippur here," says Lubner, inviting both Jewish and non-Jewish friends to share in the principles and passion of the family's faith.

As the family expanded, his sister built an adjoining house. The two homes function seamlessly, often housing three generations at any given time.

"Our large kitchen table is the heart of the home – always full of love, food, and festivity. I have treasured memories sitting with my late dad, discussing life and business and everything in between."

Today, Lubner's 90-year-old mother lives there permanently, having moved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"One of my favourite sights in the world is seeing my dear mom standing up on the garden bench to get a better view of dolphins or whales in the bay. It's such a magical spot that reminds us of how blessed we are," Marc says.

Located in the heart of Mpumalanga near Dullstroom, a stone farmhouse has been a beloved family sanctuary since 1948. The property was purchased by Sam Jaff, the grandfather of a well-known Cape Town community leader who prefers to remain anonymous. It has remained a cherished retreat for three generations.

"My grandfather was a visionary," reflects his granddaughter. "His love for birdwatching and trout fishing drew him to the area before it was well-known. He sought peace and wellness in nature, long before mindfulness became a trend."

Back then, a four-hour drive on dirt roads led to the remote property amidst a sprawling gumtree forest. There was no electricity, no cell phone signal, no modern conveniences. Yet, the large stoep, the wood-burning stove, and well-stocked river still provide the perfect escape from the city.

"My grandfather's greatest gift was teaching us that life doesn't require much to be enjoyed. Time spent there taught us the value of nature and family," she says.

Over the years, they added an ensuite bedroom and electricity, yet the home's rustic charm remains. "There's still no cell phone signal, which, honestly, is the best part," she says.

Though the family once considered selling it, the sentimental value of the farmhouse prevailed. "We often joke that the farmhouse should've fallen down by now," she laughs. But it stands strong, like the memories they still make there.

Legalised euthanasia debate puts palliative care in spotlight

ELKA COHEN

As debates about laws for assisted dying intensify globally, Dr Monique Price, a South African general practitioner specialising in geriatrics and palliative care, emphasises that the role of palliative care is to improve the quality of life, not hasten death.

She says palliative care is about more than just end-of-life care, it's a process that starts from the moment a life-threatening illness is diagnosed. "It's a holistic approach that addresses physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs, essential for enhancing the well-being of patients and their families."

The United Kingdom (UK) is grappling with the ethical and societal implications of Labour MP Kim Leadbeater's Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which seeks to legalise assisted suicide for terminally ill adults. As the bill passes its second reading in Parliament, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has raised concerns, calling it "a fundamental moral challenge to our society".

Mirvis warns against a shift in values that could redefine assisted dying as "just another treatment option". In his effort to drive home the ethical alternative that quality palliative care represents, he reminded UK legislators of Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of modern hospice care, who said, "You don't have to kill the patient to kill the pain."

In South Africa, Price points out that though the country ranks low globally in providing care for its dying citizens – 72nd out of 81 countries, according to a 2021 Duke University survey – there have been efforts to improve care through the introduction of Advanced Illness Benefits by major medical aids. "These benefits provide access to palliative care, but services remain limited and often come too late in the illness trajectory," she says.

Historically, palliative care in South Africa has been largely provided by hospices and nongovernmental organisations, which has led to a misconception that it's synonymous with end-of-life care. Price clarifies that "palliative care starts from the moment of diagnosis of a life-threatening illness, and extends beyond just terminal care". The misconception can delay crucial support, as many patients access palliative care only when curative treatments are no longer effective, missing the opportunity to benefit from its holistic approach earlier in their illness.

The South African government's support of the World Health Assembly's resolution on integrating palliative care reflects a commitment to improving access

to these services for all citizens. However, implementation has been slow. Most hospitals still lack dedicated palliative care programmes, and training for healthcare providers remains inadequate. This gap emphasises the need for comprehensive healthcare reform to prioritise palliative care as part of the national health system.

A major challenge is overcoming the stigma that equates palliative care with imminent death. Price says patients and clinicians still tend to view palliative care as a last resort, available only when curative treatments have failed. In reality, palliative care is a proactive, holistic approach that, when introduced early, is concrete in managing symptoms and enhancing quality of life. "It's a care model that integrates pain management, psychosocial support, and spiritual care, ensuring that patients experience dignity and comfort throughout their illness," she says.

The World Health Organization stresses that palliative care focuses on normalising dying as a part of life, ensuring dignity and autonomy for patients.

In many countries, including the UK and Canada, terms like "supportive care" or "anticipatory care" are used to encourage earlier referrals to palliative services. Studies show that early access to palliative care leads to better patient outcomes, including enhanced quality of life, a more dignified death, and an improved bereavement experience for families. When integrated early on, palliative care offers relief from pain and distress while providing a sense of control and comfort for the patient.

Price emphasises the importance of a patient-centred approach, saying, "Effective palliative care requires open, honest communication between healthcare providers and patients, mutual agreement on goals, and respect for patient autonomy. While families play an essential role, their wishes should never override the patient's choices." In the past, palliative care was often seen as separate from curative treatments, with patients referred only after all other options had been exhausted. This "either-or" model left many feeling abandoned by their doctors. Today, the best approach combines disease-oriented care with palliative interventions, ensuring continuous, compassionate support.

Another common misconception is the association of palliative care with euthanasia. While euthanasia seeks to end life to alleviate suffering, palliative care is focused on improving the quality of life, no matter how long it lasts.

Says Price, "Palliative care doesn't hasten death. It aims to manage symptoms, address concerns, and preserve dignity. A patient should never feel abandoned by their care team." In fact, the lack of access to comprehensive palliative care is a significant factor that increases the likelihood of individuals to seek euthanasia as an option. Expanding these services and educating the public about their benefits is key to reducing the perceived need for assisted dying.

For South Africa, prioritising the integration of palliative care into the healthcare system is crucial. This requires not just investment in funding and infrastructure, but also in training healthcare professionals to provide holistic, patient-centred care. Fair and early access to palliative services can radically transform how society approaches illness, death, and dying.



Palliative care needs to be taken more seriously



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anything from 10 to 10,000 people throughout its various venues. The venue can host large-scale banquets and gala dinners for up to 2,200 guests and 4,000 cocktail guests in the Pavillion's uninterrupted space.

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Shakespeare and ‘she’ power with a Jewish twist



BATYA BRICKER

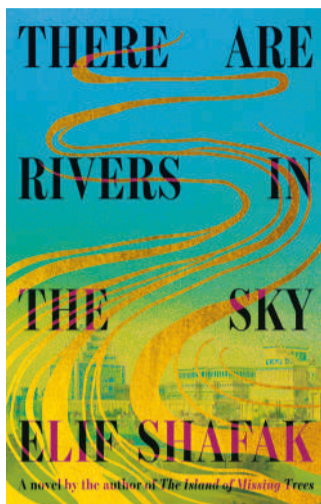
BOOKS

December is a time for sand between the toes, long lunches with family and friends (or blissfully alone), favourite drink to hand, and a glorious book in the other.

Here are some of the big releases with an underlying Jewish thread:

There are Rivers in the Sky: Elif Shafak

From the Booker Prize finalist author of *The Island of Missing Trees* comes *There are Rivers in the Sky*. This magnificent new tale is, I think, Elif Shafak's best yet. This book is 2024's answer to the tour de force from Abraham Verghese *The Covenant of Water* last year.



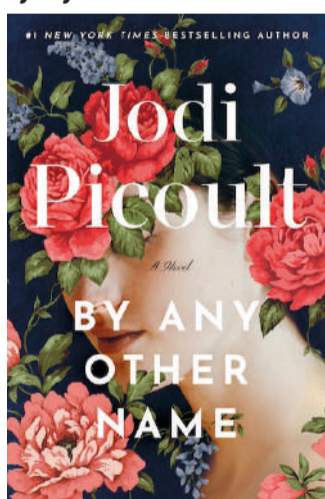
I love books that contextualise biblical stories, and in Elif's book, its Jonah's Nineveh, on the banks of the River Tigris, that comes to life. In 1840 London, Arthur is born beside the stinking, sewage-filled River Thames. With an abusive, alcoholic father and a mentally ill mother, Arthur's only chance of escaping destitution is his brilliant memory, and one book in particular catches his interest: *Nineveh and Its Remains*.

In 2014 Turkey, Narin, a ten-year-old Yazidi girl, is diagnosed with a rare disorder that will soon cause her to go deaf. Before that happens, her grandmother is determined to baptise her in a sacred Iraqi temple. But with the rising presence of ISIS (Islamic State) and the destruction of the family's ancestral lands along the Tigris, Narin is running out of time.

In 2018 London, the newly divorced Zaleekah, a hydrologist, moves into a houseboat on the Thames to escape her husband. Orphaned and raised by her wealthy uncle, Zaleekah had made the decision to take her own life in one month, until a curious book about her homeland changes everything.

A dazzling feat of storytelling, *There are Rivers in the Sky* binds these three lives with a single drop of water, a drop which re-manifests across the centuries. Both a source of life and harbinger of death, rivers – the Tigris and the Thames – transcend history, transcend fate: “Water remembers. It is humans who forget.”

By Any Other Name: Jodi Picoult



From the *New York Times* bestselling author comes *By Any Other Name* by Jodi Picoult, a novel about two women, centuries apart – one of whom is the real author of Shakespeare's plays – who are both forced to hide behind another name.

Told in intertwining timelines, this is a story about courage and finding a voice, despite the odds.

Young playwright Melina Green has just written a new work inspired by the life of her Elizabethan ancestor, Emilia Bassano. But seeing it performed is unlikely in a theatre world where the playing field isn't level for women. Then, her best friend takes the decision out of her hands and submits the play to a festival under a male pseudonym.

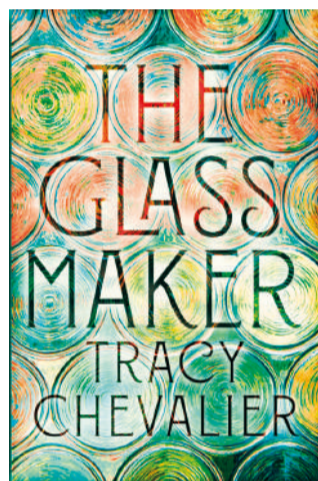
In 1581, young Emilia Bassano is a ward of English aristocrats. Like most women of her day, she is allowed no voice of her own. Forced to become a mistress to the Lord Chamberlain, who oversees all theatre productions in England, Emilia sees firsthand how the words of playwrights can move an audience. She begins to form

a plan to bring a play of her own secretly to the stage, by paying an actor named William Shakespeare to front her work. Emilia is also a converso, and the novel quietly offers a fascinating glimpse into the double lives of these Jews.

The Glass Maker: Tracy Chevalier

Like most readers, I first met Chevalier via Griet, a sixteen-year-old girl living in the Netherlands in 1664 featured in the novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, which brought to life the painting by Johannes Vermeer of the same name. The book was so evocative, I made a special trip to The Hague to see Vermeer's painting in the flesh. *The Glass Maker* certainly made me want to visit Murano again.

Tracy Chevalier's new novel spans a grand sweep of 500 years, all experienced by her long-lived heroine, Orsola Rosso. It opens in 1486, and readers are treated to an incredibly rich history of both the glass industry, Venice, and Murano. We see Venice thrive, suffer, recover, survive the “Acqua Granda” flooding of 1619, and soon



after, the COVID-19 pandemic. Orsola Rosso is the eldest daughter in a family of glassblowers in Murano. As a woman, she's not meant to work with glass, but she has the hands for it, the heart, and a vision. When her father dies, she teaches herself to make beads

in secret. With her modest pursuit, Orsola becomes an artist, fashioning beads that become emblems of hope as well as necklaces for the rich and powerful. Throughout, we get glimpses of Jewish life and influence in Venice. Although we don't actually see inside the ghetto – the original, in Cannaregio, from whence the term originates – we do pass its walls. And get a sense of context for Jews who lived in that time. We hear of Giudecca, an island south of Venice and separated from it by the Giudecca Canal, providing produce for Venetians. Giudecca, of course, is like our English word “Judaica”, and refers to Jews. It's typically the name for the Jewish quarters in southern Italy.

Matriarchs, Meze and the Evil Eye: Costa Ayiotis

This book isn't about a Jewish family, but it may as well be. *Matriarchs, Meze and the Evil Eye* by Costa Ayiotis is a storytelling delight, as rich and tasty as his mother's slow cooked lamb. Costa introduces us to his big, fat, crazy Greek family, its joys, its foibles, and for any of us who are part of fun-but-infuriating extended families, you will tut and snigger in recognition at his family dramas and diatribes.

In this humorous coming-of-age memoir, young Costa finds himself in the middle of a matriarchal triangle. His sully mother, Victoria, is forced to share her kitchen with both her conservative Greek mother-in-law and her bossy sister-in-law. A raucous war in the kitchen takes place, not only for oven territory but also for the affection of their beloved “Kostaki”. This is an intricately woven portrait of the Greek immigrant experience of a family, trying to navigate South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, and echoes so much of our Jewish experience.

• *Batya Bricker loves words, books, and the stories they tell. She is the GM of Books and Brand for Exclusive Books, a publisher, an author, a student, a teacher, and of course, a voracious reader.*

Mass migration of Jo-bird causes cadenza in Cape



CASEY SHEVEL

OPINION

As Capetonians and Durbanites start rolling down their shutters and rolling their eyes even more at the thought of our imminent invasion, Joburgers are happily gearing up for our much needed Summer “vacay”.

Suitcases are being packed, and Moishes orders placed for convenient delivery in those white polystyrene boxes of ready-prepared-meal goodness.

Some have booked for Thailand or Mauritius, but the rest of us Joburg Jews cannot wait to transform the quiet coastlines of Ballito, Ummies, Cape Town, and Plett into our very best version of King David by the Sea.

It's been a year, and everyone is depleted.

But everyone is anxious due to said depletion levels and, whether or not they have what it takes to enjoy this time away without blowing up at their overbearing mother in law and creating yet another family *farible*, they are desperate to get out of town.

Escaping the water outages, the broom seller at the gate who seems to think that we need to replenish our mop collection every two days, and the endless online aliya sales – no Gloria, I don't want to buy your fish-shaped glass platter, but thank you! – I'm beyond grateful for the glorious weather and the break. Time to kick off those Sambas in exchange for your Birkies, and start the glorious migration.

And who better to spend it with than 5 000 of our brothers and sisters? I wouldn't want it any other way!



Loungers will be draped in towels at Beacon Island Hotel in Plettenberg Bay

Where else will you see teenagers yelling from their balconies to their moms at the pool, letting them know they need more data?

I dare you to find another location where packs of teenage boys skulking around like a group of llamas, still wait while their mummies apply more sunscreen to their backs before ordering them an Uber to Clifton.

The girls in their tiny shorts are looking for something seemingly impossible to find in their equally tiny bags, tossing their hair

back, and giving you a look as they pass you at the pool.

By 08:00, every single lounge and chair is lovingly draped in timeshare towels even though not a living soul is within a 100m radius of the actual pool area.

As always, the anxiety levels run high, but if you need a quick Urbanol, beach bags are yanked open and someone immediately has your back, usually with a handful of pharmaceutical options!

Everyone is either going to or coming back

Brace yourself for the lack of parking in Sea Point and the queues at the Sea Point Spar

from a run, a swim, a cold-water immersion, or a hot yoga class. It doesn't really matter which, as long as you bring back a takeaway coffee on your way home.

Yes, it's chaos, but the very best kind.

I love how the ice-cream sellers on the beach are fully clued up on the laws of kashrut and respectfully leave you alone once you request Dairymaid.

The kids just love the freedom that comes with using a lift and pressing those buttons without an adult present several times a day – this may be the reason two of the lifts are always out of order.

The sweet shop downstairs is teaching them a valuable lesson regarding how little R20 will actually get you in life.

For those going to the Cape, it's important to note that Sea Point has zero parking. Zero! The lines at Spar are full by 07:30 on Friday morning, and the chicken schnitzels

will always “only be ready in an hour”.

South Africa remains a place of immense blessing and beauty. I dare you to locate a more breathtaking coastline with nicer people – well, at least those that aren't chanting for our imminent demise.

Our community is unparalleled. Our people really are the best.

And if you need a better reason to stay, just imagine trying to get rid of all those bloody fish-shaped platters!

Come say hi, and give me a little kiss when you see me on that white sand. I cannot wait!

• *Casey Shevel, otherwise known as #momofboys, is a mom, author, speaker, matchmaker, dating coach, and lover of all things heart-shaped.*

iSchoolAfrica's work to zero barriers given global recognition

LEE TANKLE

Michelle Lisoos and iSchoolAfrica have made such a difference to the lives of disabled South Africans, it was awarded an international Zero Project Award for doing its bit to remove barriers in education and information and communication technologies (ICT).

They were informed of the award by Zero Project, a global initiative to support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Lisoos, iSchoolAfrica's founder and executive director, and the rest of the team said it was fitting that they heard about the award on this special day.

"It's such an important day on our calendar," said Lisoos. "In our world, every day is an important day, so it was especially meaningful because it almost made what we do tangible and recognised that we're making the difference we set out to make."

"We looked at the statistics of 1% of disabled people being employed in South Africa, and we looked at the statistics about the need for technology roles and technology developers. We brought these two societal issues together, and launched the Deaf Developers Programme," said Lisoos.

iSchoolAfrica seeks to reduce inequalities and enhance opportunities for exceptional employment and economic growth, with a focus on under-resourced schools, mainstream and special needs, from early childhood development to Grade 12.

It's one of 77 innovative solutions from 45 countries that will receive a Zero Project Award at the Zero Project Conference 2025 in Vienna, Austria, in March 2025.

The school trained eight deaf youth to become iOS developers, for which they are now all employed. It's also raising the skills of education faculty and its corporate partners to ensure meaningful work and accessible workplaces.

The small programme has also introduced 100 new coding terms that have been approved in South African Sign Language.

The course takes place over a year, and includes Apple's Develop in Swift Curriculum; work readiness modules; App development projects; and internships in partner corporations.

Said Lisoos, "The thing about this programme is that it's about creating meaningful and relevant employment. It's looking at where their abilities are, not their disabilities, and we train the corporate to become an inclusive environment."

Lisoos said that to win this



Michelle Lisoos with a student from the Special School for the Deaf

award and be recognised on such a global stage wasn't just a win for the organisation, but a win for anyone who advocates for people with disabilities.

"The message of the award is something that we align and resonate with – to create a world with zero barriers for people with disabilities," said Lisoos. "It recognises that what we're doing is so important and so groundbreaking, and it's always been about not catering to a lowest common denominator, and always making sure we bring in the best of the best."

When Lisoos told participants

that the programme had won this prestigious award, she said they were over the moon and proud to show what they could now do.

"They're proud to be part of the things we did on this programme," she said. "The deaf community is excited to be recognised through the Deaf Developers Programme, and also for the importance of teaching deaf youth proper skills."

iSchoolAfrica was established in 2009 to make the world's

best technology and classroom practices more accessible.

Said Lisoos, "We saw the huge impact Apple technology had on more resourced schools, and the divide getting bigger and bigger, with compromised programmes being dumped on under-resourced schools. So, I thought of iSchoolAfrica, and the core group was established in 2009."

The basic premise is that a mobile iPad laboratory is taken into classrooms and preloaded so that when iSchoolAfrica leaves the school, teachers carry on with using the content in laboratories in the classroom.

"In under-resourced communities, students with disabilities and learning barriers are further marginalised for a host of reasons," Lisoos said. "An estimated 600 000 children with disabilities remain out of school in South Africa. Where students are in school, their schools aren't teaching them adequate skills to support their development and help them lead an independent life, with very little chance of them finding meaningful employment. There isn't adequate skills or funding for reasonable accommodation, assistive devices, and other support."

Over the organisation's 15 years, it has reached 100 000 students in 300 schools, and trained 3 300 teachers.

Lisoos is travelling to Vienna next year to showcase the Deaf Developers Programme at the Zero Project Conference at the United Nations Office in that city.

She said the award was a testimony to the importance of disability inclusion, and promoted funding programmes that were more inclusive and education-inclusive workplaces.

"I'm excited to see what other people are doing and to learn from them," she said. "There's a lot of pressure on us to make sure that we don't stop here, that we continue to grow the programme and to reach more youth with disabilities."

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1925 = R300 Up to R2 000
1931 = R8000 Up to R10 000



ONE SHILLING
1923 to 1964 = R20
1931 = R500 Up to R3 000
1939 = R500 Up to R30 000
1949 = R400 Up to R4 000



60
1923 to 1964 = R10
1931 = R500 Up to R3 000
1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



30
1923 to 1964 = R5
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000

The dos and doughnuts of *sufganiots*

LEE TANKLE

"One of the best parts of Chanukah is the sheer amount of doughnuts we get to eat." "I could eat 10 of these."

"This isn't a doughnut, it's just a piece of bread with icing on top." These are some of the comments made at the SA Jewish Report's doughnut tasting on 5 December in the run-up to Chanukah.

Seven doughnut lovers were invited to judge a variety of doughnuts bought from seven kosher bakeries around Johannesburg to help the Jewish community with their Chanukah *sufganiot* (doughnut) buying.

On the judging panel were 24-year-old teacher Natanya Porter; Pnina Biddle, a medical student at the University of the Witwatersrand and a foodie; Cindy Herring, a mom of two girls who has spent decades honing her culinary skills running the *brocha* and kitchen at West Street Shul; Jodi Rakusin, mom of twins and organiser extraordinaire; Simon Anstey, a former insurance professional and ex-radio host; Talia Talmud, an industrial psychologist who posts on Facebook under the auspices of #cakechronicles; and SA Jewish Report board member Dina Diamond.

The judges were tough in their ratings, and were told where each doughnut was from only at the end of the tasting. They scored each doughnut based on flavour, texture, appearance, and smell, and gave each category a score out of 10.

The winner was The Family Bakehouse, from which the doughnuts were by far the most expensive. With a choice of peppermint crisp and caramel doughnuts, the judges were excited to sink their teeth into such innovative offerings. The peppermint crisp doughnut was decorated with chocolate icing and pieces of peppermint crisp chocolate; and the caramel doughnut had a custard filling with caramel icing.

Anstey said he believed they "would be a huge favourite with children". He could be right. The younger judges on the panel said they were by far the best.

However, Rakusin said, "These doughnuts aren't my vibe. It's too much." Her comment shocked the rest of the panel as they had been such a high scorer.

In second place were doughnuts from Shoshana's Bakery, which were the only custard doughnuts on the list. There was great excitement when they were brought into the room. The two fluffy doughnuts covered with sugar with a silky custard on the inside had the panel's mouths watering at the thought of sinking their teeth into these – and the doughnuts didn't disappoint.

"That's a good-looking doughnut," said Diamond. Anstey said they were the first doughnut he wanted to eat. "It's so fluffy," said Porter. "The outside is super sweet, but the inside isn't as sweet, so it meshed together brilliantly."

When the doughnuts from Shula's Bakery – which came dual second – were brought out, Diamond said, pointing at the plate, "That just looks like a doughnut." The doughnuts were in the classic doughnut shape, with a hole in the middle, and decorated with white icing and colourful sprinkles.

"I'm a classic doughnut girl," said Diamond. "It's fresh, it has icing, it has sprinkles, and it ticks all the boxes."

Said Herring, "You can never go wrong with one of these."

The judges discussed whether a doughnut like this would be considered a *sufgania*. Typically that's a round jam doughnut, but after some discussion, they declared that any doughnut could be a *sufgania*.

In fourth place were apricot jam doughnuts from Pick n Pay at Genesis Shopping Centre. They were the most affordable larger doughnuts in the selection, at R10 a doughnut.

With apricot jam in the crisp doughnut covered in sugar, those in the older generation in the room were beaming with excitement at this classic.

The younger ones on the panel immediately scoffed at these doughnuts because of the jam filling.

"These are my favourites," said Rakusin with a huge grin.

However, for Biddle and Porter, they might have ranked higher, but they both dislike apricot jam.

Following on, the three miniature jam doughnuts from Tiberius came in fifth place. For the younger ones in the room, they went down better than the ones from Pick n Pay because there wasn't much jam.

"They look cute. There is a good amount of jam for someone who

doesn't like jam," said Biddle. "This is my kind of doughnut. I might go and buy these later so I can have them at home," said Rakusin, while savouring her piece of doughnut.

Diamond said that before coming to the tasting, she knew how much she loved sweet things, but "doing this underestimated my

love for doughnuts".

In sixth place were the chocolate iced doughnuts



Cindy Herring



Talia Talmud



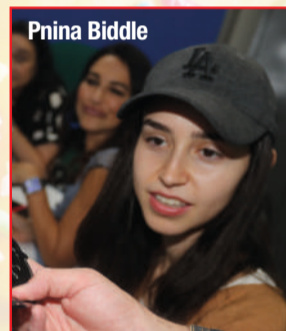
Jodi Rakusin



Dina Diamond



Simon Anstey



Pnina Biddle

with sprinkles from Sandringham Spar. For many on the panel, these doughnuts, though they look great, need some improvement in terms of texture. There was much anticipation when they were brought into the tasting room as they looked classic, according to many on the panel, but for most, the texture was dryer than they would like.

"You could throw this at someone and it might hurt," said Anstey. "It's a shame because it looks so nice – like a classic sprinkle doughnut."

Finally, in seventh place were the miniature doughnuts from Dee Jays, nicknamed "diet doughnuts" by the panel because they were so much smaller than the others. And the judges said they weren't moist enough and a bit hard for them to get the full doughnut experience.

"They look just like doughnuts that you get at a cricket game or on the beachfront," said Diamond.

But, at the end of the tasting, each judge said they would be happy to have any of these doughnuts at their Chanukah celebrations because while some may have been marginally better than the others, they were all tasty and ticked the boxes.

• Please note: these results haven't been independently audited. The tasting was done in good fun, and reflects the individual tastes of our judges.

| Doughnut | Flavour | Texture | Look | Smell | Total | Price |
|----------------------|---------|---------|------|-------|-------|--------------|
| Deejay's | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 16 | R25.50 for 3 |
| Pick n Pay Genesis | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 23 | R19.98 for 2 |
| Sandringham Spar | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 20 | R20.00 for 2 |
| Shoshana's Bakery | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 28 | R36.00 for 2 |
| Shula's Bakery | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 28 | R50.00 for 3 |
| The Family Bakehouse | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 29 | R40.00 each |
| Tiberius | 6 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 21 | R39.00 for 3 |

The ultimate Joburg staycation

OPINION

ANTONY SEEFF



As 16 December – South Africa's unofficial national breakup day – approaches, Johannesburg Jews gear up for their annual coastal migration, trading in the streets of Glenhazel for the sandy shores of Robberg and Clifton.

Those left behind may feel a mix of FOMO (fear of missing out) and *schadenfreude* – missing out on seaside adventures but secretly delighting in dodging Cape Town's gridlock and Plett's inevitable downpours – while basking in the perks of staying put.

Quiet streets, prime parking, and no lines at KosherWorld? Yes, please. And guess what? Joburg summers aren't half bad, with plenty of activities to keep you and your kids entertained while the rest of the city debates which beach has the least wind.

For outdoorsy types

Feeling stuck in the urban jungle? A quick drive out of Johannesburg could take you straight to some beautiful hiking trails where you can immerse yourself in nature while still enjoying the comfort of your own bed at night. The **Hennops Hiking Trail** and **Rietvlei Trails** offer exciting day trips with routes for every fitness level.

Closer to home, you can leash up your furry friends and head to the

revitalised **The Wilds Nature Reserve** on the edge of Houghton. With its sprawling 16 hectares of greenery and creative outdoor artwork by the talented James Delaney, it's a hidden gem for kids and adults.

For an educational twist, explore the **Cradle of Humankind**. The **Maropeng Visitor Centre** and **Sterkfontein Caves** offer a fascinating mix of adventure and ancient history.

For kids

December promises plenty of kid-friendly fun. Movie buffs can say "you're welcome" to the much-anticipated **Moana 2** or sing along with the new **Wicked** movie. You can also head to the **Museum of Illusions** at Rosebank Zone for some mind-bending exhibits and Insta-worthy photo ops. For those who need to burn off energy, **Total Ninja** in Stoneridge will have them channelling their inner American Ninja Warrior, while trampoline parks like **Rush** in Greenstone or **Bounce** in Mall of Africa deliver joy for those looking for a more classic jumping experience.

Looking to break a sweat? Go ice skating at the **Northgate Ice Rink** or rollerblading at **RollEgoli** in Bryanston. For bike lovers, the **Cycle Lab Bike Park** in Bryanston or **Eduplex** in Pretoria are fantastic options where you can BYOB (bring your own bike).

When the weather turns dodgy, the **Fun Company** (which has branches all over Johannesburg) offers bumper cars, ten-pin bowling, and arcade games galore. And don't miss mini-golf! Whether at the **Fun Company**

or **Adventure Golf**, just be prepared for the kids to outscore you, even if you bring your own putter.

For a classic family outing, there's always **Gold Reef City**, our very own *tumultic* Disneyland, or venture out to **Irene Dairy Farm** in Centurion, where kids can chase after farm animals while you sip on fresh milk and imagine a simpler life.

For adults

Let's face it: streaming marathons are a legitimate holiday plan. Top picks include the laugh-out-loud **Jury Duty** (Amazon Prime) and **Slow Horses** (Apple TV), or the sci-fi drama **Silo** (Apple TV). For something more poignant, try **We Were the Lucky Ones** for a remarkable Holocaust drama.

Feeling social? Sip cocktails with a view at the **Bar at the Top of Leonardo**, perched atop Africa's tallest building. Or explore the buzzing **Prison Break Market** in Lonehill, packed with artisanal food, drinks, and crafts.

Golfers mourning the loss of Plett Country Club can find solace in Joburg's world-class courses like **Steyn City**, or try **Hot Shots** at the World of Golf for a high-tech, competitive twist on the driving range.

So, as you can see, Joburg has more than enough to keep you busy these holidays. From outdoor adventures to family fun and even a little indulgence for the adults, a "staycation" might just prove that you don't need the beach to have a blast. Now if only we could find some local granadilla lollies to enjoy by the pool...

• Antony Seeff is an entrepreneur in the health-tech industry and a proud Joburger.



Rush at Greenstone Shopping Centre

Hotfooting it on holiday



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with my son who lives in Israel. In the discussion, he told me about a family who had been displaced from the Gaza envelope. More than that, they suffered greatly through that day in October, fought for their lives, and although they survived, many of their friends didn't. They haven't been able to return home. So current is their feeling of loss, they are unable to say the words, "Chag sameach" (happy holiday) because the feeling of happiness remains elusive. And unrelatable.

Where this is perfectly understandable, there are others who have chosen a different route. Whether through purpose, faith, an instinct to survive, or through intentional determination, the paths to healing are many. As are the stories of resilience across Israel. Stories that astound and inspire us on the other side of the world.

There are many real justifications for a holiday, even at a time like this. Vacations are important for our health, for our family, for our relationships, and for the ability to survive and thrive another year on the frontlines of the battle.

As important is the recognition that we are sophisticated enough to live with different emotions. And that taking a break doesn't mean that we care any less.

And so, this being my last column of 2024, I want to thank you for your amazing feedback over the year, for your support when I needed it, and for laughing alongside me when the haters tried to say their worst. I wish you a restorative break, and more importantly, that we'll be able to have the strength to enjoy the place where our pedicured feet find us.

Thanks to the insistence of my wife, my feet are ready for a holiday. They are shiny and smooth and prepared for whatever my Birkenstocks throw at them. The alternative to having them attended to was that the coastal hamlet of Plett would be denied a sighting of my toes as I would have been forbidden from unleashing them on the world.

That having been said, I'm not confident that the rest of me is as holiday ready. Not only have I not lost those stubborn last 20kg to perfect my beach body, but my brain and heart aren't quite there either.

December might be desperately needed, but that doesn't mean it doesn't come as a bit of a shock that it's finally here.

At day 433 since the launch of Operation Swords of Iron that followed Hamas's 7 October invasion of southern Israel, it's almost unimaginable that December has rolled around again. And that once again, South Africans, following the closure of schools, universities, and many businesses, are contemplating another summer holiday.

December 2023, a mere seven weeks from the day our world was upended, to some extent happened as though we were on autopilot. Holidays had likely been booked and paid for, and although there was unease about "living our best life" while some had been denied theirs. But it also made little sense to stay home. And so we went through the motions of the holiday as though suffering some sort of imposter syndrome.

We donned our Granadillas; built our Sun Ninjas; applied our protection factor 50; swam in the ocean. And then we came home.

Few posted their holiday "snaps" to Instagram. And few will think back on December 2023 with any form of fond nostalgia.

I know that we don't.

Afrika Tikkun delegates get close up on Holocaust

VANESSA VALKIN

Forty Afrika Tikkun delegates visited the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre last week to build awareness of the history and identity of their organisation's Jewish founders and supporters.

It also gave an opportunity to those involved in its work skills and agri-training programme to learn about the Holocaust and delve deeper into themes of tolerance and human connection.

The delegates said they were deeply impacted by the museum's exhibits, which offered a sobering view of the Holocaust and other genocides in history. A key takeaway for them was the understanding that genocide is a deliberate act of destruction that requires intent and planning to wipe out a specific group of people.

Afrika Tikkun facilitator Ntsikelelo Mkoko, said, "I learnt that you cannot box people into categories. It reminds me of what happened last month at a sausage factory in Mfuleni, where the Afrika Tikkun Centre is located. It was alleged that it was adding dog food to its sausages. Now, everyone is saying the factory is owned by Somalians and that the Somalians must all go back to Somalia. You can't generalise about a group of people, and people need to be taught that!"

Zenathi Jubisa, a trainee on an Afrika Tikkun agricultural skills programme, said, "I realised that hate is everywhere, and the fact that the Holocaust programme works on dismantling it is important. I love the fact that this opened my eyes to learn more and become a better person."

Beneficiary Amelio Klama reflected on the visit, calling it "mind-blowing" and "emotional". Learning about the Holocaust, he said, brought home the universality of suffering caused by hatred and the fact that we're all, ultimately, potential victims of prejudice and pain.

Lisa Schewitz, Afrika Tikkun's Jewish ambassador, co-ordinated the visit. "The Jewish community has always held a deep sense of responsibility towards the vulnerable and oppressed," she told the group. "This sense of duty, informed by our own history – especially the trauma of the Holocaust – drives our

commitment to social justice and helping those in need. Afrika Tikkun's mission is a living testament to this ethos, enabling us to create lasting change for disadvantaged South Africans, irrespective of background or race."

Schewitz, who raises funds for Afrika Tikkun, is urging everyone to continue to partner with the organisation to build on the impact of Afrika Tikkun and the Jewish community over the past 30 years.

To donate, scan the QR code.



Afrika Tikkun delegates visiting the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre

They expressed shock and sadness at the atrocities committed during the Holocaust. Zoe Bikwana, a Holocaust Centre educator, told them of the disturbing trend of using the term "genocide" loosely in contemporary discourse, often without fully understanding its historical and moral weight.

Bikwana challenged the group to imagine "unzipping their skins from their bodies". "We're all skeletal components of the same human form," she told the group, emphasising the common humanity underneath skin colour and the importance of fighting discrimination.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

A lot to be positive about in 2025



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

As this is the last Above Board for 2024, I thought it correct to use this opportunity for a retrospective on what has been an extremely eventful and emotional year.

This year, the Jewish community took to the streets on several occasions. It protested against Cricket South Africa's unjust removal of David Teeger as the Under-19 captain; against International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister Ronald Lamola's dismissal of the rise in antisemitism in South Africa; the government's failure to condemn the heinous sexual violence and rape committed by Hamas on 7 October; and former Dirco Minister Dr Naledi Pandor's, troubling calls for intensified campus activism such as that witnessed in Europe and America.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies played a vital role in this year's watershed general elections, spearheading initiatives such as the interfaith observer mission; the #MakeUsCount campaign; and organising highly attended election debates in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

It has been a year in which there were so many attempts to demonise Israel and the Jewish community, including through a number of inflammatory statements emanating from universities, public institutions, and countless media outlets. The Board stood resolute, issuing counterstatements, disproving false claims, and, where necessary, taking legal action to ensure press codes were upheld.

Though it remains true that South Africa has among the lowest instances of antisemitism in the world and its university campuses are among the safest, 2024 witnessed the third highest number of antisemitic incidents on record. A particularly worrying episode occurred last Friday, 6 December, in Cape Town, when a suspicious object was thrown over the wall into the Jewish Community Centre in Gardens. Police and the Community Security Organisation are investigating the object and its source. This is being taken extremely seriously by the highest levels of the

South African security cluster including an investigation by the Hawks. We thank Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis for his condemnation of the incident and support of Cape Jewry. We have written to the president, criticising his silence on this incident.

This year, the Board also held some momentous events. Our Freedom Seder, which took place merely months after 7 October, attracted such an overwhelming attendance that it had to be moved to a bigger venue. Yom Hashoah this year had a record number of school student participants, including from a number of non-Jewish schools. The 7 October Square was a demonstration of communal unity and strength, and was a site of much needed grieving and healing. Finally, just last month, we held our 120-year anniversary gala dinner, which paid homage to so many Jewish South Africans who have made iconic and impactful contributions to South Africa. A similar 120th celebration was held in Cape Town. Each of these diverse events underscored a central theme: the resilience, pride, and vibrancy of South African Jewry.

As we approach 2025, it's clear that there's so much to be positive about. Our youth are strong, our campuses are safe, and Jewish life in this country remains ever vibrant. It's also wonderful to have a new government, which, despite challenges, has held and remains full of promise. I can assure you that we'll continue to hold the government accountable and to challenge the policies that are detrimental to us both as South Africans and Jews. As our president, Zev Krengel, put it, "To be a proud South African means to love this country, to work for this country, and to make this country better for all. That, for sure, isn't going to be determined by the African National Congress government or any other government. It will be determined by us as South African Jewry."

• 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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Life's not always a beach – what else to do

CAPE TOWN

Hout Bay and Seal Island

Visit the popular Hout Bay harbour, and take a stroll around the market and sandy beach. Hop onto a boat, and go on an adventure to see the Cape fur seals who live on Seal Island.

Signal Hill

Whether it's panoramic views or the blast of the Noon Gun you're looking for, Signal Hill will give you views of Cape Town that are Instagram worthy.

World of Birds Wildlife Sanctuary

Calling all ornithophiles (bird lovers). Pop down to Hout Bay to the largest bird park in Africa. You'll also get to see your fair share of monkeys there as well. Contact: worldofbirds.co.za

Cape Town Science Centre

If you're looking for an educational and interactive experience which involves science, technology, mathematics, and engineering, look no further than the Cape Town Science Centre in Observatory. Contact: ctsc.org.za

Have a picnic

Pack your cooler bag, and head out to some of the best parks and beaches that South Africa has to offer. If it's grass you prefer, make sure to visit the Company's Garden in the city centre, where the squirrels will come say hi, or visit Green Point

Take a drive to see the penguins at Boulders Beach, who are ready and waiting to meet new visitors.

Go on a hike

Not only is hiking a great form of exercise, it's also a great way to see Cape Town from different angles. Hike up Lion's Head, Table Mountain, Silvermine, or one of the several trails at the Cape Point Nature Reserve.

Contact: 021 712 7471

Muizenberg

Take a drive through to Muizenberg, where the water is slightly warmer and the iconic colourful beach huts bring back all kinds of nostalgia. From surfing to putt-putt to ice-cream shops galore, there's plenty to do in the small town commonly known as *Jewensberg*.

The Alpaca Loom

You don't need to travel to South America to see an alpaca in person. All you need to do is visit The Alpaca Loom in Paarl to see these social animals for yourself. Contact: alpacas.co.za

Tobogganing in Durbanville

Cool Runnings Toboggan Park in Durbanville has the first downhill tobogganing track in Africa. Enjoy some outdoor fun at this family park, where you can bobsled down its 1.25km steel-pipe track.

Contact: 021 949 4439 or visit coolrunnings.capetown

Simon's Town

This historic naval town has something for everyone. From gemstones at the Simon's Town Rock Shop to the statue of Just Nuisance the dog and kayaking adventures, Simon's Town is well worth the visit.

Contact: simonstown.com

Two Oceans Aquarium at the V&A Waterfront

Get up close and personal with the best underwater wildlife. This is great educational indoor fun, and perfect for a rainy day. Pop over to the V&A Waterfront for some retail therapy once you're done at the aquarium.

Contact: 021 418 3823 or www.aquarium.co.za

KWAZULU-NATAL

PheZulu Safari Park

If you love crocodiles and snakes, the PheZulu Safari Park is the right place for you. Located in the Valley of a Thousand Hills just more than half an hour's drive from Durban.

Contact: 031 777 1000 or phezulusafaripark.co.za

Take a hike in Umhlanga

Grab your hat and comfortable walking shoes and head to the Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve and walk through the coastal dune forest and across the Ohlange River towards the Umhlanga Lagoon. Look out for the more than 200 bird species and other small mammals along the way. Finish the day off at the Umhlanga Pier and take in the breathtaking views of Umhlanga. Contact: 031 561 2271

Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre

An educational and meaningful experience that highlights some of the darkest events in human history. There's also a kosher restaurant on site. Contact: 031 368 6833 or dbnholocaust.co.za

Big Rush Big Swing at the Moses Mabhida Stadium

If you're an adrenaline junkie and are brave enough to free fall 80m into the stadium bowl, then this is for you. Get a bird's eye view of the world-renowned Moses Mabhida Stadium,



Boulders Beach

and see Durban like you've never seen it before. Contact: 031 322 9955 or mmstadium.com

uShaka Marine World

Regarded as one of the world's best marine theme parks, uShaka Marine World boasts a massive aquarium and a water park among other attractions which will keep the whole family entertained. Contact: 031 328 8000 or www.ushakamarine.com

Gateway Theatre of Shopping

Perfect for rainy days or to escape the heat, Gateway Theatre of Shopping in Umhlanga offers something for everyone. Lookout for the LEGO Fun at Gateway, which is a dreamland for LEGO lovers. Contact: www.gatewayworld.co.za

Durban Botanical Gardens

Visit Africa's oldest surviving botanical gardens, and see some of the rarest plants in the world.

Contact: 031 322 4021 or durbanbotanicgardens.org.za

PLETTENBERG BAY

Robberg Nature Reserve

If you love nature, then head to Robberg Nature Reserve. Hiking trails with spectacular views of Plettenberg Bay are waiting for you. You might even spot some seals, dolphins, or whales (if you're lucky) or an ancient cave.

Monkeyland and Birds of Eden

Get up close and personal with the free-roaming monkeys, and see a variety of exotic bird species as well. Contact: 044 534 8906 or monkeyland.co.za

Bungee jumping at Bloukrans Bridge

If bungee jumping is on your bucket list, then make your way to the world's highest commercial bungee jump at 216m at Bloukrans Bridge. Contact: bloukransbungy.com



Muizenberg beach

Urban Park and make sure to take your bicycles along. The historic and picturesque Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden on the slopes of Table Mountain will also set the scene for an unforgettable picnic and day out.

If the beach is more your vibe, head down to the world-famous Camps Bay or Clifton beaches.

ORT SA chief awarded for contribution to education

ORT South Africa Chief Executive Ariellah Rosenberg has been awarded the prestigious 2024 Robert Singer Award in recognition of her contributions to education and skills development.

The award, which honours individuals whose work significantly advances education within the ORT network, is named after Robert Singer, the former chief executive of World ORT and the World Jewish Congress, and the current chairperson of the Center for Jewish Impact.

Rosenberg, who has dedicated two decades to ORT SA, has served as chief executive since 2013. Under her leadership, ORT SA has expanded its reach, providing much-needed STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, entrepreneurship training, and job skills programmes to underserved communities across South Africa. Her commitment to empowering individuals through education has had a profound impact on many lives, helping countless young people overcome barriers and access new opportunities.

"Receiving this award is a tremendous honour," said Rosenberg. "It reflects not only my work but the incredible efforts of everyone at ORT SA who believe in the power of education. Over the past 20 years, I've seen the potential in

every young person we work with, and I remain inspired by their resilience and eagerness to learn."

Rosenberg's leadership has earned her the respect of both her colleagues and those who have directly benefited from ORT SA's programmes. Singer, who presented the award, spoke

highly of Rosenberg's dedication, saying, "Ariellah embodies the spirit of innovation and dedication that the Singer Award represents. Over her remarkable 20-year tenure, she has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to education, leadership, and community engagement. Her ability to inspire and empower those around her has created a positive ripple effect, with an impact on countless lives, and strengthened our organisation."

The impact of Rosenberg's work has been felt far beyond South Africa. ORT SA's programmes have provided a vital lifeline to communities, enabling individuals to develop crucial skills and improve their livelihoods. In recognition of her tireless

efforts, Maria Ramodike, an ORT SA beneficiary, offered heartfelt congratulations, saying, "Ariellah, you really deserve this award. You worked hard to empower us, and your efforts have improved our communities here in South Africa and abroad. Your humanity, love, and passion have made you a hero."

Rosenberg joins an esteemed list of past winners, including Dr Jorge Grünberg of Universidad ORT Uruguay; Vladimir Kritsman of the Jewish school ORT "Pri Etz Haim" in Kyrgyzstan; and staff from ORT Ukraine.



Ariellah Rosenberg with her award

Beit Emanuel turns 70 with a big, beautiful brocha

Beit Emanuel entered its 70th year of spiritual and community service with a Shabbat brocha on the evening of 22 November, which brought together more than 200 members of the congregation.

This milestone event, which marks the beginning of a year-long celebration, not only honours the shul's 70 years of existence, but highlights the growth and impact of Beit Emanuel as a spiritual home for Johannesburg's Progressive Jewish community. The event, filled with reflections of gratitude and optimism for the future, had the congregation embracing the Jewish year 5785 as a time for introspection and renewal.

Rabbi Chava Koster, a dynamic and inspiring leader, is guiding the congregation into its 71st year. Her spiritually profound and engaging sermons (droshas) have become a cornerstone of the community's spiritual life, offering fresh perspectives on navigating the complexities of modern life. Koster's approach is resonating across all ages, with children in the congregation even commenting, "Our rabbi is cool!", a sign



Margaret Auerbach and Max Green running a service during loadshedding

of Beit Emanuel's bright future, with a younger generation growing in faith and leadership.

The strong turnout at the Shabbat brocha is testament to the community's resilience, dedication, and the warmth that continues to define Beit Emanuel. The congregation looks to the future with the confidence of a vibrant, united community walking boldly into the next chapter of its rich legacy.

Letters

FILM INDUSTRY'S CALL FOR ISRAEL 'BLACKOUT' A TRAVESTY

My response to Tali Feinberg's article, "SA film association calls for Israel 'blackout'", (*SA Jewish Report*, 28 November 2024) is disgust that our local film industry representatives have stooped so low as to not only defend the indefensible, but demonise Israel for defending its country and people against the barbaric and unprovoked attack by Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, proxies of Iran's 'axis of evil'. This is a death cult, which has fired thousands of rockets indiscriminately into Israel, and kidnapped, tortured, maimed, raped, and murdered thousands of civilians – with more than 100 men, women and children still in captivity.

South Africa's film industry was pioneered by a Jew, Isidore Schlesinger, and many Jews have made outstanding contributions as writers, producers, directors, actors, and crew, and the same applies to Jews around the world.

While antisemitism and anti-Zionism is the policy of the

African National Congress government, supporting such ideologies is immoral. Not much more than a brief Google search will reveal that Israel has been fighting wars against its annihilation since 1929, not forgetting thousands of years of demonisation, expulsion, pogroms, inquisitions, and the Holocaust.

Sadly, they have made no effort to research or contextualise Israel's struggle against savage invaders, wars that have resulted in thousands of serious injuries and death – of mostly innocent civilians – but are prepared to jump onto the bandwagon of Jew-haters. Hitler would be proud of their attitude, and Goebbels proud of the successes of his public relations campaign.

The Documentary Filmmakers Association doesn't just demonise Jews and Israel, but supports the terrorists whose intention is the total destruction of Israel.

– Mark Wade, Johannesburg



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41⁹⁹

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CHANUKAH CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

25 December 2024 - 1 January 2025

- WEDNESDAY 25 DECEMBER 2024
 - Candle lighting - 18h30
- THURSDAY 26 DECEMBER 2024
 - Candle lighting - 18h30
- FRIDAY 27 DECEMBER 2024
 - NO CANDLE LIGHTING -
- SATURDAY 28 DECEMBER 2024
 - Candle lighting - 20h30
- SUNDAY 29 DECEMBER 2024
 - Candle lighting - 18h30
- MONDAY 30 DECEMBER 2024
 - PARTY 1ST FLOOR - 18h30
 - MUSIC - LATKES - CANDLE LIGHTING
- TUESDAY 31 DECEMBER 2024
 - Candle lighting - 18h30
- WEDNESDAY 1 JANUARY 2025
 - Candle lighting - 18h30

47⁹⁹

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