

Bloemfontein Goldie Rosen

Rosen, Goldie (Golda) and Ronnie

I arrived in Bloemfontein in 1955 as a bride. The community consisted of 450 Jewish families at the time. I knew no-one except for my in-law family. There were a few young couples, whom I met, and we gradually integrated into that social group. For the first number of years, we would motor to Johannesburg, to my parents, for the Pesach and Rosh Hashanah Festivals, as the shul was too far to walk to.

As the years went by, my husband Ronnie and I got more and more involved in the community. My husband joined the shul choir, eventually becoming the choirmaster.

He was an active member of the Hebrew Order of David, becoming the President later. He joined the Chevra Kadisha (all voluntary members) and finally became the President of the community. I joined the Women's Zionist League, also serving as the Chairman several years later.

We were Sabbath observant, and the religious Jews passing through Bloemfontein, would find their way to our home. We met many interesting people over the years. And then a steady decline set in.

There were a lot of farmers in the Free State. They would always come to Bloemfontein for the High Holy Days. But their numbers also declined. Our four children left high school in Bloemfontein for the Jewish Schools in Johannesburg. No child returned after their studies at the various universities. By the time we left, in 2010, the minyan barely existed, and today, there is no shul anymore, with hardly a handful of Jews left.

And so, we said our farewells and made our way to Johannesburg in 2010. My husband passed away suddenly 16 months later and in 2014, I made aliyah, to join three of my children, who reside in Israel. My older son still resides in Johannesburg with his wife and four daughters, while his eldest, a son and his wife and children live in Ramat Beit Shemesh.