The period from mid-1995 to mid-1996 saw the continuing transformation of South Africa and the consolidation of the power of the African National Congress (ANC) in the Government of National Unity (GNU) led by President Nelson Mandela. The GNU continued to implement the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) in an attempt to undo the legacies of apartheid. Affirmative action gained impetus as the nation tackled past injustices.

Although there was a substantial reduction in political violence across the country, the level remained high in KwaZulu-Natal province. Criminal violence increased against a backdrop of high unemployment, estimated at between 22 and 40 percent. Nonetheless, the economy was recovering from a long recession, with a 3-percent growth rate for 1995 and a significant drop to 8 percent in the inflation rate, the lowest in nearly three decades. Foreign investment remained unsatisfactory, notwithstanding the announcement by the GNU of an economic policy that included substantial privatization, fiscal discipline, and endorsement by the International Monetary Fund.

Local government elections were held in November 1995 in all provinces except KwaZulu-Natal and the metropolitan area of Cape Town. The ANC maintained its dominance in the elections, receiving 67 percent of the vote, with slight gains for the Freedom Front (FF), which won 3.5 percent, at the expense of the Conservative Party (CP), National Party (NP), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The Democratic Party (DP) recovered some of its support in Gauteng Province. Race still played a part in voter choice, with little crossing of racial lines.

All of the major parties in the local elections for the greater Johannesburg area fielded Jewish candidates, a phenomenon welcomed by the South African Jewish Times (SAJT): “This is a healthy state of affairs that reflects democracy at work. It also gives lie to those who would have everyone believe that Jews vote en bloc and for the same party, as a scurrilous pamphlet, distributed just prior to the election, suggested. Jews, like the rest of the population, exercise their vote as individuals and not as a group. This is how it should be” (October 27, 1995).

Local elections were held in the metropolitan area of Cape Town in May 1996 and in KwaZulu-Natal in June. In the former the NP maintained its marginal su-
The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD) involved itself in the formulation of the new constitution drafted by the Constitutional Assembly. Submissions were made on freedom of religion, belief, and opinion; separation of church and state; religious observance; and hate speech. The Constitutional Assembly completed its task in May 1996 and the National Assembly approved the new constitution with the necessary two-thirds majority. It now remained for the Constitutional Court to insure that the new constitution satisfied the broad constitutional principles agreed to in earlier negotiations. The new constitution would be introduced once approval was granted.

Shortly after the new constitution had been drafted, the NP withdrew from the GNU to take up a position as an opposition party in the National Assembly. Deputy President F.W. de Klerk thus terminated his position in the GNU executive.

The first meeting of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was held in December 1995. The TRC was charged with investigating crimes committed under the apartheid regime; however, under its rules, individuals would be able to seek amnesty. At a special interfaith religious celebration to inaugurate the TRC, Rabbi Dr. Jack Steinhorn, of the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation, Cape Town, offered a Jewish perspective on the power of transformation: “We are all the children not of a contract, but of a covenant. The reconciliation process in South Africa marks the genesis of this covenantal process, of sharing and receiving between you and me.” In support of President Mandela, Rabbi Steinhorn said the transformation needed to take place at the grassroots level, “in our homes.” Reconciliation, he continued, could be achieved through hope. “This is our task here today, to give hope to the people of South Africa.” The service was attended by representatives of the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, African Traditional, Buddhist, and Hindu faiths.

Rabbi Dr. Ivan Lerner of the Claremont Congregation, Cape Town, wrote an article in which he argued that the TRC was a tragic mistake. “If South African whites and blacks had fought a bloody war ending in the whites’ surrender, then the blacks may have been justified in convening a war crimes commission. But once a peaceful transition took place, and a government of national unity was formed, a commission to investigate the misdeeds of the past can only be divisive” (Weekend Argus, January 13-14, 1996). Rabbi Lerner’s comments attracted substantial attention, including a critical letter from Professors Milton Shain and Jeremy Sarkin and Sally Frankental. The three academics accused Lerner of misunderstanding the purpose of, and need for, the TRC (Weekend Argus, January 20-21, 1996).

Nelson Mandela’s 1996 Passover message to the Jewish community praised...
South African Jewry for its contribution to the democratization of South Africa and explicitly called on Jews to play a role in the future:

In our land, South Africa, the cry “Let my people go” was heard, and our goal—democracy, equality and justice for all our people—has become a reality.

There were many in the Jewish community who contributed immensely towards making this real: those who actively fought against injustice and discrimination and those who labored in their chosen fields to lay the foundations of building a free, democratic nation.

Today, South Africa needs the continued contribution of the Jewish community in any sphere—business, sport, science, the professions, the arts and leadership—to make our country into the land which fulfills all our hopes and aspirations.

Together, we are bound to succeed in our efforts against the other ills afflicting our society.

“Chag Sameach”—have a joyous festival. May you all have peace at this time and in the future.

Israel and the Middle East

On a visit to Israel in September 1995, Foreign Affairs Minister Alfred Nzo assured Israelis that South Africa and Iran did not have a nuclear agreement. Nzo congratulated Israel on its drive for peace and thanked the South African Jewish community for its efforts in the struggle for human rights in South Africa. While in Israel, Nzo signed a cooperation accord with Israel, setting up joint committees on science, culture, trade, ecology, and agriculture. Nzo also signed a cooperation accord with the Palestinian Authority.

The assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 was widely condemned in South Africa, and Jewish communal and political figures paid tribute to the Israeli leader at a service attended by President Mandela, Premier Tokyo Sexwale of Gauteng Province, ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa, and veteran ANC leader Walter Sisulu. Mandela offered condolences to the Rabin family, the government and people of Israel, and Jewish communities in South Africa and throughout the world. He continued: “We are with you and share your grief. We too have known the pain of having beloved and trusted leaders taken from us even as our nation clamored for the dawning of peace. May we all find the strength and courage to deny succor to the enemies of peace. They might hope that the tragic killing of a leader, at this most sensitive time, could prolong the agony of Israel and Palestine. Let it rather add impetus to the transition from conflict.”

Speaking at a memorial service at the Oxford Synagogue in Johannesburg, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris described Rabin as “brave, trustworthy and imaginative; a general who won wars but also yearned for peace; an outstanding patriot, all of whose plans and actions were designed to further the best interests of the country he loved.”
The bus bombings in Israel in February and March 1996 were condemned by the government and by the South African Jewish community. President Mandela expressed "shock and revulsion" and sent a personal message to President Ezer Weizman.

A flurry of activity was set off by a report in March that Hamas delegates were to attend a conference and meet key politicians in South Africa, and that President Mandela was willing to meet with them. The report turned out to be erroneous. Further reports that Hamas had training camps in South Africa (see "Anti-Semitism," below) were treated seriously by the GNU, but the reports were never confirmed.

The GNU condemned Israel's attack on a United Nations base in Lebanon in April, in which there were many civilian casualties, and called for an immediate end to all military activity. Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad called Israel's military activities "a gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention." Israel's actions were condemned by the United Ulama Council of South Africa and the Muslim Judicial Council.

President Mandela was scheduled to visit Israel in November 1996.

Anti-Semitism

Although anti-Semitism was of marginal significance in South African public life, a number of troubling incidents occurred in the period under review. These included the distribution of pamphlets directed against Jewish candidates in the Gauteng local elections, occasional bomb threats to Jewish schools, an anti-Semitic cartoon in the November issue of *Hustler*, a pornographic monthly magazine, and the vandalizing of a Jewish cemetery in Bloemfontein.

The Jewish community was also disturbed by President Mandela's meeting with Louis Farrakhan, the controversial American leader of the Nation of Islam, during the latter's trip to South Africa in January 1996. Prior to Farrakhan's visit, a delegation from the SAJBOD met with senior government officials to discuss the implications of the American Muslim leader's proposed meeting with the president and to dissuade Mandela from meeting him. The SAJBOD believed that Farrakhan would exploit the courtesy meeting with Mandela for his own agenda and noted that the issue was not a purely Jewish matter but rather an issue of racism in general. Farrakhan, it asserted, had "attacked homosexuals, whites, Catholics and women—aside from Jewry." Marlene Bethlehem, national chairperson of the SAJBOD, felt "there was no room for people like Minister Farrakhan in South Africa, given the current climate of reconciliation. The president of SAJBOD, Mervyn Smith, was even more forthright: "The Jewish community of South Africa knows all about Mr. Farrakhan's anti-Semitic statements. Anti-Semitism is a classic form of racism which has no place in the new South Africa."

The meeting of Mandela and Farrakhan took place on January 28. According
to *The Sowetan* (February 2, 1996), President Mandela came across as more of a preacher than his guest during his briefing to the press. He left a clear impression that he had lectured Farrakhan on the need for racial, sexual, and religious tolerance. In a carefully worded statement, the SAJBOD noted that it "would have preferred it if our esteemed President—who is the world symbol of reconciliation and non-racialism—would not have met with Minister Farrakhan. But naturally who he chooses to meet with is his own decision." At the same time, the statement went on, "the Board is comforted by the fact that President Mandela took the opportunity to point out to Farrakhan in no uncertain terms that it is imperative for all of us to promote religious tolerance and to reject any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex or religious belief."

The South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) was more openly critical of Mandela's meeting with Farrakhan: "It is indeed a travesty that a leader who seeks to sow discord amongst various groupings and whose agenda is obviously contrary to the spirit of the new South Africa and its constitution is welcomed by President Nelson Mandela, himself a symbol of the new dispensation" (*The Citizen*, January 29, 1996).

During his visit Farrakhan did not attack Jews, but he hit out at whites in general, saying they had not sufficiently atoned for the sins of apartheid. When questioned about Jews in an interview in *The Star* (February 8, 1996), he answered that among them "are those who did involve themselves in the slave trade and unfortunately there are those who concocted the falsehood that black people were the children of Ham, doomed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, servants of white people."

Notwithstanding substantial criticism of Farrakhan's visit and his meeting with Mandela, there was much support as well. In a letter in the same issue of *The Star*, Zunaid Osman of Muslim Media Watch noted that it was "a bit rich of the Jewish Board of Deputies to oppose Mandela's meeting with Farrakhan, since they were deafening in their silence when Israel aided and abetted the apartheid regime."

An Islamist group, al Quibla, propagated extreme anti-Zionist and often anti-Semitic views. The Islamic Arabian Da'wah Center International was responsible for circulating anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic materials, including Ahmed Deedat's book *Arabs and Israel: War or Peace?* which contains many anti-Semitic comments, with references to Jewish power, cunning, and duplicity. Deedat is life president of the Islamic Propagation Center International, which also expressed hostility toward Christians and Hindus.

A report in the *SAJT* (Yom Yerushalayim Edition, May 1996) by two Israeli journalists, Uri Dan and Dennis Eisenberg, claimed that Iranian mullahs, backed by Libyan and Muslim extremists, were spearheading a major effort to bolster an embryonic fundamentalist terrorist movement in South Africa. Moreover, they charged, Farrakhan handed over a check for $50 million to the leftist Pan Africanist Congress, which, they said, had close ties with al Quibla. According to the two
journalists, al Quibla had set up several training camps in the western and eastern Cape provinces, "where hundreds of youths were currently undergoing military training and indoctrination by envoys dispatched from Iran and Algeria." When the Israeli government asked the South African government to investigate reports of Hezbollah training camps, Pretoria denied the existence of such bases. Franz Auerbach of the SAJBOD refuted the "scare stories" spread by the two Israeli journalists.

JEWSH COMMUNITY

Demography

An article in the Sunday Independent (December 10, 1995) stressed the large exodus of Jewish families from South Africa. Most of the people interviewed (under fictitious names) in the article had been victims of crime and hijackings. In fact, there were no official figures for Jewish emigration, and the national census scheduled for November 1996 would conceivably provide useful information on the subject. The fact that at the start of the school year in 1996 all the Jewish day schools were packed to capacity cast some doubt on the reports of mass emigration. At the same time, there was considerable anecdotal evidence of a large exodus of young Jews in their twenties, especially those with skills.

Communal Affairs

The 38th biennial congress of the SAJBOD, in August 1995, elected its first woman to lead the national body, Marlene Bethlehem. In a keynote address to the congress, South African deputy president Thabo Mbeki gave assurances that anti-Semitism and racism would not be tolerated in South Africa and expressed the government's commitment to the Middle East peace process. The South African government would maintain good relations with both Israel and "the new Palestinian Authority," he said. The conference paid special tribute to Mendel Kaplan, an industrialist, philanthropist, communal leader, and former chairman of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency.

Mervyn Smith, outgoing national chairman of the SAJBOD, told the conference that random violence was the primary issue facing the Jewish community in South Africa. To deal with the problem, a Safety and Security Task Force had been set up under SAJBOD auspices. Johannesburg, in particular, was facing a major crime wave. "There is hardly a member of the [Johannesburg] Jewish community," noted the SAJT in November 1995, "who is not personally acquainted with a victim of car hijacking, mugging, burglary or assault — or with families of those who have met violent deaths."

Among the measures being taken to cope with the problem: The SAJBOD par-
ticipated in community police forums; synagogues stepped up vigilance over fes-
tivals and the Sabbath; almost every Jewish function was guarded by officials from
the Community Security Organization; 93 Jewish police reservists were among a
group trained for community service in Johannesburg; there was close liaison with
police; and residents of some suburbs established neighborhood watch groups.
In general, Jewish citizens were at the forefront as volunteers in the civic fight
against crime. Post-traumatic stress counseling services were also provided.

Figures from the Central Statistical Services in Pretoria showed a higher rate
of divorce among Jews than other white groups in South Africa. In the ultra-
Orthodox community, where arranged marriages are common, the divorce rate
was also rising, although it was still lower than in the general community. Rabbi
Lewis Furman said one reason for the higher divorce rate was the greater social
acceptability of divorce as an option. The situation had reached such proportions
that the Jewish Family and Community Council-Transvaal established a special
divorce commission to examine the problem, chaired by Chief Rabbi Harris and
comprising social workers, psychologists, attorneys, doctors, and rabbis. Using a
multidisciplinary approach, it would seek ways to instill a greater sense of the im-
portance of marriage among couples.

Another social problem facing the community was gambling addiction among
Jews. A reportedly high proportion of the teenagers and young adults seeking re-
habilitation in the youth section of Gamblers' Anonymous was Jewish.

Despite the perceived affluence of the Jewish community, growing poverty
continued to concern Jewish communal leaders. In 1972 the Union of Jewish
Women (UJW) instituted the first Kosher Mobile Meal Service for 14 elderly
Jews. By 1996, UJW volunteers were delivering 650 meals a week to 90 elderly
Jewish men and women living in dire poverty in the inner city of Johannesburg.
The Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society (Chevrah Kadisha) was consider-
ing the purchase of several buildings in the northern suburbs to house many of
these elderly people, which would make caring for them easier, safer, and more
cost-effective.

An organization, Tikkun, was established to unify Jewish efforts to serve dis-
advantaged communities in South Africa. The goal was to facilitate Jewish or-
ganizational, Israeli, and individual projects in accordance with the country's Re-
construction and Development Program. Tikkun also sought to highlight the
historical role played by the Jewish community in outreach projects.

Another communal initiative, Gesher (Bridge), was launched in Johannesburg
in May 1996, with Geoff Sifrin becoming the first chairman. Gesher is the new
incarnation of the abandoned Jews for Social Justice, which was a progressive Jew-
ish voice in the last years of apartheid. Gesher's aims are to serve as a Jewish lobby
speaking with one independent voice, "to enlighten" the Jewish community in the
new South Africa, and to combat Jewish racism.

A group of African-American and Jewish student leaders from the United
States, with staff members of Howard and George Washington Universities,
spent a week in South Africa as part of a study seminar in May 1995. They met with members of Parliament, U.S. ambassador to South Africa Princeton Lyman, academics, activists, student leaders, and Jewish community leadership. Hillman Rifkind, assistant director of the American Jewish Committee’s Project Interchange, sponsor of the project, said the primary objective of the trip was to enhance relations within the black-Jewish group and then to embark on cooperation projects and programs on their return to the United States. South Africa, he explained, could serve as an example of good Jewish-black relations.

Mr. Justice Marcus Einfeld, of Sydney, Australia, visited Cape Town at the invitation of the Living Newspapers’ founder, Avron Kaplan, in October 1995. Einfeld is the former president of the Australian Human Rights Commission and former UN High Commissioner for Refugee Problems.

Prof. Edna Aphek visited South Africa as a guest of Tikkun in March 1996 to advise on educational uplift and development. Aphek is the initiator and director of the Center for Innovative and Creative Thinking in Israel, an organization dedicated to education and cooperation in the Middle East.

Also in March, renowned human-rights lawyer and Harvard academic Alan Dershowitz launched the Israel United Appeal-United Communal Fund (IUA-UCF) campaign in Cape Town. Noting that the Jews in South Africa were living “in interesting times,” he spoke of Jews being more successful and affluent than ever before but threatened by assimilation. Dershowitz also addressed the opening of the IUA-UCF campaign in Johannesburg.

In June the incoming national chairwoman of the SAJBOD, Marlene Bethlehem, gave an overview of the problems facing the South African Jewish community in an address to the national council meeting of ORT South Africa. There was, she maintained, no Jewish problem per se in South Africa. “We are part of a minority problem. There is no specific agenda of the government vis à vis the Jewish community.” Anti-Semitism, which was monitored by the SAJBOD, was in Bethlehem’s view, restricted to a small minority of Muslims supporting al Quibla. The Jewish tensions in South Africa, she asserted, were tied to the Middle East peace process. Bethlehem noted that while crime and violence were high up on the list of problems, they were declining. She believed that the government had the political will to put an end to violence.

Israel-Related Activity

Israeli ambassador Elazar Granot told a gathering of business people in July 1995 that with the new South Africa there were opportunities for open and prosperous commercial relations with Israel. Granot’s appeal was backed by Avi Friedman, the first secretary of economics and trade at the Israel Trade Center, Johannesburg.

Israeli Minister of Immigrant Absorption Yair Tzaban praised former South Africans now living in Israel as outstanding olim. Tzaban was speaking in Cape
Town in October 1995 at a gathering under the joint auspices of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD, the IUA-UCF, and the local Zionist Federation.

The 60th anniversary of the Mizrachi movement in South Africa was celebrated in Johannesburg in November 1995. The guest speaker was former Israel Knesset member Joseph Burg.

Israel's Ashkenazic chief rabbi, Israel Meir Lau, visited South Africa in February 1996 and was received by President Mandela in Pretoria. Rabbi Lau told the SAJT (February 23, 1996) that he and Mandela "found a common language from the very first moment." The rabbi presented the president with an inscribed leather-bound Bible in Hebrew and English. In addressing the Jewish community in Cape Town and Johannesburg, Chief Rabbi Lau stressed education as an answer to increasing assimilation. Reflecting on the murder of Rabin, he said that by this murder "we lost our reputation as a nation that does not commit bloodshed." Nonetheless, he noted, the assassination was the "deed of an individual."

The theme of South Africa's Israel Independence Day celebration in April 1996 was "Jerusalem 3000," in celebration of the biblical city's 3000th birthday. Among the scheduled events was a tour of the country of the exhibition "City of David" in the second half of 1996 and a multimedia exhibition on Jerusalem at the Casper Center in Johannesburg.

The Israel Nature Reserve Authority and the Johannesburg Zoological Gardens formed a partnership to preserve descendants of the animals saved by Noah during the great flood in biblical times. The aim of Project Noah's Ark was to bring some 11 endangered biblical species in breeding pairs to South Africa and to return the offspring of these animals to their natural habitat in Israel. The project had a multifaith dimension as well. It "can serve to bring many of the world's religions together in its effort to preserve this important link with the Bible," explained Rob Schneider, chairman of the project, in April.

An editorial in the SAJT following Benjamin Netanyahu's victory in May noted "a sense of buoyancy and hope about Israel's new government," the hope stemming "from the promises by Bibi Netanyahu to seek internal compromises that would repair the sharp divisions in the nation and create a sense of unity."

Yehuda Paz, principal of the Israeli Focus Body, was a guest of the South African Zionist Federation in July. The Israeli group trains men and women from 142 countries in socioeconomic aspects of development. Among the graduates of the program are a number of prominent black South African leaders.

**Religion**

In November 1995, 50 Jewish spiritual leaders from Gauteng Province, Free State Province, and KwaZulu-Natal met in Johannesburg to review their role and embark on strategic planning for the future. Political freedom in South Africa had brought about a host of new challenges for those charged with the task of dis-
pensing moral guidance. Rabbi Yossy Goldman, newly elected chairman of the Southern Africa Rabbinical Association, noted that it “is easy to be virtuous when there are no opportunities to choose otherwise. With our new open society, the options for alternate lifestyles are numerous.” He stressed the need for spiritual leaders “to articulate the moral viewpoint with candor, clarity and courage.” The rabbinical association (which excludes the Western Cape) aimed to make the wider Jewish community more aware of Judaic teachings and their relevance to contemporary life.

An Orthodox women’s prayer group in Johannesburg, gathered to celebrate Simhat Torah in 1995 at a private venue, was disrupted by the forcible entry of a group of Jewish men who were outraged that the women’s service was taking place. The men attacked the women physically and with a stream of foul language and threats. The incident generated some correspondence in the Jewish press.

A new Rondebosch Kollel Synagogue was consecrated in Cape Town in July 1995. The Pretoria Hebrew Congregation celebrated its centenary in March 1996. Chief Rabbi Harris paid tribute to the achievements of the congregation in a commemorative ceremony at the Adath Israel Synagogue in Pretoria. The celebrations included an exhibition of works by South African Jewish artists.

**Education**

According to Jeff Bortz, chairman of the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE), 75 percent of Jewish school-going children were enrolled in Jewish day schools.

Yeshivah Gedolah Ohr Menachem opened in Johannesburg in April 1996. Its establishment was a response to parents who were concerned about having to send their children abroad to study. Rabbi Levy Weinberg took the position of Rosh Yeshivah, assisted by Rabbi Yosef Kesselman.

The Johannesburg Yeshiva College, headed by Rabbi Abraham Tanzer, was one of seven recipients of the Jerusalem Prize for “Outstanding School in the Diaspora.” The prize is awarded by the Israeli government and Jewish Agency under the auspices of the president of Israel for schools making a notable contribution to Torah education in the Diaspora.

An “historical moment” is how President Mandela described the first graduation ceremony of technology education teachers from the three-year-old ORT-STEP Institute in Midrand in May 1996. Dr. Eli Eisenberg, national executive director of the ORT-STEP Institute, said the institute had grown over three years from one branch with four staff members to six branches with 60 staff members in four provinces of the country. The institute was a revolutionary new education program using satellite technology to reach distant areas. Its key objective was to train school teachers in the teaching of technology, science, and mathematics to minority populations. Liberty Life chairman Donald Gordon was named the first patron of ORT South Africa.
The King David Schools in Johannesburg were experiencing serious financial difficulties. Fee assistance was in jeopardy and a fund-raising drive was being considered. The United Herzlia Schools in Cape Town undertook a major rationalization program, including increased teacher workloads, and a campaign to raise four million rand.

The Committee of University Principals granted Jewish studies full recognition as a matriculation subject for college admission. This followed years of negotiations in which the SAJBOD, represented by Mark Cohen, the coordinator of Judaica, took a leading role. The subject includes history, Jewish thought, and a thorough encounter with primary Jewish sources.

Jewish-Christian Relations

The Second African Christian—Jewish consultative forum was held in Johannesburg in July 1995. The occasion was facilitated by the SAJBOD. Chief Rabbi Harris welcomed the rabbis and Christian clergy from Europe, the United States, and Africa.

Temple Israel, Cape Town, held a Shabbat Peace Service in December 1995, with interfaith participation by Anglican archbishop and Nobel Prize laureate Desmond Tutu, and the Reverend D. Bantam, mayor of Cape Town.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg of Great Britain, a leading figure in the world interfaith movement, visited South Africa in January 1996. Chairman of the executive committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews and vice-president of the World Congress of Faiths, Sternberg called for the building of bridges and dialogue between Christians, Muslims, and Jews in South Africa. Extensive discussions were held in Johannesburg and Cape Town on the possibility of establishing a South African Council of Christians and Jews.

Culture

Hungarian born, Israeli-raised, South African artist Eris Silke exhibited her work in Cape Town in September 1995. Hailed as one of South Africa’s top artists, Eris Silke had held at least 20 solo exhibitions. The same month, a Spring Art Festival was held in Johannesburg, under the auspices of the South African Zionist Federation in conjunction with the South African Jewish Arts and Culture Institute. The exhibition, which included paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, and weaving by almost one hundred well-known artists, depicted many aspects of the city of Jerusalem on its 3000th anniversary.

Prof. Joseph Sherman of the Department of English at the University of the Witwatersrand became the first non-American to be commissioned to translate one of Isaac Bashevis Singer’s novels into English. The novel, *Shadows on the Hudson*, was scheduled to be published in the second half of 1996.

"Le Chaim," the first Jewish magazine program on South African television,
was launched on February 11, 1996. According to the *South African Jewish Times* (February 23, 1996), the program was “vibrant, fast moving, interesting, educational and depicts the mark of true professionals behind the cameras and microphones.” Film director Jon Blair, a former South African, visited South Africa in June to screen his film *Anne Frank Remembered*, to selected audiences. The film was named the best documentary feature at the 1996 Oscars.

Kim Feinberg was appointed South African coordinator of Steven Spielberg’s Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Survivors were videotaped as part of the worldwide program to preserve testimony on the Holocaust.

**Publications**

Some noteworthy new publications of Jewish interest were *Adventurous Life in Political Zionism* by Jedidah Blumenthal; *To Gershn—Tales of People of Zjembin* by Geoff Sifrin; and *Rustenburg at War* by Lionel Wulfsohn.

**Personalia**

Gill Marcus of the African National Congress was appointed deputy minister of finance in the Government of National Unity. She joined the other Jewish deputy minister (of defense), Ronnie Kasrils.

Mendel Kaplan, former chairman of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors and well-known South African industrialist, philanthropist, and community leader, was named chairman of the Jerusalem Foundation. He succeeded Teddy Kollek, former mayor of Jerusalem.

An honorary fellowship was awarded to Hanns Saenger in May 1996 by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to South African Jewry and his efforts on behalf of the university. Saenger is a Holocaust survivor. Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer received an honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in June 1996.

Among prominent South African Jews who died between July 1995 and July 1996 were Choney Kenneth (CK) Friedlander, Cape Town attorney, sports broadcaster, and executive member of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation; Dr. Harry Mendelow, renowned neurosurgeon and president of the South African Neurosurgery Society; Barney Simon, renowned South African playwright and director, co-founder (with Mannie Manim) of the Johannesburg Market Theatre; Reverend Jacob Harris Mirkin, founder of the first kosher restaurant and the first kosher hotel in South Africa; and Rowley Arenstein, former Communist activist who was struck off the Roll of Attorneys in 1967 and in 1994 was reinstated as an attorney in the supreme court in Pietermaritzburg.

*Milton Shain*