

CAPE JEWISH CHRONICLE

Vol.43 No.9 | October 2026 | Digital Edition | cjc.org.za | R450/year



Youth take a stand against GBV

Solidarity walk with victims of Gender-based Violence p19



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Solidarity walk with victims of Gender-based Violence p19



Cover image: Shay-Lee Geva, Ruby Kurgan and Ella Castle demonstrate their solidarity with the female victims of the Kempton Park murders.

CAPE JEWISH CHRONICLE

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Is Cape Town as welcoming as we think?



**BONNY
FELDMAN**
 Editor

Cape Town has won its fair share of international accolades – for its extraordinary natural beauty, its lifestyle and, most recently, *Time Out* magazine’s Best City in the World award. But there’s one title we may struggle to claim: the world’s friendliest city.

That thought occurred to me at Limmud in August, when I found myself chatting to two women I had never met before. Both had recently semigrated from Johannesburg and both spoke enthusiastically about their new lives in Cape Town. There was, however, one disappointment they shared: they had found the local Jewish community surprisingly unfriendly.

Their comments stayed with me, perhaps because I understood exactly what they meant.

I grew up in Cape Town and lived here as a young adult before moving to Johannesburg, where I discovered how easy it was to meet people and make friends. After a year or two, I also realised how much I had changed. In Cape Town, I had seldom invited people into my home for a meal – it was far easier to suggest a walk on the Sea Point Promenade.

Johannesburg was different. People seemed to make a greater effort to build relationships with new friends. Perhaps, without Cape Town’s beaches, mountains and

endless outdoor attractions, people invest more deliberately in one another. Whatever the reason, friendships seemed to require – and receive – more effort.

This matters when we consider the demographic realities of Jewish Cape Town. As the *Chronicle* reported in last month’s bumper edition, our Jewish population numbers continue to decline, although more slowly than previously thought.

If attracting people from elsewhere is one way of strengthening and growing our community, simply saying “Welcome to Cape Town” is not enough. We need to help newcomers feel that they belong – inviting them in, including them and extending genuine friendship. In doing so, we make Jewish Cape Town an even more appealing place in which to put down roots.

SIMPLY SAYING
“WELCOME TO
CAPE TOWN” IS
NOT ENOUGH. WE
NEED TO HELP
NEWCOMERS FEEL
THAT THEY BELONG.

It is, after all, something deeply rooted in Jewish values. The Torah repeatedly instructs us to love the stranger and to treat the stranger as one of our own.

So, the next time you’re at a communal or social event, look around. If there’s someone nearby you don’t recognise, introduce yourself. Start a conversation. Invite them for coffee – or perhaps even for a Shabbat meal.

You never know – the stranger sitting beside you today could become a close friend tomorrow. ●

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SHABBAT AND YOM TOV TIMES					
DATE		PORTION	CANDLE LIGHTING		
			Earliest	Latest	Ends
2/3 Oct	22 Tishrei	Shemini Atzeret	17:33	18:32	
3/4 Oct	23 Tishrei	Simchat Torah	19:25		19:25
9/10 Oct	29 Tishrei	Bereshit	17:36	18:37	19:30
16/17 Oct	6 Cheshvan	Noach	17:40	18:43	19:36
23/24 Oct	13 Cheshvan	Lech Lecha	17:45	18:48	19:42
30/31 Oct	20 Cheshvan	Vayera	17:49	18:55	19:49

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Court victory affirms limits of protest and harassment

A judgment by the Western Cape High Court has affirmed that the constitutional right to protest does not extend to defamatory, intimidating or unlawful conduct, following a legal challenge brought by Cape Union Mart against the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and its supporters.

The judgment, handed down on 4 September, orders protesters to stop making defamatory statements about Cape Union Mart, its brands and Philip Krawitz, the company's executive chairperson. For almost three years, the PSC and its supporters have staged protests outside Cape Union Mart stores and made allegations concerning the company's relationship with Israel and its alleged complicity in the war in Gaza.

The case has attracted particular attention within the Jewish community because of the intersection between political protest, Israel-related activism and the targeting of a Jewish-owned business and its leadership.

Krawitz said the company had gone to court because it believed it was necessary to

defend its constitutional rights and those of its employees. While acknowledging that the right to protest is a fundamental democratic right, he said that protests must remain within the law and be based on fact.

The judgment, he said, vindicated the family business's decision to seek legal recourse rather than respond to the protests outside the legal framework.

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) has welcomed the judgment, describing it as an important affirmation that political disagreement cannot justify harassment, intimidation or conduct that unfairly targets individuals or businesses.

The Board said the ruling was particularly significant in the context of Jewish

individuals and businesses being targeted because of their identity, religion or beliefs. Constitutional rights to equality, dignity, freedom of religion and security, it stressed, apply to all South Africans.

The case also highlights the distinction between legitimate political protest and conduct that crosses legal boundaries. The court's order does not remove the right to protest, but places limits on how that right may be exercised.

The judgment comes amid continuing protests at some Cape Union Mart stores and in shopping centres where the company's outlets are located. Krawitz said the company would engage with landlords and shopping centres regarding the implications of the judgment.

He also paid tribute to Cape Union Mart employees for their handling of the protests, noting that the workforce includes people from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds.

For the Jewish community, the case has broader significance beyond the individual parties involved. It provides an example of the legal avenues available when political activism moves into allegations or conduct that a person or organisation believes is unlawful.

Daniel Bloch, Executive Director of the Cape SAJBD,

said the PSC is entitled to seek leave to appeal, as any litigant is. If it does so, he said, Cape Union Mart will continue to defend the matter through the legal process.

"A court order is not optional," Bloch said. Anyone who knowingly breaches the interdict risks being held in contempt of court, with sanctions potentially including fines and, in serious cases, imprisonment. "Our hope, however, is that the judgment will be respected and that no further enforcement action will be necessary."

Bloch said the judgment was also a reminder of the role of the judiciary in South Africa. "South Africa's courts are not swayed by political pressure, public noise or popular sentiment. They decide cases on evidence and law. That is exactly what happened here."

He encouraged members of the Jewish community who face intimidation or defamatory allegations because of their Jewishness or Zionism not to assume that they must simply accept unlawful conduct.

The case provides an example of the legal avenues available when political activism moves into allegations or conduct that a person or organisation believes is unlawful.

"We encourage people to document what is happening, including keeping screenshots, messages and other evidence, and to approach the Cape SAJBD for advice," Bloch said. The Board can explain available avenues of recourse, including through workplaces or other relevant bodies, and advise when legal advice may be appropriate.

"This is one of the reasons the Board exists: to protect the rights, dignity and interests of our community and help people navigate situations where those rights are undermined or at risk." ●



Care Services

#We are One 2026

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Seven Organisations
One Big Dream

Our Care Services organisations support our
community every day.
On 13, 14 & 15 October, let's be there for them.





TWO HOURS OF YOUR TIME. ONE COMMUNITY COUNTING ON US.

Every day of the year, there are organisations in our community quietly doing extraordinary work. Care for our elderly. Support individuals and families through difficult times. Provide homes, dignity, companionship and connection. Help people through grief and loss. Create opportunities for people with disabilities. And ensure that, when someone in our community needs help, there is somewhere to turn.

On 13, 14 and 15 October, it's our turn to be there for them.

We Are One, a 3-day, community-wide campaign, seeks to raise R11.5 million for 7 Care Services organisations: Astra, Cape Jewish Seniors, Glendale Home, Highlands House, Jewish Community Services, Nechama and Oranjia Youth Centre.

And reaching that target takes more than donations. It takes people.

We're asking members of our community to give just 2 hours of their time to join us, pick up the phone and help rally support. No fundraising experience needed. You don't need to be an expert. Just show up, make some calls and be part of something that matters.

2 hours isn't much. But when hundreds of people give those hours together, they become a powerful force for impact. That is the spirit of We Are One. A celebration of the unique strength of our Cape Town Jewish community – people coming together to ensure that the organisations providing vital care and support throughout the year can continue their essential work.

They're there for our community all year. On 13, 14 and 15 October, let's be there for them.

Your 2 hours can help sustain a year of care. Click below to book your volunteer slot – be part of We Are One. ●

SCAN/CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR VOLUNTEER SLOT AND BE PART OF WE ARE ONE.

OCTOBER 2026 Community Events

ORGANISATION	EVENT	DATE	FOR MORE INFO
Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre	Zoom: Promoting Polish tour 2027 Thurs	1 October 19h00	RSVP: admin@holocaust.org.za
ORT SA CAPE JET	Webinar with Alison Jacobson AI as a Sparring Partner: How Entrepreneurs Can Think Better, Not Just Work Faster	Fri, 9 October 12h00 – 13h30	RSVP: jet@ortsacape.org.za
Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre	Exhibition: The Righteous Among the Nations	Mon, 12 October 18h00	RSVP: admin@holocaust.org.za
Midrasha Melton	The Jews of SA: Understanding the findings of the SA Jewish Community Surveys	Mon, 19 and 26 October 19h15-20h15	Lauren Snitcher: 082 880 2257
Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre	Lecture by Shirli Gilbert	Tue, 20 October 18h00	RSVP: admin@holocaust.org.za
Cape SAJBD	Cape SAJBD AGM & Conference 2026 - Unpacking the 2026 Local Government Elections	Wed, 21 October 17h30 – 19h30	RSVP: Sajbd2@ctjc.co.za
ORT SA CAPE JET	Business Breakfast Club with Gia Whitehead & Harry Sherzer	Wed, 21 October 09h00 – 11h30	RSVP: jet@ortsacape.org.za
JEWELL	Webinar on mental health	Sun, 25 October 19h00–20h30	RSVP: info@jewellness.org
Cape Jewish Seniors Association (CJSA)	Art and Craft Exhibition by CJSA members. Open to the community to submit entries to exhibit	Tue, 27 October	Amanda: 021 434 9691

COMMUNITY NEWS

DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

South Africans have far more power to bring about change than they may realise – but only if they are prepared to use it.

That was the central message from Wayne Duvenage, chief executive of the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), when he addressed a recent United Jewish Campaign (UJC) Business Breakfast in Cape Town. Drawing on more than a decade of civil activism, Duvenage spoke about corruption, accountability and the role ordinary citizens and businesses can play in defending democracy.

For Duvenage, it is a role he never expected to occupy. Before becoming one of South Africa's most prominent civil activists, he spent decades in the travel and tourism industry, including five years as chief executive of Avis South Africa.

"I certainly didn't have civil activism on my CV when I left Avis," he said. "It happened, and it happened for a reason."

That reason was the controversial Gauteng e-tolling system. OUTA was established in 2012 as the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance to challenge the scheme, which Duvenage and his colleagues believed was fundamentally flawed.

Rather than immediately resorting to litigation, the organisation researched the issue and spent more than a year attempting to persuade government to reconsider. When that failed, it turned to the courts and, critically, to the public.

"It was about the principle in the scheme," Duvenage said.



"It was about doing what is in the best interest of society."

Helen Schneider (UJC), Matthew Gruz (UJC) and Wayne Duvenage

The e-toll fight became a powerful lesson in the influence of organised civil society. It also taught OUTA the importance of what Duvenage calls "narrative economics" – owning the story, communicating it clearly and ensuring that an issue remains in the public eye.

The approach taken in the e-tolls example was to galvanise public support for non-compliance. As Duvenage explained, "The International benchmark for successful e-tolling is 90% compliance. We encouraged members of the public not to comply because we believed that the scheme was fundamentally flawed. Ultimately, non-compliance reached such a high level that the scheme was not sustainable."

E-tolls were eventually switched off in 2024, but OUTA had by then evolved into a much broader organisation. Today it tackles corruption and maladministration across areas including public procurement, energy, transport, higher education and government oversight. With over 30 staff members, the organisation is

currently dealing with more than 350 projects.

Duvenage cited the proposed Karpowership deal as another example of sustained civic intervention. OUTA challenged plans to procure electricity from floating gas-powered ships, believing that there was a risk that, should load-shedding come to an end, the country would be tied into the Karpowership contract for many years ahead. The opposition tactics included legal and environmental processes, and ultimately OUTA succeeded in challenging electricity generation licences for the three proposed projects.

The organisation's work relies heavily on whistleblowers, who provide information about alleged wrongdoing. OUTA helps them understand how to submit evidence while minimising unnecessary exposure.

But Duvenage stressed that defending democracy cannot be left solely to organisations such as OUTA. Business, too, has a role to play.

"Business doesn't want to challenge government," he said, arguing that companies cannot separate their own prospects from the health of the institutions and society in which they operate.

"If we don't defend the democracy against this corruption, then there is no country to do business in."

Duvenage clearly believes that the future cannot lie with an ANC-dominated government. "Liberation politics was important in 1994," he explained, "but now we need politics that looks at the future of the country."

With local government elections approaching, Duvenage also emphasised the power of the vote – while cautioning that active citizenship cannot begin and end at the ballot box.

"Active citizenry works every single day," he said.

Citizens do not have to become full-time activists to make a difference. They can ask questions, vote, support civil society organisations, provide information, challenge questionable decisions through lawful channels, and remain engaged with what is happening around them.

Despite the scale of South Africa's challenges, Duvenage's message was ultimately optimistic. He pointed to the country's resources, tourism potential and functioning institutions as evidence that its problems are not insurmountable.

"I'm excited about South Africa," he said. "We have amazing potential."

It was a message that resonated strongly with the ethos of the UJC: that strong communities and societies depend not on spectators, but on people willing to participate, contribute and take responsibility. ●

For more information, visit <https://www.outh.co.za/>

OBITUARY

Marc Sternberg z"l: A champion of Cape Town's Jewish community



The sudden passing of Marc Sternberg z"l has left a profound sense of loss across Cape Town's Jewish community – a community to which he gave generously, energetically and, very often, quietly.

Marc's contribution extended across numerous communal organisations and initiatives. Rabbi Pini Hecht of the Marais Road Shul described him as someone who did not simply talk about what could be done differently or better – he acted. His generosity was consistent, but his contribution was about considerably more than financial support. He gave his time, shared ideas and offered direction, particularly when organisations were navigating difficult periods.

One organisation especially close to him was the Simcha Fund, a communal organisation that helps financially struggling community members celebrate joyous life milestones and occasions (*simchas*) with dignity. He worked closely with Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg of the Claremont/Wynberg Congregation in the work of the Fund, serving as vice-chairman. He was also its most generous

and regular donor for many years. His support helped dozens of children celebrate their *bar* and *bat mitzvahs*, enabled couples to have modest weddings, helped Grade 12 pupils attend their Matric Dance with confidence, and assisted families in celebrating a *brit milah* with dignity.

Bringing a wealth of business experience and knowledge, Marc was deeply involved with the Fund, and had in fact started working on the financial documentation for the Simcha Fund for 2027 just prior to his passing.

He also played an important role in the development of Jewish student life in Cape Town and Stellenbosch. Rabbi Nissen Goldman recalled that Marc became the first person in Cape Town to commit to a monthly donation towards the establishment of Chabad on Campus – volunteering his support before he had even been asked.

HE WANTED JEWISH LIFE IN CAPE TOWN TO FLOURISH – AND BELIEVED IN TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING THAT HAPPEN.

His involvement continued as the programme grew. He sponsored welcome *braais* and *mezuzot* for students in Cape Town and Stellenbosch and encouraged Rabbi Goldman to establish a full-time Chabad presence in Stellenbosch. When Rabbi Goldman hesitated, Marc urged him: "Just go for it, the money will come."

Today, more than 150 Jewish students in Stellenbosch have access to Jewish social events, *shiurim*, Shabbat meals, friendship and support. And, continuing the vision started by Marc, Rabbi Goldman hopes to purchase a permanent property for the Chabad House dedicated to Marc's life and legacy.

Marc's giving reached many more organisations, including the City of Cape Town. One example is his involvement and support of the Cobras Mountain Protection Team, an initiative to provide safety to hikers on Table Mountain. This contribution was recognised by the presence at Marc's funeral of the Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Geordin Hill-Lewis.

Yet, much of what Marc did went without acknowledgement. Rabbi Goldman recalled Marc enthusiastically showing him a spreadsheet he had devised to allocate his monthly *tzedakah* across an extensive list of causes. "At his core," he said, "it's who he was – a giver."

But Marc could also be challenging. He had strong views about how things should be done and was unafraid to voice them. Those who worked closely with him experienced his advice, mentorship and sometimes 'tough love' – driven by a desire to see people and organisations succeed.

Underlying it all was a strong sense of Jewish identity and communal responsibility. He wanted Jewish life in Cape Town to flourish – and believed in taking responsibility for making that happen.

Marc leaves his wife Tanya, children Zoe, Aaron and Liv, his parents Michael and Leora, his sister Lauren and her family – as well as a community immeasurably enriched by what he gave to it. ●

SUKKOT

The festival of Sukkot: the *lulav* and the *etrog*

On each of the seven days of the Festival of Sukkot, it is traditional to recite a blessing on the Four Kinds: an *etrog* (citron), a *lulav* (palm frond), three *hadassim* (myrtle twigs) and two *aravot* (willow twigs).

The ritual of the prayers is done for a number of reasons: to acknowledge the presence of G-d in all places; for sustenance, in particular as regards the growing of food; and for unity among different kinds of Jews.



HEALTH

Palliative care – helping people live with comfort, dignity and meaning

PALLIATIVE CARE FOCUSES ON QUALITY OF LIFE

Palliative care is often misunderstood as being only about the final days of life. However, as Shelly Korn of Sunset Care explained during a recent JEWELL-Jewish Wellness Space webinar, its purpose is to help people live as well as possible when facing a serious illness – providing comfort, support and dignity throughout their journey.

Unlike traditional medical care, which often focuses primarily on curing illness, palliative care addresses the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of both the individual and their family.

It can take many forms, including symptoms management, end-of-life care during the final months of life, geriatric care for older people living with complex health needs, and hospice care tailored to each person's circumstances.

Many professionals recommend that palliative care begins at the time of diagnosis

Below from top: Panellists Andrea Mendelsohn, Rafaela Joffe Peerutin, Rod Bloom; Right from top: Samantha Klynsmith, Sarit Swisa, Shelly Korn; Moderator Natalie Barnett



of a life-limiting illness, rather than only when someone is approaching death. Early support can help individuals and families manage symptoms, make informed decisions, and prepare for the road ahead.



THE IMPACT EXTENDS BEYOND THE PATIENT

Serious illness affects more than the person receiving care. Families and caregivers often carry a significant emotional and practical burden as they navigate medical decisions, changing roles, and uncertainty about the future.



Shelly Korn highlighted the pressures faced by the 'sandwich generation' – those caring for ageing parents while also supporting their own children. For families whose adult children live elsewhere, as is increasingly common in the Cape Town Jewish community, these challenges can become even more complex. Decisions around care, finances and living arrangements may need to be made from a distance, often during a highly emotional period.

WHILE REMAINING AT HOME IS OFTEN A PERSON'S PREFERENCE, IT IS NOT ALWAYS THE MOST APPROPRIATE OR SUSTAINABLE OPTION.

Six expert panellists emphasised the importance of making use of the support available within the community. Alongside private practitioners, Nechama, as explained by Sarit Swisa, can provide guidance, emotional support and practical assistance to families navigating these challenges.

LOSS TAKES MANY FORMS

The losses experienced by someone requiring palliative care are not only physical. People may grieve the loss of independence, their previous lifestyle, their role within their family, future plans, or their sense of identity.

Anticipatory grief – grieving a loss before it occurs – is a significant part of this process. Counselling and emotional support can therefore be valuable not only after someone has died, but while individuals and families adjust to a changing future.

PALLIATIVE CARE ADDRESSES THE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR FAMILY.

A key message from the webinar was that "choosing to care for someone at home doesn't mean choosing to do it alone". Families need a network of support, including healthcare professionals, counsellors, community organisations and spiritual care providers.

AGEING IN PLACE REQUIRES PLANNING

Many people hope to remain in their own homes as they age or approach the end of life. However, ageing in place requires careful planning and support.



Samantha Klynsmith of Highlands House noted that families often need guidance around practical considerations such as medical care, equipment, home support, finances and decision-making.



These conversations are particularly important within Cape Town's Jewish community, which has an ageing population and many older people whose children no longer live locally. Ensuring that appropriate support networks are in place is becoming increasingly important.



HOME CARE VERSUS HOSPICE CARE

While remaining at home is often a person's preference, it is not always the most appropriate or sustainable option. Hospice care can provide specialist medical support, symptom management and emotional care for both the individual and their loved ones. Hospice care can be accessed from hospices, hospitals, nursing homes, step-down facilities, and at your own home.



Rod Bloom of the Rohan Bloom Foundation emphasised that hospice is not a place defined by sadness, but one that provides comfort, dignity and support during an important stage of life.

Hospice organisations such as Sunset Care offer co-ordinated support that may include medical interventions, equipment, family assistance,

Continues on page 21.

Unpacking the 2026 Local Government Elections @ the Cape SAJBD AGM & Conference 2026

Real talk, real updates,
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FEATURING A DISCUSSION WITH

WAYNE SUSSMAN

South African Political
Commentator and Analyst



WEDNESDAY
21 OCTOBER 2026



17H30 TO 19H30



CAPE SAJBD
Engage | Educate | Empower



VIEWS CONNECT, COLLABORATE, COMMUNITY

What is restorative justice?

Restorative justice is an approach to conflict and crime that focuses on repairing the harm caused by wrongdoing and bringing together everyone affected to seek healing and accountability.

But what does that mean in practice? How does the Cape SAJBD implement this strategy, and why should our community consider doing the same?

Our community has seen its fair share of media coverage over the past year relating to legal action. The courts in Cape Town have heard cases involving hate speech, antisemitism and defamation, with further matters still to come.

But at the Cape SAJBD, we cannot emphasise enough that legal action is generally our last resort.

Where circumstances allow, our preference is dialogue, education and mediation. It is when these avenues fail, or when conduct is sufficiently serious or persistent, that we turn to the courts and other legal remedies.

In fact, much of our work fighting antisemitism happens quietly, behind the scenes, through an approach grounded in restorative justice.

Not every person who makes an antisemitic statement is a committed antisemite. Sometimes the source is ignorance, misinformation, fear or anger in the heat of the moment. Some people we encounter have had little interaction with Jewish people, know very little about Judaism, and may not recognise classic antisemitic tropes or understand why particular language is so offensive.



DANIEL BLOCH
Exec. Director
Cape SAJBD

That does not excuse antisemitism. But it can affect how we choose to respond to it.

Rather than immediately seeking to publicly shame an individual or damage them personally or professionally, we first ask whether there is an opportunity to change that person's understanding.

Through engagement, we can explain why particular words or actions caused harm, provide information and context, listen to the other person's perspective and seek genuine accountability. Where there is sincere remorse, this can result not only in a meaningful apology but, more importantly, in a change in attitude.

The objective should not always be to create another enemy. Sometimes we have an opportunity to create an ally.

Over the past year, we have dealt with several antisemitic incidents involving individuals who, once we engaged with them, demonstrated genuine remorse. In appropriate cases, a private conversation achieved far more than a public confrontation ever could.

This is also why we do not automatically seek to have people fired from their jobs, publicly humiliated or see their families dragged into disputes for which they bear no responsibility. Accountability should be directed at the conduct and the person responsible for it.

Of course, restorative justice has limits.

Some individuals refuse dialogue. Others persist with hateful conduct despite being given opportunities to reconsider their actions. And some statements or actions are simply too serious to be addressed through education and mediation alone.

In those circumstances, we will not hesitate to pursue appropriate legal remedies.

Restorative justice does not mean an absence of consequences. It means seeking accountability in a way that, wherever possible, repairs harm and changes behaviour rather than simply inflicting punishment.

Our community has an important role to play in this approach. When community members report antisemitism, they understandably want action. Sometimes that action will be public and legal. But often the most effective intervention will happen quietly.

We therefore ask our community to trust the process and recognise that success does not always require a court judgment, newspaper headline or public apology.

Sometimes success is an individual walking away from an encounter understanding Jews and antisemitism differently from when the conversation began.

At a time of extraordinary anger and polarisation, we need to be willing to engage and educate while remaining prepared to stand firm when necessary.

There will always be cases in which we must use every legal mechanism available to protect our community. We will continue to do so.

But strength is not measured only by our willingness to fight. It is also measured by our willingness to engage, educate and, where genuine remorse exists, forgive.

We should seek accountability without vengeance, education before condemnation, and dialogue wherever dialogue remains possible.

If we can turn ignorance into understanding, remorse into change, and potential enemies into allies, we do more than respond to antisemitism. We help defeat the hatred that created it. ●

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Explore our community with Daniel, as he talks to community members, stakeholders and partners. **ED Talks is serious... But not too serious.**

Watch on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube



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THE CAPE SAJBD



The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies is the representative voice of the Western Cape Jewish Community.

We safeguard the rights, dignity and wellbeing of our community through advocacy, education, public affairs, strategic partnerships and community leadership. We engage with government, civil society, the media and communal organisations to strengthen Jewish life, combat antisemitism and build an inclusive South Africa.

Below are some of the key ways in which we serve our community.



REPRESENTATION

Representing the interests of the Western Cape Jewish community in dealings with Government, political leaders, municipalities and public institutions.



ADVOCACY

Safeguarding the religious, civil and constitutional rights of the Jewish community through engagement, advocacy and legal action where necessary.



COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

Monitoring, responding to and challenging antisemitism and hate speech while supporting members of the community and defending our constitutional rights.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Building constructive relationships with Government, diplomats, faith communities, civil society and the media.



EDUCATION

Educating students at schools, universities and the wider public about Judaism, Jewish history, the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Championing democracy, equality, religious freedom and human dignity while standing against all forms of discrimination.



COMMUNITY SECURITY

Working closely with the Community Security Organisation (CSO) Cape Town and local & national security agencies to promote the safety and resilience of our community.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Delivering and supporting initiatives that strengthen Jewish identity, remembrance, civic engagement and social cohesion.

Examples include:

- Yom HaShoah
- Country Communities Engagement
- Partnering with 60+ Affiliate organisations
- Entrepreneurs' Network
- Social Justice Programmes



RELOCAPE

Helping individuals and families relocating to the Western Cape, connect with schools, synagogues, organisations and community resources.



CAPE BOD BURSARY FOUNDATION

Investing in the next generation through tertiary education bursaries that empower young people to achieve their potential.



YOUTH, STUDENT & YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT

Supporting Jewish student unions in the Western Cape and developing future Jewish leaders through advocacy, leadership development and community participation.



COMMUNITY UNITY

Promoting an inclusive, connected and resilient Western Cape Jewish Community built on mutual respect, pride and shared responsibility.

OUR STRATEGY



ENGAGE

Building trusted relationships with Government, civil society, faith communities and strategic partners.



EDUCATE

Promoting understanding of Judaism, Jewish history, the Holocaust and the contribution of Jews to South Africa while combating prejudice.



EMPOWER

Giving our community the confidence, knowledge and support to live proudly as Jews and respond effectively to antisemitism and discrimination.



Representing our community since
1904

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VIEWS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Why I'm voting

I once asked someone whether she was going to vote and she replied, with great confidence, "I don't do politics." It was said as if politics were a niche interest, like padel or cold water swimming.



SIMONE SULCAS
Chairperson
Cape SAJBD

I understood the fatigue. Truly, I did. But I remember thinking: politics may not interest you, but it is very interested in your roads, your rates, your safety, your schools, your business, your electricity supply, and the price of almost everything.

Voting is not only about parties, candidates or manifestos. It is about refusing to become a spectator in your own country. Of course, cynicism is tempting. Some politicians campaign as if memory is not a thing and accountability is a rumour. But democracy is not improved by our irritation from a distance. It is strengthened when ordinary citizens insist on being counted.

For me, voting is not an act of blind faith in politics. It is an act of responsibility despite politics. It says that, even where the choices are imperfect, the outcome is still too important to ignore. We do not vote because everything is working. We vote because the direction of our country, our city and our community is not something to leave entirely to other people.

As Jews, that matters deeply. For much of our history, decisions were made about us, not with us. So, when I vote, I do not see a small administrative chore. I see citizenship. I see belonging. I see a voice our grandparents would never have taken for granted. In a country where our community has worked hard to contribute, build and belong, participation is not a luxury. It is part of the responsibility of being here.

We are, after all, not a community short of opinions. At any Shabbat table, we debate, question and challenge – often with the confidence of people certain they could fix the country before dessert. But democracy needs more than commentary. It needs action. A vote turns opinion into participation. It is where all the analysis, frustration, hope and argument finally have somewhere useful to go.

Every election matters, including a by-election. Local decisions shape the places where we live, work, worship and raise our families. They affect safety, services, jobs, public spaces and social cohesion. These are not abstract issues. They are the streetlights that work, the roads that are repaired, the neighbourhoods that feel safe, the businesses that can operate, and the small daily signs that a country is either being cared for or quietly neglected.

For much of our history, decisions were made about us, not with us. So, when I vote, I do not see a small administrative chore. I see citizenship. I see belonging. I see a voice our grandparents would never have taken for granted.

That is why I will vote. Not because I believe one ballot paper can fix everything. Not because democracy is neat, easy or perfect. But because I refuse to be passive in the country I call home. I want to know that I showed up, used the voice I have, and did not outsource my future to someone else's apathy.

If we are going to speak up – and let's face it, we will – then let's make sure our voices count where it matters most: at the ballot box. ●

REPORT ANTISEMITISM & HATRED

The Cape SAJBD closely monitors and investigates all acts of antisemitism in South Africa – but **we stand against all forms of hatred.**

Our 'No Place for Hate' campaign fights hatred directed against anyone to combat a culture of racism, antisemitism and prejudice in our country.

Report incidents of antisemitism and hate by sending a Whatsapp message to the

Antisemitism Hotline on 079 994 5573.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE



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NO PLACE FOR HATE

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

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CAPE TOWN



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STORIES

CAPE TOWN'S OWN CRYPTO-JEWS

The definition of a Crypto-Jew provided by Google is: “a person who secretly practises Judaism while publicly professing another faith”. Based on this definition, it’s probably not inaccurate to call two women from the Western Cape ‘Crypto-Jews’.



The two sisters, who spoke at the Limmud event in August under the pseudonyms ‘Batya’ and ‘Gila’, have lived as devout Muslims throughout their lives – that is, until they discovered their Jewish roots in more recent years, and finally took the decision to identify as Jews. It’s been a long, emotional journey for these two women who are finally embracing their Jewish heritage and rethinking their identities.

The fact that the two sisters did not use their real (Muslim) names at Limmud, and that they asked that no photographs of them be published reflects the difficulties they have faced in this incredible reclaiming of their Jewish identities. While their decision has been accepted by some of their family members, it’s been rejected by others from their Muslim family and the wider Muslim community. And so, while they have enthusiastically and happily taken on their Jewish identities, they still remain, in a way, hidden, fearing the

wrath of some people who are unwilling to accept the choice they have made.

Speaking to two large audiences at the Cape Town Limmud event – and thereafter at the event in Johannesburg – the sisters left their audience without a dry eye. Clearly strongly immersed in their Muslim religious backgrounds, the two spoke about their studies of the Quran and the Arabic language, and of their observance of the tenets of the Islamic faith. During their childhood, they attended Madressah (an Islamic educational institution) to learn about the Muslim religion and religious practices, and were included in Muslim lessons at Grove Primary School, which they attended in their junior school days. As adults, they deepened their understanding of the religion through their studies.

Two sisters have lived as devout Muslims throughout their lives –until they discovered their Jewish roots in more recent years, and finally took the decision to identify as Jews.

Yet, despite the depth of their Islamic education, there was always something different – they were constantly aware that they stood out from others in their family and community. But they did not

understand the reason for this difference. Both their mother and maternal grandmother – clearly, strong forces in their lives – told them that certain practices others were doing did not apply to them. At one point, their mother took them out of the religious school, offering instead to ‘home school’ them in religious matters.

As the girls grew older, they began asking questions about their past, discovering that there were predecessor women in their family named Rachel, Chana and Chava. They also learned that there had been many divorces in the family, presumably caused by disaffection around religious issues.

A breakthrough moment came when one of the sisters found out by chance that Jewish identity is passed on through the matrilineal line (from mother to child), rather than from father to child, as is the

case in Islam. Most significant about this is that the sisters realised that the Jewish religion would in all likelihood regard them as being Jewish because their Jewish identity had come down through five generations of women, beginning with a foremother called Rachel.

This sparked an intense period of self-driven learning about Judaism, obtained via sources from various organisations, including Chabad. They came across concepts during their research that they had learned from their mother and grandmother which they knew were not from Islam. These learnings about Jewish culture and practices “felt like home”, the sisters related to the audience.

The process of a full return to Jewish life and religion is ongoing for the sisters. It’s a hugely emotional journey, but one which they are embracing wholeheartedly. ●

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From the pen of Joshua Schewitz, executive director, SAZF Cape Council



**JOSH
SCHEWITZ**
SAZF Cape
Council

Dear Community

October will never be the same. As October 7 approaches, we remember those who were murdered, those taken hostage, and those whose lives were changed by injury, trauma and loss. Alongside that grief is a profound pride in the people who, confronted with unimaginable brutality, did everything they could to save others.

Hamas's attack shattered lives, families and our sense of security. For Jews around the world, the scenes from southern Israel brought a terrible recognition: the hatred we had learned about through the experiences of earlier generations was before our eyes.

We must remember what was done to our people. We must also remember the names and actions of those who came to their aid.

Oz Davidian, a farmer, repeatedly drove into the Nova festival area and its surroundings, rescuing around 120 people. Each journey to safety was followed by a decision to go back.

Right from top: Oz Davidian, Amit Mann, Aner Shapira

Aner Shapira, an off-duty IDF soldier attending the festival, threw incoming grenades out of a roadside shelter where others had taken refuge. He saved lives before he was killed.

Amit Mann, a paramedic in Kibbutz Be'eri, continued treating the wounded as terrorists attacked the clinic. She remained with her patients until she was murdered.

Their actions deserve to be remembered in their own right. Behind every person they saved is a family whose future would otherwise have been very different.

Across the communities under attack, security teams, soldiers, police officers, medics and civilians fought to protect lives. In the days that followed, reservists returned to serve, volunteers organised supplies, and families opened their homes to people who had lost theirs.

There was also the quieter endurance of those at home: parents managing households alone through months of reserve duty, children waiting for a call, and families learning to live with injuries or an absence that could never be filled. Their burdens deserve our attention long after the anniversary has passed.

Here in Cape Town, remembrance carries responsibilities. It asks us to support those still living

Remembrance carries responsibilities. It asks us to support those still living with the consequences, to teach our children about the people behind the names, and to stand openly alongside Israel and our fellow Jews.

future must find expression in what we do throughout the year.

We should also make room for those who do not feel strong. No bereaved family owes us an uplifting story. No survivor should feel obliged to turn pain into a lesson in resilience.

This October, we mourn those whose lives were stolen and honour those who saved lives, defended communities and sustained families. We carry their stories forward with care, with pride and with a commitment to one another.

Am Yisrael Chai ●

SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST FEDERATION CAPE COUNCIL

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ARTS & CULTURE

The fate of Jewish languages today

A fascinating talk at Limmud this year by Sarah Bunin Benor, Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies and Linguistics at Hebrew University College, focused on the fate of Jewish languages throughout the world.

While most of the languages are under severe threat or have actually disappeared, traces of some languages survive because they are used in new ways.

Benor explained how, over the past two centuries, migration and major historical events have reshaped the languages spoken by Jewish communities around the world. She also referred to the decision of the newly-created Jewish state of Israel to choose Hebrew as the official

language of the country, so marginalising Yiddish and preventing the continuity of the language among Jewish citizens of the country.

Although lost to many of the descendants of East European speakers, Yiddish continues to thrive in Hasidic communities. Other longstanding Jewish languages are increasingly endangered, with Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, Jewish Neo-Aramaic from Iraq and Iran, and Jewish Malayalam from southern India now spoken mainly by older generations – a fact which raises deep concerns about the future of these languages.

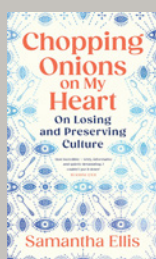
Yet these languages are not simply disappearing. Jewish communities are finding new ways to connect with their linguistic heritage through music, food and other cultural traditions, even when the languages themselves are no longer part of daily conversation.

At the same time, Jewish language continues to evolve. New varieties are emerging as Jewish communities adapt the languages of the countries in which they live, including Jewish English, Jewish Latin American Spanish and Jewish Russian. Many young Jewish people are creating a new language that they speak at Jewish youth camps which incorporates Hebrew and Yiddish words.

Together, these shifts tell a broader story of Jewish migration, adaptation and identity – and of the ways language continues to reflect the changing experience of Jewish communities across the world. ●

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Purely coincidentally, just a few days after I heard Sarah Bunin Benor's talk at Limmud, I came across a very interesting podcast that highlights the issues she spoke about. The podcast relates to an acclaimed book called *Chopping Onions on my Heart: On Losing and Preserving Culture* (also published under the title, *Always Carry Salt: A memoir of preserving language and culture*) by British Jewish author, Samantha Ellis. The writer talks about the loss of Iraqi Judeo-Arabic; how culture is preserved through food; identity issues for a 2nd generation émigré; and the horrific laws in Iraq today that prevent any Iraqi Jews from returning to the country. [Listen to the podcast here.](#)



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COMMUNITY NEWS

MAYA SHEWITZ

On Sunday, 20 September, members of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) WC & Stellies, Bnei Akiva Cape Town and Habonim Dror held a run/walk to show their solidarity with the female victims of the Kempton Park murder tragedy.

Open to the whole community, over 60 people from our community came together to show support and stand united against violence towards women in our country. We walked from the Sea Point

Pavilion to the SABC building and back, all dressed in black and purple with posters with slogans against GBV.

Everyone coming together to spread awareness about such an important issue was extremely powerful. We are very thankful for everyone's support and hopefully together we can continue the fight against GBV in South Africa. ●





New to Cape Town?

The Western Cape Jewish community **welcomes** you!

**Recently relocated? Looking to reconnect?
Or simply want to learn more about our community?**

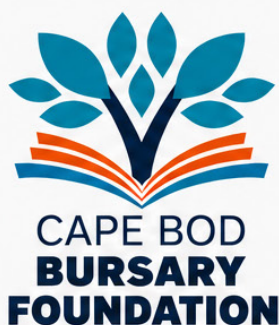
Discover the **organisations, services** and **opportunities** that make our Jewish community so vibrant. From education and youth to advocacy, welfare, seniors and communal life, we're here to help you find your place.

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'Palliative care – helping people live with comfort, dignity and meaning' continues from page 10.

emotional support and links to wider community resources.

ADDRESSING GAPS IN CARE

The webinar, moderated by JEWELL's director, Natalie Barnett, highlighted that there remains a shortage of palliative care resources, particularly for those who cannot access private healthcare. Dr Andrea Mendelsohn, who works in the field at Groote Schuur Hospital, stressed the need for stronger public-private partnerships to address this gap. By way of example, she highlighted Nechama's contribution in providing grief counselling training to hospital staff.

Another significant gap is the absence of a dedicated

paediatric hospice facility in Cape Town. This was a reality experienced by Rod Bloom following the death of his 14-year-old son, Rohan, from cancer. His experience led him to establish the Rohan Bloom Foundation, which is working towards creating a paediatric in-patient facility – a vision that is now close to becoming a reality.

BUILDING A JEWISH MODEL OF CARE

End of Life Educator and Soul carer Rafaela Joffe Peerutin highlighted the opportunity to develop a unique Jewish approach to palliative care – one that recognises that support extends beyond medical intervention.

Such a model, she explained, should incorporate spiritual care and include religious leaders alongside healthcare professionals and community organisations.

PLANNING AHEAD

One of the strongest messages from the webinar was the

importance of having difficult conversations before a crisis occurs.

Families are encouraged to discuss:

- What does the person want as their illness progresses?
- Who will make medical decisions if they are unable to do so?

- What practical and financial arrangements need to be put in place?
- What support will the family need?

Avoiding conversations about illness, ageing and death can make planning more difficult. Having these discussions earlier allows families to focus on what matters most – living with meaning, connection and dignity.

For a community that places great value on family and collective responsibility, both JEWELL and Sunset Care emphasise that greater awareness of palliative care is an important step towards ensuring that people receive the support they need throughout every stage of life and will continue collaborating to plan a way forward. ●

To find out more about Sunset Care email shelly@sunsetcare.co.za

To find out more about JEWELL go to Jewellness.org

A recording of the webinar is available on the JEWELL YouTube channel. **[Click here to watch the recording.](#)**

If you have a question for any of the panellists, or would like to get involved in providing services in this space, contact JEWELL at info@jewellness.org



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AGEING IN PLACE



For many families in the Jewish community, the family home is far more than just a place to live. It is where families gather around the Shabbat table, where grandchildren visit during Yom Tov and where years of memories are built, shared and passed from one generation to the next.

As time goes on, however, many homeowners begin facing an emotional and practical question: can we continue living safely and comfortably in the home we love?

For families living in double-storey homes, stairs can gradually become a daily challenge. Often, the first signs are small. A hesitation before going upstairs. Avoiding certain rooms. Leaving something behind because the climb feels like too much

effort. For children and loved ones, there may also be a growing concern about safety, independence and what the future might hold.

Yet the thought of leaving a cherished home, familiar surroundings, and a close-knit community can feel overwhelming. Many South Africans assume that growing older means eventually having to downsize or move into a retirement estate. More families, however,

are discovering that there is another option.

Ageing in place has become an increasingly important conversation for homeowners who want to maintain their independence, remain close to loved ones, and continue enjoying the comfort and familiarity of home for years to come.

At Lifta SA, we believe growing older should never mean giving up the home, lifestyle and independence that matter most. A home should continue supporting you through every stage of life, which is why more homeowners are choosing to future-proof their properties with elegant and practical Home Lift solutions.

A Home Lift is not simply about convenience. It is about preserving dignity, independence, safety and quality of life. For many families, it means remaining close to children, grandchildren, friends, places of worship, and the community connections that form such an important part of daily life. It also gives families peace of mind, knowing that movement between floors can remain safe and comfortable long into the future.

Lifta SA specialises in beautifully designed European Home Lifts that combine style, safety and practicality with minimal building work. Unlike traditional lifts that often require major structural changes, our Home Lifts are designed for quick and efficient installation in new or existing homes. Many homeowners are surprised to learn that adding one is often far simpler and less disruptive than expected.

The Duo is ideal for compact spaces and everyday convenience. Designed for two passengers, it travels smoothly between floors using slim support rails that guide the lift safely up and down. Its modern appearance blends beautifully into the home while

maintaining a small footprint, making it a practical solution for homeowners who want greater accessibility without compromising on style.

For homeowners looking for additional space and flexibility, the Trio offers even greater comfort and accessibility. Spacious enough for a wheelchair or multiple passengers, it is ideal for larger homes or families planning for future mobility needs. Whether carrying shopping, luggage or simply moving comfortably between levels, the Trio provides a safe and elegant solution that allows homeowners to continue enjoying every part of their home with confidence.

Both models are designed with safety and ease of use as priorities. Features such as battery backup, smooth start and stop movement, and simple user-friendly controls help provide reassurance for homeowners and their families. Most importantly, they are designed to help people remain independent and comfortable in the homes they cherish most.

When compared to the emotional and financial cost of moving, including transfer fees, estate agent commissions, moving expenses, and the stress of downsizing, many homeowners see a Home Lift as a valuable long-term investment. It not only improves accessibility and convenience but can also add future readiness to the property itself.

At Lifta SA, we are proud to help South African families continue living independently, confidently and comfortably in the homes and communities they treasure most.

Because sometimes the best move is staying exactly where you are. ●

Website: www.lifta.co.za
Email: info@lifta.co.za
Contact number: 080 737 3737



Why Choose Our Home Lifts?



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All our Home Lifts can be installed within 2 days.



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Retro-fit

Due to their design and simplicity of installation, our Home Lifts can be installed after the house has been built.



Size

Duo Home Lift has a tiny footprint of just 0.8 square metres (carrying capacity of 170 kgs) while Trio is only 1.3 square metres (carrying capacity of 250 kgs).



Power Requirements

Our Home Lifts operate by way of a normal 220V plug and there is no need for 3-phase power.



Silence in Action

Our Home Lifts do not make use of noisy hydraulics or external mechanisms and due to their unique drive system, they have an audible noise level of fewer than 48 decibels.



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STORIES

Making a difference through civic work: Errol Anstey and Danielle Klaff

There are many ways of contributing to a city. Some people begin with politics; others arrive there by way of community work, environmental activism, education or simply the conviction that they can make a difference.

KAREN MILLER

For Errol Anstey and Danielle Klaff, the routes have been very different. Yet both have ended up doing something increasingly unusual: putting time, energy and practical experience into the civic life of Cape Town.

Anstey was recently awarded the title of Alderman after 16 years as a City of Cape Town councillor. For him, local government was the culmination of a political involvement that began when he was still at school. In 1974, at 14, as he was walking home from Sea Point Boys' High, he walked into the Progressive Party campaign office and started helping with the posters which became a daily habit after school. It was an unlikely introduction to what would become a lifelong involvement in politics. He worked with many well-known community members in the Atlantic seaboard, was Colin Eglin's campaign manager and branch chair, and in 2011, took the opportunity to be elected on the party lists and became involved in local government.

Since then, he has worked in every national and municipal election and by-election, as well as two referendums. When he finally became a city councillor in 2011, it was partly because there was a feeling that more people from the business world should be involved in local government. Allocated to Gugulethu area, Errol moved freely within that community, building DA structures in the townships.

His contribution has been particularly practical. Much of his council work has focused on the often unglamorous work of making the city administration easier for residents and businesses to access, by improving systems, reducing delays and finding more efficient ways of doing things. Online appointments for driving and vehicle licences, faster processing of some permits, and improvements to reporting systems were among some of his initiatives. He also chaired a task team aimed at improving the collection of traffic



Errol Anstey wearing his alderman medal



Danielle Klaff in a food garden



Anstey receiving his Alderman award

fines: over roughly a decade, the collection rate quadrupled.

The roots of Anstey's civic involvement go beyond party politics. His years in many roles in Habonim, including leadership and outreach projects, exposed him to township education initiatives and the Treatment Action Campaign, experiences that helped shape his desire to contribute to South Africa and, later, to Cape Town.

The award of the title of Alderman is a formal recognition of his long service. It comes with a medal which can be worn on state occasions, although the title and medal are less important to him than what he managed to accomplish during those years. More importantly, he hopes his years in public life will encourage others to become involved, particularly by voting and recognising that participation can make a difference.



Danielle Klaff receiving her award from Ward Councillor Roberto Quintas

Danielle Klaff has taken a different route into civic life. She grew up in Johannesburg, studied art at Michaelis and, in the 1980s, visited an organic farm in France. That experience sparked an enduring interest in sustainability and self-sufficiency.

She went on to establish South Africa's first green magazine, *Kagenna* (named after the praying mantis in San). Later, living off-grid in Wilderness, she taught art and gardening. She wanted, however, to do more, and moved to Hout Bay, where she lived on the mountain above Imizamo Yethu. Her environmental work continued through her running of Envirochild, an NGO providing environmental education in schools, water-saving schemes and vegetable gardens. Their flagship event was the Hout Bay Green Faire, South Africa's first off-the-grid, zero-waste event. Ten years ago, she joined Mensch, an organisation she describes as extraordinarily supportive and upskilling.

Community involvement eventually led to formal civic politics. During Covid in 2020, she and another community member raised money to feed vulnerable people, work for which they received civic recognition. She subsequently joined the DA, became secretary of the local branch and took on community projects. For ten years she has served on the Hout Bay Ward Committee, representing the environmental sector, and has recently received an Appreciation Award from the City of Cape Town recognising that service.

Now a candidate on the City's proportional representation list, Klaff is bringing environmental concerns directly into the political arena. Her portfolio interests include water issues, such as sewage and E. coli in the sea, wetlands, green buildings, and climate change and its implications for food security. For her, political ambition is inseparable from the principle of *Tikkun Olam*, repairing and improving the planet.

There is a pleasing symmetry between Errol and Danielle. Both have their own

Continues on page 35

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BOOKS

The Glass Island

We are beset with stories of war. Pervasive and shocking, our world seems to revolve around the Middle East, Ukraine, refugees escaping tyranny. How do we find the light of Truth, banish darkness and find morality again?



Reviewed by
**BERYL
EICHENBERGER**

Sounds very esoteric, doesn't it? And perhaps it is, but for author Patricia Schonstein these are subjects that drive her. Peace, humanity, caring, respecting animals and our environment are her soul mates.

The creative arts allow us to speak out, whether through the theatre, painting or writing. The arts are the changemakers, saying the difficult things through words, symbolism and motif. When an author has licence there is no telling where we might travel with them and, in *The Glass Island*, Schonstein's eighth novel, she uses her considerable creative skills in prose, poetry and art knowledge to probe our inner and outer environments and pose tough questions.

Using magical realism, and, as the protagonist, her own lived experiences, she crosses genre boundaries, reviving the dead, in conversation with the living, uses past wisdom, mythology, to find new perspectives on social issues. This deeply thought-out journey is at once finely wrought, dazzling, sumptuous, theatrical, surreal, ingenious. It is signature Schonstein. Her creative pen sweeps us across this quilt. Cutting, stitching, adding memory pieces that speak to the narrative. As a poet and curator she has interspersed poems seamlessly, adding another dimension – descriptive realities that are movingly apt.

Characters from her previous books, favourite Long Street venues, decadence, a little magic, banquets of mouth-watering food, the Space Theatre, all have a place shifting across the experience. The glorious theatricality is so rich with description as we ride with her across time and continents to a Venetian-inspired sinking golden city, mysterious, sinister. Finally to an island of Peace – the Glass Island.

Overseen by the mysterious Magistra and the Contemplatives, it is here that five powerful souls, past and present, gather to ponder 'ethical decay and the tyranny that drives it...the power of creativity and truth in facing up to tyranny'. In the shadows is the sixth soul, waiting, while war and fascism rage on the mainlands.

But the depth is serious. Schonstein's concern lies with what is happening in the world today and where the answers might lie. This is her stage; she creates a story that provokes thoughts otherwise not entertained, allowing ideas to emerge. We disappear down portals into a time warp where nothing is impossible. You could be walking through a Frida Kahlo painting or a dreamscape: nothing is quite what it seems. She challenges in a gentle, probing way...what are we doing? How do we treat our fellow man, our animals, the lands we live in? Losses that have affected her, brought her to new realisations, those people who have shaped her thinking. She recalls a conversation with her late friend Katarina underlining her commitment to her craft.

'I have an obligation as an author to tackle the dark and irredeemable aspects of human behaviour and my absurd belief that my writings might play a part in ending war and the recurrence of genocide...'

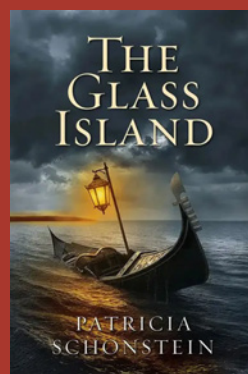
Words can be powerful weapons. The feelings that emanate are palpable.

It is a short novella – only 110 pages – with meticulous referencing on the poets, characters, and art, but the content is weighty. A beautifully crafted book that demands attention, re-reading and discussion. Multifaceted, hybrid, exploring, contemplative, questioning, existential, Schonstein's metaphorical words are a meditation on our tragically crumbling world. ●

Patricia Schonstein is an award - winning novelist, poet, children's book writer, blogger and anthologist. Her work has been endorsed by Nobel Laureates, the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu and JM Coetzee. She lives in Cape Town.



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THIS BOOK
REVIEW.



PODCAST

UNHOLY: TWO JEWS ON THE NEWS



MIRA RUDNICK

As a South African Jew, there is something particularly fascinating about listening to *Unholy, Two Jews on the News*.



Hosted
by Israeli
journalist
Yonit Levi
of Channel
12 News

and British Jewish journalist Jonathan Freedland of *The Guardian*, the podcast feels like a window into a conversation that many of us in the Diaspora are rarely able to have in quite this way.

Levi brings an Israeli perspective that is deeply informed by the realities, politics and emotions of living in Israel. Freedland, as a British Jew, brings a distinctly Diaspora perspective, engaging with those realities from outside Israel, while also offering insight into how Israel and Jewish issues are understood and experienced in the wider Jewish world. The result is a fascinating exchange between two people who are both deeply invested in the subjects they discuss, but who experience them from different places.

Beyond that, the journalism is simply exceptional. With guests ranging from renowned journalist Ilana Dayan and military correspondent Amos Harel to Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, *Unholy* explores Israeli and Jewish news through an impressively broad range of voices and experiences.

What also makes the podcast so compelling is that it does not simply tell you what happened. It invites you into the conversation around what it means, why it matters and how Jews in different parts of the world might understand it. In a time when it is increasingly easy to consume only the perspectives that confirm what we already believe, that is a valuable exercise in curiosity and critical thinking for Jews and non-Jews alike.

And the best part? New episodes drop every Friday, making for excellent Shabbat table conversation, provided you are studious enough to listen beforehand. I almost always am! ●

You'll find this podcast on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/@Unholy-media.

STORIES

International leadership award for Helen Lieberman

KAREN MILLER

This September, Helen Lieberman received the 2026 Stephen R. Covey Principle-Centered Leadership Award, an international recognition of a lifetime of leadership.

There is something particularly appropriate about the award coming to someone whose idea of leadership has never been about standing at the front of the crowd.

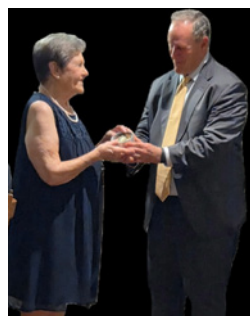
For Helen, leadership has always been about enabling other people to take responsibility for ensuring their own and their communities' futures.

More than 60 years ago, as a young Capetonian newly graduated, at the height of *apartheid* and without any awards to her name, Helen went into Langa. There she joined women who were already working to improve their communities. The commitment she made to them formed the beginnings of Ikamva Labantu, the NGO that she founded. It was a model of community work based on a deceptively simple idea: ordinary people can create extraordinary change when they decide to take responsibility for their communities.

For Helen, leadership has always been about enabling other people to take responsibility for ensuring their own and their communities' futures.

That principle has remained at the heart of Helen's leadership. The Covey award, established in 2019 by the Stephen R. Covey Leadership Center at Utah State University's Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, recognises leaders who demonstrate character, competence and service-oriented leadership.

Helen herself is quick to move the spotlight elsewhere: "This award may carry my name, but the story has never been about



Helen receiving award from the late Stephen Covey's son



one person." It belongs, she says, to the women who opened their communities and their lives to her and showed her what could happen when people stepped forward and took responsibility for one another. That instinct, to recognise the people who are often overlooked, is one of the most distinctive features of her leadership.

Today, Ikamva Labantu continues to work in precisely this way. Its Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme trains and supports principals and practitioners in under-resourced communities, strengthening the quality, leadership and sustainability of community-based early learning centres. Helen has consistently argued that such community leaders should not be regarded as marginal figures. She has particularly highlighted the women running township early childhood centres, insisting that they are not simply 'volunteers', but professionals, educators and guardians of the future. They need training, funding, infrastructure and dignity.

It is a philosophy that reaches beyond early childhood development. Ikamva Labantu also supports older people in township communities, reflecting the organisation's broader commitment to strengthening the people and structures that already exist within communities. Its work also looks to the future, providing safe and stimulating havens for children after school.

"Across Cape Town's township communities, remarkable people are stepping forward every day," said Ishrene Davids, Director of Ikamva Labantu. "They are opening early learning centres, supporting neighbours and building stronger communities. Helen's story reminds us that the future is in our hands."

The Covey award is not simply another honour in a long list. It is specifically about principle-centred leadership: the character, competence and service-oriented principles that shape the way a person leads. In Helen's case, that makes it an especially fitting recognition, because her particular form of leadership has always been about bringing other people into the work rather than placing herself at its centre.

The visit by representatives and Fellows of the Covey Leadership Center to Ikamva Labantu's ECD training centre in September therefore had a satisfying symmetry. The people coming to honour an internationally recognised leader met another generation of local changemakers, the principals and practitioners who are quietly building stronger beginnings for children in their own neighbourhoods.

Helen is no stranger to awards. Over the years, her work has been recognised with an impressive array of South African and international honours: the Order of the Disa; an honorary doctorate from the University of Notre Dame; the 2008 Roger Joseph Prize for her humanitarian work through Ikamva Labantu; the 2008 Absa Jewish Achiever Humanitarian Award; and, in 2017, France's *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur*.

Each recognised a different aspect of a remarkable contribution to humanitarian work, service to disadvantaged communities and the building of community-based organisations.

The Stephen R. Covey Principle-Centered Leadership Award adds something different. It honours not only what Helen Lieberman has achieved, but how she has led: by recognising ability where others might not see it, by giving grassroots leaders the tools and support to develop their own communities, and by understanding that leadership is ultimately about service. ●

ARTS & CULTURE

Ann Nurock on creativity, AI and advertising that makes an impact

For the ninth year, leading advertising and marketing executive Ann Nurock returned to share her annual report on the state of creativity in the advertising world.

Hosted by SAFIM Art Collaborative and the SA Jewish Museum, her presentation in August, *Creativity Strikes Back!*, explored some of the major themes and standout campaigns from this year's Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

The title reflected a noticeable shift in the industry's relationship with artificial intelligence (AI). At the 2025 festival, uncertainty about AI and its potential impact on creative industries dominated the conversation. A year later, the mood has changed. As Ann explained, "When used correctly, AI is amplifying creativity" – rather than replacing the distinctly human thinking behind great creative work.

There are, however, concerns. While experienced creative professionals remain essential, AI is already taking over some of the tasks traditionally performed by junior creatives, raising questions about how the next generation will gain experience and develop their skills.

Ann also returned to a theme highlighted last year: the growing influence of content creators. Their increasing appeal to advertisers worldwide is contributing to a continued shift away from traditional media.

Another recurring feature of Ann's presentations is the way brands use creativity to address real societal challenges.

One example with particular relevance in crime-conscious South Africa came from BCP Bank in Peru. With mobile phone theft leaving victims vulnerable to fraud and the rapid draining of their bank accounts, the bank recognised that speed was critical. It developed an innovative solution that transformed ordinary point-of-sale terminals at local businesses into emergency security points, allowing customers whose phones had been stolen to quickly lock their bank accounts before thieves could access their funds.



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TO WATCH THE
CAMPAIGN: **BCP
BANK ANTI-THEFT
CAMPAIGN**

Another campaign that delighted Ann's audience came from Puerto Rico. Hyundai Puerto Rico's *Coquí Alarmed*, winner of the Grand Prix for Audio & Radio, transformed the distinctive call of the island's much-loved coquí frog into a celebration of local identity.

The idea was sparked by a viral 2025 Reddit post in which a tourist complained about the frog's loud nighttime call and asked how to silence it. For Puerto Ricans, however, the tiny native frog is a cherished cultural symbol.



SCAN/CLICK
TO WATCH THE
CAMPAIGN: **HYUNDAI
PUERTO RICO –
COQUÍ ALARMED**

In their campaign, Hyundai replaced the standard electronic locking sounds on vehicles in major rental fleets with the call of the coquí. Rental cars became unlikely cultural ambassadors – introducing visitors to a familiar sound of Puerto Rico while also raising awareness of the frog and its conservation. ●

While the Cannes Festival may seem a long way away from us at the tip of Africa, we have a strong local connection to the Festival: a Grand Prix Film Craft winner from our Jewish community at this year's Festival. Bev Wynne, the founder and executive producer of Gatehouse Commercials, was featured in the August edition of the *Cape Jewish Chronicle* as one of the women we highlighted for Women's Day. See more here.



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BNEI AKIVA

WHAT DOES BNEI AKIVA MEAN TO YOU?

MAYA SHEWITZ

I first joined Bnei Akiva in 2021 as a *chanicha*, not knowing how much it would influence my life. From being a *chanicha* on camps and participating in *Hadracha*, to eventually becoming a *madricha* myself, Bnei Akiva has taught me crucial values that I now live my life by. My *madrichim* made such a strong impact on me and, without them, I would not be the person I am today.

This is my third year as a *madricha* in Bnei Akiva, and watching the impact I have had on my *chanichim* is such a special feeling. I continue to hope that I can give my *chanichim* the same meaningful experience and impact that my *madrichim* gave me. Bnei Akiva has given me the opportunity to become more religious and to involve myself more meaningfully in my community. I have met some of my closest friends through Bnei Akiva and formed connections with people I may never have met otherwise.

Without Bnei Akiva, my life would be completely different. I am extremely grateful for the values, experiences and friendships that Bnei Akiva has given me. ●



NETZER

IT'S HAPPENING AT NETZER!

DANIELLA BESWICK

Netzer and Temple Israel Youth have been very busy over the last little while!

Our Friday night kids' programmes have been a great success. From slime-making to Minute-to-Win-It, arts and crafts, to fun challenges, there has been no shortage of excitement! Activities around Lag B'Omer, Pesach, and now, of course, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have been a big hit too. While fun is always at the centre of our programmes, education plays a crucial role in everything we do.

Our teen leadership programme, Kabbalat Torah Academy (KTA), has also begun another season. Our new participants have already been getting involved in planning and running High Holy Days programming for our younger kids, developing new leadership skills, and thinking creatively about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur activities.

Through all of this, engagement and excitement around getting involved in youth activities has been at an all-time high, and we can't wait to see it continue to grow! ●

HABONIM

FROM MINI MACH TO MACHANEH: THE ROAD TO DECEMBER BEGINS!

AMIRA KARSTAEDT

Over the 4th-6th of September, Habonim Dror hosted a jam-packed Mini Mach weekend in both Cape Town and Johannesburg for Grades 3-7. Our *channichim* arrived to their respective campsites brimming with excitement, and returned home well-stocked with wonderful stories to share.

In Cape Town, Mini Mach took place on the gorgeous Habonim Campsite, which meant we were treated to the beach on our doorstep, waterslides and sport on *kikar* (main field), engaging *peulot* (activities), quality time spent with *madrichim*, singing songs together after a delicious *shabbat* dinner and dancing our hearts out at *Havdalah*. Capetonian *channichim* were also treated to a reptile show on the Saturday afternoon, while Joburgers bravely traversed the Magaliesburg obstacle course and enjoyed a special magic show by Soso The Magician that night.

Mini Mach marked our final small programme before the most anticipated event of the year: *Machaneh Achshav U'letamid*, happening 6-23 December on our beloved Habonim Campsite in Onrus. Habonim *Machaneh* is a spectacular experience for Jewish youth across Southern Africa, and this one is not to be missed! We cannot wait to welcome your children to the summer of a lifetime this December. ●

For more information, contact amira@habo.org.za or visit our website: www.habonim.org.za

HISTORIC LESOTHO GATHERING UNITES FAITH LEADERS IN SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL

Over 1 500 faith leaders, parliamentarians, and youth gathered in Maseru for a landmark weekend event in early September hosted by the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI), Friends of Zion Lesotho, and Friends of Israel Lesotho.

The gathering celebrated shared biblical values and a deep theological bond between Christians and Jews, anchored

in Romans 11 and Genesis 12:3. Participants engaged in workshops and educational fellowships, reaffirming Lesotho's commitment to standing with Israel.

Highlights included children receiving the traditional Priestly Blessing and local gospel artists leading prayers for the peace of Jerusalem. SAFI leadership, including Executive Director Gavi Sacks and Clive Mashishi, conducted outreach to build enduring



relationships with Christian Zionists across Lesotho.

The event concluded with a strengthened alliance between the faith communities of Lesotho, South Africa, and Israel. ●

COMMUNITY NEWS

Building stronger connections across the Jewish world

One of the consequences of the October 7 terror attacks in Israel has been a growing need for young Israelis to travel to places where they feel safe and welcome. Yet, as antisemitism has risen around the world, those destinations can seem increasingly difficult to find.

South Africa presents something of a paradox. Jewish life here remains vibrant and visible, and Jews are generally able to express their identity openly. Yet many Israelis are apprehensive about visiting the country, associating South Africa with the government's position on Israel, rather than with the Jewish community that lives here.

This gap in understanding between Israelis and Jewish communities outside Israel – particularly those beyond North America – is one the Jewish Agency for Israel (JA) is seeking to address.

During a recent visit to Cape Town, Pnina AGENCY, the JA's Director of Global Jewish Connections, spoke about the need to strengthen relationships between Israelis and Jewish communities around the world.

While American Jewry is relatively familiar to many Israelis, AGENCY explained, there is far less awareness of Jewish communities elsewhere in the Diaspora. This has contributed to a significant shift within the JA itself – with greater recognition of both the contribution of these communities and the importance of connecting them more closely with Israel. As a result, the organisation is expanding its global presence.

Established 97 years ago, the Jewish Agency works

in 66 countries, including South Africa, with the aim of securing “a vibrant Jewish future for generations to come”. Its priorities include strengthening Israelis affected by terror, particularly those in the south and north of the country; promoting Aliyah; empowering young Israelis through engagement with the Jewish people; fostering lifelong connections between Israel and global Jewry; and supporting the resilience and security of Jewish communities worldwide.

MANY ISRAELIS ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT VISITING THE COUNTRY, ASSOCIATING SOUTH AFRICA WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON ISRAEL, RATHER THAN WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY THAT LIVES HERE.

Since October 7, some of that work has taken on a new urgency.

Initially, the JA provided financial assistance to many Israelis displaced from their homes following the attacks. But, AGENCY explained, it soon became clear that recovery would require more

From left: Avi Kagan, Jewish Agency for Israel Representative and Executive Director Israel Centre South Africa of the Jewish Agency; Hila Zetler, Chairman WIZO Cape Town; Hayle Cohen, Vice Chair SAZF CC; Pnina AGENCY, Jewish Agency Director of Global Jewish Connections; Josh Schwartz, Executive Director SAZF CC

than financial support. Communities needed sustained relationships and a sense that they were not facing the long road back alone.

One response has been to connect recovering Israeli communities with Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

The JA's Communities2Gether (C2G) programme offers a powerful example. Through the initiative, South African Jewish communities were paired with Kibbutz Nir Am, close to the Gaza border. After residents were evacuated from the kibbutz, the relationship became part of the support accompanying them as they began returning home and rebuilding their lives.

The emphasis on communal resilience is also reflected in JReady, the Jewish Agency's worldwide Jewish Emergency Network. Launched in November 2020 in response to the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, JReady brings together expertise, resources and networks to help

Jewish communities prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Developed as a ‘by the community, for the community’ initiative, it has evolved beyond its pandemic origins into a global platform for emergency preparedness and communal resilience.

Underlying this work is the Jewish principle of *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* – all Jews are responsible for one another.

It is a principle that has acquired renewed significance since October 7. Whether through helping an Israeli community rebuild after terror, or strengthening the ability of Jewish communities elsewhere to respond to crises, the Jewish Agency is placing greater emphasis on the connections that bind Jews across borders.

And for smaller Diaspora communities such as Cape Town's, that shift also offers an opportunity – to become better known within Israel and to play a more visible role in the wider Jewish world. ●

Since October 7, the JA provided financial assistance to many Israelis displaced from their homes. But it soon became clear that recovery would require more than financial support.



VIEWES CONSIDER THIS

Created in God's image – follow your dreams

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise.” (Proverbs 6:6)



RABBI MALCOLM MATITIANI

The author of The Book of Proverbs urges us to follow the example of the lowly ant that works industriously during the summer to stock up on food supplies for the winter. Although King Solomon explains this directive as a warning against sloth, one can also understand the injunction to mean that one must make provision for the future. Although one must enjoy life and the present (Deuteronomy 26:11, Jeremiah 31:14, Ecclesiastes 3:13), one

should plan sensibly for what is to come.

Just as the Book of Proverbs gleaned a profound lesson from the ant, we can learn an important lesson from another insect, albeit an animated one. I am referring to Barry B. Benson, the star of the animated film, *Bee Movie*. This motion picture explores the issue of the purpose of life.

The hero of the story has just graduated from college and is horrified to discover that he is destined to have the same job for life. Refusing to accept his fate, Barry rebels by joining the ‘Pollen Jocks’ on an excursion outside the hive. On one of his excursions a florist saves his life. Barry then discovers that humans steal honey from bees, and he realises that his true calling is to stop this injustice by suing the human race.

The story of Barry B. Benson is of an individual who refuses to give in to the expectations of his parents, friends and society, and is resolved to determine his own future and to be the best bee that he can be according to his own idea of what that is.

All too often people bow to the expectations of others when making life-determining decisions. All too often we lack the courage of our convictions to reach our full potential as human beings. *Bereishit Rabba* 84.7 posits that Joseph’s striped coat given to him by his father made him appear effeminate so that he looked like Rachel, Jacob’s beloved wife. The *midrash* further states that Joseph curled his hair and used cosmetics to



In the traditional ritual of *Tashlich* on Rosh Hashanah, we symbolically cast away our “sins” into a body of water, beginning the New Year with a clean heart. Reverse *Tashlich* turns this symbolism into action — instead of putting something into the water, we take something out.

Together, on a perfect spring day for Reverse *Tashlich* and the *mitzvah* of *Tikkun Olam*, we headed to Hout Bay to clean, removing litter and

Rabbi Malcolm, Diana Sochen and Dalene Morris with their bags of litter.

plastic while caring for our environment and the world we share. Thank you to everyone who joined us.



BNEI MITZVAH MAZAL TOV!



To Maya and Zoe Katz, and Aiden Lees, and their families.

add to the illusion, making Joseph simply a surrogate for his late mother – indeed his father even discouraged him to dream (Genesis 37:10). It was only when he was sold to the Ishmaelite traders by his brothers that Joseph came into his own. Stripped of his coat, Joseph could begin to discover his own potential which he did by interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh’s cup bearer, baker and finally Pharaoh himself.

The story of Joseph is similar to the story of Barry B. Benson in that both were expected to abandon their individuality and conform to their parents’ expectations of whom they should be. The life-affirming principles of Torah uphold the right of every individual to express themselves freely

within the confines of the ethical values of our tradition. Each of us has distinctive talents and skills, likes and dislikes and we need to cater for these differences. By refusing to allow the expectations of others to dictate our own future we emulate the example set by Joseph and the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. We are all divinely mandated to pursue our own dreams and aspirations.

Just as we can learn to be industrious and diligent from the ant, so we are obligated to follow the example of our biblical ancestors (and our animated bee friend) and follow our dreams to become the best human beings possible. ●

OCTOBER 7TH

Bearing witness: Sagui Dekel-Chen's remarkable concert at Kibbutz Nir Oz and an unexpected story

I made a journey to Kibbutz Nir Oz to hear the story of an extraordinary young man.

Sagui Dekel-Chen returned to his kibbutz to perform a concert on its lawn before more than 3 000 people. His story is almost impossible to comprehend. On October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists invaded Nir Oz, Sagui fought back to defend his kibbutz. He was shot, wounded, and taken hostage. He then spent 498 days as a hostage in Gaza.

During those 498 days, Sagui composed songs in his head and committed them to memory. When he finally came home, he brought those songs with him. And now he was performing them in the very place where his heartbreaking story had begun.

It was possibly one of the most incredible concerts I have ever attended – not because Sagui is a professional singer. In fact, he was humorously upfront about the fact that he isn't, which made him all the more endearing. What made the evening so meaningful were the songs themselves: songs about what happened to him, his family, and his friends in Nir Oz on October 7, and about what he endured during the many months he was held captive by Hamas.

I think part of Sagui's astounding strength lies not only in his determination to embrace life as part of his rehabilitation, but in what he chose to do with his experience. After enduring



RICH KIRSCHEN

one of the most inhumane situations imaginable, he decided to create something from it. He wrote songs in captivity, held them in his memory, returned home, and then somehow summoned the charisma, courage, and sheer will to bring 3 000 people back to Nir Oz to bear witness to what happened to his home.

I HAD MADE THE JOURNEY TO NIR OZ TO HEAR THE STORY OF AN EXTRAORDINARY YOUNG MAN. BUT UNINTENTIONALLY, ON THE DRIVE DOWN TO NIR OZ, I HEARD THE STORY OF MY OWN SON.

It was an act of reclaiming his life.

But what I didn't expect was that the most personal part of the evening would happen before we even arrived at the concert.

My wife and I drove down from Jerusalem with our son and his girlfriend. As we approached Nir Oz, our son began telling us what had happened to him as a commander of an intensive combat unit on October 7 and in the days that followed.

At each intersection, he explained where he had fought Hamas. He pointed out the trees where his friends had been killed. As we entered Nir Oz, he showed us the unbearable scenes he had witnessed at the Kibbutz.

He described everything calmly and in remarkable detail. He simply pointed things out and told us what had happened, place by place, almost as though he were giving us a tour.

It was clearly important for him to tell the story. And I think the fact that he could tell it this way – calmly, precisely, without becoming overwhelmed – spoke to how much of what happened he has been able to process.

For my wife and me, however, hearing him tell the story while we were actually driving

through the places where it happened was profoundly different from simply knowing the facts. We had heard some of this before. But seeing the intersections, the trees, the fields, and the houses – and hearing our son describe what he had experienced in each of those places – made it visceral.

And somewhere along that drive, I realised something I hadn't anticipated.

I had made the journey to Nir Oz to hear the story of an extraordinary young man.

And I did hear that story. I heard Sagui's songs. I heard what he had endured. And I felt privileged to be there to honour him and bear witness to his experience.

But unintentionally, on the drive down to Nir Oz, I heard the story of my own son.

That realisation hit me hard.

It is strange to think that my first significant Israel experience, in 1981, took place at Kibbutz Nir Oz. I was a seventeen-year-old American teenager living there on an exchange programme, and that experience eventually helped lead me toward *Aliyah*. At the time, Nir Oz represented a place where the Israeli dream felt romantic, tangible and real.

And now, 45 years later, I was driving through that same place with my son, listening to him describe how, as an Israeli soldier, he had fought Hamas on October 7 and in the days that followed.

The place where I had once experienced Zionism as an idealistic teenager had become the place where my son had to fight for his life – and fight for the survival of this country.

There was something almost impossible to comprehend about that.

Two young men. Two very different stories. One amazing evening.



Destruction at Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7.

Continues on page 35.



Milnerton's weekly walking group



Above from left: Sea Point Members enjoyed a day in the West Coast viewing spring flowers; Milnerton Members enjoying an outing to the West Coast



A new year, a new chapter

After celebrating the High Holy Days and beginning a new year, it is a natural time to think about fresh starts and opportunities.

While New Year resolutions are often associated with younger generations, every stage of life offers the chance to begin again.

For older people, a new year can be a reminder that growth, joy and possibility have no expiration date.

NEW BEGINNINGS COME IN MANY FORMS

We often imagine new beginnings as dramatic change. Yet some of life's most rewarding fresh starts are found in simple moments.

A new beginning could mean learning a skill or hobby, reconnecting with friends, volunteering, joining a community group or taking up painting, art or exercise. Every day offers an opportunity to try something different, discover a hidden talent or find a new source of joy.

THE GIFT OF EXPERIENCE

One of the greatest advantages of growing older is the wisdom gained from a lifetime of challenges, successes and valuable lessons. These experiences shape who we are and develop resilience.



Group at First Winelands Morning



Sea Point Members enjoying a morning at Boeresjiek

Even when facing difficulties, a positive attitude can help us recognise our strengths and focus on what remains possible. Our achievements, relationships and memories continue to provide meaning and inspiration.

CHOOSING OPTIMISM

We cannot control everything that happens, but we can choose how we respond.

Optimism does not mean pretending everything is perfect. It means believing good things can still happen, every day has value and there are reasons to be hopeful.

Focus on what you can do, spend time with positive, supportive people, and celebrate the small things. A smile shared with a neighbour, a conversation with a grandchild, or a peaceful morning walk can brighten an entire day.

STAYING CONNECTED

Connection is an important ingredient for a fulfilling life. The new year is an opportunity to strengthen relationships with family, friends and the community, creating belonging and purpose.

The knowledge and life experience of seniors are valuable gifts, from which younger generations can benefit through their guidance, encouragement and wisdom.

CONTINUING TO DREAM

Available time during retirement can create opportunities to discover new passions, begin creative projects, travel or make meaningful contributions.

Setting achievable goals can also be an encouraging way to start the year. They

need not be ambitious – each one achieved can bring accomplishment and purpose.

There are still conversations to have, friendships to deepen, places to explore and joy to discover. Treasure the memories behind you, but look ahead with curiosity, gratitude and confidence.

A new year is more than turning a page on the calendar. Whatever your age, each sunrise offers another chance to learn, grow, appreciate life's blessings and create new memories. Your next chapter may yet be one of the best in a life story still being written.

ATTENTION ALL ARTISTS AND CRAFTERS

CJSA will host its **5th Art and Craft Exhibition on 27 October**, showcasing the creativity of senior citizens. We welcome art and craft submissions from anyone over 55 and encourage talented people across our communities to take part.

The exhibition will be open to the public throughout the day. Those interested in exhibiting can request information and entry forms from the CJSA office or find details in the weekly programme distributed by email.

Diana Sochen, Executive Director ●

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL

We congratulate our members who have had joyous occasions during the last month.

Batmitzvah: Joel and Ethne Abramowitz – granddaughter

Wedding: Shulamit Rozowsky – granddaughter in Israel

Golden Wedding: Peter and Tzilli Reizenberger

Birthday: Pinchas Gutter – 91 years, Rabbi Newman – 85, Tony Shapiro – 80, Errol Coosner – 80

Engagement: Sonia Norrie – Grandson, Rochelle Winer – Grandson

Welcome to new members: Tamara Isaacman, Vivian Stern, Morris Stern, Joseph Faktor, Cheryl Faktor

Wishes to those who are not well:

Trevor Lomofsky, Rhita Herman, Carie Clift, Tina Philips

Our condolences to members

who have lost loved ones: Shirley Greenstein – Sister

Condolences to the families who have lost loved ones who are CJSA members: Reeva Chait

COMMUNITY NEWS

Community collaboration opens doors for young adults

For young adults completing university or a tertiary qualification, entering the working world can be a challenging transition. Qualifications may provide the foundation, but finding that first opportunity – and gaining the experience employers are looking for – is often less straightforward.



Delegates at the Limmud Session

A new Cape Town initiative is aiming to make that transition easier by connecting graduates and young adults with professional networks, mentors and practical opportunities that can help them take their next steps.

The initiative is being driven by the Eliot Osrin Leadership Institute (EOLI), together with Staffwise, ORT SA CAPE Jet, the Cape SAJBD, Chabad on Campus, Entrepreneurs' Network, and young adult influencers.

Professionals and business owners can contribute through mentoring, offering work-shadowing or internship opportunities, sharing expertise, or simply introducing a young person to someone in their network.

"There is a real need to help young adults bridge the gap between completing their studies and finding their place in the professional world," says EOLI Director Viv Anstey. "We have an extraordinary network of skills, experience and connections within our community. The opportunity is to bring those resources together in a way that can benefit the next generation."



Speakers Gia Whitehead, Dalit Cohen, Harry Scherzer & Anton Ressel

The collaboration will explore ways of giving young adults greater access to mentorship, internships, work-shadowing, industry connections, entrepreneurial opportunities, leadership development and networking.

An early indication of the interest in this area came at Limmud SA Cape Town, where the initiative hosted *Level-Up: Building Your Professional Edge – Navigating the transition from university to the workplace*. Speakers Gia Whitehead, Harry Scherzer and Dalit Cohen shared their perspectives on entering and navigating the professional world.

"The response showed us that young adults are looking for more than simply job opportunities," Viv says. "They are looking for connections, guidance, exposure to different career paths and opportunities to learn from people who have already travelled some of that road."

The initiative also highlights the role that the wider community can play. Professionals and business owners can potentially contribute through mentoring, offering work-shadowing or internship opportunities, sharing expertise, or simply introducing a young person to someone in their network.

"For us, this is about community collaboration," says Viv. "One conversation, introduction or opportunity can sometimes open a door that a young person would otherwise struggle to access. If we can mobilise our community around that idea, we can help create meaningful pathways into employment, entrepreneurship and leadership."

Young adults interested in participating, as well as community members who would like to contribute to the initiative, can contact the EOLI team at glp@osrinleadership.org.

'Making a difference through civic work: Errol Anstey and Danielle Klaff' continues from page 24.

businesses and both have spent years working in the community before, or alongside, formal political structures. Their paths began with a sense that something needed doing, whether that meant improving a bureaucratic system, feeding vulnerable people, educating children about the environment or giving local residents a stronger voice. And Danielle is quick to remark how Errol has been generous with advice and encouragement to her since her move into local politics.

Both of them share a concern about voter apathy and the importance of participation. For Anstey, it remains important to encourage people to vote and to understand that they can influence what happens around them. Klaff, too, sees disengagement and apathy as a problem.

Cape Town is a city of extraordinary complexity, and its civic machinery can sometimes seem remote from everyday life; but it is shaped by people like Anstey and Klaff, who are prepared to turn up, serve on committees, tackle unglamorous problems and keep going.

Anstey's 16 years on council have now earned him the title of Alderman. Klaff is looking ahead, hoping to use formal political office to advance the environmental causes that have occupied much of her life. Different generations, different starting points, and very different journeys, but ultimately the same idea: that citizenship is not simply about living in a city. It is about contributing to its welfare. ●

'Bearing witness: Sagui Dekel-Chen's remarkable concert at Kibbutz Nir Oz and an unexpected story' continues from page 33.

Sagui had returned to Nir Oz to reclaim his home by bringing thousands of people back to bear witness.

And perhaps that is part of what it means to bear witness: sometimes we go somewhere to hear someone else's story and discover that, in ways we never expected, the story is also our own.

I left Nir Oz with an overwhelming sense of pride in Israel and especially in my three Israeli children – and in all they have endured and sacrificed for this country.

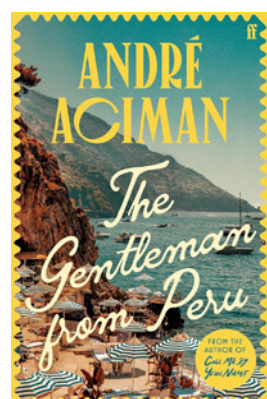
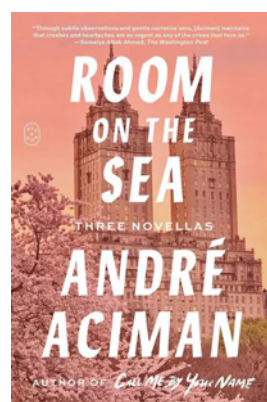
But it was also a heavy evening, and a reminder of the extraordinarily heavy price that all of us continue to pay as Israelis. ●

BOOKS

LOOK OUT FOR THESE BOOKS

The *Cape Jewish Chronicle* has invited some of our readers who are book lovers to share their recommendations about books they have read – and loved! Please share your recommendations by contacting editor@ctjc.co.za.

FICTION



**NOVELS BY
ANDRÉ ACIMAN**
Recommended by
KAREN MILLER

André Aciman's *Room on the Sea* and *The Gentleman from Peru* display the qualities that have made his fiction so distinctive: an acute sensitivity to missed opportunities and the mysterious ways in which one person can alter another's life. *The Gentleman from Peru* introduces an enigmatic older man whose apparent ability to see into the

lives and pasts of others gives the story an almost magical dimension. *Room on the Sea* itself is quieter: two married strangers meet while serving on a jury and gradually become absorbed in the possibility of a relationship.

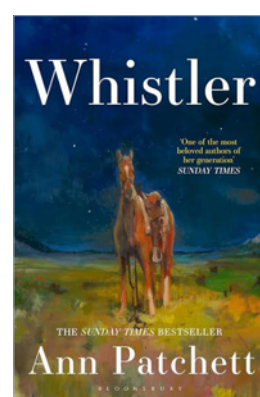
What I particularly admire in Aciman is his restraint. He writes sparingly, allowing a gesture, a glance or a seemingly incidental remark to reveal a character's hidden motivation. His characters are rarely as straightforward as they appear; beneath ordinary behaviour lie longing, regret, fantasy and self-deception.

Perhaps this sensitivity to displacement and memory is partly rooted in Aciman's background. Born into a Sephardic Jewish

family in Alexandria, Egypt, he grew up in a multilingual, cosmopolitan world before his family left Egypt as refugees for Rome, eventually settling in New York. His work is consequently permeated by nostalgia for places, identities and lives that can no longer quite be recovered.

In this respect he reminds me of Elizabeth Strout (Olive Kitteridge, *My Name is Lucy Barton*, *The Things We Never Say*). Both writers are fascinated by the private emotional lives of ordinary flawed characters. Strout is generally plainer and more understated; Aciman is more lyrical and sensual. Yet both possess the rare ability through simple but beautiful expression to make us understand why people behave as they do and gradually to see into their hearts and minds.

Room on the Sea and *The Gentleman from Peru* are available at the Jacob Gitlin Library



WHISTLER
Recommended by
SHERYL SCHKOLNE

Ann Patchett's *Whistler* was voted Book of the Month by Wordsworth Books. However, some readers found it too saccharine and so it was with mixed feelings that I read it.

But I found it a poignant and moving read. A 54-year-old English teacher is walking around the Metropolitan

Museum of Art in New York with her husband when he informs her that there is an old guy following them. It turns out that it is Daphne Fuller's stepfather, whom she hasn't seen in over 40 years since her Mom divorced him.

Whistler deals with the present – catching up with everyone's life and what has happened since Daphne and Eddie were last together when they were in a terrible car accident. The book creates suspense in understanding what happened to Daphne and Eddie after the car crash in the snowy winter all those years ago.

Whistler is not a fast-paced, action-driven novel. Instead, it explores childhood memories, sexuality, marriage, career success and the search for fulfilment through a balanced life. Daphne's mother married three times, and we view these marriages through the eyes of Daphne and her sister, Leda, a psychotherapist. Eddie, who was briefly married to Daphne's

mother, suddenly reappears and becomes an important presence in Daphne's life. The novel shows how the past shapes the present, and how childhood experiences influence the way we live as adults.

Well worth the read.

Ann Patchett, co-founder of an independent bookstore in Nashville, Tennessee, has written a number of novels, this being her most recent. She has previously won the Orange Prize for Fiction for *Bel Canto* as well as being a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2020 for *The Dutch House*.

PODCAST



**PHOTOGRAPHER
LEE MILLER IN
ADOLF HITLER'S
BATH**

Recommended by
DEBBIE FELDMAN

One of the most striking photographs from the final days of the Second World War shows American photographer Lee Miller sitting in Adolf Hitler's bathtub in his Munich apartment.



A fascinating BBC *Witness History* podcast explores the story behind the image, with Miller's son, Antony Penrose, recalling what he learned about his mother's extraordinary wartime experiences.

Miller's journey from fashion model to photographer and war correspondent was remarkable, particularly at a time when opportunities for women in photojournalism were extremely limited. As Germany's defeat became inevitable in 1945, many journalists headed for Berlin. Miller and *Life* magazine photographer David E. Scherman, however, travelled to Munich, where they entered Hitler's abandoned apartment. Just days earlier, Miller had photographed the liberation of Dachau. In Hitler's bathroom, Scherman took the now-iconic photograph of her in the bath, with her mud-stained boots from Dachau deliberately left on the bathmat.

For Miller, who had witnessed the horrors of the concentration camps and had many Jewish friends, occupying Hitler's private space carried powerful symbolism – an intimate act of defiance against the man responsible for so much suffering.

I really enjoyed this podcast. It provided a compelling, personal perspective on wartime history. The BBC *Eyewitness History* series is very easy to use, and at 9 minutes long, they're perfect for listening to while on short journeys. ●



**JEWISH
COMMUNITY
SERVICES
CAPE TOWN**



www.jcs.org.za

JCS@WORK A safety net when life takes an unexpected turn

BONNY FELDMAN
Editor - Cape Jewish Chronicle

Life can take an unexpected turn, leaving a person suddenly in desperate need of help with even the most basic requirements of daily living. It can happen to anyone, regardless of background or financial standing. When disaster strikes someone in the Jewish community, through the loss of a home or job, a breakdown in family relationships or another personal crisis, there is a remarkable safety net available. It is rooted in the age-old Jewish principle of Tzedakah - the obligation to pursue social justice and support those in need.

For many people including the aged who are assisted by Jewish Community Services (JCS) in Cape Town, crisis has followed a failed business venture, job loss later in life, sudden illness, alcohol or drug dependency or the lasting financial effects of the Covid pandemic. When the alternative may be homelessness, JCS can provide accommodation, meals and the care needed to help people regain some stability.

One of the most significant recent additions to this support is Spes Bona, a welfare aged home. Opened in late 2025, the modernised facility provides a home for welfare older people who lack the financial means to live independently. With 46 residents requiring assisted daily living and a lengthy waiting list, the need is clear. The home has a full complement of staff including carers, OT, a clinic for medical assistance and meals prepared daily in the kitchens.

Three residents who shared their experiences highlighted what Spes Bona offers: attractive gardens and outdoor spaces, attentive care, Wi-Fi, communal areas, laundry services and physical activities, including chair yoga led by an occupational therapist.

"What more can one ask for?" says Bernie Goldberg, a JCS client since 2024. For Bernie, being cared for at Spes Bona has also lifted a significant burden from her two children, neither of whom lives in Cape Town. She suffers from anaemia and another health condition that affects her ability to walk, making the reassurance of having assistance close at hand particularly important.

Almost all the rooms at Spes Bona are

singles and, while compact, each has its own bar fridge, giving residents a degree of independence.

"I am happy here," says Ron, who has lived at Spes Bona since October last year. Although he would have preferred to live independently in a flat, he recognises the value of having people around him. "It's good to have company, and not to feel alone." That sense of connection extends beyond the shared living areas. Residents can join painting and knitting groups and make use of a library while a twice-weekly bus service takes residents without their own transport to Gardens Shopping Centre.

For Merle and Julian Cohen, JCS and Spes Bona have been a lifeline. After living in Johannesburg for 50 years, they moved to Cape Town five years ago. Severely affected by Covid and illness, the couple battled for several years to remain financially afloat before their circumstances became

overwhelming. About a year ago, they approached JCS for help and, in February, moved into Spes Bona's only double room.

"I'd be sleeping under a bridge if we weren't here," says Merle, expressing her gratitude for the support they have received.

The circumstances that bring people to JCS are varied, but they share one sobering reality - life can change dramatically and unexpectedly. Knowing that there is an organisation, backed by a community committed to Tzedakah, means that, when difficulties become overwhelming, people do not have to face them alone. Each indigent and vulnerable member of the community is treated with care, respect and the dignity they are worthy of.

If you would like further assistance regarding care for the elderly, please contact Care Services at JCS on **021 462 5520** or email **care@careservices.org.za**

"When the alternative may be homelessness, JCS can provide accommodation, meals and the care needed to help people regain some stability."



#JewishCommunity #JCS #CapeTown #Accommodation #SpesBona



COMMUNITY NEWS

The sixth Jewish Literary Festival will see a stellar line-up of authors

The 2027 Cape Town literary calendar is soon to be rolled out, but be first in line for one of its hottest events.

Now in its sixth edition, the biennial Jewish Literary Festival in Cape Town takes place on Sunday, 28 February next year, and has become a firm favourite with its line-up of both international and local authors. A veritable feast for the literary soul.

Prepare for the ultimate day of storytelling, when imagination takes flight. Where there's a genre, there's a book, and we will have it in this world of learning and living. While there is a Jewish thread running through the events, you don't have to be Jewish – or even a reader – to attend. This is a welcoming day of indulgence, diversity, insight and camaraderie, of meeting friends and making new ones, discussion and debate as you move from session to session.

To whet your appetite, we're revealing just some of the international and local authors you can expect to meet in-person.



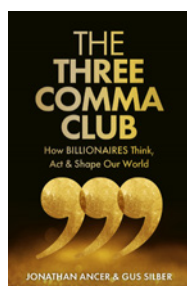
Jonny Steinberg

KEEP UPDATED

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www.jewishliteraryfestival.org.za

For further information please contact Beryl Eichenberger on 082 490 6652 and hipzone@mweb.co.za



From the UK, Louisa Treger joins us again with her latest historical novel *A Fatal Love*; from Australia, Joanne Fedler speaks to us about bereavement in *Bring us home from Sorrow*. Visiting from France, Peter Elliott tells us of the Nazi Art plunder of Jewish families in France in *Looted*, while Eric Lieberman, now based in Los Angeles, recounts a family history in *The Boy in the Barrel*.

An innovation in 2025 was the virtual session room. Such was its success that 2027 will see two rooms devoted to these real-time interviews with top international authors. You can look forward to immersive narrative non-fiction with Philippe Sands in *38 Londres Street*, a history of the Nazi war criminals in Chile; Jonny Steinberg's perspective on Winnie and Nelson; Natalie Livingstone recounts the Nuremberg trials as seen through the eyes of eight remarkable women in *The Nuremberg Women*; Catherine Ostler uncovers a history of art, war and betrayal in *The Renoir Girls*; while Alka Joshi gives us a new novel in *Six Days in Bombay*.

On the local front we love the real-life stories of our national

retail chains as Steven 'Boykey' Sidley reveals in *Checkmate: How Shoprite Checkers rewrote the Rule and Won*; Gus Silber and Jonathan Ancer tell us how billionaires think, act and shape the world through *The Three Comma Club*; and Hazel Friedman uncovers Jeffrey Epstein's predatory paradise in SA in *The Devil Wears Sneakers*. Many other popular local authors will be in discussion across the varied sessions.

Comedy, tragedy, resistance, economics, psychology, travel, politics, history, romance, memoir, AI, culture – and the spices that make up life – come under the JLF 2027 spotlight in a wide programme of topical, engaging, insightful sessions. More than 50 authors have committed to joining us, and with over 20 sessions over the one-day event plus a plenary



Jonathan Freedland

session with an international headline author, the range should suit the most diverse of tastes.

The full programme will be revealed soon, so watch this space.

Your day ticket, on sale soon, entitles you to attend any five sessions as well as the plenary. ●

SAVE THE DATE

MARK YOUR DIARIES

JLF2027 WILL BE HELD ON

28 FEBRUARY 2027

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Dvarim Sh'Ro'im Mi Kan Lo Ro'im Mi'sha

Yes, you are correct. That was not gibberish. It was in fact transliteration.

What I wanted to say to you was that there is a famous Israeli song called (in translation this time), "Things that you see from Here are not what you see from Over There."

I was reminded of the song on Erev Rosh Hashanah. I have celebrated Rosh Hashanah in many different places over the years, starting with the 'only show in town' in the Somerset West Hebrew Congregation back in the 1960s, with Rabbi Musikanth on the *Bimah*, and Herzl, Sedley, Richard, and my brother and me in the back row.

A few years in Cape Town, going to the Gardens Schul completed my South African Rosh Hashanah service experiences.

On *Aliyah* in Israel, when I went to services, which was erratic, they were services on my kibbutz or in the army. During my terms as a *Shaliach* for the Jewish Agency, I celebrated in Reform and Reconstructionist Synagogues in San Francisco, London and New York.

In addition to services, there was, of course, always a Rosh Hashanah meal, almost always with family and friends.



JULIAN RESNICK
writes from
Israel

And then there was this Rosh Hashanah which bizarrely coincided with the 25th anniversary of 9/11. And where was I going to be on September 11th, 2026? In Boston. So where should we go for *Erev Chag*, both for services and for the festive meal? The big Reform Temples were not an option, as they were so very expensive and beyond my budget. I did not want to go to Chabad, as they do not reflect my Jewish Identity (no offense, Chabad, but I have different Jewish commitments on Rosh Hashanah). I was at a loss as to what to do until I found *Kahal Breira* (Community of Choice). We decided that this is where we were going to be for Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Who are 'we'? My wife, myself, and a very good friend who is

the CEO of a significant Jewish organisation in Connecticut. Why did we choose to attend services at a place so different from any Synagogue we had attended in the past? We are curious Jews. We love exploring all the possible ways to be Jewish. On my Jewish Journeys around the world, I have visited with my groups an incredible range of synagogues: Chabad, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Ashkenazi and Sephardi – so the time for Humanistic Judaism had arrived.

But where do we eat? Services start at 7.30 pm and go until 9.00 pm, so we decided to eat beforehand. There were two options close by: an American Bistro and a Turkish Restaurant. Despite Erdogan, we chose Turkish, and it turned out to be a great decision. We were welcomed into services by some lovely folks with traditional Shana Tova greetings (but no "Good Yontiffs", as in the Somerset West days).

And then the service began with an introduction worth reading, so here it is:

"Tonight, after the sun goes down, Jews are gathering all over the earth to usher in the New Year. We are members of an ancient family and members of the entire human family. We believe if we can improve our lives, we can help improve the lives of others. As is our

custom, we begin by lighting the candles."

The blessing was recited in both Hebrew and English, and was the perfect entry point to understanding their philosophy:

ברוך האור שבכל אחד
ברוך הוא המביא שמחה בעולם
ברוך אור העתיד

Blessed is the light in
each of us
Blessed is the light that brings
joy into the world
Blessed is the light of
the future.

This was the spirit and focus of the entire service, filled with a celebration of our common humanity and what we share with others. Focusing on that which is in us, more than looking at an external force.

Challenging for those of us brought up in traditional Jewish culture? Absolutely.

Refreshing for those of us who are living through divisiveness while we long for inclusivity? Totally.

My fervent hope and prayer for us all, those of you who live as Jews abroad, and those of us who live as Jews here, in Israel, is that we should all try to experience new ways of being Jewish and do our best to reach out to those who celebrate in ways different from us.

Shana Tova to you all. ●



COMMUNITY SUKKOT

Rabbi Oshy Deren of Chabad of the West Coast visited the Samson Centre with his son and son-in-law to encourage people to say the prayers over the *lulav* (palm frond) and *etrog* (citron) for Sukkot.

COMMUNITY NEWS

A NEW TORAH FOR THE SEPHARDI COMMUNITY



A joyous celebration at the Cape Town Sephardi Synagogue marked the donation of a new Sefer Torah to the congregation by Ohad and Beverly Gabay – bringing together community members, rabbis and guests for a significant moment in the life of the synagogue.

The donation was the culmination of a journey that began several years ago, when Ohad Gabay discussed the *mitzvah* of writing a *Sefer Torah* with Rabbi Naftali Silver, the incumbent leader of the synagogue.

Rabbi Emeritus Suiza with the *sofer*, Rabbi Tarab

“One of the final *mitzvot* in the Torah is the *mitzvah* to write a *Sefer Torah*,” Rabbi Silver explained. “We had spoken about it some years ago and Ohad began the process of making it happen. He is tremendously grateful to have been able to complete it.”

The occasion was celebrated by a large gathering at the synagogue, with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein among those attending.

“It was a phenomenal event,” said Rabbi Silver. “What was particularly special was seeing so many people coming to experience our community and to share in the celebration.”

The new *Sefer Torah* also reflects the distinctive traditions of Sephardi Jewry. Rabbi Ruben Suiza, Rabbi Emeritus of the Cape Town Sephardi Congregation, who is himself a *sofer* (a person with the traditional skills needed to hand-write sacred texts) explained that it will “enhance and reinforce our congregation and the unique traditions of our customs and history”.

Unlike the Torah scrolls familiar to many Ashkenazi congregations, a Sephardi Torah is housed in a metal case or a rigid, upright wooden case, often beautifully decorated in silver or gold colours, with *rimonim* – bells – on top. An inscription inside records the names of donors and those in whose memory the Torah may have been donated.

A JOYOUS CELEBRATION AT THE CAPE TOWN SEPHARDI SYNAGOGUE MARKED THE DONATION OF A NEW SEFER TORAH TO THE CONGREGATION.

The wooden case, with its inner velvet lining, helps protect the Torah from the elements and can preserve its integrity for decades – and sometimes centuries. In keeping with Sephardi tradition, the Torah is read while standing upright on the *bimah*, which Rabbi Suiza described as giving it “greater dignity and elevation”.



There are also differences in the writing style. The traditional Sephardi script, known as *Vellish*, is ancient and follows specific requirements of Halacha. Often written with a reed quill, although a feather may also be used, its letters have a distinctive, more rounded appearance.

Yet Rabbi Suiza emphasised that these differences in tradition do not alter what lies at the heart of the Torah. “All Sifrei Torah, whether Sephardi or Ashkenazi, contain the exact same text, *mitzvot* and number of words and letters,” he said. “This confirms that Bnei Yisrael are and will always be one.”

For the Gabay family, the donation also carries a strong connection to both South Africa and Israel. Beverly is originally from Cape Town, while Ohad is Israeli and lived in Johannesburg for many years before the family made their home in Cape Town.

Rabbi Silver believes occasions such as this provide an opportunity to celebrate the diversity and vibrancy of Jewish life in the city.

“The Sephardi synagogue is unique in many ways, and this community is an incredibly important part of Jewish life in Cape Town – particularly for those with Sephardi heritage,” he said.

For congregants and visitors alike, the celebration was a reminder of the continuity represented by a *Sefer Torah* – linking generations through Jewish learning, tradition and communal life.

“We must continue to complete Sifrei Torah and celebrate each one,” said Rabbi Silver. “Each celebration reminds us that our work is never finished. We must keep growing in Torah and *mitzvot*, creating more joyous moments like this.” ●

The protective container for the *Sefer Torah* can be seen on the left

SAZF CAPE COUNCIL ISRAELI FILM CLUB
PRESENTS



מכתב לדוד

A LETTER TO DAVID

THE COMPLETE VERSION

A FILM BY TOM SHOVAL

A LETTER TO DAVID IS A SEARINGLY INTIMATE AND EMOTIONALLY
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ARTS & CULTURE

A SPIELBERG MOVIE NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN CAPE TOWN!

While most people associate the name ‘Spielberg’ with acclaimed director Steven Spielberg, his younger sister Nancy Spielberg is an accomplished documentary producer in her own right.

Her films focus on Jewish and Israeli history, including *A Letter to David: The Complete Version*. The South African Zionist Federation Cape Council, in conjunction with the *Cape Jewish Chronicle*, has secured the rights to screen the film for a Cape Town audience.

The film tells the story of David Cunio, who was abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz during the October 7 attacks and held hostage in Gaza for 738 days. Through his story, the documentary bears witness to the experience of captivity, its impact on his family, and the human lives behind the events of October 7.

Spielberg’s motivation for producing the film reflects her broader commitment to preserving Jewish stories through film. She sees filmmaking as a means of bearing witness –

ensuring personal experiences are documented and remembered rather than lost within a larger political and historical narrative. Her work is also driven by a desire to counter antisemitism while encouraging dialogue, empathy and understanding.

The documentary demonstrates how film can turn an overwhelming historical event into a deeply personal story. Spielberg’s emphasis is on giving individuals a voice, preserving their testimony and helping audiences connect emotionally with Jewish experiences beyond news reports and statistics. ●



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