The big political story of the year in South Africa took place in June, when President Thabo Mbeki relieved Jacob Zuma of his duties as deputy president upon Zuma’s implication in what Judge Hillary Squires called a “corrupt relationship” with convicted Indian businessman Schabir Shaik. This was not an easy decision for Mbeki, since Zuma was an extremely popular politician. Further problems arose for Zuma in December, when he was charged with raping a family friend. Both cases were scheduled to be heard in 2006.

Michael Bagraim, national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD), expressed support for President Mbeki’s removal of Zuma from office. “I don’t really see any implications in terms of the Jewish response other than that it’s reassuring for us to see the democratic institution of Parliament being implemented properly, and that a man of Zuma’s stature accepted the ruling of the president. As soon as we see that, we can see that democracy works.” These sentiments were echoed by Justice Dennis Davis, chairman of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD, who contended that the decision to sack Zuma “puts us at the forefront of morally accountable countries.”

During 2005, the economy enjoyed its most robust year since the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party, came to power in 1994. The growth rate touched 5 percent and business confidence soared as the country’s currency, the rand, maintained its strength against European currencies and the U.S. dollar. Even ongoing unrest in poorer areas of the country failed to dent business confidence. South Africa now had over seven years of economic growth, stock market gains, and substantial foreign investment.

Yet a number of concerns remained. Among them were a housing shortage; high levels of HIV/AIDS infection, with over five million people HIV-positive; and high unemployment due to a lack of job skills among many South Africans. Wealth was still spread unevenly. While a black middle class was emerging—helped substantially by the government’s Black Economic Empowerment, a form of affirmative
action in the business sector—the vast majority of the poor were black. There was talk of addressing the problem through passage of an Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGI), to be implemented in 2007.

The wealth disparities were highlighted at the SAJBOD’s biennial conference in Johannesburg by Dr. Chris Landsberg, director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg. “Government’s economic policies have not addressed the poorest-of-the-poor, and are making the wealthy wealthier,” he warned. But the country was progressing, he continued. Nearly two million new homes had been built since 1994, about four-and-a-half-million households had been connected to electricity, and some 11 million had been provided with running water. The economy was creating just over 50,000 new jobs per year, although, to be sure, more than that number entered the labor market annually.

One area of concern to Jews and other cultural minorities was talk of legislation requiring “representivity,” the representation of ethnic groups according to their proportion in the population. If carried out, such a system could bar the Jewish community from maintaining its own institutions, forcing Jewish old-age homes, for example, to serve a majority of black, non-Jewish clients.

The issue was discussed at a meeting of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD. F. W. de Klerk, the former president of South Africa, said it was imperative to protect minorities, and that “representivity” was “irreconcilable with the constitutional principal of cultural diversity,” which required “a degree of community autonomy and acceptance that there are important spheres of life that should be free from majority interference and control.” His concerns were shared by Michael Bagaim, the SAJBOD national chairman, who said: “In order to ensure the continuity of our organizations we have to insist on our right to run them as Jewish organizations. This means limiting admission to those of the Jewish faith only, if we choose. While it may constitute discrimination, we firmly believe that the discrimination is reasonable and perfectly acceptable under our Constitution” (SA Jewish Report, Sept. 2).

The Gauteng Council of the SAJBOD celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, a foundation document drawn up by the anti-apartheid Congress Alliance in 1955. At a formal function to mark the occasion, the chairman of the Gauteng Council, Zev Krengel, acknowledged that “the Jewish community as a whole failed to rise to the challenge posed by the apartheid years.”
Israel and the Middle East

In January, Tony Leon, leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, visited Israel and the Palestinian territories, where he with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and senior Palestinian leaders. Leon commented on the changes he had observed since visiting two years earlier. In his view, Palestinians “on the street” were more positive about the situation. And Leon questioned whether the South African government could serve as an honest broker in the Israel-Palestine dispute, since it had taken sides against Israel’s security fence at the International Court of Justice in 2004.

Notwithstanding Leon’s comments, there were indications of warmer relations between South Africa and Israel. In June, an editorial in the SA Jewish Report maintained that the government “has undergone some important changes in the past few years towards a more balanced approach to the Middle East.” The editor based his assertion on South Africa’s continued support for a two-state solution and a number of developments that took place in 2004: the “warm official welcome” given to an Israeli diplomatic and trade delegation led by Ehud Olmert, then serving as Israel’s deputy prime minister and minister of trade and industry; the strict control exerted over a UN conference in Cape Town on Palestinian rights so that it did not degenerate into an anti-Semitic hate fest; the appointment of a senior ANC figure as ambassador to Israel; and “significant gestures of friendliness towards the South African Jewish community, with an implicit understanding of its strong ties to Israel” (see AJYB 2005, pp. 530–31). The editor further suggested “cooperation on civilian projects between the Israeli and South African defense industries.”

Michael Bagraim, the SAJBOD chairman, seemed to share this optimism, informing the SAJBOD biennial conference that encouraging developments in the Middle East had lessened pressure on the SAJBOD to devote its energies to the conflict, and thus enabling the organization “to pursue its core function, which is to safeguard and promote the rights and well-being of the Jewish community of South Africa.” Ilan Baruch, a career diplomat appointed in October as Israel’s new ambassador to South Africa, also noted a more positive stance towards Israel in the country.

A senior group of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD met with the visiting Palestinian deputy foreign minister, Abdullah Abdullah. Both the deputy minister and the Jewish group stressed the need for peace in the Middle East and the importance of dialogue between Jews and Muslims in Cape Town.

In February, delegates from 18 South African companies attended a
trade meeting in Tel Aviv. In November, for the first time in 12 years, a high-level trade mission of South African government and business leaders went to Israel, facilitated by the South African Israel Chamber of Commerce.

Even so, the Israeli-Palestinian impasse continued to be a source of conflict in South Africa. Comparisons between apartheid South Africa and Israel were common. In May, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), after a massive march, presented the Cape Council of the SAJBOD an inflammatory letter claiming that Israel was systematically destroying and desecrating Islamic holy sites, and ultimately planned to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and replace it with a Jewish Holy Temple (see below).

In March, the United Jewish Communal Campaign (UJC)—formerly known as the IUA-UCF Campaign—was officially launched by Natan Sharansky, then serving as minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs. Four months later, Dennis Ross was hosted by the South African Zionist Federation and WIZO. Ross gave public speeches in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The Zionist organization Habonim Dror Southern Africa celebrated its 75th anniversary.

The Israeli pullout from Gaza was closely followed by the South African community, and received considerable editorial support from the SA Jewish Report and most Jewish leaders.

**Anti-Semitism and Racism**

David Saks, senior researcher at the SAJBOD, noted that South Africa had not experienced the upsurge of anti-Semitism noted elsewhere in the world in recent years. Saks explained that “South Africa has consistently recorded fewer than 40 anti-Semitic incidents a year for at least two decades now,” and these tended to be instances of verbal abuse and hate mail rather than physical violence (SA Jewish Report, Feb. 25).

Anti-Semitic rhetoric often accompanied Muslim anti-Zionism. In May, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) organized a march of some 10,000 people to the SAJBOD’s Cape Council offices, and there presented a memorandum demanding answers to charges that Israel planned to attack Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem. The Cape Council refused to accept the memorandum, maintaining that these falsehoods ought to be presented to the Israeli embassy, but nevertheless invited the MJC to meet and discuss Muslim-Jewish relations. In replying to the invitation, the MJC secretary, Sheikh Ahmed Seddick, wrote offensive comments about Israel and Jews.
Jewish-Muslim relations remained an ongoing concern. Speaking at the annual conference of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD, its chairman, Justice Dennis Davis, acknowledged that the state of Muslim-Jewish relations was a “major failure” of his tenure, and predicted that the issue would remain a “profound challenge” for the SAJBOD for many years to come. He recalled the advice given recently by a visiting Israeli lecturer, Prof. Yehuda Bauer, who called on the world to encourage the majority of nonfundamentalist Muslims to take control of their community. “It’s vitally important that we bear that wise counsel in mind as we go about our business,” said Davis.

The most inflammatory racist incident during the year had nothing to do with Jews. On August 8, Mayor Nomaiindia Mfeketo fired her media adviser, Blackman Ngoro, for insulting the nation’s “Coloured” (mixed-race) population on his Web site. Calling black Africans “vastly superior,” Ngoro referred to “coloured beggars, homeless and drunk on cheap wine.”

Holocaust-Related Matters

The 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was commemorated in Johannesburg and Cape Town in January. At a special service, the Western Cape premier, Ebrahim Rasool, called the Holocaust “the most cold-blooded, systematic, and deliberate genocide” the world had seen, and “certainly a crime against humanity.” He continued, “Muslims in general and Arabs in particular can’t allow their own subjective sense of what is right or wrong in the Middle East to lead to a numbing of our common humanity in that we may want to deny that Auschwitz happened . . . . Tonight’s commemoration must become a fundamental pillar in our desire to make this region a home for all, whatever our perspectives on Israel and Palestine.”

Commenting in an editorial, the SA Jewish Report (Feb. 4) suggested that Rasool’s comments showed “that it is possible to have serious differences regarding the Middle East conflict, yet still see our humanity in the other side, and acknowledge their historical experience and suffering.”

This Holocaust commemoration was also marked by a meeting of young Jewish and black students at the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, where the students both celebrated South African freedom and recalled the Holocaust. Coincidentally, the renowned South-African-born actor, Sir Antony Sher, was, at the time, performing Primo, an adaptation of Primo Levi’s If This Is a Man, Levi’s memoir of Auschwitz.
The Cape Town Holocaust Centre maintained its full schedule of programs. It brought over Thomas Kuncewicz, director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center, to speak in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In March, an exhibition titled “Seeking Refuge,” curated by the Centre, opened in Johannesburg. Its theme was the lives of the German Jewish refugees who came to South Africa. Stephen Feinberg, director of the National Outreach Education Division at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., ran a four-day seminar for educators and also presented the Centre’s annual lecture. Richard Freedman was appointed director of the Centre, succeeding Myra Osrin, who retired.

In other Holocaust-related news, a contingent of South African Jews joined thousands of others from around the world for the “March of the Living” in Poland. In August, a new Raoul Wallenberg Garden was opened at the West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg.

The Holocaust featured in a minor controversy that erupted in the South African National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, when the ANC chief whip, Mbulelo Goniwe, commented to Tony Leon, the leader of the opposition, “One thing that you forget is that you are here because of the magnanimity of the ANC. If we had chosen the path of the Nuremberg trials, all of you would be languishing in jail for the crime of apartheid that you committed.” Leon, who is Jewish, and several other Democratic Alliance members walked out of the chamber.

Michael Bagraim, speaking for the SAJBOD, called Goniwe’s comments “an unacceptable attack on the white minority in South Africa.” “The Nuremberg Trials,” explained Bagraim, “were instituted to punish those who were guilty of overseeing some of the most horrific atrocities ever committed, including the planned mass murder of millions of innocent men, women, and children. The intimation of Mr. Goniwe that all South African whites are collectively guilty of similar crimes against humanity is offensive and uncalled for.”

The SAJBOD launched a complaint against Voice of the Cape, a Cape Town Muslim radio station, for broadcasting an interview with Sheikh Muhammad Colby, a South African Muslim studying at Al Azhar University in Cairo, who described Jews in conspiratorial terms, claiming, for example, that they were bent on carrying out “any form of destruction and killing and slaughtering and murdering and raping without any mercy, whether it is children, mothers, babies.” The Monitoring and Complaints Unit of the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa upheld the complaint, and the station was ordered to broadcast an appropriate apology at regular intervals.
Demography

Michael Bagraim reported that statistics available to the SAJBOD indicated that the exodus of Jews from South Africa was slowing considerably. "In addition," he added, "there is a growing, and obviously extremely encouraging phenomenon of former émigrés returning to South Africa. The Jewish day schools in Johannesburg are now making provision for the children of parents who have returned and are in the process of reestablishing themselves, while people involved in the shipping and transport business in Cape Town confirm that there is a steady trickle of Jews coming back to the country" (SA Jewish Report, Aug. 12).

This claim was confirmed by David Saks, who informed the SAJBOD's conference that emigration had declined sixfold. "South African Jewry in 2005 finds itself numerically stable, cohesive, and an extremely well-organized community. It is also, however, a community still licking its wounds following the most sustained period of attrition through emigration since its establishment some 165 years ago," explained Saks.

According to the 2001 census, Jews numbered between 72,000 and 80,000. Places like the Plettenberg Bay Area in the southern Cape and Nelspruit in Mpumalanga had shown substantial growth. Approximately 70 percent of Jews lived in Johannesburg. Both Cape Town and Durban were aging community, as younger people appeared to be relocating elsewhere.

Communal Affairs

The SAJBOD conducted its biennial conference in Johannesburg on the theme "Jews in a Democratic South Africa: Roles, Rights and Responsibilities." The optimism expressed during the proceedings was reflected in an editorial in the SA Jewish Report (Sept. 9) that praised the openness of South Africa, which "provided a tremendous opportunity for Jews to engage fully with it and help address its national concerns, such as poverty and unemployment, and we should do so."

Speaking in his capacity as national chairman, Michael Bagraim indicated that two of his objectives had been met: strengthening the SAJBOD's relations with the government and democratizing the Jewish
community. His third objective, to educate the community about the SAJBOD's work, had still to be accomplished.

It was reported that Jewish welfare in Johannesburg was now largely under the Chevrah Kadisha, originally founded many years earlier as a burial society. In addition to its own welfare projects, the Chevrah Kadisha incorporated the Jewish Community Services, the two Jewish homes for the aged, the Society for the Jewish Deaf, and Nehama, a bereavement organization.

The Jewish Guild Linksfield Bowling Club in Johannesburg, founded in 1897, was saved from a financial crisis by two businessmen, Abe and Solly Krok. "The Jewish Guild is the only Jewish club on the continent of Africa," explained club president, Henry Cohen. "It is the only club that flies the Israeli flag together with the South African and club flags" (SA Jewish Report, June 6).

Shortly after the SAJBOD's biennial conference, the Cape Council of the SAJBOD hosted the Commonwealth Jewish Council (CJC) at its biennial conference. The guest of honor, Western Cape premier Ebrahim Rasool, used the occasion to warn against religious extremism. "Fundamentalism is the gathering together of people who don't know what to do with the uncertainty in their hearts; it is fear of the future that expresses itself in a yearning for the past." The SAJBOD also hosted the African Jewish Congress, with delegates from sub-Saharan countries and the British Commonwealth attending. Late in the year, the Gauteng Council of the SAJBOD organized an open forum to question the chairman, Zev Krengel, about the SAJBOD's work.

Moonyeen Castle was elected chair of the Cape Council of the SAJBOD. She was the first woman to hold this post since the inception of the SAJBOD in 1904.

The involvement of the SAJBOD in Tsunami relief at the end of 2004 was widely praised. The SAJBOD set up a special disaster-relief fund and worked in conjunction with the government in organizing a rescue plan for stranded South Africans and delivering medical supplies. Over 2,000 South African vacationers were caught up in the tragedy, and four members of the Jewish community lost their lives.

The death of Pope John Paul II was mourned and his life praised in an article by Michael Bagaim. "No pope has ever done more towards healing the age-old breach between Judaism and Christianity, combat anti-Semitism, and establish ties between the Vatican and the State of Israel," he wrote (SA Jewish Report, Apr. 15). Toward the end of the year,
Bagraim spoke of excellent Jewish-Christian relations in South Africa. “We are meeting on a constant basis with Christian leaders at all levels, finding much common ground and forging warm ties of friendship” (SA Jewish Report, Oct. 28).

Numerous Jewish organizations contributed towards welfare programs. The United Sisterhood, for example, provided aid for South African children through Our Children’s Fund and other projects. ORT continued to train the disadvantaged, and Durban Jews awarded scholarships, helped equip schools, and carried out HIV/AIDS work in disadvantaged communities. A Durban HIV/AIDS project received the Mail & Guardian Investing in Life Award for independent foundations and not-for-profit organizations. The award was given specifically to the Chiva/KwaZulu-Natal Paediatric ARV Training Initiative, a project funded, managed and coordinated by the Durban Jewish community. The Union of Jewish Women continued to involve itself in a range of activities, including the Rape Crisis Project, HIV/AIDS prevention, adult education, soup kitchens, postpartum depression groups, and kosher meals-on-wheels.

MaAfrika Tikkun, which coordinated the community’s projects to help black South Africans, continued with a very active program. Marc Lubner, who replaced Herby Rosenberg as chief executive after Rosenberg’s retirement, reported that the organization was establishing community centers in many areas of the country. He described them as “weather ships” from which the programs would operate, including crèches, soup kitchens, and after-school care. “MaAfrika Tikkun should be seen as an oasis in the desert of pain and suffering,” explained Lubner. “But we have to forge alliances with others, such as medical groups and government offices, to assist with documentation and grants, all of which will be based in our central location. We cannot do it on our own.”

In Cape Town, MaAfrika Tikkun partnered with the municipal administration and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in a flagship project, the Nelson Mandela Peace Park in Delft, outside the city. The project was then extended to Mfuleni in Khayalitsha, a township outside Cape Town.

In May, the senior leadership of the Jewish community met with Jacob Zuma, then serving as deputy president, to discuss the needs and concerns of the Jewish community and to ask how it might help improve life for everyone in the country. Coping with HIV/AIDS was high on the agenda.
Religion

Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein was inaugurated chief rabbi in a ceremony at Bet Hamedrash Hagadol in Sandton, Johannesburg. Among the dignitaries present were President Mbeki and his wife. Addressing the gathering, the president described the moment as “an auspicious occasion, both for the Jewish community of South Africa and the country as a whole.” After recalling the contribution of South African Jewry, which had “enriched, and continues to enrich the marvelous tapestry of South Africa,” he expressed confidence that this would continue under the new chief rabbi.

Rabbi Goldstein spoke of the illustrious lineage of the Jewish people, including its reception of the Torah on Mt. Sinai and the millennia of learning by its sages. He called on all Jews to apply Jewish values as citizens of South Africa and thus to participate in the moral regeneration of society. He also paid tribute to his predecessor, Rabbi Cyril Harris, who was in poor health and unable to attend. Shortly after his inauguration, Rabbi Goldstein launched a series of seminars on ethics for Jewish professionals in the fields of health care, law, and business.

The new chief rabbi, like all those holding the office before him, was Orthodox. During the year, the community’s Orthodox establishment was challenged on three separate occasions, stirring debate over whether a more religiously pluralistic system might be better for South African Jewry. The first two incidents were provoked by Orthodox Jews who were more liberal than the official leadership.

An American homosexual Orthodox rabbi, Steven Greenberg, caused a stir when he arrived in South Africa to participate in discussions of the film Trembling Before God, in which he appeared, and to lecture for various audiences. The Johannesburg bet din (religious court) objected to the screening, and its head challenged Rabbi Greenberg’s claim to Orthodoxy. Initially denied a platform, he was eventually allowed to speak.

The Greenberg controversy triggered communal discussion about the power of the Orthodox rabbinate. “Have we become a theocracy with the Orthodox community running the show, where there is only one view and one truth?” asked Justice Davis, chairman of the SAJBOD Cape Council. Davis characterized “fundamentalism” as a worldwide problem, even among Jews. “Conservative and Reform Jews struggle with their identity, and shouldn’t be discarded on the altar of fundamentalism. Gender, the
battle between particularism and universalism, were issues that would have to be addressed,” he declared.

Battle lines formed again in the fall over an “egalitarian Orthodox” service held on the second day of Rosh Hashanah in Cape Town. The chief rabbi’s office issued a statement indicating that the service could not be termed Orthodox since it did not conform to Jewish law. “Different trends of Judaism have come and gone,” explained the chief rabbi, “and that’s why, in terms of Jewish continuity and survival, the closer we are in alignment with Judaism that has stood the test of time, one which is based on complete adherence to the code of Jewish law and to all the principles of our faith—that is the Judaism which has a future.”

But Justice Davis, one of the prime supporters of the controversial service, called, first, for respect for all Jewish denominations, and then proceeded to defend the specific innovation under discussion from the charge of transgressing the strictures of Orthodoxy. “In the egalitarian Orthodox framework,” he said, “there is in fact a very restricted role for women . . . . They are entitled to be called up to the Torah, can read the haftarah, can sing Ein K’Eloheinu, Adon Olam, Yigdal, and can deliver sermons, but ultimately men still have a very dominant role in all of this.”

The most serious clash came when the chief rabbi refused to share a platform with a Reform rabbi who had been asked to speak at a service in memory of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister assassinated in 1995. Rabbi Goldstein justified his stance by citing “a 40-year-old document [known as the Concordat] signed by one of my illustrious predecessors, Chief Rabbi B. M. Casper and the head minister of the Reform movement at the time. The joint historic accord states that ‘from the religious point of view there is an unbridgeable gulf between Orthodoxy and Reform.’ Therefore it has been the South African Jewish community’s custom that an Orthodox rabbi cannot share a speaking platform with a Reform leader and that all official functions are Orthodox. The organizers of the Rabin memorial in Johannesburg deviated from these well-established rules and asked a Reform minister to speak. Consequently and unfortunately, I was forced to withdraw . . . .”

Several sharp criticisms of Rabbi Goldstein’s behavior were published in the SA Jewish Report. A group calling itself “Jews for Pluralism” noted that the Concordat had also stated that in “social, welfare and other nonreligious matters, Orthodox and Reform should cooperate . . . in the general communal interest,” and argued that the Rabin memorial event came under that rubric. Mendel Kaplan, a leading communal figure and former chairman of the governing body of the World Jewish Congress,
wrote that there was no room for division in South African Jewry. He asked, “Are we going to become a community pushed by a small minority to be intolerant of the broad house of Judaism?” Justice Davis added his voice, calling on South African Jews to “achieve a balance of the promotion of our own conception of Judaism in our own way and constructing a simultaneous sense of a community unified in its respect for, among other things, Jewish diversity.”

Answering his critics, Chief Rabbi Goldstein explained that “I have to preach what I believe is in the best interests of the community. . . . As chief rabbi of every single Jew in this country, I preach Torah Judaism in its authentic form. I can’t with a clear conscience call something Judaism if it is not. Politically, it would have been much easier for me to go [to the memorial service]—I so badly wanted to,” but “a good leader has to have the courage to say what he feels is the truth, even if it’s going to make him unpopular.”

The dispute was also the subject of an editorial, “Seeking shalom bayit,” in the SA Jewish Report (Nov. 25). The Jewish weekly described the incident as “a sad event for the community” and offered its pages to facilitate dialogue. Community leaders were called upon to exercise “wise and active leadership” and to restore harmony. “It would be a good thing for the leadership of the community to use this forum now for calming tempers and negotiating a way out of the confrontation, which seems to have reached an inconclusive and unsatisfactory stalemate,” the paper suggested.

In September, Rabbi Cyril Harris, the former chief rabbi, passed away at the age of 68. Tributes poured in from Jews and non-Jews from across the country, bearing testimony to the significant role Harris played in South Africa since his arrival in 1988. “A great leader,” “A source of blessing,” “A teacher and a friend,” “A man for all seasons,” “Conscience of the community,” “A man of courage and conviction,” “The people’s chief rabbi,” were just some of the encomiums showered upon the late rabbi.

His successor, Chief Rabbi Goldstein, called in December for the establishment of a “Moral Bill of Rights.” In a democratic society, he maintained, safeguarding human rights was essential, and “the broad acceptance of the need for human responsibilities had also to become part of the common culture.” South Africa, he said, “needed a document of common moral values that all South Africans would adhere to” (SA Jewish Report, Dec. 2).

In other religious news, the Ohr Sameyach congregation in Cape Town bid farewell to Rabbi Jonathan Shippel; the Wynberg Hebrew Congre-
gation in Cape Town celebrated its centenary; a new synagogue was opened in Benoni, near Johannesburg, to replace the old one that had closed in 2004; Somerset Strand Synagogue in the Western Cape dedicated a new building; the Glendiningvale Synagogue was closed in Port Elizabeth; and Pretoria’s Mahon L’Hora’a, an advanced yeshiva, reported that 18 students had obtained rabbinical ordination since its inception four years earlier.

Illustrating the trend toward the establishment of many small Orthodox synagogues, there were now 50 places of worship in Johannesburg (all but four of them Orthodox), as compared to 30 active synagogues in 1970, despite a 40-percent decline in the size of the city’s Jewish community over the 35 years.

Education

The seemingly excessive number of Jewish day schools in Johannesburg in proportion to the population was a subject of discussion. Those critical of the trend argued that children were too thinly spread, with classes so small as to limit interaction and opportunities for friendship, and possibly creating psychological problems. Furthermore, they said, the upkeep of so many schools could prove to be financially ruinous.

There were others, however, who pointed out that the reason for the proliferation of fringe schools, especially among the ultra-Orthodox, was the great difficulty that different Jewish movements confronted in coming to an agreement about curriculum. Fay Lewis, who chaired the Johannesburg Board of Jewish Education, had no objections to the initiation of new schools so long as they were financially viable.

The Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town celebrated its 25th anniversary with a gala dinner and keynote lecture by Prof. Yehuda Bauer, the noted Holocaust scholar (see above, p. 548).

Culture

Suzman was the best known of those liberals who devoted their lives to the fight for human rights and the rule of law in South Africa. From the start of a political career that spanned almost four decades, she challenged the iniquity of apartheid and used her membership in Parliament to expose the inhumanity of a system that came to be defined as a crime against humanity. Launching the exhibition, Colin Eglin, a former leader of the Progressive Party and colleague of Suzman, expressed the hope that it “will not only serve as a historical record, but will be an inspiration for the future and will make us realize that we have a responsibility to keep alive in the community the liberal and democratic values for which Helen has fought so bravely.”

The catalog for an exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum, “Treasures of Japanese Art: The Isaac Kaplan Collection,” was awarded first prize in the exhibition catalog category at the annual South African Museum Association conference.


Professor Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph wrote a special composition, “Lifestyle,” for the Nqogobo Women of the Eastern Cape. The piece was performed by Xhosa traditional singers at the Women’s Day event at the Cape Town City Hall.

The *SA Jewish Report* celebrated its seventh anniversary. The weekly was the only national Jewish paper. “Our target readership includes Jews affiliated to synagogues or community organizations, as well as ‘unaffiliated’ Jews more involved in general society, in business, politics, the arts, professions, etc. Politically and religiously we are open to a wide spectrum of views,” explained the editor, Geoff Sifrin.

**Personalia**

Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, who died during the year (see above, p. 000), was given a posthumous OBE (Order of the British Empire) for his services to Jewish communities and intercommunal relations in South Africa; Rabbi Dr. David Sherman was posthumously awarded the Order
of the Disa by the Western Cape premier for his contributions to human rights; Sir Aaron Klug, the South-African-born and Cambridge-based Nobel laureate in chemistry, was honored with the Order of Mapangubwe Gold Cross; Justice Albie Sachs was awarded the Annetje Fels Kupferschmidt Award by the Netherlands Auschwitz Committee; Raymond Hack, a prominent lawyer, was appointed CEO of the South African Football Association; Harry Schwarz, a former prominent politician and ambassador to the U.S., was named an honorary fellow of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and Errol Anstey received the Herzl Award, given by the World Zionist Organization for outstanding young volunteers to the Zionist cause.

Among prominent South African Jews who died in 2005 were Chief Rabbi Harris (see above, p. 555); Professor Asher Dubb, an eminent neurologist; Rabbi Dr. David Sherman, a long-serving Reform leader; Dr. Solly Aronovsky, founder of the Johannesburg Young People’s Symphony Orchestra; Lionel Abrahams, writer and poet; Solly Kessler, communal leader; Lionel Hodes, former secretary general of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF); Harry Klass, prominent Hebrew Order of David leader; Shimmy Katz, water polo player and administrator; Leon Markowitz, former mayor of Cape Town; Eleanor Goldin, Jewish day school educator; Fanny Lockitch, communal worker; and David Melamet, prominent jurist.