

# CHOL – Community History On-Line

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

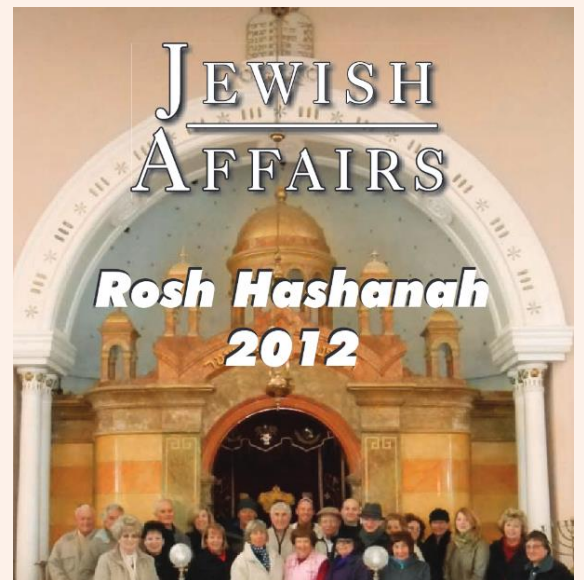
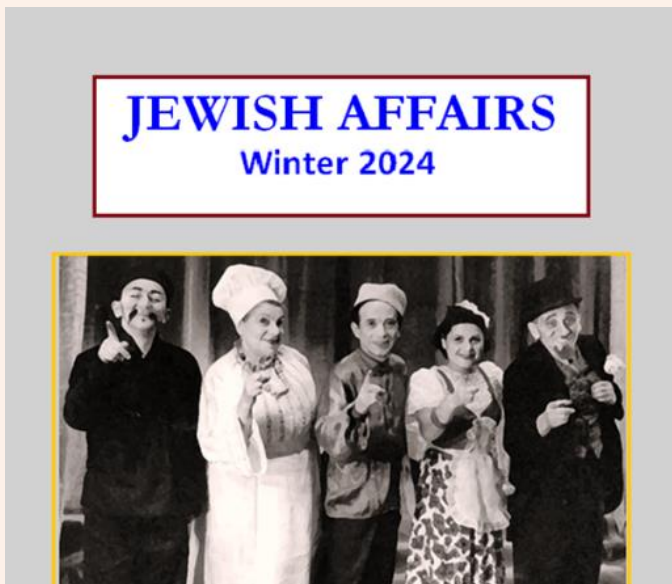
Community History On-Line CHOL Newsletter #14 January 2025

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## **JEWISH AFFAIRS - 83 YEARS ON** compiled by David Saks

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*It is evident that there is hardly a topic of Jewish significance in South Africa which has not at one time or another been featured in the pages of Jewish Affairs over the past 60 years. This diversity has continued to this day. The journal has made its mark in the Jewish cultural scene in no uncertain terms. So said Professor Musiker 23 years ago!*



In this issue of the CHOL Newsletter, we invited the editor of **Jewish Affairs**, David Saks, to write about the history of the influential publication and highlight the wealth of articles and illustrations therein.

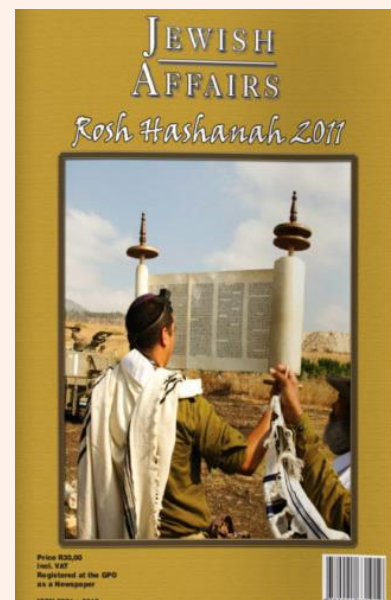
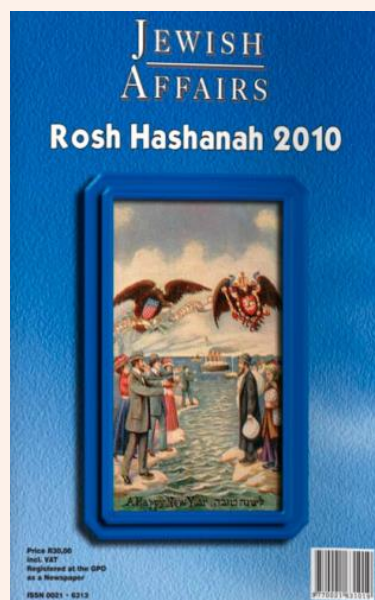
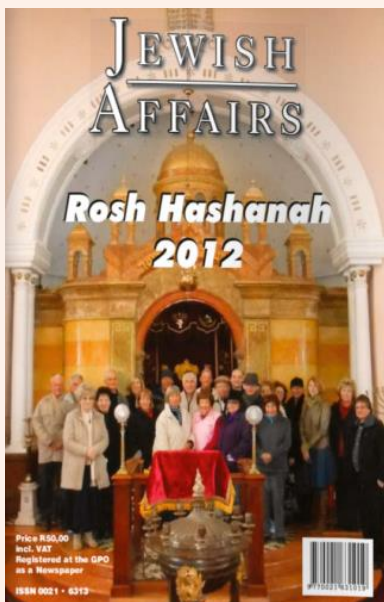
### **1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

Long regarded as South Africa's leading Jewish historical and cultural journal, *Jewish Affairs* (JA) has been brought out under the auspices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) since June 1941. The original purpose of the publication was to provide a monthly report-back bulletin to the Jewish community at a time of great stress and uncertainty – this was early in World War II, which Nazi Germany was very much winning at that stage, and high antisemitism levels in South Africa continued to be a major concern for the communal leadership. With the passage of time, however, *Jewish*

*Affairs* gradually morphed into a general interest cultural, historical and current affairs magazine, and before long was being recognised as the country's go-to vehicle reading for anyone interested in Jewish history and heritage, particularly concerning the local Jewish community. One key reason for this is that it is the only vehicle that allows for a properly detailed, extended exploration of subjects of interest to South African Jewry, unlike other community publications where space constraints seldom allow for topics to be dealt with in more than 1000 words or so.

*Jewish Affairs* continued to appear monthly until well into the 1980s before the number of annual issues was reduced to four, albeit that they were longer and contained lengthier, more in-depth articles than had previously been the case. Despite ever-rising financial challenges a print issue was produced alongside an electronic version right up until 2019, after which the journal, yielding to the inevitable, switched to online format only.

The first *Jewish Affairs* website was housed on the main SAJBD website until October 2021, when a new stand-alone website - [www.jewishaffairs.co.za](http://www.jewishaffairs.co.za) – was launched. The site provides free and easy access to everything that has appeared from the Chanukah 2008 issue onwards. Rather than appearing by date of publication, articles are grouped under themes, grouped under the categories 'Jewish History – South Africa', 'Jewish History – General', 'Israel and Zionism', 'Antisemitism and the Holocaust', 'Religion, Arts and Culture', 'Personalities', 'Fiction and Poetry' and 'Book Reviews' 'Jewish History – South Africa' is divided in turn into subthemes, namely 'Communities and Congregations', 'Military', 'Economy and Professions', 'Sports, Arts and Culture' and 'Politics and Human Rights'. To browse through these themes, go to [Categories – Jewish Affairs](#). To download PDFs of all previous JA issues from Chanukah 2008 onwards, go to [Archived Issues – Jewish Affairs](#).



**Subscription to *Jewish Affairs* is free.** You can take advantage of this rich communal resource by writing to the editor ([david@sajbd.org](mailto:david@sajbd.org)).

## 2. EDITOR'S CHOICE: HIGHLIGHTS OF *JEWISH AFFAIRS* SINCE 1999

Given the number of top-drawer contributions *JA* has been privileged to feature, it is an impossible task for me to list all of the articles published under my editorship that I consider to be of special importance. The following must therefore be regarded as a partial listing of the more memorable issues, as well as individual articles, that have appeared over the past half century. Rather than going from earliest to latest, the order in which the following selections appear is from the most recently published.

The most recently published issue of *Jewish Affairs* is the **Winter 2024** edition (with the Summer 2024 one scheduled to appear soon). In this issue's most substantial piece, Alon Shapira delves into a famous but often misrepresented act of heroism during World War II by South African POW Corporal Bernard Friedlander: ["What on Earth is There to Talk About?" – An Act of Wartime Heroism Forgotten and Remembered – Jewish Affairs.](#) Another highlight is Steve Katzew's take on the history and activities of a famed and honorable sporting institution, the Rocky Road Runners Club and the central role that Jewish runners have played on it from the outset: [Running with Rockies – Jewish Affairs.](#) Former South African and now Australian Peter Arnold explores issues of Jewish identity and further recounts the methodology and findings of an important study on SA Jewish emigration patterns he participated in [Identity and Belonging – Jewish Affairs.](#) Veteran contributor Gwynne Schrire looks at how different civilisations have measured the years and named days and months over the millennia and where Jews have fitted in: [The Calendar, Jews and Leap Year – Jewish Affairs.](#) There was also an 'Original Poetry' feature, with contributions – whose sombre themes reflect our current times – from Charlotte Cohen and Abigail Sarah Bagraim: [Poetry, Winter 2024 – Jewish Affairs](#)



The final *Jewish Affairs* issue for 2023 (Vol. 78, No. 3, **Spring-Summer 2023**) was continually put on hold until late in the year due to the events of 7 October. The horrors of that day and their grim aftermath created a very different reality, affecting normal schedules and timetables. In my editor's introductory newsletter, I emphasised how particularly at this time the continued appearance of vehicles for promoting Jewish history and culture like *Jewish Affairs* were an assertion that the Jewish people will not allow their enemies to define us and would continue to explore, celebrate, build on and enrich ourselves through connecting to their people and heritage.

Some highlights of this issue included:

[Report to South African Jewry, November 2023 – Jewish Affairs:](#) At the SAJBD Conference in December, National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner reported on the SAJBD's core activities from the closing months of the Covid-19 pandemic to the present turbulent times.



[Three Uncles in World War Two: Part II – Lieutenant Cyril Egnal – Jewish Affairs:](#) In the second part of his account of the careers of three uncles of the sisters Arlene Rubin and Denise Buxbaum during World War II, Stuart Buxbaum follows the story of Cyril Egnal, an officer in the Union of South Africa Air Force.



Among other Buxbaum also history of Herber where Jewish were accommodated King David. The first Hashanah 2019 [Jewish children \(Part](#) remainder appearing year. A delightful provided a unique boarding school culture as well as making a valuable contribution to the history of Jewish education in SA in general. It was enthusiastically received by ex-Herber Houseniks and general readers alike.



memorable efforts, Stuart contributed a lively three-part House, the hostel in Doornfontein children from the country areas while receiving their schooling at installment appeared in the Rosh issue ([Herber House: "A Hostel for I\) – Jewish Affairs](#)), with the in successive issues the following slice of social history, the series record of a thriving Jewish

[The Congo, its Jews and their flight to Cape Town – Jewish Affairs:](#) Gwynne Schrire recounts the turbulent events surrounding the attainment of the Congo’s independence from Belgium, the story of the former colony’s largely Sephardi Jewish community and how the crisis led to the influx of many of its members, now refugees, into Cape Town.



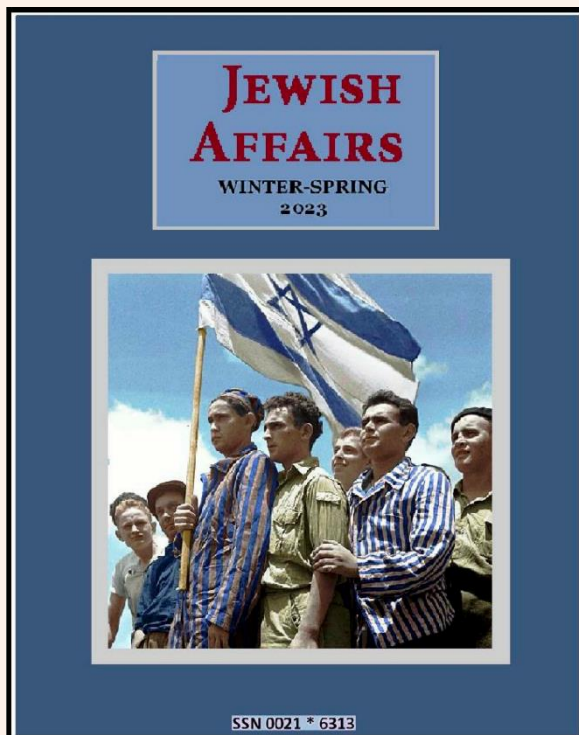
[Expedition “Escape” – Journey Diaries – Jewish Affairs:](#) Fifty years after his escape from Communist Romania, in 2019 Lyonell Fliss repeated the route he had followed, commencing in Bucharest and ending in Vienna. Each diary entry appears alongside his memories of the parallel journey taken half a century before, a reminder of the ruthless, sinister and fear-dominated societies under which Eastern and Central Europeans lived during the Communist era.



[A Brief Journey through Portuguese Jewish History – Jewish Affairs:](#) Bernard Katz’s long-running “A brief journey through...” series on major European Jewish communities past and present arrives at Portugal, it’s important legacy and impact even after the advent of the notorious Inquisition and the modest but significant revival of Jewish life in the country in our own times.

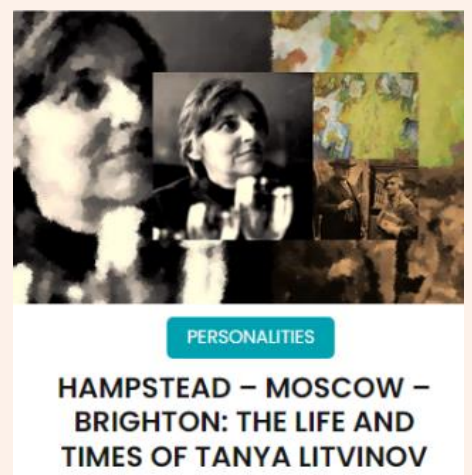


[From Destruction to Connection – Jewish Affairs](#): “Out of the destruction of Jewish communities through the evils of war, came the realization of the importance of maintaining and strengthening our Jewish life, connecting with our Jewish past, and the importance of thereby going forward into the future” – Zita Nurok reflects on family journeys from Gorzd and Riteve in Lithuania to South Africa’s Roodepoort and Volksrust.



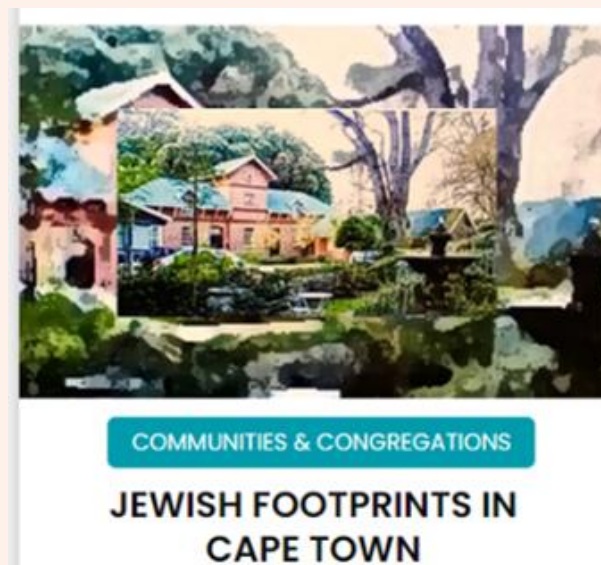
In the **Winter-Spring 2023** issue, Paul Trehwela reflected on the life and career of a dear and admired friend. The daughter of Maxim Litvinov, People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs under Stalin, and English-born writer Ivy Low, Tanya Litvinov carved out a notable career of her own as an artist, writer and campaigner for freedom:

[Hampstead – Moscow – Brighton: The Life and Times of Tanya Litvinov – Jewish Affairs](#)



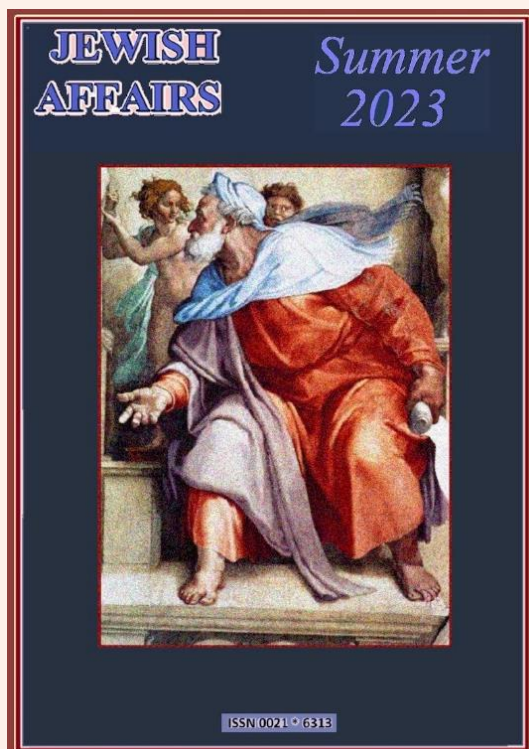
In [A Brief Journey Through Netherlands Jewish History – Jewish Affairs](#), Bernard Katz relates how Jewish refugees from the Inquisition were given sanctuary in the Netherlands and went on to play a significant role in the emergence of the newly independent Dutch state as a major economic, cultural and military-naval force on the international stage.

In [Jewish Footprints in Cape Town – Jewish Affairs](#), Gwynne Schrire looks at some physical reminders of the Jewish presence in Cape Town, from a 1669 baptismal record to streets, public buildings, artworks, museums and other ‘footprints’ in our own times.



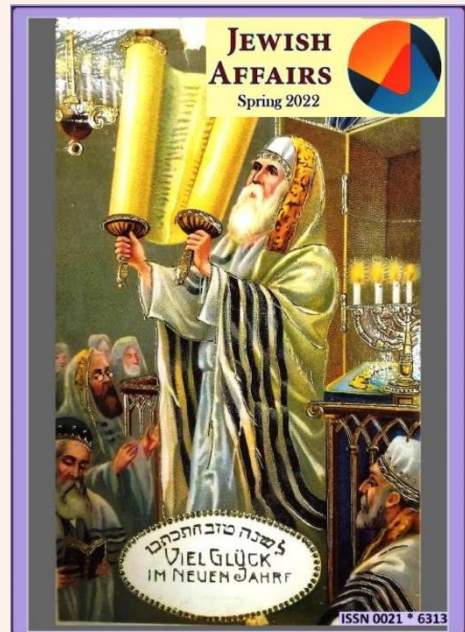
In the first of two review essays, the editor discusses the third and concluding volume of Milton Shain’s acclaimed history of antisemitism in South Africa, which picks up the story from the 1948 elections and formal commencement of the apartheid era until our own times: [Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists: Antisemitism in South Africa from 1948 to the Present – Jewish Affairs](#)

The first issue for 2023 of *Jewish Affairs* (Vol. 78, No. 1, **Summer 2023**) featured:



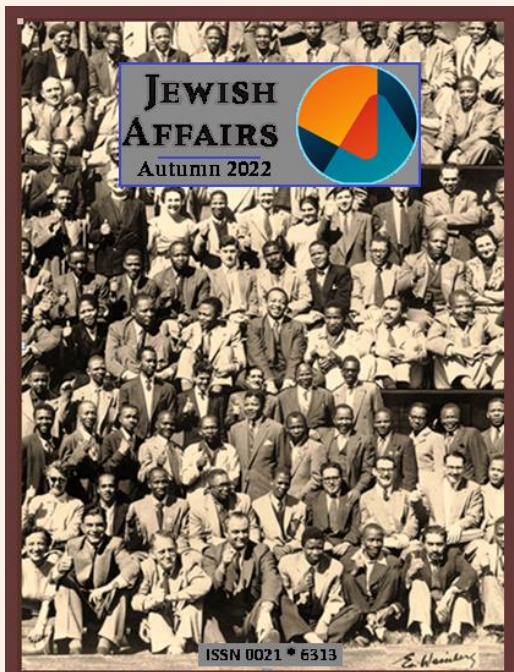
- The third in Bernard Katz’s trilogy on the life and times of the great Prophets: [The age of Ezekiel and Daniel to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah: Bible, History and Archaeology – Jewish Affairs](#)
- JA republished an interesting perspective of the Rambam (Maimonides) by Jeremy Gordin, who died tragically shortly before going to press: [The ghost in the machine; or, towards contextualizing the Rambam – Jewish Affairs](#)
- A striking number of Jews were involved in the world’s first successful heart transplant operations. They included the uncle of one of *Jewish Affairs*’ veteran writers Gwynne Schrire, who reviews his life and little recognised contribution: [Barnard, Schrire, heart surgery and family connections – Jewish Affairs](#)

The **Spring 2022** issue featured 'Three Uncles in World War II (Part 1)', in which Stuart Buxbaum chronicled the wartime career of Alec Hyman Egnal, the first of his wife's three uncles who served in South Africa's Union Defence Force during the war ([Three Uncles in World War II \(Part 1\) – Jewish Affairs](#)). In the succeeding issue he relate the stories of the remaining two, Cyril Egnal and Max Sack. In the same issue, Margaret Green's 'Manelowitz Family Mayses' recounted how members of her own family eventually made their way from Rakishok, Lithuania, to South Africa, along the way being caught up in the bitter fighting of the Russian Civil War and laying the groundwork for their future lives and careers in a newly independent Lithuania: [Manelowitz Family Mayses – Jewish Affairs](#)



The main theme of the **Autumn 2022** issue was the Jewish community's involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. For the cover image of this issue, we chose Eli Weinberg's iconic composite photograph of the 156 accused in the 1956-1961 Treason Trial.

The issue included:



- <https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/mensches-in-the-trenches-new-perspectives-on-jewish-anti-apartheid-activists/> Written by acclaimed author Jonathan Ancer in collaboration with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, *Mensches in the Trenches* is a compelling, engagingly written and meticulously researched exploration of a largely unexplored aspect of the anti-apartheid struggle.

- As retold by this writer, two of the sons of activist Arthur Goldreich look back on the eighteen months spent as young boys living on Liliesleaf Farm, legendary underground headquarters of Umkhonto we Sizwe in Rivonia, the time they spent with Nelson Mandela during the time he lived there incognito and the police raid in July 1963 that brought their idyll to an abrupt end:

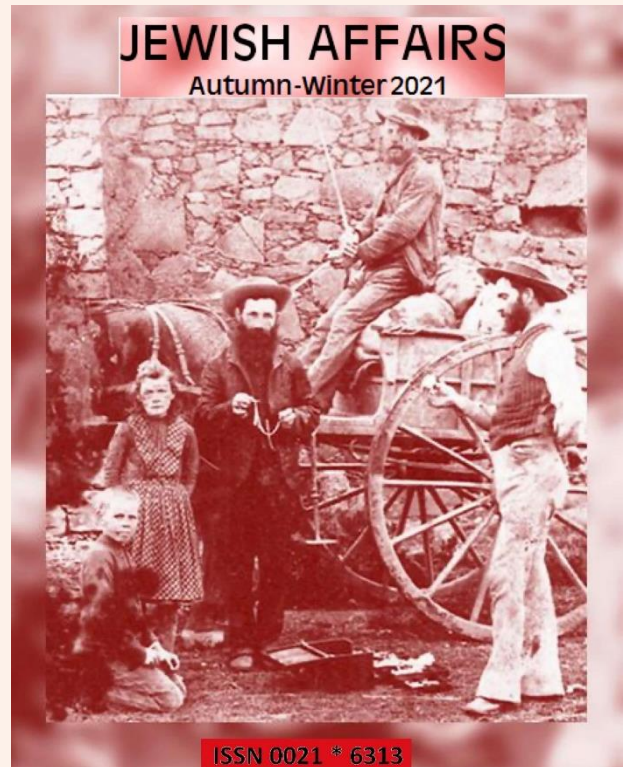
<https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/boyhood-at-liliesleaf/>

- A substantial poetry section, on a range of rather sobering subjects from the war in Ukraine to contemporary terrorism, anti-Israel indoctrination and the Holocaust: <https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/poetry-autumn-2022/>



The often-misunderstood relationship between the Jewish and Afrikaner communities in South Africa was the main feature of the **Autumn-Winter 2021** issue. The issue included:

- Ivan Kapelus examining the pre-1948 relationship between the two communities, arguing that there was more to the relationship than the antisemitism displayed by the Afrikaner press and politicians in the preceding two decades: [How true a reflection of the Afrikaner-Jewish relationship was the pre-1948 antisemitism of the Afrikaner Press and Politicians? \(\(Part 1\) – SA Jewish Board of Deputies \(sajbd.org\)](#)



- An extract from Dominique Malherbe's acclaimed new book on Sarah Goldblatt (memorably described by Professor Albert Grundlingh as 'A Boerejood on steroids') and her famed relationship with one of the icons of Afrikaans literature, Cornelis Jakobus Langenhoven: [Searching for Sarah: Extract from the new biography – SA Jewish Board of Deputies \(sajbd.org\)](#).
- Veronica Belling's review essay on the above, based in part on her own original research on Sarah Goldblatt's background and life. ['A Boerejood on Steroids' – Dominique Malherbe's Searching for Sarah: A Review essay – SA Jewish Board of Deputies \(sajbd.org\)](#)
- In her article 'Free to Choose Charlotte Cohen, a regular contributor of both original essays and poetry demonstrates based on classical Jewish sources, that true freedom requires being protected by the confines of just and prescribed laws', while retaining our ability to choose. [Free to Choose – SA Jewish Board of Deputies \(sajbd.org\)](#)

The **Spring 2020** issue had a strong focus on the history and heritage of South African Jewry, combined with fresh new insights into Jewish involvement in the greater heritage of the country as a whole. These included:

- This editor's review essay on Irwin Manoim's engrossing new book on the Progressive movement in South Africa, which throws welcome light on a previously neglected aspect of local Jewish history:

<https://www.sajbd.org/media/a-compelling-new-history-of-progressive-judaism-in-south-africa>

- Based on the relevant chapter in his book, Irwin Manoim relates how Port Elizabeth's Rabbi Andre Ungar became the only Jewish minister of religion forced to leave South Africa for opposition to Apartheid:

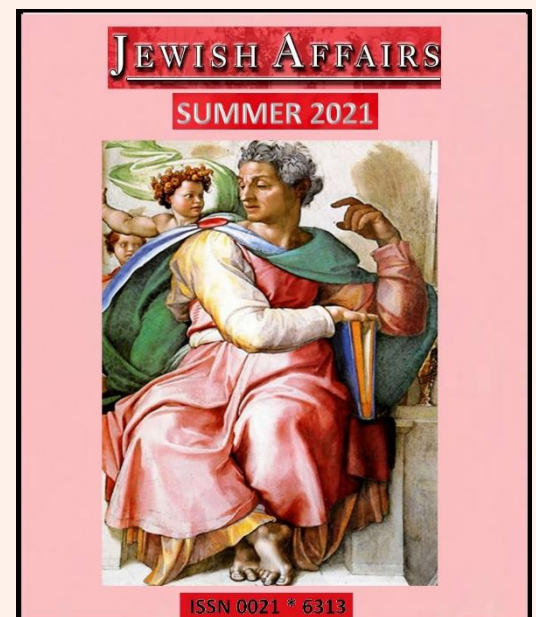
<https://www.sajbd.org/media/the-loud-mouth-rabbi-who-was-told-to-go>

- In '[A Ceylon of the Cederberg](#)': Benjamin Ginsberg and the commercialisation of Rooibos Tea', Boris Gorelik describes how the Ginsberg family were instrumental in making rooibos one of the world's most popular herbal teas and an important export item for South Africa



The Jewish bond to the Land of Israel, past and present was a strong theme in the **Summer 2021** issue. Features included:

- Bernard Katz on Isaiah, "the poet laureate of the Jewish people', who was both a recorder of and participant in an extraordinary epoch in early Jewish history: [The Age of Isaiah: Bible, History and Archaeology](#)
- Dead Sea Scrolls authority Simon Berg look at the compilation of the Jewish scriptures and considers the accuracy of their transmission down the centuries: [Has the Hebrew Bible been accurately recopied and transmitted throughout the ages?](#)



- Honey Gluckman on the birth of the modern-day State of Israel, as reflected in a teenage girl's correspondence with an Irgun POW in Kenya: [My 11th Pen Pal - Letters from Menahem](#)
- Lord Arthur Balfour's niece Blanche Dugdale was also a devoted campaigner for a Jewish state. Veteran contributor Glenda Woolf (aka Gita Gordon) refers to Dugdale's diaries to throw some light on a neglected gentile stalwart of the Zionist cause: [Blanche Dugdale...Zionist Par Excellence](#)



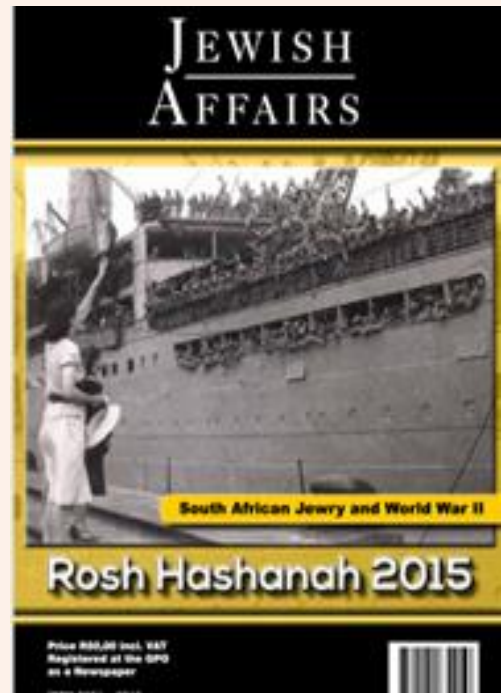
The **Pesach 2019** issue had a special focus on Jewish culture and heritage. It included contributions on music in the Bible (and Judaism in general) by Cecil Bloom, the Tu B'Shvat festival, past and present, by Henia Bryer and an overview of the Barmitzvah ceremony and how it has evolved over time by Lionel Slier. Closer to home, the indefatigable Gwynne Schrire has, with much relish, investigated the origins, analysed the contents and considered the overall historical context of a late Victorian-era family scrap album which recently came to light at an auction in the Western Cape and which her research reveals belonged to the family of Ellia Marks, younger brother of the famed Sammy: [Queen Victoria, broad-minded women and the Marks family scrapbook – Jewish Affairs](#).

Part of the abiding value of *Jewish Affairs* is that it provides a forum in which the lives, achievements and contributions of former prominent SA Jews to be evaluated and recorded. In the subsection 'Memoirs and Mentschen', anti-apartheid activist, author and journalist Paul Trehwela writes on the trade unionist, businessman, philanthropist and Jewish communal worker Morris Isaacson, after whom a famous school in Soweto is named ([Soweto's Morris Isaacson School and the man who made it possible – Jewish Affairs](#)), while Marge Clouts looks at the life-long involvement of her late mother, Sarah Leftwich, in furthering the Zionist cause in South Africa. [Sarah Leftwich – A Life in Zionism – Jewish Affairs](#)

'Holocaust Echoes' features the final instalment of Holocaust survivor and educator Don Krausz's power and unforgettable memoir 'Child of the Concentration Camp' ([Child of the Concentration Camp \(Part V\) – Jewish Affairs](#)). The issue concludes with the editor's review of *The Last Hurrah*, Graham Viney's account of the 1947 Royal Visit to SA and the insights this now largely forgotten episode provides into the general milieu and mind-set of a society (including its Jewish community) on the brink of radical, unanticipated, political change.

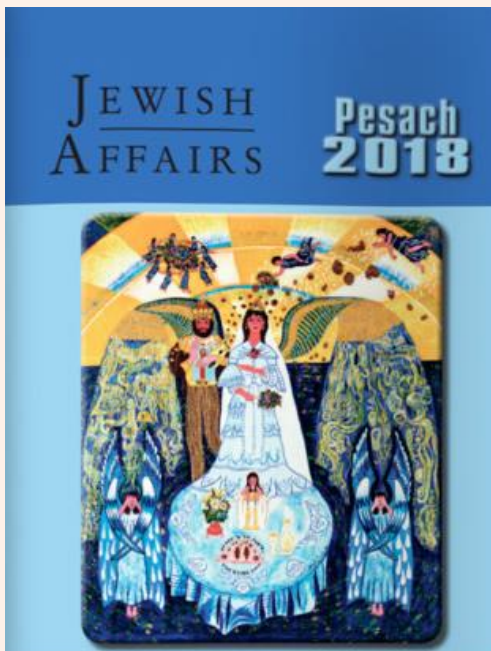


The **Rosh Hashanah 2018** issue was devoted almost entirely to the subject of Israel, and in particular to the noteworthy role that South African Jews played in its birth and early struggle for survival ([Jewish-Affairs-Rosh-Hashanah-2018-1.pdf](#)). Three years previously, the



**Rosh Hashanah 2015** issue focused on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, focusing on the involvement of the South African Jewish community in the war ([Rosh-Hashanah-2015.pdf](#))

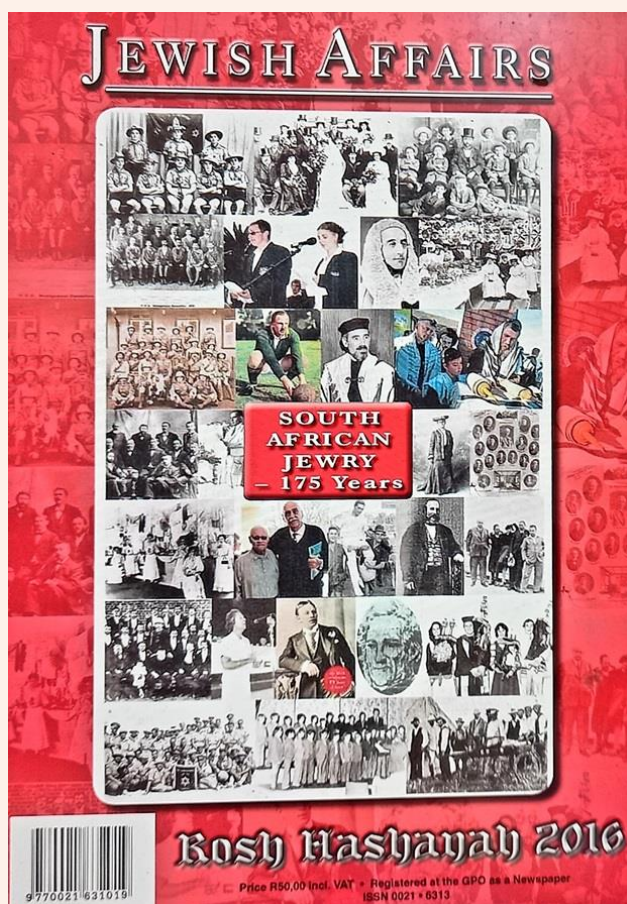
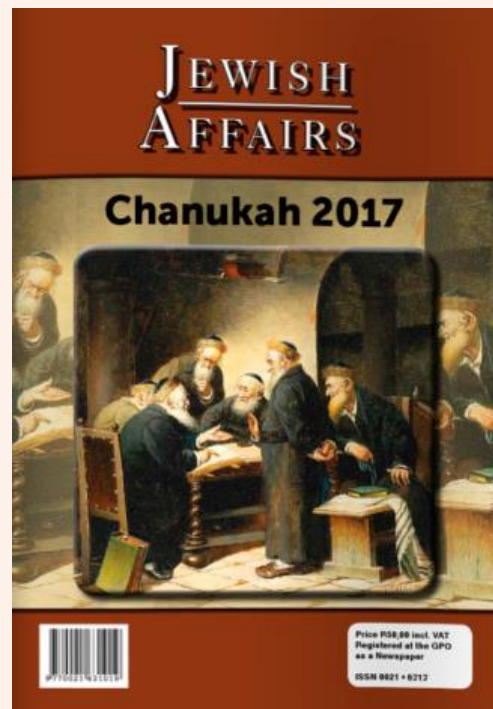
The **Pesach 2018** issue was largely devoted to SA Jewry, and what its members have accomplished. It kicked off with an erudite, engaging and in fact long-overdue overview of the influential role that Jews have played in the South African newspaper industry, from the very beginnings of the independent press in Cape Town in the 1820s onwards.



Written by the distinguished journalist and editor Irwin Manoim, co-founder of the *Weekly Mail* (now the *Mail & Guardian*) it features many eminent figures in the annals of local journalism, amongst them Joel Mervis, Benjamin Pogrund and Johnny Johnson: ([Jews and the formation of the South African newspaper industry – Jewish Affairs](#)). For her part, veteran contributor Gwynne Schrire wrote about five very remarkable Jewish women in Cape Town, each of whom in their own way have pioneered life-changing social welfare programmes for needy South Africans beyond the confines of the Jewish community.

The **Chanukah 2017** issue included an Arts & Culture focus, comprising inter alia an overview by the late Stefan Welz of the significant role played by Jewish philanthropists, collectors, gallery owners and dealers in the development of the visual arts culture and industry in South Africa and Ute ben Yosef and Gwynne Schrire tracing the background to a painting, now owned by Cape Town's Arthur's Road synagogue, depicting a passionate discussion on the Talmud.

Elsewhere in the issue, Chuck Volpe considers the civilizational crisis gripping the West and how Jewish civilization points to ways in which the downward trend might be reversed. In the second part of his testimony to his experiences during the Holocaust, Don Krausz records his family's transferral from Westerbork to Ravensbrück and the growing horrors which he experienced and witnessed during this time.



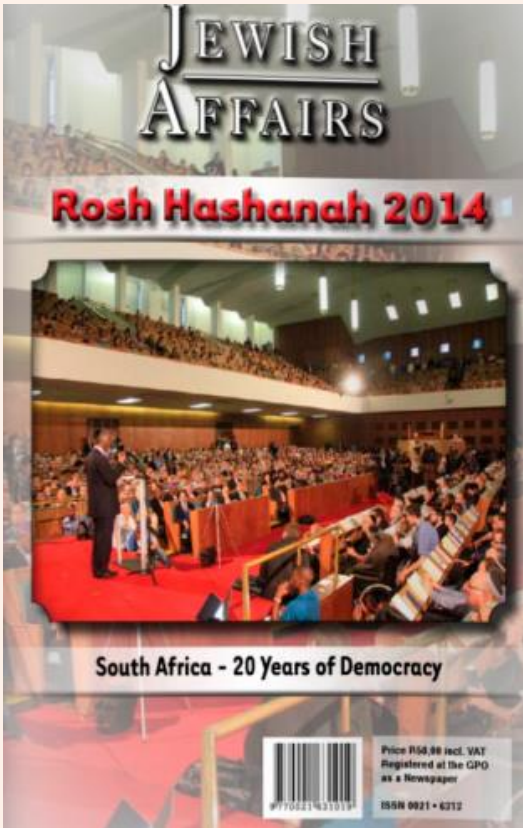
2016 marked 175 years since the founding in Cape Town of South Africa's first Jewish congregation, an event that in turn marks the formal birth of the SA Jewish community. The **Rosh Hashanah 2016** issue was devoted to looking back on, and celebrating, this milestone:

<https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Rosh-Hashanah-2016.pdf> . That year *Jewish Affairs*

achieved a milestone of its own, namely 75 years of continuous publication since its first appearance in June 1941.

Two 'anniversary themes' make up a large part of the Chanukah 2014 issue ([Chanukah-2014.pdf](#)). The first marks the centenary of the start of World War I, and looks at the impact of the conflict on world Jewry, and specifically on the community in South Africa. The second was the seventieth year since the deportation to Auschwitz of the Jewish community of Rhodes (Rhodos), a reminder of how

severely the Holocaust decimated Sephardi as well as Ashkenazi Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Essays and perspectives on the Jews of Rhodes, including on the commemorative visit of survivors and their families earlier this year, are provided by the late Violette Fintz, Maurice Turiel, Isaac Habib and Zmira Cohen.



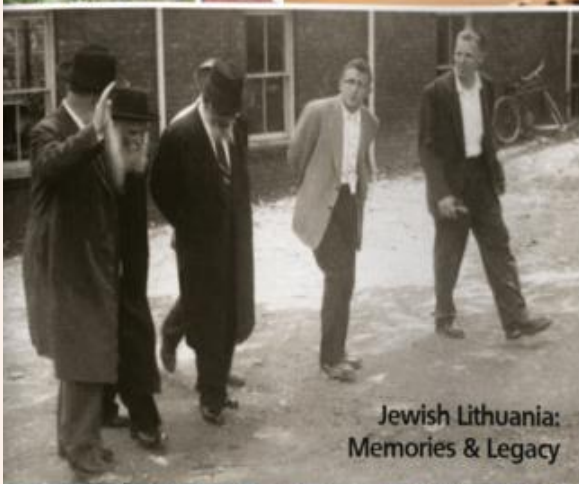
The special focus for the **Rosh Hashanah 2014** issue was on that year's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of democracy in South Africa and how it has affected, and been influenced by, the Jewish community. The editor's historical overview of the transition years to the present was followed by a feature on the SAJBD's 2014 'Freedom Seder', in which Chief Rabbi Goldstein, Zev Krenkel and Johnny Copelyn provide their insights on the attainment of freedom in SA in the context of the Biblical exodus narrative. An enlightening analysis of where the country found itself 20 years after the transition and what led up to it is provided by Tony Leon, one of the main actors in that story. Marlene Bethlehem looks back on her ten years on the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Commission, a statutory body created in this case to promote and protect the rights of South Africa's many diverse ethnic, faith, linguistic and cultural groupings. One of the ways in which Jewish community members were trying to make a

positive difference in addressing the legacy of apartheid was in the educational field. Here, Honey Gluckman wrote a moving and inspiring account of her work as a Second Innings 'Granny' tutoring underprivileged learners.

The transition to democracy theme also features in the Book Reviews, with Naomi



Musiker and Ralph Zulman looking at two important recent books on the subject, *Liberation Diaries: Reflections on 20 Years of Democracy* and Tony Leon's latest book, *Opposite Mandela: Encounters with South Africa's Icon*. Marcia Leveson wrote on a compelling new novel on a Jewish family in 1960s Port Elizabeth



The **Pesach 2014** issue was divided into two broad themes. The first looked at the legacy of Jewish Lithuania, providing perspectives by those who were born and grew up there, those descendants of Jewish Lithuanians who have returned to visit and from a renowned rabbi and historian on Lithuanian Jewry's enduring spiritual-intellectual heritage ([Pesach-2014.pdf](#)).



Veronica Belling, Natalie Ginsberg and Joseph Rabie are all descendants of Lithuanian Jews who settled in South Africa. In their accounts of visiting the land of their

forebears, they bring their particular family experiences and academic training to bear in describing their thoughts and feelings on confronting the echoes of a culture that was all but obliterated seventy years ago. The Lithuanian boyhood of Solly Per features in a memoir written up by his daughter-in-law, Linda Per, and the editor tells the harrowing yet also inspiring story of Lithuanian Jews who escaped the Nazi killing machine through being sent to a Soviet slave labour camp just days before the German invasion. The opening article by Rabbi Berel Wein is taken from the recent book *The Legacy: Teaching of the Great Lithuanian Rabbis*, co-authored with South African Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein.

### 3. A SHORT HISTORY OF JEWISH AFFAIRS AND SOME HIGHLIGHTS 1941-2001

In 2002, a special issue retrospective issue of *Jewish Affairs* was brought out to mark its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The introduction to that issue was written by the distinguished **Professor Reuben Musiker**, a doyen of the librarianship profession in South Africa and the former head of the Wits University Library, as well as a long-serving JA board member. Professor Musiker undertook the formidable task of selecting some of the most important articles produced by the journal over the previous six decades. I can do no better on this occasion to present his considered findings and the accompanying notes he made.

Prof Musiker commenced his overview by looking at the journal's various editors over the decades.

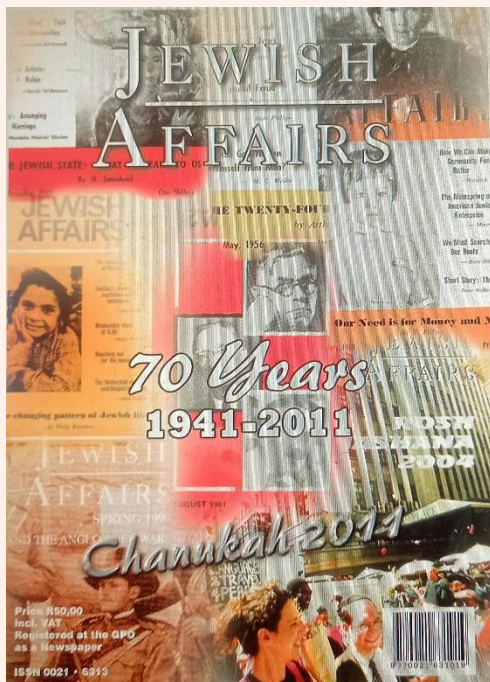
"There were various editors in the early period of *Jewish Affairs*, including the highly respected journalist and author **Henry Katzew** in 1946. The appointment of **Amelia Levy** as editor was a turning point in the history of the journal. Levy took over the editorship in 1952, ten years after its inception and held the position until 1968. Edgar Bernstein described her as "a journalist with a catholic outlook and deep culture, who maintained the journal on a consistently high standard which won the respect of a readership that went beyond the Jewish community". The journal became widely known in South Africa and abroad and attracted contributions locally and from overseas. Its contents reflected all aspects of Jewish life in South Africa and in Jewish communities around the world. Judaism, Jewish philosophers, Jewish history, the Holocaust and Israel were constantly featured. Some of its pages were always reserved for literature. At the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary function in 1982 and again in 2001. Nadine Gordimer, the distinguished South African author and Nobel Prize laureate, paid tribute to Milly Levy who had encouraged her in the formative days to the writing career.

Amelia Levy encouraged many other budding Jewish authors to contribute to Jewish affairs. She also familiarized her readers with the works of South African Jewish artists and sculptors. One of her major achievements was the promotion of understanding between religious denominations. She served as secretary of the Society of Jews and Christians and as editor of its journal *Common Sense*, gaining the friendship and confidence of leading members of churches represented in the society. **Hadassah Sacks'** name appears as editor for the first time in May 1977, and she served until the March April 1991 issue. Doctor **Joseph Sherman** an eminent academic, succeeded her in September 1991 and held this post for eight years. **David Saks** is the current editor, having produced his first issue in 1999.

Each of these editors had their own strengths and directions. Hadassah Sacks kept the journal at a popular level. Joseph Sherman took the opportunity to recast it as a more scholarly publication, focusing on academically referred articles, many of them by internationally distinguished scholars. On taking over the editorship from Doctor Sherman, David Saks sought from the beginning to strike a balance between the academic, scholarly approach and the popular by including contributions from both categories. The social and political transformation in South African society has also necessitated the re-examination of trends in current parting which is reflected in the pages of *Jewish Affairs*.

Professor Musiker listed his selection under various themes, the largest selection being under the heading “History”. Wrote Prof Musiker, “Some highlights of South African Jewish historiography include Chief Rabbi L I Rabinowitz’s address at the inaugural meeting of the South African Jewish Sociological and Historical Society in (1947); Gus Saron on the significance of South African Jewish history (1970) and his 1981 review essay on the important South African Jewish yearbook of 1929; Richard Mendelsohn discussed his biography of Sammy Marks in 1991; In 2001, John Simon produced a lengthy review essay on Gus Saron's book *The Jews of South Africa*.

A great number of fine historical articles were published. These included the eminent Natal archivist, BJT Leverton's essay on “Some Jewish notabilities in Natal's 150 years” published in 1974 and Gus Saron on Jewish pioneers in Natal.



**JA 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue, featuring front the cover pages of earlier JA issues**

A special issue to mark the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War (1999) was certainly a highlight [see *image, left, bottom left corner: Ed*]. It led to the Kaplan Center for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town holding a full day symposium on the subject of Jews in the Anglo-Boer.

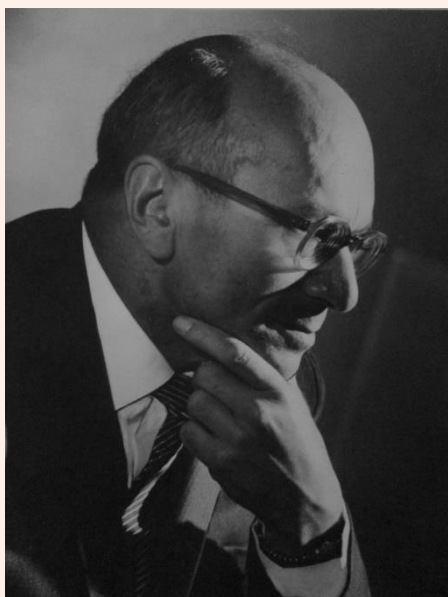
Richard Mendelsohn discussed the role of the Jewish soldiers in the British forces, David Saks wrote about Jews in the Boer forces and, expanding on previous research by Chief Rabbi L I Rabinowitz, also outlined the nominal role of Jews in the Boer armed forces. Other fine articles in that issue

included John Simon on rabbi Hertz and the Anglo Boer War, Ryno Greenwell on Jewish artists and publishers, Edna Bradlow on Jewish refugees at the Cape during the war and Milton Shaine on the war and the image of the Jew in South Africa.

SA Rochlin devoted many articles to the role of Jewry in South African history. These included a 1950 essay entitled ‘South African Jewry 100 years ago’, articles on Sephardic Jews in South Africa (1947) and Pretoria Jewry (1955). E L Hermann and



Joseph Sachs, writing in 1952, covered the topic of Dutch Jews. In 1960, *Jewish Affairs* devoted a special festival issue on South African Jewry since union.



**Gus Saron** (left) wrote many important historical articles in *Jewish Affairs*. Noteworthy examples are '50 years and the changes which they brought' (1960) and 'From immigrants to South Africans: a sketch of South African Jewry' (1976).

L Mirvish wrote on Cape Town Jewry in 1910 (1960) and Reuben Musiker on the Jewish 1820 Settlers (1970).

Johannesburg history has been the topic of various articles. Mayer Hirsch outlined the early years of Johannesburg Jewry (1956 and 1959) and SA Rochlin produced an article on Johannesburg jury in 1956. Louis Hotz wrote on early Jewish Johannesburg (1966) and Oscar Norwich covered the same subject in 1976.

IS Rappaport (1950) and Jay Mervis (1983) produced further articles on the subject. Frank Bradlow was another distinguished contributor to the journal who wrote noteworthy articles on Cape Town Jewry in 1970, 1985 and 1992 respectively.



**Rose Norwich** (left) contributed many important articles to *Jewish Affairs*. In 1997 she wrote an important article describing the South African Friends of Beit Hatefutsoth Country Communities project. In 1993 she dealt with the original South African Jewry exhibition in Israel, which she attended and for which she personally assembled the photographs.

Economic history was ably covered by **Professor Marcus Arkin** (right below) who, in articles of 1960 and 1986, dealt with the role of Jews and the economic development of South Africa. He followed this up with an overview of the economic history of KwaZulu-Natal Jewry (2001). Marcus's son **Professor Anthony Arkin** (left below) likewise, an economic historian, contributed an overview of Jewish economic activity in modern day



South Africa in 1999 and on the demographic profile of the Durban Jewish community in 2001. Biographical articles formed another valuable contribution to historical knowledge. These included Gus Saron on Jewish pioneers in Natal (1956) and on Sir Matthew Nathan, governor of Natal 1907-1909 in 1963.



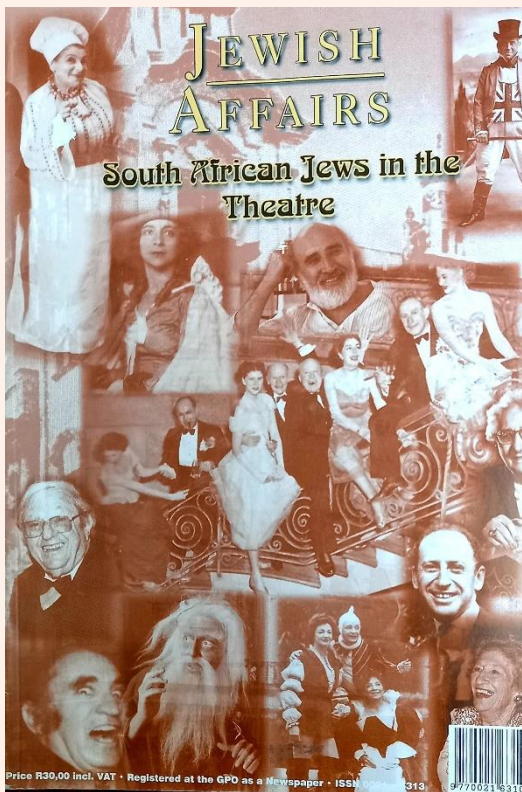
Nathan Mendelow wrote on Johannesburg's 18 Jewish mayors (1986). Rose Norwich wrote on Sophia and Herman Tobiansky of Sophiatown (1991) and David Saks contributed a monograph of Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi's friend and associate, in 1998. Mention should also be made of Marcus Arkin's series of reviews of Jewish personalities included in the dictionary of South African Biography which appeared between 1969 and 1987. Jewish women were featured in 1993 in articles by Rose Norwich on Jewish woman in early Johannesburg and Elaine Katz on Bertha Solomon. In 1997 Rose Norwich wrote on Dina Joel and in 2000 Anne Harris profiled woman in Jewish law. Jocelyn Hellig dealt with the feminist challenge to halakha and Bitya Abramowitz dealt with the same issue from a traditional orthodox perspective.

Under the heading 'Immigration', Prof Musiker listed as noteworthy examples the contributions of Frieda Sichel (1963), Marcus Arkin (1966) and Franz Auerbach (1986) on the refugees from Nazi Germany; Edna Bradlow on 19<sup>th</sup> Century immigration (1975 and 1997); Gwynne Schrire in 1994 and 1997; Milton Shain on the Cape Immigration Act of 1902 (1980) and Louis Hotz and Aubrey Newman on Lithuanian immigration in 1963 and 1994 respectively. On the theme of '**Politics**', Prof Musiker identified as one of the most important issues ever brought out by *Jewish Affairs* the special issue entitled 'Jews and apartheid which appeared in 1997. Contributors included Harry Schwarz, Gideon Shimoni, Alec Goldberg, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, Paula Slier, Rabbi David Sherman, Rabbi Norman Bernard. Franz Auerbach wrote on the Jewish community's response to apartheid, David Saks on the Jewish people accused in the Treason Trial, Alec Goldberg on apartheid and the Jewish Board of Deputies and Milton Shain with Sally Frankenthal on 'Accommodation, activism and apathy: reflections on Jewish political behaviour during the apartheid era'.

In 2000 *Jewish Affairs* brought out a special issue devoted to the **Jewish contribution to South African law**. A highlight was the superb overview by Professor Ellison Kahn on the Jewish contribution to the law and legal profession in South Africa. If the legal issue was the highlight of 2000, the same can be said of the SA Jews in Medicine issue in 2001. Two noteworthy contributions were those of Richard Mendelsohn on Jewish doctors of the Anglo-Boer War and Gwynne Schrire on how Cape Town jury cared for its sick poor and century ago. There were also brief biographies of Aaron Klug, Sydney Kark, Izzy Segal, Phillip Tobias, Jack Penn and Leo Schamroth and an interesting article by Irving Lisssoos on the Jewish connection in the first heart transplant performed by Christian Barnard. A long article on the **Jewish contribution to South African medicine** by Louis Freed appeared in 1972.

Under the heading **Art, Music and Theater**, Prof Musiker made special notes of Joseph Sachs, who already in the 1940s and 1950s wrote prolifically on the Jewish contribution to South African art. Dora Sowden's fine overview of Jews in South African art, music and theatre was published in 1960. Neville Dubow wrote on aspects of Jewish art in 1970. Two articles by Frank Bradlow covered the field of South African Jewish arts (1981) and Johannesburg art (1986). The individual artists whose lives and works have been covered by Jewish affairs over the decades include Wolf Kibel (1963 and 1967) Moses Kotler (1977) Abe Berry (1989) Renee Shapshak, Herman Wald, Isaac Witkin, Irma Stern, Cecily Sash, Lippy Lipschitz and Ernest Ullman. [Editor's note: A range of others have since featured following the appearance of Prof Musiker's 2002 overview: see [Religion, Arts & Culture – Jewish Affairs](#)].

On the subject of **music**, Jewish Affairs published articles on the Jewish Guild orchestra (1983), 'Jewish music and musicians of Doornfontein 1891 to 1992' was the highlight of the performing arts issue in 1995, 'The Bible in Music' was the subject of a fascinating article by Cecil Bloom in 1997, Veronica Belling contributed a major article on 'The golden age of Yiddish theatre in South Africa' (2001).



*The Editor adds:* Another memorable special issue was **Jews in South African Theatre** Co-edited by Percy Tucker it appeared in nineteen 2006.

**Jews and Literature** formed the subject of a 1997 issue. Inter alia Joseph Sherman editor at the time wrote on 'The Jew of Malta and "The Merchant of Venice"'.

'**Jews in South African Sport**' were featured in articles by JM Brauer (1946) and S Mervis (1986) while in 2001 Basil Wunsh provided an interesting profile of two Jewish rugby Springboks, Maurice Zimmerman and Louis Babrow. [Editor: In recent years Steven Katzew has written various articles on the subject of Jews in South African sport. They include: [The Transvaal Automobile Club – Nursery of Jewish Squash Stars – Jewish Affairs](#) and [RUNNING WITH ROCKIES – Jewish Affairs](#)].

To mark the centenary of the 1<sup>st</sup> SA Zionist Federation conference, in 1998 *Jewish Affairs* brought out another landmark special issue, devoted to the topic of **Zionism in South Africa**. John Simon wrote on the roots of the South African Zionism, Marcus Arkin on 'The Zionist Federation Umbrella', David Saks on 'The Orthodox right wing and Zionism', Robin Sassen on 'The impact of the youth movements on the South African Zionist ideal' and also on 'The Zionist military relationship with South Africa', Aleck Goldberg on the South African Zionist Federation and the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and S Levine on 'South Africans and their work in Israel'.

**Anti-Semitism in South Africa and the Holocaust**, as one would sadly expect, has been the subject of very many articles in *Jewish Affairs* during its history. Of the very many examples that could be quoted, the eminent academic Henry Lever wrote about anti-Jewish prejudice in 1970, there was an important article by Arthur Suzman on 'The winds of change' in the fateful year 1976, Milton Shain contributed an article on the character of Hoggheimer in 1981, in 1991 Sandra Braude wrote on the sterling work of **The Society of Jews and Christians** in this field during the period 1937 to 1951. Jocelyn Hellig contributed seminal articles on anti-Semitism in 1989 and again in 1997. In 1999 she followed these up with a major article on Muslim-Jewish relations in South Africa from a Jewish perspective. A special issue entitled 'After the Holocaust' appeared in 1999.

As Professor Musiker concluded in his overview, “it is evident that there is hardly a topic of Jewish significance in South Africa which has not at one time or another, been featured in the pages of *Jewish Affairs* over the past 60 years. This diversity has continued to this day. The journal has made its mark in the Jewish cultural scene in no uncertain terms”.



David Saks January 2025

David Saks is Editor of *Jewish Affairs*, and Associate Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. He is also the author of a number of books on South African political, military and Jewish history. They include *Jewish Memories of Mandela* (2011) *Boerejode: Jews in the Boer armed forces, 1899-1902* (2010) *African Outliers: The Bacher and Kirsh families in South Africa* (2018) and histories of Yeshiva College, the Johannesburg Children's Home and the Great Park Synagogue. He has contributed to journals and given talks on this and similar topics.

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 14 compiled by David Saks, Johannesburg, January 2025

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

- 57 communities <https://chol.website/communities.htm>
  - 60 Memoirs <https://chol.website/memoirs.htm>
  - 153 original stories <https://chol.website/stories.htm>
  - 38 Videos of presentations <https://chol.website/presentations.htm>
- 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).



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