



# CHOL – Community History On-Line

A forum for those involved in preserving the footprint of Southern African Jewish community life in digital form

Community History On-Line CHOL Newsletter #18 April 2025

## New CHOL Projects 2025; and introducing the CHOL Facebook Group

In this issue:

1. Join the CHOL Facebook group
2. Seeking information on library collections
3. Jewish innovations in South African agriculture
4. South African Jewish music in performance and research
5. What's new on the CHOL website [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website)
6. New activities to participate in: **Share Your Stories** with Gail and **Debating SA Jewish History** with Professor Richard Mendelsohn.

### 1. Introducing the CHOL Facebook Group

Come and have your say, connect with others and ask your questions about Southern African Jewish Community History on the new CHOL Facebook Group

Thank you to Dave Bloom, for creating this group for CHOL. It's a public group, everyone can find it, but you will be asked a few questions before you join – for security reasons. (Also it helps us to get to know our new members.) Already there are over 80 members, though it has only been up for a few days! CHOL is a wonderful platform for Jewish Geography of a really positive nature in the complex world we live in. Do join the CHOL conversation, here: CHOL Facebook Group and invite your friends.

### New CHOL Projects 2025

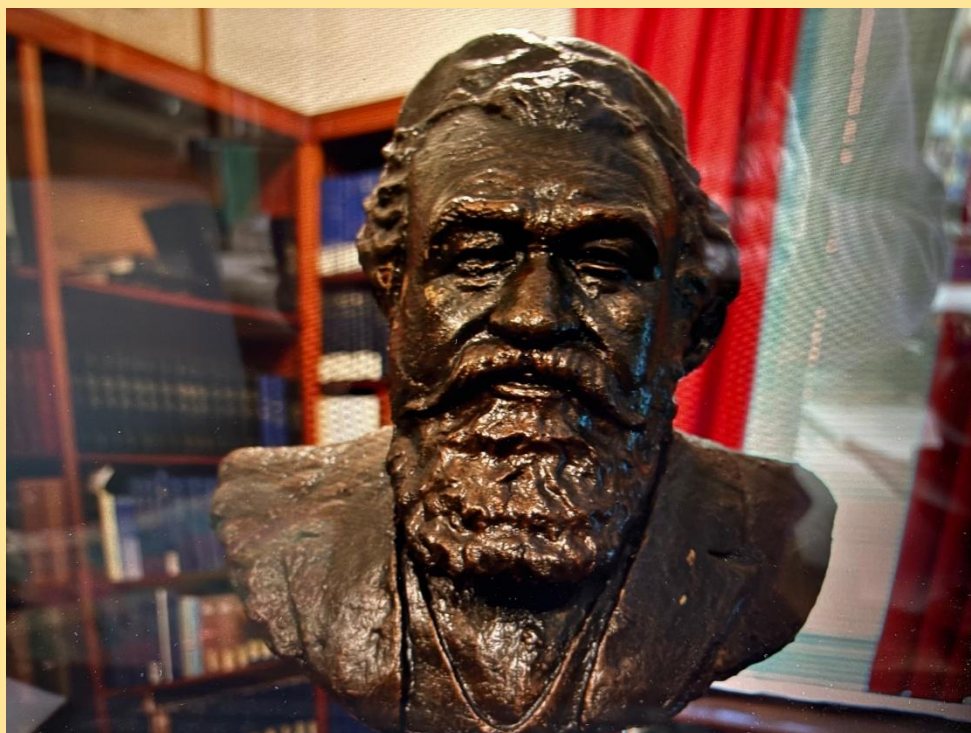
For our next projects and presentations we will be considering scoping Jewish content **libraries**; examining **Jewish innovations in agriculture** and researching and performing **Jewish music**. See the details below.

If you have information and/or would like to participate, in any of the above or know more about any of these please write to [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website). (See below for more details about each topic)

## 1. Can you help find and scope Libraries and Collections?

Do you know of any libraries or unofficial, even small individual collections of materials (books, papers, photographs, videos etc) pertaining to South African Jewish communities?

CHOL is setting out on a scoping mission to find out some very basic information about them whether they are large or tiny: We want to find out where they are, what they contain; who owns and manages them; and whether and how they are accessible to others. When we have the information about these collections, they will be listed on the CHOL website [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) as resources for research and discovery.



Did you know that **Rabbi Judah Leo Landau** (pictured left in the bronze bust) whose extensive library is housed in about five rooms at Wits University, came to Johannesburg, when he was appointed to lead the new Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation in 1903.

When the two early congregations merged in 1915, and built the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street, he became the first Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg. He was also then appointed the first Chief Rabbi of South Africa in which capacity he served until his death in 1942.

Rabbi Landau, born 1866, was very erudite and highly educated. He was a scholar, poet, and playwright of note and a prolific writer. In addition to his rabbinic duties, he was appointed Professor of Hebrew at Witwatersrand University. In nearly four decades of spiritual and intellectual leadership of the South African Jewish community, Landau participated in and stimulated a great variety of activities and organizations: religious, charitable, cultural, and Zionist.

Mark Wade, who has visited the extensive Landau Collection when he made his films *Legends and Legacies*, will be 'scoping' this vast collection simply to find out how many items there are (approximately in five rooms!) what the contents mainly are about and how accessible they are.

If you know of any collection of South African Jewish interest, wherever it is and however big or small, please contact Jeremy Hodes who is managing this Scoping Study for CHOL to give him any information or ask any questions. Write to Jeremy at [jeremy@chol.website](mailto:jeremy@chol.website).

You can go the CHOL website [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) homepage and find updates on the next events and click there for the questionnaire to fill in and to send to Jeremy.

---

### 3. Were any of your family innovators in South African agriculture?



The Zebedelia citrus estate created by the Schlesinger family in the Northern Transvaal.

Were your parents or grand or great-grandparents or any family members involved with farming or agriculture in South Africa? There are so many amazing Jewish innovators in this under researched area of South African Jewish history.

For our next presentations Professor Richard Mendelsohn, Emeritus Professor of History at UCT is inviting you to participate with him in presentations and stories about Jewish innovation in agriculture. Please reply to this email or get in touch to discuss how to tell the story.

Off the top of our heads, here are some examples. If you know about these or others and can tell the story, let us know. Write to [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website) or directly to Professor Mendelsohn at [richard.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za](mailto:richard.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za)

#### **Some South Africans involved with agriculture:**

1. The Shlesingers and their citrus estates in Zebedelia
2. The Sarembocks and soft fruit in Ceres
3. The Zettlers with Strawberries in Stellenbosch
4. The Potato kings of Bethal
5. Onion Kings of Caledon and Botrivier near Hermanus (Bramie Lenhoff and Dave Bloom)
6. Michael Eliastam's father was a pig farmer around Springs /Devon
7. The Isakow family created farm equipment
8. The Krup family created farm machinery
9. Jews were very involved with milling there were a couple of our members corresponding about that.
10. Professor Richard Mendelsohn will talk about Smouse and algemene handelaars who bought farmers produce and sold them seed and fertiliser – probably

introduced better strains and gave them better prices and credit They bartered goods for livestock

11. Jews were cattle speculators in the pioneering days of Rhodesia

12. The irrigation entrepreneurs

13. Ostrich farmers and dealers

14. Sammy Marks. Professor Mendelsohn who wrote the biography of Sammy Marks will talk about this early pioneer.

If you have a story to tell, please write to [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website) and /or [richard.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za](mailto:richard.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za)



Innovations in deciduous fruits growing, processing and marketing in the Ceres area.

#### 4. Do you know about South African Jewish Music?

CHOL will be supporting exciting potential research and performance projects regarding South African Jewish music. [Geraldine@chol.website](mailto:Geraldine@chol.website)



Pictured are Santie De Jongh, Special Collections curator of Stellenbosch University Library with Cantor Ivor Joffe (of the Marais Road Synagogue, Sea Point) checking out the plethora of amazing music books and recordings in Ivor's garage – that we hope will soon be transported to Stellenbosch.

Ivor and Santie are hoping to engender serious research on this rich trove of material, some of it saved from destruction when Beinkinstadt's shop closed a few years ago. The Kaplan centre at UCT is interested in working with Stellenbosch University on research and performance. Ivor and Santie are also planning a special concert based on the material possibly in December or January coming, so hopefully visitors will be able to attend.

---

## 5. New on the website this month:

*The website is where all the goodies are – so do look regularly to see what is new – and what you think may be missing*

### This month you can see:

1. A brand new CHOL website for [Oudtshoorn](#) Community has been created.
  2. Nuggets from the Minute books, have been garnered by Stan Loon for [Bellville](#)
  3. New families and copies of the Maitland Echo have been uploaded for [Maitland](#)
  4. [SAJAC \(South African Jewish American Community\)](#) is now connected
  5. [Woodstock and Salt River](#), the new website includes pictures of the 2004 reunion
  6. There are more [Stories](#) and [Memoirs](#) on the ever expanding CHOL website click the links above or visit [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website)
- 

## 6. **New activities** for you to join

### A. Share Your Stories

You are all invited to a 'Share Your Stories' zoom session on **Tuesday, 29th April at 13:00 New York time; 18:00 UK; 19:00 South Africa; 20:00 Israel**

The Subject is a continuation of our last session with two writers telling about the books that they have just published. What led them to undertake the project, what it means to them and how they overcame personal and other obstacles along the way to achieve their aim!

So, prepare yourselves for a super session with **Merle Levin of Stanford in the Cape** and **Emanuel Derman in New York**. The link to the session will be sent nearer the time. Wishing you all a Happy Pesach! Best, Gail

### B. Debating SA Jewish History – with Professor Richard Mendelsohn

I am delighted to tell you that Professor Richard Mendelsohn is running a 10-session course for Midrasha on Wednesday evenings online at 19.30 South African time, starting on Wed 7<sup>th</sup> May.

We were thinking that many of you might be interested to join him. he will cover the **immigrant experience; orthodoxy and Reform in South Africa; Antisemitism; Jews and Apartheid; Gender and South African Jewry and SA Zionism and its critics.** To see the flyer **Click [here](#)** to see the next (and recent past) CHOL events, investigations and presentations. To book your place contact Lauren Snitcher [lauren@snitcher.org](mailto:lauren@snitcher.org) +27828802257

~~~~~  
**Your feedback to the CHOL Newsletter** is always welcome. Please send to [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website)

Please keep us informed of your own 'Community History On-Line' activities and interests. If you know people who might be interested in CHOL activities, please forward this Newsletter to them or pass on their details to CHOL.

You can also say if you would prefer not to receive post from CHOL

~~~~~

**CHOL Newsletter no 18** compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, April 2025

Checkout the CHOL website: [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) which now has on it:

- 59 [Communities](#)
- 61 [Memoirs](#)
- 161 original [Stories](#)
- 40 Videos of [Presentations](#)

also on the site are resources and journal articles and all our CHOL newsletters

~~~~~

**CHOL – Community History On-Line** is a forum set up in 2020, under the auspices of the Kaplan Centre at UCT and the South African Jewish Museum – bringing together all those working on / or interested in creating an online presence relating to the **History of Jewish Communities in Southern Africa.** see [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) contact [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website).

