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**21 April 2026**

## **Where to next? UCT professor to reflect on the future of Jewish life in South Africa**

**29 April 2026 | 18:00 SAST | Auditorium LT1, Neville Alexander Building, lower campus**

Historians often hesitate to predict the future. Yet moments of profound change invite reflection on what lies ahead. Drawing on decades of data collected by the University of Cape Town's (UCT) [Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies](#), Professor Adam Mendelsohn will, during his upcoming inaugural lecture, examine demographic, religious and political developments shaping Jewish life in South Africa today.

Professor Mendelsohn's lecture will place contemporary developments in historical perspective, exploring patterns of migration, identity and prejudice to assess how Jewish communities have evolved and where they may be heading. By situating the present within a longer historical trajectory, he will reflect on the future of Jewish life in South Africa.

Mendelsohn is the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies. His research focuses on comparative Jewish history, particularly the historical experiences of Jews in South Africa and the United States. He has written extensively on Jewish migration, identity and economic mobility in the English-speaking world. His work has also informed exhibitions he co-curated at institutions including the New York Historical Society, Princeton University Art Museum and the Center for Jewish History in New York.

His intellectual trajectory was shaped by a course he took fortuitously as an honours student while on a UCT exchange programme at the University of Wisconsin. Arriving in wintry Madison shortly before the start of the academic year, only two classes still had space: a course on the history of Japanese fascism and another comparing the trajectory (and interconnections) of Jews and African Americans in the United States. The latter initiated an abiding interest in comparison between the historical experience of Jews in South Africa and the United States, and in how Jews have navigated issues of race in both societies.

Since 2016, he has worked on a large-scale commissioned project focused on the Jewish experience during the American Civil War. This resulted in a monograph published in 2022 and another due for publication in 2027.

- Members of the media wishing to attend the lecture are requested to [RSVP](#) via email.

**ENDS**

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