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NJEWISH News

Zalman Kossowsky, former Kenton United Synagogue rabbi, dies at 80

Despite reports his death may have been related to the virus, his synagogue stressed that he passed away of natural causes

By **JTA** and **JEWISH NEWS REPORTER**
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Kenton United Synagogue (Google maps screenshot)





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Tributes have been paid to Zalman Kossowsky, a former rabbi at Kenton United Synagogue, who has died aged 80.

The Iranian-born former chief rabbi of Zurich was head of congregations on three continents during a career that spanned many decades.

Kossowsky led the north London community from 1986-1991, with the shul saying, “both he and his wife Danna were very caring and popular during their time with the Kenton community and were involved with all aspects of community life.”

The United Synagogue added: “We wish the family a long life, and that they will be spared further suffering.”

Zalman Kossowsky’s synagogue in Florida stressed that he passed away Sunday, aged 80, of natural causes unconnected to the coronavirus pandemic.

Kenton congregant Frank Weinberg said he was “so very sad to hear about Rabbi Kossowsky. I still have vivid memories of him. It’s easy for any Rabbi to say “no” but my recollection of Rabbi Kossowsky is that he would do all he could to find a way to say “yes” He always appeared to be non judgemental but at the same time he managed to involve so many people”.





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Born in Tehran to Lithuanian refugees fleeing the Soviet takeover of their country, Kossowsky was raised in South Africa. He later went to Israel for his rabbinic studies before migrating to the United States, where he stayed for better part of the 1960s and '70s, serving at one point as a chaplain in the U.S. Marines and working on his doctorate in sociology.

He later served as a congregational rabbi of Kenton, before accepting the role of chief rabbi of the ICZ, a communal umbrella organisation in Switzerland's largest city, which he led from 1991 to 2007.

"His biggest accomplishment was he kept the community together," said Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis. Kossowsky served on its standing committee.



Rabbi Zalman Kossowsky

"On the one hand you could see he was a very elegant and aristocratic person, but on the other hand he had a very warm and welcoming side and was very people orientated and very soft spoken."





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Kossowsky was a scholar who toiled to find solutions for agunot, women trapped in marriages because their husbands refused to give them a biblical bill of divorce, or get.

Rabbi Noam Hertig, the current chief rabbi of Zurich, recalled Kossowsky as “very kind and always smiling.”

“He was my Rav. He was the one who encouraged me to become a rabbi,” Hertig said.

Hertig recalled his playful side and his big-time interest in technology.

“He always had the most advanced technical gadgets, a pager and then a Palm Pilot,” he said, “and always the newest phone.”

<https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/zalman-kossowsky-former-kenton-united-synagogue-rabbi-dies-at-80/>

