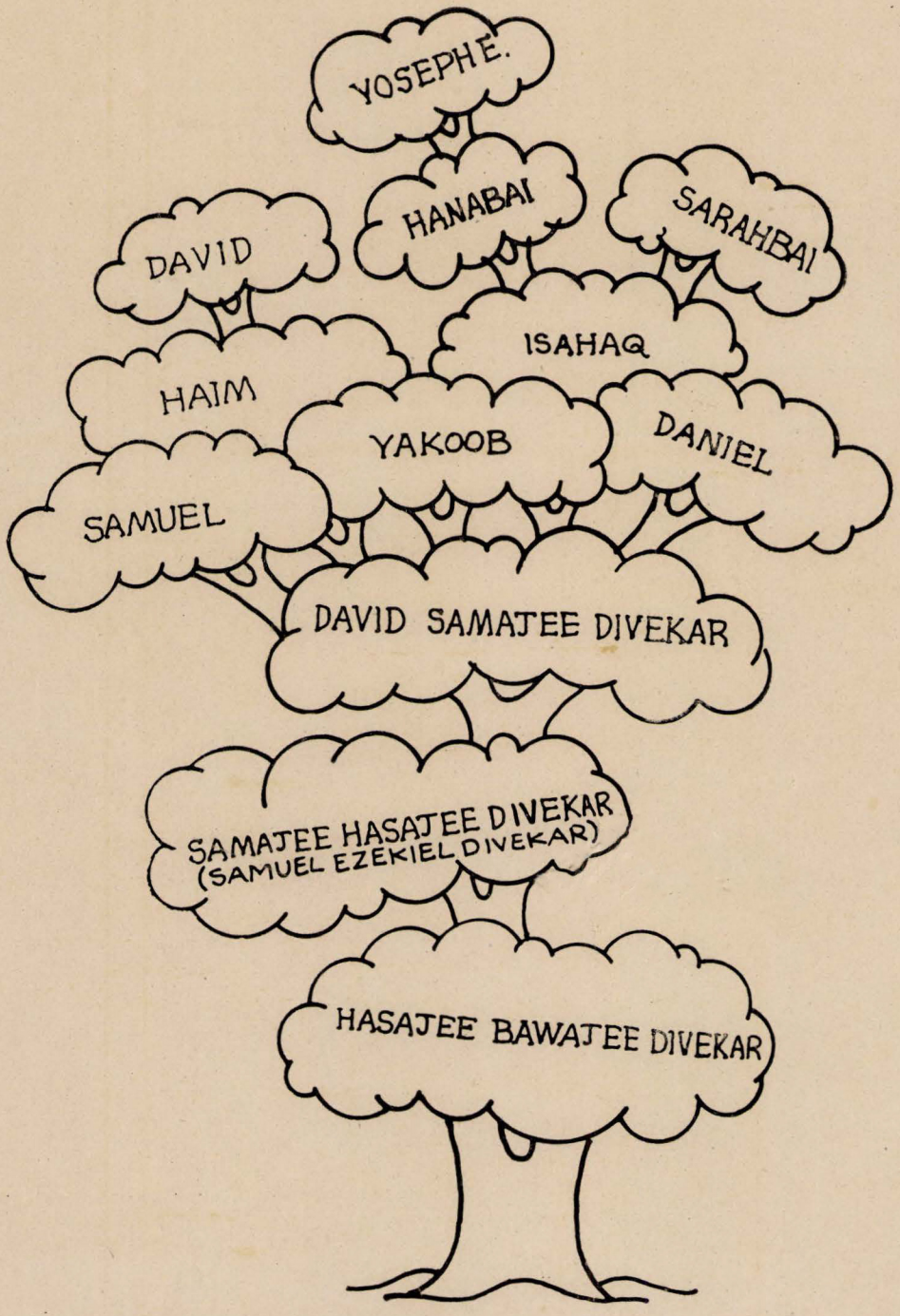
"SHAAR
HARAHAMIM"
SYNAGOGUE 1796





"GATE OF MERCY"
SYNAGOGUE 1796



The Family Tree of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar.

THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE BENE-ISRAELS OF INDIA, BOOK II
A FANSTASTIC STORY OF THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO JUDAISM

This book is dedicated to :—

(i) The Indian brethren for their religious tolerance and hospitality,

(ii) David Ezekiel Rahabi for kindling the torch of learning to pray in Hebrew and for observance of other rituals,

and

(iii) Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, the founder of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and others for their services for the progress of the Synagogue and for the welfare of the community.

Published by :

E. M. JACOB GADKAR
for THE "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE,
254, SAMUEL STREET, BOMBAY-400 003.

Printed at :

APPAN PRINTERS, Bhajiwala Building,
Sayani Road, Bombay-400 025.

All rights reserved by the Publisher.

Published in : October 1984.

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2026

PREFACE

I have mentioned in Book No. 1 (Preface) that the books make no pretension to be exhaustive.

More information on the activities in the community and resumes of more personalities should have been included.

With the co-operation of the readers these will be included in Book No. 3.

I have enjoyed preparing these two Books, and the Souvenir. I hope you will enjoy reading these.

EZEKIEL MOSES JACOB GADKAR

DESCRIPTION OF PICTURES ON COVER PAGES

COVER PAGE (FRONT : The Silver Mezuzah is on the door-post of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and was presented in 1880 by Haeem Ezekiel Medhekar and his wife Elisheba, sister of Elijah, Moses and Barukh Benjamin Gadkar.

Samson Joseph, Senior Inspector of Police, is seen sounding Shofar on 6-12-81.

INSIDE COVER PAGE : Family tree of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, Founder, "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

INSIDE BACK COVER PAGE : Members of the congregation seen participating in the 185th Anniversary Celebration of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held in 1981 with all their enthusiasm.

COVER PAGE (BACK) : Bene-Israel Officers in the Army during the 19th and 20th Century.

PROLOGUE

By : E. G. Moses (Malekar)

WE

Out of we came Abraham and together with Isaac and grandson Jacob (also named Israel) founded the Semitic race. Their descendants have gone through great migrations and dispersions during which they must have accumulated the progeny of every conceivable race-stock from among the strangers who lived in their midst, and in whose midst they lived.

WE ARE THAT PEOPLE

Out of the Jewish people who opted to call themselves "Hebrews" traced their origins to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob was renamed "Israel." From among the sons of Israel issued the "Twelve Tribes" which were called "The Children of Israel". To them, according to the Bible, was bequeathed "The Promised Land" which was named "The land of Israel."

WE ARE THAT PEOPLE

In the days of the Judges, the Jews were a group of tribes. In the times of Saul, David and Solomon, they were united into a Nation. Once this period was over, they were divided into two kingdoms, that of Judah and that of Israel. Later, these two kingdoms were destroyed and the people dispersed to the four corners of the earth. **Today wherever the Jews live, whether born there or naturalised, to that nation do they belong.**

WE ARE THESE PEOPLE

"In the entire civilised world, the Jewish race has been the source of the Highest Conceptions of God, of man and of nature. It is the Jews who originated and still preserve the highest descriptions of the attributes of God — a pure spirit, infinite in knowledge, power, goodwill and He continues so, to this day."

WE ARE THESE PEOPLE.

(Chalres Eliot)

F O R E - W O R D

By : E. G. Moses (Malekar)

"Better to light one candle than curse the darkness"

These volumes are unique. Unique in multiple ways. There has been none like this before, there will be perhaps none like it hereafter. Its features, its intent — all are unique.

These are reference volumes of the past and the present. These contain voluminous information. These are packed with facts that the reader be better informed, know more and more about the ancient past and the present. These are volumes the reader can turn to for information and encouragement when the fire of enthusiasm burns low.

These are volumes of faith with powerful belief in One God alone who created all, it has perfect faith in the doings of the past as the deep foundation for the doings of the future.

These are volumes of hope. Hope about the potentialities of the future, of human freedom, to shape destiny in making far reaching decisions.

These are volumes of love. Conceived as a love offering, it conforms to the Commandment that encompasses all Commandments; "Love thy neighbour as thyself." These focus deep attention on the irretrievable ingredient, the stuff that life is made of.

These are volumes of dedication. They dedicate in pure spirit the radiant memories of the past, which endowed the days gone by with a rich and splendoured heritage.

We have emerged as God's special handiwork, with an array of traits, characteristics and qualities. Background, experience all come in a once-for-ever way for each human.

God has not trifled. Divine handiwork does not cut corners in nature. Blessed individuality shines forth from each living person's eyes, and throbs through that person's body.

Take stock of what the Supreme Master of the Universe has given and increase and multiply your gifts and your deeds.

Learn from the volumes, Draw from it, Enjoy it, And Try to live by it.

CONTENTS

I.	Preface	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	(ii)
II.	Description of pictures on cover pages		(ii)
III.	Prologue	E. G. Moses Malekar	(iii)
IV.	Fore-word	E. G. Moses Malekar	(iv)
1.	History of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	1 - 10
2.	Synopsis of Synagogues	Daniel E. B. Gadkar	11 - 15
3.	What is a Synagogue?	Rabbi Dr. Shalom Coleman	16 - 23
4.	Jerusalem and the Bene Israels	Haeem Samuel Kehimkar	23
5.	Truth and Humanity	Prof. E. M. Ezekiel	23
6.	Special prayers at the Anniversary Celebrations		24 - 26
7.	Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, Founder of the Synagogue	Abraham Samson Shapurkar	27 - 30
8.	David Hasem Divekar, The first B. I. Dramatist		31
9.	Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, The first Kirtankar		31
10.	Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, The first B. I. Hebrew Examiner		32 - 33
11.	Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, The first historian of Bene Israels		34
12.	The First Six Trustees of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue		35 - 40
13.	Some members who had rendered valuable services to the Synagogue		40 - 50
14.	History of Bene Israels	D. J. Samson	51 - 54
15.	Monument at Navgaon Cemetery		54
	SOME BENE ISRAEL PERSONALITIES WHO WERE/ARE FIRST IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES :		
16.	Ezra Reuben, Chief Judicial Officer		55
17.	Dr. A. S. Erulkar, Physician to Mahatma Gandhi		55
18.	Autobiography of Dr. J. J. Jhirad, The first Indian Chief Medical Officer		56 - 60
19.	Simon & Rebeccabai Wakrulkar, Social Workers in 19th Century.		61 - 62
20.	Miss R. Reuben, Educationist		63 - 64
21.	Advice to Youth	Miss R. Reuben	65
22.	Reuben David, Miracle man of Ahmedabad Zoo		66 - 68
23.	David Ezra Reuben, The only I.C.S. Indian Jew		68
24.	Joseph David Penkar, Dramatist		69
25.	David Abraham, Cine Artist		70
26.	Dr. (Miss) E. A. Solomon, Sanskrit Scholar		71
27.	Prof. Moses Ezekiel		72
28.	Jewish Contributions to Civilization	Cecil Roth	72
29.	Arthur Daniel, The First Indian to Join Bengal Pilot Service		73
30.	Mrs. Sheba George A. Sion, The only lady Dyeing Master		73
31.	Prof. Nissim Ezekiel, Poet of International repute		74
32.	S. S. Solomon, Wizard of designing garments		75 - 76
33.	Benjamin Abraham, The First Bene Israel Marine Engineer		77
34.	Rabbi Sion David, The First Bene Israel Rabbi		77
35.	The Jews of Ahmedabad	I. D. Reubens	77 - 78
36.	The title of Kazi — How it came about?		78 - 79

37.	Recent manifestations of anti-semitism	Dr. A. S. Erulkar	80
38.	Observance of "Yom Kippur" and "Shabbath" by the ancient Bene Israels		80
39.	Story depicting staunch faith in "Shema"		81
40.	Prophet Elijah's visit to a village		82 - 83
41.	Bombay and Bene-Israels	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	84 - 90
42.	Prophet Elijah at Seder Service	Mrs. Herman Gordon	91
43.	Records maintained by Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar		92 - 94
44.	Reports of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue (1878-1898)		95
45.	Hazzan Hacham Shelomo Salem Shurrabi, Spiritual Guide of Bene-Israels		95
46.	History of the Bene-Israels	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	96-102
47.	Jews in Defence Services	Lt. Col. M. A. Isaac	103
48.	Prof. E. M. Ezekiel, Un-official Rabbi of Bene-Israels		104
49.	Mrs. Abigael E. Moses, Women's Libber		105
50.	Advice to Youth	Mrs. Abigael E. Moses	106
51.	Daniel Abraham Satamkar, The Philanthropist		106
52.	Dr. Samuel Satkel Varulkar, The man who saved a hospital from burning		107
53.	Aaron Benjamin Kandlekar		107
54.	Dr. Joseph Benjamin Bamnolkar, Secretary of Indian National Congress		108
55.	Alec Moses Elijah		
56.	Moses Samuel Penkar		109
57.	Mrs. Diana Moses Ezekiel		110
58.	Aaron David Shapurkar		110
59.	Some Important Jewish Institutions in India		111-128
60.	What is Indian Culture?	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	128
61.	Guests at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held in 1981		129-132
62.	Journals and Journalists		133-144
63.	Eli Raymond Gadkar, Disciple of Vinoba Bhave-the Bhoodan worker		141
64.	Daniel Moses Mazgaonkar, Disciple of Jai. Prakash Narain		142
65.	Status and Activities of the Bene-Israels in old Bombay	Mrs. Rachel A. Gadkar	144-145
66.	Dramatists and Cine Artists		146-148
67.	Executives in Government and Private Establishments		148-154
68.	Some Communal Workers		155-160
69.	Biography in Marathi of Solomon Samson Penkar	Shrimatee Rachelbai Daniel	161
70.	Sermon on Pesach in Marathi	Abraham Samson Shapurkar	162-164
71.	Some Communal Workers (continued)		165-166
72.	Some Sportsmen		167-169
73.	Bene-Israel Women	E. M. Jacob Gadkar	169
74.	Miriam Aaron Jacob, Social Worker		170
75.	E. B. David, Sculptress		171
76.	Recipients of Awards and Rewards		171-177
77.	Bene-Israel Authors and Publications		178-179
78.	Gift of two Sefrei Torahs to Bene-Israels from Israel		180
79.	Epilogue	E. G. Moses	181
80.	Thanks		182

HISTORY OF "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" -- "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE

By E. M. JACOB

INTRODUCTION :

The history of the "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE is very interesting and fascinating one. Till the Eighteenth Century, the Bene-Israel Community in the Western Part of India did not have a House of Worship of their own. In fact they were not aware of it, except perhaps the late Commandant Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, who knew the existence of the 'Pardeshi" Synagogue built in Cochin in the year 1568.

The establishment of the first Bene-Israel Synagogue is a matter of great pride not only to the members of this Synagogue but to all the Bene-Israels in India and also Bene-Israels living in countries outside India particularly in Israel because the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue not only catered to the spiritual needs particularly during the first 150 years after its establishment in 1796 but also played an important role in the field of Education and health of the community. To cite a few examples : (i) It gave substantial grants for the establishment of the Home for Destitutes and Orphans; (ii) It gave grants to educational institutions and still continues to give the grants; (iii) It provided costly books on Jewish Religion and also secular books to a Jewish Library; (iv) It gives financial assistance to the poor who wish to emigrate to Israel; (v) It provided a Charity Dispensary at a time when cholera and other dreadful diseases were rampant in Bombay from 1919 to 1922; (vi) It provided extra accommodation during High Holidays for a number of years since the accommodation in all the Bene-Israel Synagogues in Bombay was not sufficient to accommodate all the members of the community. (For details, see article "SOLUTIONS FOR THE PRESSING PROBLEMS").

It is pertinent to state here that some of the prominent personalities of the community who have contributed towards the growth of the activities of the Synagogue and in the community and who were responsible for the spread of religious and secular education were members of the Synagogue. They were authors of Books on Jewish religion and who had translated the Hebrew prayers in Marathi version; poets, dramatists, journalists, educationists, eminent Doctors and Lawyers, responsible for the starting of the only Jewish school, Kirtankars who delivered the messages of the PROPHETS to the members of the community and the only Bene-Israel who rose to the high office of Mayorship of Bombay. (Resumes of these personalities have appeared in this Book).

The First Bene-Israel Synagogue :

The Synagogue was built by Samaji Hasaji Divekar (Samuel Ezekiel Divekar) at Samuel Street in May 1796. It was known as Samaji Hasaji Synagogue till 1896. Samuel Street was named after the builder of the Synagogue. The Synagogue was built at this place because a vast majority of about 2,000 Bene Israels then in Bombay were residing at Samuel Street, Isaji Street (Isaji was the brother of Samuel who was also in the Army) and Israel Mohalla (Mohalla means locality). All these places are in the vicinity of the Synagogue.

Management of the Synagogue for the First Ninety-Three Years :

From 1796 to 1889, the Management of the Synagogue affairs were controlled by the Kammodan Muccadams (Presidents) and a few Advisers (Choglas), elected by the Congregation on the recommendations of the Muccadam.

It is interesting to note that the President and his team not only managed the affairs of the Synagogue but also were empowered to settle all disputes i.e. individual, family and community, just like the Panchayat System in the villages.

The Divekar family carried on the Management for many years. They acquired other properties out of the proceeds of the donations received by the Synagogue and from the funds of the Divekar Family.

Our prayers are never wasted, though they seem to be in vain.
Nothing seems to lighten, the burden of our pain.

The First Kammodan Muccadam was none other than the founder of the Synagogue. After his demise in 1797 in Cochin, where he had gone to procure a Sefer Torah, his adopted son David, (son of his brother Isaji), assumed office of Muccadamship since Samuel had no son but two daughters from his two wives. After the passing away of David in 1846, Haskel Abraham Isaji Divekar was Kammodan Muccadam, till 1872 and thereafter David Haeem Divekar till his death on November 16, 1889. He was the last Kammodan Muccadam. From 1889 onwards till to-day the Management of the Synagogue is carried on by a Managing Committee elected by General Body at its election meeting in December every year.

Rule of David Samuel Divekar (1797-1846) :

David Samuel Divekar was Kammodan Muccadam from 1797 till his death in the year 1846. He was popularly known as "Dada" (Elder Brother). His management of affairs of the Synagogue and Community was above reproach.

He exhibited open hatred for those Bene-Israels who had heathen concubines. But this zeal for high standard of morality created for him many enemies, who later in 1823 under the leadership of Subedar Solomon Bapuji Sankar formed a separate party, which wanted to build another Prayer Hall. However this did not take place since Subedar Solomon Bapuji Sankar was murdered by his brother-in-law Pingle on account of some family dispute.

Rift in the Community :

However, another revolt took place which was raised by Samuel Jacob Divekar Maistry. This Maistry used to ill-treat his second wife Hassubai, who submitted her case for redress to Kammodan Muccadam David Samuel Divekar. To the charge-sheet levelled against him, Samuel Jacob Divekar sent a disrespectful reply on account of which he was ex-communicated. Thereupon Samuel Jacob Divekar collected the discontented elements in the community and also a few influential persons, with a view to building another Prayer Hall. In the year 1839, Samuel Jacob Divekar, Haeem Isaaji Garsulkar and a few other Bene-Israels of Bombay subscribed a sum of Rs. 2,725/- and purchased land on December 22, 1840. The new group rented a room in the premises owned by Daniel Kehimkar Maistry, where they held services for about three years. On this very land the New Synagogue, which was later named as "SHAARE-RASON" was consecrated on June 4, 1843.

David ruled the Community with an iron hand tempered with Justice and equity. He had a Council of Advisers who were men of piety wisdom and experience. The 1832 Council consisted of eminent and influential men like : (1) Jamadar Isaji Abraham Chincholkar. (2) Tanaji Isaji Telulkar, Maistry; (3) Havildar Balkoji Ramaji Khanavker; (4) Subedar Solomon Joseph Umardekar, and (5) Yesba Joseph Ziradkar, Gubbai (Treasurer).

Rule of Haskel Abraham Isaaji Divekar (1846-1872) :

Dada (David Samuel Divekar) died in 1846 and the power of the Kammodan Muccadam was seized by Haskel and Aaron, sons of his brother Abraham Isaaji and it was during the regime of Haskel that the second rift occurred in the Community which culminated in the opening of a new Prayer Hall called "KENNESETH BENE-ISRAEL" popularly known as "Malya Warchi Masjid" at Khadak. Haskel was assisted in the Management of the Synagogue by his brothers and a Council of Advisers (Choglas), prominent among whom were Samuel Elijah Varulkar (Gabbai) and Haeem Solomon Rajpurkar Kazi (Father of Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi).

Hazzan (Cantor) :

It is not known, who were the Hazzans of the Synagogue from 1796 to 1835. In the year 1835, however, Elijah (Eloba) Joseph Rajpurkar was appointed as "Hazzan" of the Synagogue. Before him one Solomon was the Hazzan. In addition to Hazzan there used to be a post of a "Kazi". The functions of the Kazi were to write Ketubah, perform marriages, circumcisions and death ceremonies and conduct all other rituals such as vow redemption, nazir redemption, naming and renaming ceremonies, etc., for which he was paid good fees. The affairs of the higher religious order such as divorces, disputes etc. were controlled by Kammodan who gave decisions in consultation with Kazi and Choglas.

God's laws work slowly, but they work.

Eloba Hazzan died in 1871. In memory of his meritorious services, no substitute was appointed for one year, during which period his family received his full salary as pension.

Another Prayer Hall :

When the year was over, there were two claimants to the post of Hazzan. One was Reuben, son of the previous Hazzan and the other was the Shamash of the Synagogue. Haskel, who assumed Office of the Muccadamship after the death of David Samuel Divekar, favoured the appointment of a learned Hazzan from Cochin or Iraq and the name of David Ashkenazi from Cochin was even suggested. The opposition group favoured the son of previous Hazzan, Reuben Elijah Rajpurkar. This resulted in a rift.

Free fights and assaults became the order of the day and eventually Kammodan Muccadam Haskel Divekar stopped attending the Synagogue. In 1872 they opened a new Prayer Hall in a building adjacent to the Jamatkhana, which was then mortgaged with one Kasambhoy Dharamsi, who agreed to pay Rs. 75/- per month as rent for the three Warehouses.

Removal of Haskel and Appointment of David Haeem Divekar (1872-1889) :

On August 19, 1872, Haskel Divekar was removed from his Office and in his place David, Haeem Divekar, grandson of Dada Kammodan and great grandson of the founder of the Synagogue was elected as "Kammodan Muccadam". He was a poet, dramatist, journalist and author of eight books.

The new Choglas elected were :- (1) Havildar Haeem Joseph Talkar, (2) Dr. Daniel Joseph Talkar, (3) Abraham D. Chincholkar (Treasurer & Secretary), (4) Solomon Rahamim Talkar (Writer), (5) Abraham S. Penkar, (6) Samuel M. Killekar (7) David Solomon Borgharkar, (8) Haskel Jacob Bhorupkar and Joseph E. Rajpurkar (Yosef Master).

Reuben Eloba Rajpurkar was appointed as Hazzan in the year 1872. After some years Chincholkar retired as "Gabbai" and in his place Samuel Elijah Varulkar was elected.

Mortgage of Property and Suit for Recovery of Debt :

It was during the Muccadamship of Haskel Divekar that the Synagogue Building was extended in 1860, in order to accommodate more people since the population of the Bene-Israels in Bombay had increased. The cost of the expansion of the Synagogue was met from the funds of the Synagogue as well as from the contributions from the members of the Community.

However, the regime of Haskel Kammodan was one of misrule. Between 1862 and 1865 the Kammodan, Gubbai Samuel Elijah Varulkar and Aaron Abraham Divekar Chogla borrowed Rs. 40,000/- from one Vasanji Dwarkadas and mortgaged with him seven warehouses of the Synagogue. Vasanji in turn mortgaged them with Cassumbhoy Dharamsey. Earlier, the Jamatkhana and the house adjoining had also been mortgaged with Cassumbhoy by the Kammodan.

In order to recover the mortgaged property, the Jamat (General Meeting) of the Synagogue at its meeting held on March 13, 1881, appointed the following seven Trustees :- (1) Elijah Aaron Penkar (Subhedar), (2) Reuben Abraham Korlekar, (3) B. P. Bhorupkar, (4) Solomon Rahamim Talkar, (5) Abraham Jacob Talegaonkar, (6) Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar (Hon. Secretary, and (7) Abraham Daniel Kurulkar (Hon. Treasurer).

A Committee consisting of M/s. Samuel Shalome Kurulkar, Rahamim Solomon Talkar and Reuben Elijah Dudhkar was appointed to frame the Trust Deed. However, at its meeting held on July 17, 1881, the Jamat rescinded its resolution of framing the Trust Deed. As a result of this, M/s. Solomon Rahamim Talkar and Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar resigned from the Managing Committee.

Haskel Abraham Isaji Divekar who was Kammodan Muccadam of the newly formed Prayer Hall died in 1885. He was succeeded by his son Abraham who continued in this Office till the New Prayer Hall re-united with the Synagogue in 1906. In 1890 Cassumbhoy filed a suit against the Synagogue and the new Prayer Hall for the recovery of his debt which amounted to nearly Rs. 1,00,000/-. The defendants were :- (1) Dr. E. Moses Rajpurkar, (2) Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, (3) G. Moses Malekar, (4) Balaji Pithaji Bhorupkar, (5) Nathu Awaskar & others who represented the Synagogue, and (1) Samson Moses Divekar and (2) Abraham Haskel

Give us the power to relieve the world's pain, Bringing back order and peace once again.

Divekar and others who represented Kenneseth. The two sections were defending separately to save the Synagogue property. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in the Lower Court and a heavy decree was passed against them. This in effect meant complete loss of all property plus the payment of a huge amount to the creditor. In addition the Kenneseth was asked to pay a rent of Rs. 10/- per month to the creditor.

Since the debts were not paid, in the year 1901 M. C. Dharamsey filed a suit in the High Court of Judicature at Bombay, being Suit No. 771 of 1901, for Foreclosure of the Bene-Israel Community's right to redeem the mortgaged properties. Before the suit was filed, the members of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue separated the Management of the properties from the Prayer Hall, by appointing three Trustees to manage the said properties. The three Trustees appointed were Mr. D. J. Samson, Mr. Solomon Mosses Vakrulkar and Gershon Moses Malekar. By amending the Synagogue Constitution, the three Trustees were made ex-officio members of the Managing Committee of the Synagogue, which consisted of six members, excluding the Trustees. While Trustees had a right of vote at the meeting, they were not eligible to hold offices of President, Secretary or Treasurer of the Synagogue.

Appeal by the Synagogue against the Court's Decision :

The suit was decided in favour of Mohammed Cassim Dharamsey. The Management of the Synagogue wanted to file an appeal but the attorneys of the Synagogue declined to proceed with the appeal unless certain amount of fees was paid to them in advance. At this critical juncture, the late Mr. D .J. Samson, one of the Trustees of the Synagogue came to the rescue by giving personal securities to the attorneys.

Compromise arrived at :

In the High Court while the Appeal was being heard, Samson Mazagaonkar and Khan Saheb David Solomon Pezarkar of Kenneseth brought to the notice of the Court their claim of Rs. 4,000/- which they had lent to the Kenneseth. This new development created an alarming situation, Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of the High Court warned that it would be in the interest of all concerned if a compromise is brought about and the two places of worship re-united, lest the case might be prejudiced by the internal dissensions. This sound advice was accepted by all. The Kenneseth Bene Israel Prayer Hall re-united with the parent body, the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue as a result of the resolution passed to this effect at the Jamat meeting on April 4, 1906. "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue also agreed to pay off the debt of Rs. 4,000/- to the loanees. In accordance with the agreement arrived at between the two Houses of Worship, Sefer Torahs from the Kenneseth were brought to the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in the early morning of April 6, 1906, amidst great jubilation, singing and dancing by the entire congregation. However, the unity brought about was not appreciated by Samson Mazagaonkar, his relatives and friends. They tried to stop the procession. Being unsuccessful in this attempt, they returned to the Kenneseth and were glad to see the "Ner Tamid" lamp burning, which the leaders had forgotton to take with them. Mazgaonkar's Group thought this was a good opportunity to continue the Prayer Hall by borrowing a "Sefer Torah" from the New (Shaare Rason) Synagogue. In this attempt also they did not succeed as Dadu Shet's (Abraham Haskel Divekar) two sons, Abasaheb and Chinu removed the 'Ner Tamid' lamp by climbing on the roof and entering the premises through a window. These two youths carried out the job with great courage and tact and brought the lamp safely to the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue. The Kenneseth was locked after the lamp was removed in order to avoid further trouble.

The Jamat of the Synagogue at its meeting held on April 4, 1906 also agreed that Kammodan Muccadam Daduseth, (Abraham Haskel Divekar) and Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi should have their hereditary honours and privileges as enjoyed by them and their forefathers.

As a result of the compromise, a consent decree dated 15-6-1906, made in Appeal No. 1408 in the Suit No. 771 of 1901 of the High Court of Judicature at Bombay, wherein the Advocate General of Bombay, David Joseph Samson, Solomon Moses Vakhrulkar and Gershon Moses Malekar (Trustees), were the Appel-

God counts the tears that for others are shed.

lants and one Mohammed Cassim Dharamsey was the Respondent, was arrived at by which certain properties were restored to the Synagogue Trustees.

Since the re-union of the Synagogue and the Prayer Hall was brought about mainly due to the efforts of Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi, the Jamat of the Synagogue passed a resolution giving him "MISHBERAKHA" on Ereb Kippur and to his heirs after his death. This practice still continues.

Terms of the Consent Decree :

By the consent decree of 15-6-1906, the three Trustees were confirmed as being appointed by the Jamat of the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue. (The defendant had objected to the appointment of the Trustees). Power was reserved to the Jamat to remove the said trustees and appoint new ones and the trustees were appointed Ex-Officio Members of the Managing Committee of the said Synagogue. Under the terms of the consent decree the proceeds from the properties are to be applied for the purposes of the upkeep of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, for other purposes of the Synagogue and for the benefit of the Bene-Israel Community in Bombay, subject to the rules of the Jamat (General Body) of the Synagogue which may from time to time be determined.

Although all the godowns were not restored to the Synagogue Trust, the Trustees, particularly the late Mr. D. J. Samson extended the property by constructing upper storeys on some of the godowns and thereby increased the income of the Trust by way of rent from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 1,150/- per month.

Dispute Among the Members of the Synagogue :

About this time a split occurred in the Jamat of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and it was divided into two parties, one led by D. J. Samson and the other by Solomon Moses Vakrulkar. Mr. D. J. Samson's party was in power from 1906 to 1918 and Mr. S. M. Vakrulkar's party came into power in 1918.

The first step taken by Mr. S. M. Vakrulkar's party was to amend certain constitutional rules by which the three trustees ceased to be ex-officio members of the Managing Committee.

The Jamat of the Synagogue called upon the trustees to make certain payments to certain institutions. Mr. D. J. Samson and Mr. Gershon Moses Malekar declined to pass the payments on the ground that the income from the Synagogue properties was to be applied for the benefit of the members of the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue and not for the benefit of the Bene Israel Community.

Another resolution was passed by the Jamat on May 4, 1919, whereby three additional trustees were appointed, they were Dr. E. Moses, Mr. Abraham Reuben Bhinjekar and Mr. Shalom Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi. After three months of passing of this resolution, the resignation of the late Mr. Solomon Moses Vakrulkar who had submitted his resignation earlier as a trustee of the Estate Trust was accepted and the appointment of the three trustees mentioned above was confirmed by the Jamat.

Since the Trustees refused to honour the resolution of the Jamat, the Jamat of the Synagogue filed a suit against the Trustees in the High Court of Jurisdiction at Bombay, Suit Number being 951 of 1920, in which the Jamat prayed that it may be declared that the income of the Trust mentioned to be applied (i) to the upkeep of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, (ii) for the purpose of appertaining to the said Synagogue, (iii) otherwise for the benefit of the Bene-Israel Community in such a way and subject to such rules as the Jamat may from time to time determine; and (iv) that it be declared, that Rules 4, 6 and 10 framed by the Jamat are valid rules and that the Trust property is held for the Benefit of the Bene-Israel Community generally and not only for such membership of the Community as are members of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, and the Trustees be directed to make the payment as per resolution passed at its meetings on December 21, 1919 and February 16, 1920.

Decision of the Court :

By its decision of 26th November, 1921, the Court upheld the arguments of the Plaintiff and directed the Trustees to make the payment as per the resolution passed on 21st December, 1919 and 16th February, 1920. The Court also upheld the argument of the Plaintiff that the Trustees should pay the amount to

the Treasurer of the Synagogue for forwarding the same to the Institutions concerned, instead of making direct payments, which was the contention of the Trustees.

(Rules No. 4 pertains to the appointment of Ministers. Hazzan & Kazi, Assistance to orphans & destitutes, religious and secular education to the poor children and youths, libraries, providing free medical aid and grants to Housing Societies, etc. Rule 6 empowers the Jamat (General Body) of the Synagogue at its meeting to be held in March and August every year to sanction grants to institutions after studying the budget sent by the Trustees. Rule No. 10 permits the Jamat to Sanction grants at meeting other than in March and in August, subject to the availability of funds with the Trustees.

One More Dispute (1926) :

Another dispute arose between the party in power and the Opposition party in 1926. This was on the proposal of the party then in power of constructing a Central Hall, while the opposition party wanting the funds to be utilised for assisting the poor widows & orphans and providing educational needs of the poor youths. The controversy between the two parties reached its highest pitch and it appeared that dispute would have to be fought in the High Court forum, resulting into great waste of money. Fortunately, better counsels prevailed and through the intervention of Mr. Moses Samuel Penkar and the efforts of Mr. Solomon Moses Vakrulkar and Mr. Shalom Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi, a compromise was arrived at before the threatened High Court litigation was actually launched. As the result of the compromise the scheme of the Central Hall was abandoned and it was resolved to form an Endownment Fund of about Rs. 60,000/- with the object of providing grants as mentioned under Rules Nos. 4 and 6. (Reference to these was made earlier).

Yet Another Dispute (1932) :

After the two disputes between the parties in the Synagogue, it was thought that peace would prevail. Unfortunately it was not to be. Another dispute arose over the question of assisting the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes & Orphans in the year 1932 or 1933. (It appears that donation or debentures of Rs. 40,000/- were to be purchased). The late Mr. Moses Abraham Gadkar's party, which was in power, had proposed to assist the Home while the late Dr. Jacob Ezekiel Talkar's party was against it. Heated discussions used to take place at the Jamat meetings. Certain members' right to exercise their votes were suspended by the then President, the late Mr. Moses Abraham Gadkar. The aggrieved members filed a suit in the Hight Court of Bombay and as per the decision of the Court the voting rights of the members were restored. The election meeting that was held after this lasted from about 7.00 p.m. to about 5.00 a.m. the next morning. In the following year the late Dr. Jacob Ezekiel Talkar's party came in power.

The scheme of the late Mr. Gadkar's party to assist the Home did not succeed. Later events proved that the contention of Dr. Jacob Ezekiel's party in opposing the assistance was correct.

Management of the Home :

It is pertinent to state here that the Management of the Bene-Israel Home for the Destitutes and Orphans came over to the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in the year 1946.

In the initial stages, the Home was managed by seven Trustees, three each from the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society and the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue and one from the Bene-Israel Conference. The first two had contributed Rs. 10,000/- each and had agreed to contribute Rs. 1,200/- per year for the upkeep of the Home. The Bene-Israel Conference contributed Rs. 30,000/- and agreed to contribute certain amount per year. Since the said Conference did not meet for about 10 years and its yearly contribution was not received, its representative ceased to be on the management of the Home. Later the three representatives of the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society also ceased to functions as a result of the Suit filed by the late Mr. K. M. Elijah in the High Court of Bombay. The plaintiff prayed that since the yearly grant from the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society was not received for a number of years, it had no right to be represented on the said Home. The Court upheld the argument of the plaintiff. Since then all the six trustees are appointed by the Synagogue.

The disputes between the members of the Synagogue continued for a few years more. For want of availability of records and for want of

space these are not included in this history. However, one of these needs to be mentioned.

Youth Group :

In the fifties a majority of youth members had formed a group and contested the elections to the membership of the Managing Committee of the Synagogue as a result of which the representatives of this Group came in power in 1951. The first President of the Group was Mr. Emanuel E. Moses Rajpurkar. Owing to disagreement among the Group members Mr. Rajpurkar resigned from the Group. Mr. Arthur Samson was the President during the year 1952. But he submitted his resignation from the Presidentship after about six months as he was to be elevated to the Bench in the Small Causes Court of Bombay. Mr. Nissim A Reuben Bhinjekar was elected in the vacancy caused due to the resignation of Mr. Samson.

Another Court Case :

One more suit was filed for an injunction prohibiting the Management of the Synagogue from holding the election in December, 1952, since according to the Plaintiffs Mr. M. A. Moses and Mr. Aaron Samson, the names of the new members who were officially admitted as members of the Synagogue after September 30, 1952 and therefore had no right to vote at the election meeting. It is necessary to state here that under Rule No. 13, members enrolled on October 1, of a particular year are entitled to vote at the election meeting in December of the year. However, in practice (since 1920) the applications for membership were received till the end of September, which were considered by the Management in October and November or even in December.

As a result of the injunction, the election could not be held in the year 1952. However, the said election took place in 1953 as the Court decided that the procedure adopted by the Management of enrolling the members was in vogue for a number of years and therefore it could not be said that the members whose applications were received prior to October 1, but admitted after September, were ineligible to vote at the election meeting.

Unfortunately disputes arose among the youth group itself and the Group did not last long, although some of its members actively participated in the affairs of the Synagogue.

Reports and the Statement of Accounts :

The First Annual General Meeting of the Synagogue was held on 7th December, 1878. In absence of the Kammodan Muccadam David Haeem Divekar, who was on Police duty in Alibaug Solomon Rahamim Talkar (Writer), one of the Choglas, occupied the Chair and conducted the meeting. At this meeting the Annual Report and the Statement of Accounts for the period 13-5-1878 to 27-9-1878 were read by Mr. Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, Hon-Secretary. In this report it is mentioned that the previous report and the statement of accounts were not available since no report and statement of accounts were submitted. The Annual General Meetings of the Synagogue continued to be held till 1899. At these meetings it was the custom to commence the meeting with Prayers to the Almighty for keeping alive the members of the Synagogue during the previous year. Blessings were also invoked for the future.

Space does not permit to note the business transacted at the meetings from 1878 to 1899, for which period the reports and the statements of accounts were published. Howeve two items mentioned in these reports deserve our attention :-

(a) In the statement of accounts for the period 11-12-1888 to 31-12-1888 (in those days monthly statements of accounts used to be put on the Synagogue Notice Board) it is mentioned a sum of Rs. 3,076/- was borrowed to defray legal expenses for Suit No. 90 of 1885 and the amount spent for this purpose was Rs. 3,145/-. A few members of the Synagogue had also contributed towards the loan.

(b) Tributes were paid to Subhedar Major Sardar Bahadur Moshe Bapuji Malekar, who was Hon. Treasurer of the Synagogue from 1888 to 1896. He meticulously maintained the accounts, curtailed the expenses, with the result, debts were repaid (except to Cassambhai Dharamsey) and small balance of Rs. 1,834/- was in the Synagogue Fund. He used to put on the Synagogue Notice Board a copy of the monthly statement of accounts for the information of the members. After his passing away in 1896, his son Gershon Moses Malekar (who later became one of the Trustees) took over

the responsibilities of the Treasurership and followed in the footsteps of his dear father in the proper maintenance of accounts.

Some Important Ceremonies and Celebrations, etc. held at the Synagogue :

(1) On January 30, 1879, Mrs. Squires & Rev. J. Samuel alongwith two Europeans visited the Synagogue, when Samuel Isaaji Pingle bore the expenses for the lighting arrangements.

(2) On August 8, 1880, one Daniel David Bhastekar, originally a Bene-Israel, was again converted to Judaism at his request since he could not attend any Synagogue for offering Prayers for twelve months of the previous year as he was imprisoned for an offence committed by him while he was in the Army serving as a "Soldier".

(3) On August 29, 1880, Special Prayers for the persecuted Afghan Jews, were recited by Hazzan Shalome Joseph Penkar and a sermon was delivered by Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, Hon. Secretary. Shofar was blown by the Hazzan. This account was published in the "Times of India" in its issue dated August 31, 1880.

(4) Mr. Haeem Moses Rajpurkar Kazi Father of Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar, maintained a garden in the Synagogue, in appreciation of which he was presented a sum of Rs. 10/- in the year 1880.

(5) On Sunday, the March 19, 1882, the Bene-Israel Community in Bombay observed "Fast" and Humiliation Day for the fierce persecution of Russian Jews. The late Mr. Joseph Rajpurkar composed special prayers for the occasion which were recited at the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue after which the late Mr. Rajpurkar delivered a sermon. The expenses for the publicity in this connection were borne by the New Synagogue, now known as "SHAARE-RASON".

(6) A meeting of the Community convened under the auspices of two Synagogues and Prayer Hall viz. Old, New and Kenneseth Bene-Israel Prayer Hall on January 2, 1891, held at the Old Synagogue premises decided to issue an appeal for the relief for the persecuted Russian Jews.

(7) On December 2, 1891, a General Meeting of the Community was held in the Synagogue premises to consider an appeal sent by the Russo-Jewish Committee of London for aid to the Russian Refugees who were in great distress in London. The late Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar presided over the meeting. Mr. David Solomon Hon-Secretary of the Bombay Branch of the Russo-Jewish Committee of London read the appeal, at the conclusion of which Mr. Rajpurkar made an impassionate and moving speech which touched the hearts of those present to such an extent that although the gathering was not large the Management was able to collect Rs. 350/- on the spot.

(8) Centenary Celebrations :

The Centenary of the Synagogue was celebrated from Tuesday, 12th May, 1896 to Wednesday, 13th May, 1896. To honour this occasion morning and evening services of the Synagogue were overcrowded.

At the commencement of the evening service, 100th, 8th, 134th and 104th Psalms were chanted by the assembled congregation. During the service before the reading of the Law, Mr. S. M. Moses, J. P. of M/s. David Sassoon & Co. was requested to perform the ceremony of naming the Synagogue, which he kindly consented to do. On ascending the Tebah (Bima) Mr. Moses said "Brethren, I have been asked by the warden of the Synagogue to perform the most interesting ceremony of naming this House of God. I feel honoured for this privilege. It has given me great pleasure to be present here to-day. We must congratulate ourselves for being present at its Second Jubilee and I sincerely trust that the Bene-Israel Community may long enjoy the peace, prosperity and happiness under the beneficial rule of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen Empress and that they may attend this Synagogue with their children for generations to come. I will now proceed to perform the pleasant task entrusted to me. Brethren, I humbly invoke the blessings of the Almighty upon all Israel especially upon this congregation and this house and I name it "SHAAR-HARAHAMIM" — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE by which name it should henceforth be called. And I fervently pray that the services carried on here will be mercifully accepted by our Heavenly Father. Amen".

After the reading of the Law Mr. Joseph Ezekiel, Fellow of the University of Bombay and a Justice of the Peace, preached a discourse on the Jubilee and the morals taught by its rules, taking for his test Leviticus XXV-10, which was very impressive and instructive as his sermons always were. He then offered the Prayers composed by himself, in Hebrew, English and Marathi.

Mr. Shalome Joseph Penkar, Hazzan of the Synagogue who conducted the greater portion of the service then invoked blessings upon Her Majesty and for Lord Sandhurst the Governor of Bombay. The concluding portion of the services was read by Mr. Joseph Ezekiel. Both after the morning and the evening services, circuits were made round the Tebah with singing and carrying Scrolls of the Law as on the Simhat Torah Day.

(9) On October 29, 1896, Special Prayers composed by Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar were recited by him for imploring divine forbearance and compassion on the public at large in view of the Bubonic Plague Fever — that laid such a heavy hand — at the Synagogue. The day was also observed as a "Fast".

Presentation to the Synagogue :

(1) WHEN the Synagogue was built in 1796, one Tanaji Samuel Malyankar Maistry presented "Tebah" (Bima) to the Synagogue in memory of his son Rahamim, who died in 1786, on condition that the said Tebah should not be removed till "MESSIAH" arrives.

(2) THE Synagogue secured a "Sefer Torah". fifty-one years after its establishment (In 1847).

(3) On July 8, 1880, Solomon (Sileman) Rahamim Talkar, (Writer) presented "Net Tamid" Lamp. It appears that there was no "Ner Tamid" Lamp in the Synagogue upto this period. Circumcision and Eliyahoo Hannabi Chairs and original Hekhal were presented by Aaron Abraham Divekar, grandson of Isaaji Ezekiel Divekar, who was the brother of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar. Golden crowns for Sefer Torahs were presented by Mrs. Ladubai Pezarkar. Silver Mezuzah with beautiful silver chain was presented by Mordechai and his wife Elisheba Mordechai Haeem Mhedekar (Elisheba was the sister of Moses, Elijah and Barukh Benjamin Gadkar).

SOURCES :

(1) The two plaints i.e. (i) Appeal No. 1408 in Suit No. 771 of 1901 filed by the Synagogue for the recovery of the warehouses; & (ii) Suit No. 981 of 1920 filed by the Synagogue against the Trustees.

(2) Records left by the Late Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar.

(3) Report of the Samaji Hasaji ("Gate of Mercy") Synagogue from May 13, 1878 to December 31, 1899.

(4) Articles of Kenneseth Bene-Israel Prayer Hall by the late Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi.

(5) Article on "Our New Synagogue" — By the late Mr. I. I. Shapurkar.

From 1796 to 1889 the management of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue were carried out by Kammodan Muccadams, i.e.

1796 — 1797 :

Commandant Samuel Ezekield Divekar.

1797 — 1846 :

Dada Kammodan David Samuel Divekar.
Adopted son of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar.

1846 — 1872 :

Haskel Abraham Isaaji Divekar.
Haskel was the son of Abraham Isaaji Divekar.

1872 — 1889 :

Appointment of David Haeem Divekar as Kammodan Muccadam in place of Haskel Abraham Isaaji Divekar who was removed from the office by the Jamat of the Synagogue on August 19, 1872.

David was the grandson of DADA Kammodan and great grandson of the founder of the Synagogue, Samuel Ezekiel Divekar. After his demise in 1889, the management of the Synagogue was and is being carried out by an elected Committee.

1872 — 1885 :

Haskel Abraham Divekar was Kammodan Muccadam of 'Kenneseth Bene Israel' Prayer Hall. After his death in 1885 the Kammodan Muccadamship ceased, though his son Abraham played a leading role in the affairs of the Prayer Hall till 1906 when it rejoined the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue.

The true religion is built upon the rock. The rest are tossed upon the waves of time.

"GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE
SOLUTIONS OF PRESSING COMMUNAL PROBLEMS

Prior to the restoration of the warehouses as a result of the compromise arrived at between the Trustees of the Synagogue and Mahomed Kassim Dharamsey in 1906 the Treasury of the Synagogue was almost empty. However by 1915 the Synagogue had accumulated sufficient money by way of proceeds from the rents of the warehouses, donations and bidding amount. In order to assess urgent needs of the community, a Special Committee was appointed consisting of fifteen persons, including three Trustees by the Jamat on November 26, 1916. This Committee was requested to recommend solutions of pressing communal problems in order of their priority. This Special Committee submitted its report on March 31, 1918 and the Jamat of the Synagogue considered this report on May 8, 1918. The Jamat passed eight resolutions, gists of which are as follows :-

Resolution No. 100 : Central Synagogue :

The recommendation of the Special Committee to build a Central Synagogue was not approved.

Resolution No. 101 : Appointment of Ministers :

It was resolved that a member of the community who is expert in Hebrew reading, capable of conducting services in the Synagogue and delivering sermons in Marathi, be considered for appointment of Hazan without delay.

Resolution No. 102 : Orphanage and Asylum :

After considering the correspondence and the resolutions of the Managing Committee and the Jamat since 1910 about the Orphanage and Asylum for the poor and the resolution of the Jamat held on August 1, 1915 resolving that a house of an approximate rental value of Rs. 35/- per month should either be built or leased for the poor and destitutes, the Jamat is of the opinion that it should collaborate with the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society for building an asylum provided the contribution to be made by the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society is equal to the contribution made by the Synagogue i.e. Rs. 10,000/-.

Resolution No. 103 : Charitable Dispensary :

Resolved that a Free Charitable Dispensary be opened in some convenient place on behalf of this Synagogue and for this Dispensary, a L.M. & S. or M.B.B.S., Bene-Israel be appointed as a Doctor. Dr. E. Moses, M.D., J.P., and Dr. A. S. Erulkar, M.D. (Lond.) be appointed as Honorary Consulting Physicians of this Dispensary.

Resolution No. 104 : Technical & Industrial Education :

Since the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund has decided to provide technical and industrial education to the poor but deserving youths in the community, it is resolved to contribute Rs. 500/- per annum for atleast four years to the said Education Fund on the conditions that (i) the recipients of these loans should be known as the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue scholars; (ii) two representatives of the Synagogue will serve on the Managing Committee of the B.I.C.E. Fund.

Resolution No. 105 : Free Education in Marathi & Hebrew :

It was resolved to open classes for teaching of Hebrew reading, if possible with meaning to children in collaboration with the New Synagogue ("SHAARE RASON") either in their Synagogue or at any other convenient place.

Resolution No. 106 : Books for Library :

That a sum of Rs. 500/- be sanctioned to the Israelite Brotherhood for purchasing books on Hebrew literature, Jewish religion and Jewish history provided the Brotherhood agree to contribute atleast Rs. 250/- towards the purchase of the books. Further resolve that a sum of Rs. 100/- per annum be donated to the Brotherhood for four years on condition that the Brotherhood contributes Rs. 30/- per annum for equipping the Library with more books.

The donation was given on certain conditions, an important one of which was that the Synagogue will have the right to take back the books purchased out of its contributions, in case the Library or the Brotherhood itself ceases to exist.

Resolution No. 107 :

It was unanimously resolved that the consideration of other schemes framed by the Special Committee be taken up after the resolution regarding the above mentioned most important of the scheme have been completely carried into effect.

"Educate men without religion and you make them but clever devils".

"Religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident of it".

SYNOPSIS OF SYNAGOGUES IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

By Daniel Elijah Benjamin Gadkar (Pune)

INTRODUCTION :

The significant features in Jewish Orthodox Synagogues and Prayer Halls.

Judaism is a religion of monotheism. The following constitute the important features in a Jewish Synagogue :-

1. There are no idols or images in the Synagogue and Prayer Hall.
2. Continuous burning of an oil lamp in a decorative metal vessel (Ner Tamid).
3. The picturesque decorations over the entrance to the Ark which is a collection of religious symbols of Judaism.
4. The Tablets of Ten Commandments in Hebrew and English, fixed on the top of Western Wall. They are the tenets of the conduct towards God and man and are the essence of moral law in Judaism; according to the Bible, these laws were given to Moses on the Mount Sinai engraved upon two tablets by God.
5. A frame containing a message in Hebrew is hung near the Hekhal, the English translation of which is "THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE LORD' WHERE THE PIOUS COME TO LEARN'
6. The dome covering the entrance to Holy Ark is called in Hebrew 'HEKHAL HAKKODESH'. Inside the Holy Ark are kept Holy Scrolls the 'SEFER TORAHS'
7. A special chair and a lamp dedicated in honour of the Prophet Eliyahoo Hannabi.
8. The seven branched golden candelabrum of the Tebernecle called 'MENORAH'.
9. A separate gallery or accommodation for ladies is arranged.
10. A raised platform (Tebah) for reading the prayers to the congregation is built in the centre.
11. The shield of David.

AHMEDABAD :

1. "MAGEN ABRAHAM" SYNAGOGUE,
   Bukhara Moholla, Opp. Parsi Agiary,
   AHMEDABAD.

In 1906 a Prayer Hall — donated by Dr. Solomon Abraham Erulkar. The corner stone of the Synagogue was laid on 19-10-1933 and the consecration ceremony was held on 2nd September, 1934.

BOMBAY :

1. "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE, (1796).
   254, Samuel Street, Bombay-400 003.
2. "SHAARE RASON" SYNAGOGUE (1843)
   90, Tantanpura Street,
   Bombay-400 003.

For details, please see the article 'History of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

3. "MAGEN DAVID" SYNAGOGUE, (1861)
   Sir J. J. Road, Byculla,
   Bombay-400 008.

Built from contribution received from the House of Sassoons.

4. "KENESETH BENE-ISRAEL" PRAYER HALL (Malyavarchi Masjid) (1872)
   Tantanpura Street,
   Opp. Shaare Rason Synagogue,
   Bombay-400 003.

For details see article "History of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

5. "KENESETH ELIYAHOO" SYNAGOGUE, (1884)
   Dr. V. B. Gandhi Marg, Fort,
   Bombay-400 023.

Built by Sir Jacob Sassoon, son of E. D. Sassoon.

6. "THE TIPHERETH ISRAEL" SYNAGOGUE, (1886)
   92, Clarke Road, Bombay-400 011.

In spite of two Bene-Israel Synagogues in Bombay the necessity was felt for another Synagogue at Jacob Circle due to the increase in population there. A Prayer Hall known as Jacob Circle Prayer Hall was started in the year 1886 in a rented premises of the building known as Talegaokar Building. Mr. Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar who was the Hon. Secretary

of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and Solomon Benjamin Ghosalkar and their friends were mainly responsible for building the Prayer Hall. It came to be known as the 'Tiphereth Israel Synagogue' in 1896. The Synagogue was consecrated on 23rd March, 1924. This Synagogue has been giving its attention to the cause of the education of the poor children ever since its inception and even at times when its budget did not permit.

7. 'ETZ HAEEM' PRAYER HALL, (1888)
   19, Umarkhadi, 2nd Cross Lane,
   Bombay-400 009.

A Synagogue-Prayer Hall — is not only a House of Prayer, but also a House of Assembly and a House of Study. With this object in view, Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Israelite School (now known as Sir Elly Kadoorie School) had provided the Prayer Hall known as 'ETZ HAEEM' (ETZ means tree, Haeem means life) in the School Compound with the objects of :-

(a) giving opportunity for DIVINE Worship in Hebrew with the understanding of the meaning,
(b) providing for Sermons and lectures on Religious subjects,
(c) organising a Choir and reducing Congregational service on more order and discipline,
(d) helping and initiating publication of books on Jewish Religion in Marathi,
(e) rendering monetary help to the School.
(f) helping poor students with books and clothing. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, the 'Prayer Hall' was shifted from the School compound after Mr. Kehimkar's death in 1908. True to the object of the Prayer Hall, it continues to contribute donations to Institutions that cater to the educational needs of the poor children.

8. "MAGEN HASIDIM" SYNAGOGUE, (1904)
   8, Mohomed Shahid Marg, Agripada,
   Bombay-400 011.

Eighteen years after the establishment of the first Prayer Hall at Jacob Circle, another Prayer Hall was provided in the same locality not because of its need but because of differences of opinion amongst the members of the first Prayer Hall. It was known as "Jacob Circle New Prayer Hall", then popularly known as "Dandoolkar's Prayer Hall', since Benjamin Samson Dandoolkar had played a leading role in the formation of the New Prayer Hall. A plot of land was acquired in Madanpura, not far away from Jacob Circle for building a Synagogue which was consecrated on March 29, 1931. A separate building was constructed later in the compound of the Synagogue, the upper two floors of which are loaned to the members of the community for holding marriage and other receptions. It has the largest membership.

A Pavilion named "Mrs. Rebeccabai Samuel who was responsible for its construction was opened for the use of the community in 1983. This Pavilion, which is in the compound of the Synagogue is meant for holding receptions, staging plays, etc.

9. "RODEF SHALOM" SYNAGOGUE, (1925)
   36, Sussex Road, Byculla,
   Bombay-400 027.

This is the only synagogue of reformed Jews and was started by Dr. (Miss) J. Jhirad.

10. "PAREL BENE-ISRAEL PRAYER HALL" (1930)

This Prayer Hall was closed down in 1978. There was no membership in the Synagogue. Exepnses for the maintenance of the Synagogue were met by donations.

11. "KURLA BENE-ISRAEL PRAYER HALL," (1946)
    Jewish Colony, 275 S. C. Barve Marg,
    Kurla (West), Bombay-400 070.

This is the only Prayer Hall in the Suburbs of Bombay.

12. A TEMPORARY PRAYER HALL, (1930)
    Bandra, Bombay-400 050.

Dr. E. Moses, Khan Saheb R. Samson and others staying in Bandra started holding prayers during High Holidays from New Year to Simhath Torah in a room at Dr. E. Moses' residence; later services were held on New Year Ereb and Yom Kippur only. After the departure of Mr. Emanuel E. Moses, son of Dr. E. Moses, a Hall is rented every year for this purpose. A cemetery was started in 1946. The Prayers mentioned above are organised by the Bandra Jewish Cemetery Trust and the income derived, as a result of holding the High Holiday services, is transferred to the Trust.

CALCUTTA :

1. "NEWEH SHALOM" SYNAGOGUE, (1823)
   9, Jackson Lane,
   Calcutta-700 001.

2. "BETH-EL" SYNAGOGUE, (1856)
26, Pollack Street,
Calcutta-700 001.

It was built by David Joseph Ezra and Ezekiel Judah and later renovated and enlarged by Elias Shalome Gubbay at his personal cost. At one time it had over 100 Sepharims but today there are only about 30.

3. "MAGEN DAVID" SYNAGOGUE, (1884)
109-A, Canning Street,
Calcutta-700 001.

"Neweh Shalome" Synagogue was in a bad state for want of repairs. Elias David Joseph Ezra was requested to build another Synagogue, which he did in memory of his father David Joseph Ezra, who died in 1882. This is the largest Synagogue in the East. A magnificent structure, its architecture has been praised by all visitors. The outer walls are of mellow red grey brick. The interior is Italian in design and is a unique work of Art. The pillars adorned on the top with floral designs, imported from Paris. There are 3 cut-glass electroliers.

4. "MAGEN ABOTH" SYNAGOGUE, (1897)
25, Blackburn Lane,
Calcutta.

5. "SHA'AREH RASONE" (1933)

It was started by A. Levroy for the convenience of those who, for reasons of ill-health, were unable to go to north Calcutta, where all the Synagogues are situated.

COCHIN :

1. "JEWISH" SYNAGOGUE, (1345)
Crangonore, Kerala.
(since closed).

2. "PARDESHI" SYNAGOGUE, (1568)
Jew Town, Mattancherry,
Cochin, Kerala.

Built by the descendants of Spanish, Dutch and other European Jews. It stands on the grounds near the Palace of the Maharajah of Cochin, over-looking a Hindu Shrine, which demonstrates the cordial relations of the Jews with the people of Kerala. In the construction of the Synagogue, coconut milk was used instead of water for mixing the mortar. Its gleaming brass pulpit, exquisite willow patterned (no two identical), Chinese tiles brought from China in 1760 and the square clock tower with dials in Hebrew, Malayalam and Roman figures and the construction of a beautifully gilded and carved Ark to contain the Torah Scrolls. Gleaming silver cases were made for the Torah and the Golden crowns to cover them. In 1805, the Maharajah of Travancore presented one of his crowns to the Synagogue. This is the first Synagogue that is in existence in the commonwealth and one of the oldest in the world. The Synagogue has been declared as a high historical monument and a "Tourist Centre" by the Government of India.

3. "CHENNAMANGALAM" SYNAGOGUE, (1614)
Jew Street, Chennamangalam,
Cochin, Kerala.
(Rebuilt in 1916: since closed).

4. "PARUR" SYNAGOGUE, (1781)
Jew Street, North Parur,
Cochin, Kerala.

5. THE KUMBAKAM SYNAGOGUE,
Jew Street, Ernakulam,
Cochin, Kerala.
Rebuilt in 1939 (since closed).

6. KADAVUMBAGHAM SYNAGOGUE,
Ernakulam ,Kerala.
Since closed.

A common-feature of all the Synagogues in Kerala, is to have a Teba or Bimah on the top and another in the centre of the Synagogue. The top one is used for reading the law and for services during the Sabbath and Festivals and the bottom one is used for the ordinary daily prayers and Musaph (additional prayers) on Sabbath and Festivals. It is said that Ezra was the first to suggest that the Law is to be read from a raised platform.

DELHI :

1. JUDAH HYAM HALL, (1956)
2, Humayun Road,
New Delhi.

This prayer hall was built by the Jewish Welfare Association, which was formed in 1949. It is named as "Judah Hyam Hall" in memory of the late Khan Bahadur Dr. Judah Hyam, the father of the donor, Dr. Rachel Judah who donated a sum of Rs. 4,000/- towards its construction. The Hall also serves as a centre for Jewish and interfaith studies. For this purpose an annexe to the Hall was completed and

dedicated on 26-12-1979. From this centre, the Association issues Bulletins on various issues of Judaism and inter-faith unity. In order to promote goodwill and understanding among all religions, it has a well stocked library of books on all religions and also sacred scriptures of other religions. Scholars of comparative faiths and religions are encouraged to have an access to the Books of this Library. The Silver Jubilee of the "Judah Hyam Hall" (Synagogue in Delhi) was celebrated with heartwarming solemnities on the 6th and 7th February, 1982, at a crowded function with representatives of many faiths participating.

PUNE :

1. "OHEL DAVID" SYNAGOGUE, (1867)
   Synagouge Street, Pune Camp,
   PUNE.

This beautiful Synagogue is popularly known as 'Lal-Devul' because the wall outside is completely red. This was built by Mr. David Sassoon. The tomb of David Sassoon, founder of the House of Sassoons is built in the compound of the Synagogue. The Centenary Celebrations of the Synagogue were inaugurated by Dr. Zakir Hussain, the then President of India in 1967. This is the biggest Synagogue in Maharashtra.

2. "SUCCATH SHELOMO"
   SYNAGOGUE, (1921)
   93, Rasta Peth,
   Pune-411 011.

This is the largest Synagogue of the Bene-Israels. It celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 16th May, 1971, when Jews from India and abroad attended the function.

RAIGAD DISTRICT :

1. "MAGEN ABOTH" SYNAGOGUE, (1840)
   Alibag.
   Rebuilt on 25th December, 1910

2. "BETH-EL" SYNAGOGUE, (1842)
   Rewdanda.
   Rebuilt in 1876.

3. "BETH-EL" SYNAGOGUE, (1849)
   Mirchi Galli, M. G. Road,
   Panvel-410 206.

"Beth-el" means House of Almighty God. This Synagogue is one of the oldest in the Konkan District. This Synagogue has a special significance of its own. It is believed by many that whatever vows are taken i.e. prayer for a child etc. are fulfilled and the parties concerned perform Eliyahoo Hannabi ceremony after the fulfilment of their vows.

P.S. :- These first three Synagogues, built in Konkan District were due to the inspiration and encouragement received from Hacham Shelomo Shurrabi, who was Hazan of the Shaare Rason Synagogue. He died in 1856.

4. "KENESSETH ISRAEL"
   SYNAGOGUE, (1849)
   Taley, Ghosaley,
   Mangaon.
   Burnt in 1852 and rebuilt in 1876.
   (Since closed).

5. TALEY GHOSALE (1852)
   Borley.
   (Since closed).

6. "HESED-EL" SYNAGOGUE, (1860)
   Poynad, Konkan.
   Rebuilt in 1933. (since closed)

7. "BETH-HAELOHIM" SYNAGOGUE, (1863)
   PEN.

The name means The House of God. Prior to the building of the Synagogue a Prayer Hall was opened. Sutkel Kandlekar donated a piece of land for the erection of the Synagogue, which was built at the expenses of Hannabai Haeem Divekar. It was rebuilt on 9th March, 1893.

8. "SHAARE SHALOM" SYNAGOGUE, (1869)
   Borlai Hubshi, Janjira.
   "Shaare Shalom" means the Gates of Peace (since closed).

9. AMBEPUR" SYNAGOGUE, (1874)
   Ambepur (Cheul).
   Rebuilt in 1884. (since closed).

10. "BETH-EL" SYNAGOGUE, (1882)
    Ashtami, Taley Roha.
    (since closed).

"It is when we're in misery that we revere God. The prosperous seldom do so".

11. TALEY KHAR SYNAGOGUE, (1892)
Chorde.
(Since closed)
Built by Haeem Samuel Penkar.

12. "ORLE-ISRAEL" SYNAGOGUE (1896),
Nandgaon.
Rebuilt in 1945. (Since closed).

13. "SHAAR HATHEPHILAH"
SYNAGOGUE (1921),
Mhasla.

THANE :

1. SHAAR HASHAMAIM
("GATE OF HEAVEN") SYNAGOGUE (1879)
Tembi Naka, Thane.

PAKISTAN :

1. "MAGEN SHALOM" SYNAGOGUE (1893),
Jamila Street and Nishtar Road,
Karachi 3.

It was built by Mr. Solomon David Umardekar. At that time Karachi was in the Indian Territory. This is the only Synagogue in Karachi, now in Pakistan. This Synagogue Building was extended in 1912 at the expense of Mr. Gershone Solomon Umardekar and his brother Rahamin Solomon Umardekar, sons of the founder.

A community hall built by Abraham Reuben Kamerlekar in memory of Shegulabai Solomon Umardekar and was named as 'SHEGULABAI HALL' after her.

The first Hazan of the Synagogue was Samuel Moses Nagavkar. Hananiel Moses Benjamin Gadkar was also a Hazan for many years. The Karachi Jewish community also provided a Hebrew School in 1916; Nathan Abraham Hall in 1918, and formed Karachi Jewish Syndicate in 1918 with the object of providing Houses to Jews at reasonable rents.

NUMBER OF SYNAGOGUES IN INDIA

BENE ISRAELS			IRAQI JEWS	COCHIN JEWS	
	Prior to 1950	Present		Prior to 1950	Present
Ahmedabad	1	1			
Bombay	8	7	2	6	2
Delhi	1	1	**5 Calcutta	Kerala	
Pune	1	1	1		
Raigad District	13	5			
Thane	1	1			
Pakistan	1	—			
TOTAL	*26	16	8	6	2

* Keneseth Bene Israel Prayer Hall which re-joined the "Gate of Mercy" in 1905, is not included.

** Minian is arranged by rotation in the five Synagogues on Sabbath.

"Religion is the dominion of the Soul. It is the hope of life, the anchor of safety, the deliverence of the soul".

WHAT IS A SYNAGOGUE ?

By RABBI Dr. SHALOM COLEMAN

INTRODUCTION :

RABBI Dr. SHALOM COLEMAN of Perth, Hebrew Congregation, Western Australia has recently published a book "WHAT IS A SYNAGOGUE?" Earlier he had published : 1) "WHAT EVERY JEW SHOULD KNOW!" and 2) "WHAT IS A JEWISH HOME ?"

Rabbi Coleman had visited Delhi, Bombay and Cochin in 1970 and was given a community reception in Bombay under the auspices of the Central Jewish Board of India. He is a great admirer of Indian Jews, particularly the Bene-Israels.

Since we are publishing the Book in commemoration of the 185th Celebration of our Synagogue, we thought it would be appropriate to reproduce certain important excerpts from "WHAT IS A SYNAGOGUE?" in this book.

NOTE : If the reader peruses this article, he will observe that some of the things mentioned in it were either practiced in the past or are still in vogue in the Bene-Israel Synagogues i.e.

(a) SYNAGOGUE AS HOUSE OF LEARNING :

A frame is hung near the Hekhai with Hebrew letters, meaning ot which is "THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE LORD WHERE THE PIOUS COME TO LEARN".

(b) USE OF THE SYNAGOGUE AS A HOSPITALITY CENTRE FOR WAYFARERS :

This practice was observed by all the Synagogues in earlier times and is still being practiced by a few.

(c) HAZZAN SAMMASH AND GABBAI :

The functions performed by these were the same as mentioned in the article.

(d) ADMINISTRATION :

In the early days, the administration of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, "Shaare Rason' ' Synagogue and "Kenneseth Bene-Israel" Prayer Hall was carried on by Kammodan Muccadam and Choglas on the same lines as outlined in the article.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS :

The origin of the Synagogue is really veiled in obscurity. Josephus puts it as far back as Moses, a factor confirmed by a writer of New Testament also. That it was one of the earliest of all other forms or places of worship is well recognised. Its pattern is cradled in the 'Sanctuary of Moses' time and certainly that of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. But the Synagogue is not a temple. It is a meeting house and Rabbinic literature numbers 480 in one text and 394 in another at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple by Titus in 70 C.E. There are scholars who date the origin of the Synagogue to 950 BCE in the time of Solomon (J. Weingreen), and others select a much later date—during the Hellenistic period (M. Friedlander). From the evidence available the foundation of the institution is probably the result of the assemblies which were gathered in the Babylonian exile. Prophet Ezekiel had already gone into that exile wih Jechoiachin 11 years before Nebuchadnezzar destroved Jerusalem and the Solomonic Temple in 586 BCE, and the groups he addressed was probably the begining of what later developed into assemblies for prayer and instruction.

NOTE:

In the Jewish Calendar for the year 5740/1979-80, published by The World Zionist Organisation, Bureau for Cultural Services to Communities, a photograph of the doors of the Synagogue of Abraham, the Patriarch at Hebron has appeared on the last page, month of Elul. The doors were brought from Gaza in 1835. They were beautifully carved with typical Arab designs on sycamore wood. The doors disappeared during the destruction of the Jewish community of Hebron in the riots of 1929. The Synagogue from which they came in Gaza was destroyed and its stones were re-used in 1935 to build the citadel in Ashkelon.

(Compiler of the Book)

"Every man, either to his tenor or consolation has some sense of religion".

NAMES FOR SYNAGOGUE:

It was also a "House of Assembly" or "Bethaknesset" and both terms are used as far back as Ben-Sira, author of the Apocryphal work Ecclesiasticus" or "Wisdom" of Joshua son of Sirach". From its inception the Synagogue was the meeting house of the Jewish people in community, just as the home is the meeting house of the family. They are relaxed, or should be in both. It also explains why the decorum of a Synagogue sometimes falls short of much that is to be desired, not because Jewish people should treat it with the sort of ominous silence, overdone in some areas, but because the conversations often drowns out the voice of the incumbent leading the Services. As the strictness with which decorum achieves the dignity of the House of Prayer, it is the relaxation in discussion of Torah and in study of the Scriptures, which achieves the essence of the Bethamidrash. It is in the abuse of both for different purposes that can drive people from them. The most common translation of the Hebrew term Bethak'nesset or House of Assembly is the word "Synagogue" from a Greek root meaning "Meeting House". The influence of the Greek term does much to express the suggestion that the institution was familiar in the Hellenistic period. Nevertheless there are references in the Old Testament to such gatherings as have been described, e.g. the Psalmist writes of Israel's enemies; "They have set Thy Sanctuary on fire..... They have burned up all the Meeting places of G-d in the land" and the following comment is very pertinent "Not satisfied with destroying the Temple, they proceeded to burn all the meeting places of G-d in the land", it seems improbable that the pious men of Israel had nothing else than the Temple to serve their religious needs. Although the Bible has no record of them, there must have been places where they met even informally to study the sacred writings. There is another passage which also makes interesting reading: "Thus saith the Lord G-d", says the Prophet ..... "although I have scattered them among the countries, yet have I been to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come", and a scholar writes: "To the humiliating allegation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that the exiles being far removed from the Temple, forfeited the Fatherhood and protection of G-d, comes the Divine retort, that they still preserve their relationship to Him by means of their Houses of Worship and Houses of Learning, each of them serving the purpose of a miniature Temple in which the spirit of G-d was present". It is with reference to this work that the Synagogue is often called "a little sanctuary". It also explains how the institution grew in the lands of the dispersion and took the place of a central Shrine. The Synagogue, however, in the Diaspora, developed into that sort of "meeting house" where, in addition to study and prayer, it became a place for announcements, for social and cultural meetings, and discussions, even matters concerning the commercial life of people. It was the "platform" for many speakers on Jewish causes, not least of which is Zionism. Charity appeals and fund-raising activities are also helped by virtue of such functions being conducted in the auditorium of a Synagogue. It would be fair to say that as the Temple of Jerusalem centralised the nation Israel, and hundreds of thousands still visit the last surviving wall of the Herodian Temple, so the Synagogue has become the most important centralising structure for the Jewish communities' meeting there in districts all over the world.

ANCIENT SYNAGOGUES :

From the evidence now in existence there must have been hundreds of small Synagogues where Jews met for study and prayer during the period of the Second Temple. One of them was actually on the Temple Mount, and the New Testament records the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" at Jerusalem which had included people from Cyrene and Alexandria.

The use of the Synagogue as a hospitality centre for the wayfarer is expressed to this day by the Kiddush, a ceremony over a cup of wine to inaugurate the Shabbath of Festival meal recited at the conclusion of the Evening Service.

SYNAGOGUES BY THE SEA :

Josephus mentions a custom among Hellenic Jewish Communities of building their houses of worship near the sea.

The largest synagogue building before the destruction of the temple was the Great Synagogue of Alexandria in which Caligula demanded an effigy of himself to be adored as a deity. It was destroyed by Trajan (98-117 CE), and

according to Philo it was only one of many. The Talmud explains, in the name of Rabbi Judah, "He who has not seen the double-colonnade (the basilica — Synagogue) of Alexandria in Egypt has never seen the glory of Israel". It was said that it was like a huge basilica, one colonnade within the other, and it sometimes held twice the number of people that went forth from Egypt. There were in it 71 Cathedras of gold corresponding to the 71 members of the Great Senhedrin, not one of them containing less than twentyone talents of gold, and a wooden platform in the middle upon which the attendant of the Synagogue stood with a scarf in his hand. When the time came to answer Amen he waved his scarf and all the congregation duly responded.

Morever they did not occupy their seats promiscuously, but goldsmiths sat separately, silversmiths separately, blacksmiths separately, metal workers separately and weavers separately, so that when a poor man entered the place he recognized the members of his craft and on applying to that quarter obtained a livelihood for himself and for the members of his family.

SYNAGOGUES OUTSIDE ISRAEL :

With the evidence available, although there is some conflict, a synagogue was probably in existence in the 2nd pre-Christian century on the Island of Delos in the Cyladeon group in the Aegian Sea. There is an epigraph dealing with the Jewish community, which refers to an instruction from Lucius, Consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy VI warning the various kings and states "not to molest them nor attack them or their towns or their country" ..... There appear to have been synagogues named after Roman notability such as Agrippa, the Emperor's son-in-law, another named after the Roman procurator of Syria, Volumnius, yet another after Herod, King of Judea and friend of Augustus. The names bear testimony to the date these synagogues were founded.

There are records which indicate that Synagogues from the pre-Christian period existed at Antioch and Damascus. Others were known to exist in Greece. For example a marble block with the inscription 'Sinagoga Ebraion' was discovered by archaeologistss at the foot of the steps leading upto the ancient gateway of the city of Corinth. So also synagogues existed on the Island of Cyprus.

In the Holy land, when the Temple was destroyed, it has been suggested that the Tomb of David on Mount Zion was a Synagogue. In the year 60 CE there were less than two million Jews in Israel and about three million in other areas, such as Babylon, Asia Minor, North Africa, Egypt and what are today known as Yugoslavia, Italy and Spain. They looked to the Temple as their central shrine. With its destruction the synagogue took on a much more important role. It became the meeting place for all religious activities. While the Jew prayed for the restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem, and still does, the Synagogue, though not a substitute for the Temple, nevertheless contains many appurtenences and ritual which significantly symbolise those of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. They in turn made the portable Tabernacle or Sanctuary of Moses' time a fixed Holy Place "in the place which He shall choose".

RESPECT FOR TORAH SCROLLS :

In the Synagogue of Ashkenazim, the custom is to perambulate around the central platform or "Bimah", enabling the worshippers to kiss the Scroll or bow towards it in reverence for the Torah, and the bells incorporated in the "Rimonim" or "Keter" warn the Worshippers of its impending arrival. For the Torah the whole Congregation stands in awe and respect.

In Sephardi Synagogue scrolls are not carried around the Synagogues as in the Ashkenazi custom, but instead are opened and held high with the parchment and column of reading facing the Congregation on the West, the North and the South. While in Shephardi Synagogues exhibiting the Scrolls in this manner inaugurates the public readings, in Ashkenazi Synagogues it serves to indicate the conclusion of the reading.

ETERNAL LAMP :

In order to symbolise the Almighty's presence in the Synagogue a lamp is suspended in front of the Ark. It is called "The Perpetual Lamp" — in Hebrew "Ner Tamid", and so the Rabbinic dictum "the preservation of the perpetual light in the Synagogue is a testimony to all

"A man's religion is the truth he lives habitually, sub-consciously and consciously".

future generations that the Divine Presence rests on Israel". for the source of all light is the Almighty. The situation of the lamp in early times, appears to have faced westward but quite unlike the separate lamp it is today, had an association with the seven-branch candelabrum called the "Menora" central to it, and was in fact an integral part of it. It was then called "Haner Ha-Ma'aravi" or "The Western Lamp", and Maimonides describes it as such. The view however, is by no means universal, and according to Abraham son of David (ibn David) Halevi and Rashi, the Ner Hama'aravi was not the middle lamp but referred to the second branch from the Western end of the Menora. At any rate the Ner Hama'aravi was continually burning and was made a "perpetual light" (Ner Tamid) from which, at eventide, all other lamps were kindled. Such was the position in Temple times. The reason why the Western Lamp was in front of the Parochet, i.e. the overchanging veil of the Ark of the Testimony. was "to testify to all mankind (lit those who enter the world) that the Divine Presence rests in Israel". The passage continues to explain in the name of Rab : "That was the Western branch of the candelabrum in which the same quantity of oil was poured as into the rest, and yet he kindled (the others) from it and ended therewith". Half a log of oil was poured into each branch which was estimated to burn through the longest night. Thus by the morning they were extinguished. The following evening the priest cleaned out the old wicks, poured in fresh oil, and relit it, yet this western branch was still burning when he came to clean them out, which was done last of all. This was the miracle which testified to the Divine Presence in Israel. The connection between the perpetual lamp and the Menora ceased with the destruction of the Temple. The seven branch candelabrum was never reproduced as part of the Synagogue ritual equipment, and the perpetual lamp was now a separate single lamp occupying the same prominent position in front of the Ark and veil as it did in its original form. In Synagogues today electric light bulbs substitute the oil as fuel, but Levy makes a valid point when he comments that electricity may well threaten the perpetuity of the light, particularly in these times of fuel strikes "where as a carefully tended oil lamp would be more reliable." However, an automatic change over to an emergency service is sometimes installed to overcome the deficiency of electrical failures.

THE SEVEN BRANCH CANDELABRUM :

"In remembrance of the destruction of the Temple" appurtenances used in the Temple are never used in the Synagogue. This accounts for the fact that the Menora, or seven branch candelabrum is never used when such candelabra are of the same shape and material, i.e. metal, as the original. In such a case for ornamental reasons six, eight or nine branch candelabra are used.

HANUKKAH LAMP :

In the case of a Hanukkah lamp, nine branches are used to celebrate the Feast of Lights or Dedication, referring to the miracle when a cruse of oil, normally lasting 24 hours, continued to burn for 8 days and nights during the rededication of the Holy Temple by the Maccabees, during the war with Antiochus IV and the Syrio-Greeks. The nine branch Menora is often called a "Hanukiya" to distinguish it from the seven branch candlestick and at the same time the name reflects the Festival for which it is used. Of interest in the fact that King Solomon had made an additional ten such candelabra in gold, five on the right of the original Menora, and five on the left. The Rabbis also explain that during the life of Simon the Just the "Western Branch Lamp" was burning, but when he died some-times it was extinguished and at others it burned. Also there is evidence that, in the Synagogues of Galilee surviving the Destruction, there were pictures of the Menora, and that the Jewish people in their Synagogues observed the Commandment "to cause a lamp to burn continually" as an everlasting statute for all your generations in memory of the Sanctuary. It has also been suggested that the regularity of the practice of burning a lamp continually was because no sun-light fell into the Sanctuary and it was essential to have at least one light there for practical reasons. It has also been observed that the Ner Tamid — The Perpetual Lamp, symbolises Israel whose mission is to become "a light of the nations". That the Ner Tamid, as a symbolic reminder of the Menorah was suspended in front of the Ark from its niche in the Western wall, does not occur before the 18th century.

"I would rather think of my religion as a gamble than to think of it as an insurance premium".

ANGELS :

A word about angels as they appear in Judaism would not be out of place as we discuss the symbolism of the Synagogue for as they appear in the Scripture, so too there are many references in particular in the Jewish liturgy and prayers. Angels in the early sources are nameless. Later they bear such names as the Archangels Gabriel, Michael, Uriel and Rapael. They are the only angels named in the Jewish Prayer Book and are often found asscciated in the Apocalypses. Each of the names have a meaning which describes his title. For example Michael "Who is like G-d" : : the tutelary Prince of Israel. Gabriel lit, "man of G-d", Uriel — "Fire of G-d", and Raphael — angel of heating" from the Hebrew root. The Bible however has no concept of salvation through apotheoses in the manner of pagan mysteries. The idea of a mystic union with G-d, yearning for his grace and revelation, but actual absorption into Him, is unknown in Judaism. On the other hand, later Jewish eschatology does not treat of man's aspiration to the status of angels. Zechariah, for example sees enigmatic visions and dreams, and his angel explains them. An angel interprets the vision of the four beasts to Daniel. Gabriel explains to him the vision oi the ram. The visions of Amos and Jeremiah belong to the same category. The symbol is the background for prophecy. The prophet does not apply his wisdom to unravel the meaning of the symbol. The Divine interpretation is what really counts. The Almighty reveals its meaning. So also in the dreams of Joseph and Daniel G-d Himself reveals their meaning. In Israel's thought process, whatever the angel, whatever the spirit, and the Psalms in particular reflect it, all are events of the Divine Being. The Psalmist says' "He maketh the wind his messengers, his ministers flaming fire". The word 'angel' and 'messenger' into what we understand by 'angel' (a more or less super-human being entrusted with a mission) is marked by the addition of the name of G-d, thus we find "the angel of the Lord". "Sons of G-d" is a title for angels in Scripture. Angels are described as Holy Ones". The angels, in Judaism, and their use in the liturgy, make them instruments of Divine beneficence. They are charged by G-d to protect men and Jacob speaks of the angel "who delivered me from all evil". That there are many angels is testified to in Gen. 32 : 3 where he meets a host of them. They were distinguished by several classes. For example, the "Seraphim", from a root "to burn" may have the meaning of fiery creatures or winged serpents. "Hayyot" from Hebrew root "to live" may mean "living creatures" as described in Ezekiel's vision ch. 1.

THE MENORAH :

Israel's true symbol of identification, and the President's coat-of-arms in the State of Israel is the Menorah. The Torah explains that by command of the Lord, Bezalel of the tribe of Judah, who was filled "with the spirit of G-d, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, and to devise skilful works, to work in gold and silver and in brass, and in cutting stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of skilful workmanship", was called to perform the holy task of fashioning it alongwith other important appurtenances of the Sanctuary. The Rabbis infer from the text that the Menorah was beaten out of one solid block of gold. It was therefore one piece. It was not made up of a number of pieces first of all prepared separately and then beaten and welded together as one. A craftsman's hand indeed, and only such an artist of his devotion and dedication could achieve it. The Torah explains fully the design of the Menorah. The central shaft had three branches emerging from it on both sides so that all seven lamps were on a straight line. The three lamps on the right and the three on the left all curved inwards towards the lamp on the central shaft so that all the flames. on the right and on the left, would blend together making the central flame blaze as one great light unifying all seven. Seven is the number of days of creation, and seven lamps would indicate completeness for each of these days. The pattern was such as to have been revealed by the Almighty Himself, explains the Midrash, to Moses in a vision of fire. It was a shape of the nature representing the sacred tree of knowledge and in every generation has always captivated Israel's spirit of imagination. Every branch of learning and symbolically all the 7 branches together represent the fusion of all knowledge the source of which lies in the Holy One, blessed be He, who is light and knowledge personified at its very source.

Religion is the best armour in the world, but the worst cloak.

AMEN :

It was necessary to keep up with the Reader and to respond to every blessing with the universal "Amen". The word Amen is from a Hebrew root "to believe" and the word "truth" —"Emet" is also derived from it. The Rabbis recommend 100 blessings a day from a word play on the passage "what does the Lord ask of you", and consider that David had enacted it. By responding with Amen to every blessing is confirmation of the blessing itself, and therefore would be included in the number. The real basis of the statement however is as Abrahams writes : "the assembled people signify by it their firm assent to, and personal participation in, the sentiments which have been pronounced".

How Amen is to be uttered :

Our Rabbis taught, the Amen uttered in response should be neither hurried, nor curtailed, nor orphaned". This is explained to mean that the word should not be slurred, the last letter 'N' should be pronounced clearly, and not said simply because others are responding and he has not heard the blessing itself. In Jewish teaching "Amen" expresses: "The blessing which the Reader is reciting is true and I believe in it". In respect of the standing prayer of the Eighteen Benedictions, the passage continues to explain that with the response Amen two things are intended (1) the blessing is true and (2) may it be the Will of G-d that the words will be believed speedily". The Rabbis warn against responding Amen to any blessing from a "Cuthean" or non-Jew unless the whole of it has been heard, for fear that he may have made an allusion to Mount Gerizim where he worshipped a dove, or some other pagan reference denying the unique Oneness of the G-d of Israel. In such large Synagogues, as has been explained of the Great Synagogue of Alexandria in ancient times, an official stood on a platform and waved a flag at the moment when the Congregational Amen was to be uttered.

THE HAZZAN :

First of the Synagogue officials, after the Rabbi, is the Hazzan. The term is now-a-days translated as Cantor, but when one traces its origin he was a lot more. In temple times, his full title is "Hazzan Hak'nesset" and as such was "overseer of the Synagogue". On the Day of Atonement "He lifts up the Sefer Torah (from the Ark) gives it to the Head of the Synagogue, who in turn gives it to his deputy, who in turn gives it to the High Priest. This procedure was in order to give honour to the High Priest since the whole service is performed by him on Yom Kippur. From the verbal root "Hazah" lit, "see" in word and vision, the word Hazzan came to mean "superintendent" supervising children at their studies. He was an expert in the reading of Torah and Tanach, and had a knowledge of Haggadot, Halachot, Midrash and all Berachot. In fact he was also called a "Hacham Batorah" — "Sage of the Torah", and his place was standing on the Bimah. This we learn from the Great Synagogue of Alexandria where he waved a scarf in his hand when he reached the place where "Amen" had to be proclaimed. In the academy debates he was the one who announced the order of proceedings. He was the crier and the janitor, and so the Rabbis "said to R. Zison the Hazzan 'say Begin (the debate)'. On Erev Shabbat he stood on the roof-top and blew the Shofar to announce the Shabbat and summon the people to prayer. The custom ceased in Babylon since the Jewish community lived among the gentiles. The Talmud also recounts that at one time the Hazzan used to knock on the houses to summon the people to prayer in the Synagogue, and the instrument he used had its permanent place in the Holy Ark, but the practice was forbidden on the night of Shabbat. The custom subsequently changed from "knocking" to "calling". In the Synagogues he was the Superintendent of prayer meetings, and apart from giving the signal for responses, as has already been mentioned, he assigned seats, and therefore acted in much the same capacity as today's "Shammash" — beadle or sexton. In fact the Mishnah calls Hazzanim "Shammashim". Furthermore in the Rabbinic courts he was the "crier" or "Sheriff". He collected the votes and executed punishment and performed the task of flagellation. It was not always possible for an expert person to be found in the Congregation to conduct the prayers, for he prayed by heart, and so the Hazzan Hak'nesset was made also a 'Sh'liach Tsibur', and he

was obliged to read the Torah, during the public readings, particularly on Shabbat in order not to shame anyone.

The procedure has been explained as follows: The Hazzan reads half of the verse of "Shema" and the Congregation repeats it and completes it from begining to end. This would also have influenced the response "Blessed be the Name of His Glorious Kingdom for ever and ever". The Hazzan began "Shema Yisrael" and the congregation said "Hear O Israel the Lord Our G-d the Lord is one". The Hazzan then responded "Blessed be the Name of His Glorious Kingdom for ever and ever" and the verses were divided between the Hazzan and the worshippers. With the increasing work load the "Hazzan Hak'-nesset" was receiving during the course of the Talmudic period, it was inevitable that in the post-Talmudic period the term Hazzan came into its own as the Cantor of the Synagogue, to conduct prayers alone, while all the other duties enumerated were left to another official called "Shammash" — "beadle". Before we turn to "Shammash" however it is interesting to note that according to scholars there was a dwelling for the Hazzan in every Synagogue building in the early years, no doubt because, as overseer, he would have had the security of the building also to deal with among his many other duties. He also called the priesthood to the platform when it was time for the priestly benediction. However it was not until the 14th C. that the office of reader became a professional calling.

THE SHAMMASH :

In the days of the Sanctuary, and subsequently in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, the work of the beadle would have been handled by the Levites. According to the Scripture one of their duties made them "Keepers of the gates of the Tabernacle" and they "were over the work of the Service", also their fathers "being over the host of the Lord were keepers of the entry" The service of the Shammash, however, is treated like all others of the Holy Service, and while the work of the Hazzan Hak'nesseth included the work of the Shammash of the Synagogue, as the official is now called, none of the original spirit involved in that work in the days of the Temple has been lost. It is under the category of "Avodat Hakodesh". However as the Hazzan Hak'nesset was designated to summon the people to prayer in the early days, in Gaonic times it was already the duty of the "Shammash" to rouse the congregation by knocking on doors, and the division by that time was already complete. The Shammash in his role of keeping the Synagogue in order, caring for all the rituals, and the lamps and Torah Scrolls, would have to know the order of the Service, and make the Torah Scrolls ready for their appropriate readings. He is the first to open the Synagogue and the last to leave. He performed the errands of the Rabbi and the leaders of the Congregation. He attended public and private affairs as they affect the Congregation, and in this way became an almost indispensable figure. To many he is a confidant much more than any other official, and because of it, sometimes has more power than the office he holds is considered to warrant. Too often, however, the beadle is overlooked by members of the Congregation he serves at times of joyous celebrations, especially as most if not all of them, have had occasion to meet him with their requirements, which he has been ready to comply with, co-operate and assist.

SYNAGOGUE ORGANISATION

The Synagogue is the Congregation's permanent home, but the Congregation is a voluntary organisation and speaks for the religious Jewish community. As the religious officials are elected by the membership, so too the lay leaders likewise are elected in accordance with the democratic rules and constitution of the members. These lay officials are responsible for the administration of the Congregation as the Rabbi, with the assistance of his colleagues and staff, is responsible for the religious needs in accordance with Jewish traditional beliefs and discipline. That there was always a partnership between religious and lay leadership is testified as far back as the period of the exile, for we learn from both Jeremiah and his younger contemporary Ezekiel, that almost immediately after the Babylonian settlement, there was a group of "elders" who together with priest and prophet, were in charge of all local and general Jewish affairs. Among them would have been "heads of fathers' houses" who led the returning exiles under Zerubabel and Ezra. A general convocation of the exiles scattered

In religion, as in friendship, they who profess most are the least sincere.

over a vast area from Egypt to the Iranian plateau was impossible. Popular gatherings in individual communities, therefore, were very frequent. The gatherings was known as "edah" It was composed of males readily available for Divine Service, but who would easily voice an opinion on any matter of importance to the Congregation or community at large.

The individual assemblies would have had their own chiefs or heads, and a central authority to appoint them, even as in Elephantine the communal leadership as a whole and not the captains of individual detachments, had supervised the administration of the Colony. However lay leaders seem to have been in charge of all fund collections.

ADMINISTRATION :

In former times administration of smaller communities was entrusted to a single elder, at the most two or three, although some Rabbis advocated at least seven. In the large ones greater specialisation was required and officers were elected to deal with fiscal, judicial, religious and charitable matters. Occasionally the general board was divided into an administrative committee and a sort of legislative council. In the former there were between two and five rarely seven or more officers. The term 'gabbai" was the Hebrew title for such officials and is the title given today to the President of the Board of Management of the Synagogue. In addition there were special supervisors of the Synagogue, the communal schools, charities and the like. The officers of the Board deal with the accounts, the constitution, and all the administration affairs of the Congregation.

JERUSALEM AND THE BENE ISRAELS

"The dream of our life is the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the country of which it forms the natural capital. Happy, therefore, shall be the day for the Jews and the Bene Israels when the proud dream of theirs is realized, and glorious will be the condition of Palestine when Jerusalem is rebuilt by the Chosen People of God. But until this desired event is brought to pass, the Bene Israels, as well as all the Jews on the face of the Earth, loyally regard the country in which they are living as their Fatherland".

Haeem Samuel Kehimkar said this 51 years before the birth of the State of Israel.

TRUTH AND HUMANITY

"A story is related, of old, that a young Jew was once taken captive, and was carried away to a distant land and sold as a slave. Cut off from his people, excluded from society and steeped in anxiety he passed his days in misery. Among the treasures which the city possessed, a rare scroll was found which none could read. It was suggested that the slave might be asked if he would be able to read it. The scroll was taken to him; he saw it; he knew it. His mind was filled with emotion. He held it close to his heart, embraced it and kissed it. For it was the scroll of the Torah that was taught to him in his early days".

"In a manner likewise it happened with the Bene Israel when the light of Judaism first dawned on them in their Indian Exile. They were roused from their long wintery sleep; and as the dew and rain revive the seemingly dead grass, so the revival of religion stirred them up to activity. With a zealous devotion they looked forward and clung to among the diverse teachings of the Torah, the SPIRIT OF SHEMA. When Jacob the Patriarch, just before his death suspected defects in his sons, he asked them, "Is there possibly, amongst you any who are unworthy to rank as my chidren by not believing in God's UNITY?". Then the sons all unanimously answered and said : "HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD THE LORD IS ONE". Then the hoary Patriarch fervently exclaimed : "BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE GLORY OF HIS KINGDOM FOR EVER AND EVER". The first words, a Jewish lad is taught to lisp are the Shema. The last words uttered in the hearing of dying son or daughter of Israel are also the Shema".

(Excerpts from the sermon delivered by the late Prof. Ezekiel Moses Ezekiel Talkar at the consecration ceremony of "Succath Shelomo" Synagogue, Pune, on May 29, 1921).

Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting. — Edmond Burke.

SPECIAL PRAYERS AT THE 185TH ANNIVERSARY

OF

"GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE

25-10-1981

The following is the English version of the Hebrew Prayers :

"Blessed is the Lord, Our God of Israel, who has allowed us to enjoy this 185th Anniversary of His Holy House in which we and our fathers have been praying and praising His Great Name these 185 years. Blessed is He who has strengthened our faith in His Unity and in His Holy Law, and has separated us for His glory for his service, and for sanctifying His blessed name by which we are called. Blessed is the Keeper of the Covenant and Mercy, which He swore unto our fathers, and has turned away that mercy from us, who has not made an end of our exile, but has preserved our remnants in the countries of all nations."

"O Thou, who abidest in the praises of Israel, Cause Thy face to shine upon Thy people of Israel, when Thou Hast chosen to be a peculiar treasure unto Thee; upon Thy servants, who sing together this day praises to Thy Name; and upon this house, which is called "SHAAR HARAHAMIM". Every time when the children of The Covenant come to this House to entreat Thee, open to them the gates of Thy Mercy, and hear their prayer as that of King Solomon when he built Thy Holy Temple; and bless them to verify Thy word saying 'In every place where I record my name, I will come unto Thee and bless Thee'. Heavenly Father! Send Thy Light and Truth upon the flock of Thy commandments, and in the way of Life. Remove jealousy and envy from amongst them and plant love and brotherhood among them, that each man may see to the welfare of his neighbour, and wish for peace and follow it". Amen.

Note :- The wording of the Special Prayers is the same as that was recited at the Centenary Celebration of the Synagogue held on 13-5-1896 except for the change in the dates of celebration.

The Prayers were composed in Hebrew and recited by the late Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar.

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, the fountain of life".

תהלות לאל ליום יובל בית הכנסת שער הרחמים

בעיר במבאי ביום ד׳ ר״ח סיון ה׳ת׳ר׳נ׳ו׳

מאת

הצעיר יוסף יחזקאל י׳צ׳ו

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעָנוּ לִשְׁנַת הַיּוֹבֵל הַשְּׁנִית שֶׁל הַבַּיִת הַקָּדוֹשׁ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ הָיִינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ וַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִתְפַּלְלִים וּמְהַלְלִים אֶת שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל זֶה מֵאָה שָׁנָה: בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר חִזֵּק אֶת אֱמוּנָתֵנוּ בַּאֲחִדּוּתוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה. וְהִבְדִּילָנוּ לִכְבוֹדוֹ וְלַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ וְלִקְדֻשַּׁת שְׁמוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ הַנִּקְרָא עָלֵינוּ: בָּרוּךְ שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבַּע לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְלֹא הֵסִיר חַסְדּוֹ מֵאִתָּנוּ · וְלֹא עָשָׂה עִמָּנוּ כָּלָה בְּגָלוּתֵנוּ · וְהַשְׁאִיר לָנוּ שְׁאֵרִית בְּאַרְצוֹת כָּל הָעַמִּים:

יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ לִהְיוֹת לְךָ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים ; וְעַל עֲבָדֶיךָ הַמְזַמְּרִים הַיּוֹם לִשְׁמְךָ יָחִד · וְעַל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ 'שַׁעַר הָרַחֲמִים' מֵהַיּוֹם וָמַעְלָה: וּבְכָל עֵת אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹאוּ בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ אֶל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה לְהִתְחַנֵּן לְפָנֶיךָ פְּתַח לָהֶם שַׁעֲרֵי רַחֲמֶיךָ וּשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתָם כְּמוֹ שֶׁשָּׁמַעְתָּ תְּפִלַּת שְׁלֹמֹה הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּבִנְיַן בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ · וּבָרֵךְ אוֹתָם לְקַיֵּם דְּבָרְךָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּכָל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַזְכִּיר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ: אָבִינוּ שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם שְׁלַח אוֹרְךָ וַאֲמִתְּךָ עַל צֹאן מַרְעִיתֶךָ לַיְחוֹתָם בְּדַרְכְּךָ מְצוֹתֶיךָ וּבְדֶרֶךְ הַחַיִּים · וְהָסֵר מִתּוֹכָם קִנְאָה וְשִׂנְאָה וּנְטֹעַ בֵּינֵיהֶם אַהֲבָה וַאֲחָוָה לְמַעַן יִדְרֹשׁ אִישׁ טוֹב לְרֵעֵהוּ וִיבַקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְיִרְדְּפֵהוּ:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

אַבִּיר יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרֵךְ אֶת אַדְּוָתֵינוּ הַנֶּאֱהָבָה וְהָרַחֲמָנִית הַקִּיסָארִית
וִיקְטוֹרְיָא יי״הו הַמּוֹשֶׁלֶת בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצָדָקָה עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל
עַמּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹשְׁבִים תַּחַת צֵל כְּנָפֶיהָ בְּחַשְׁקֵט וָבֶטַח : שְׁמוֹר
בְּרִיאוּתָהּ וְהַאֲרֵךְ בַּטּוֹב יָמֶיהָ וּבַנָּעִימִים שְׁנוֹתֶיהָ · וְהָפֵר עֲצַת אוֹיְבֶיהָ:
בָּרֵךְ אֵת בְּנָהּ הַיּוֹרֵשׁ עֶצֶר וְאֶת כָּל בָּנֶיהָ וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת כָּל בְּנֵי
מִשְׁפָּחוֹתָהּ הַיְקָרָה יי״הו : שַׂמְּחֵם בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ וְרַחֵם בַּעֲצָתֶךָ · וְתֵן לְעַם
נַחֲלָתֶךָ חֵן וָחֶסֶד בְּעֵינֵיהֶם וּבְעֵינֵי כָּל שָׂרֵיהֶם וְיוֹעֲצֵיהֶם : אָב הָרַחֲמָן
הַגֵּט וּרְאֵה בְּעֵין חֶמְלָתֶךָ עַל בָּנֶיךָ הַשְּׁרוּיִם בְּצָרוֹת · וְחָקֵל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם
אֶת כִּבֶד עוֹלָם · וּגְאָל אוֹתָם מִכַּף כָּל עָרִיצִים · וּקְרָא דְרוֹר לְלֵל
הָעֲשׁוּקִים : מָלֶךְ עֶלְיוֹן גַּלֵּה כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ · וּקְשׁוֹר
אֶרֶ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּבֵל בַּעֲבוֹתוֹת אַהֲבָה וְשָׁלוֹם : א׳כ״ר :

TO FORGET IS A CRIME.

TO BE LAZY IS A GREATER CRIME.

TO NEGLECT WORK AND OFFER EXCUSES IS THE GREATEST CRIME.

ACTION WITHOUT DELAY IS THE SECRET OF EFFICIENCY.

COME TO A MAN OF BUSINESS

SOLELY ON MATTERS OF BUSINESS

QUICKLY TRANSACT YOUR BUSINESS

AND GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

LEAVING HIM

ALONE TO ATTEND TO HIS BUSINESS

We are guilty of many errors and many faults; but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.

Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed.

To him we cannot answer "TOMORROW".

HIS NAME IS TODAY.

Gabriell Mistral.

Nobel Prize Winning Poet from Chile.

A Short Biographical Sketch

of

Samuel Ezekiel Divekar

THE FIRST BENE-ISRAEL TO BUILD A SYNAGOGUE (1796)

INTRODUCTION

This sketch is based on the booklet on his life history written by the late Mr. Abraham Samson Shapurkar, published by the Synagogue in 1927.

Built in 1796, the Synagogue was known as "Samaji Hasaji" Synagogue after its sole builder Samuel Ezekiel Divekar for one hundred years. On May 13, 1896, on the occasion of its Centenery celebrations it was named "SHAAR-HA-RAHAMIM" or "GATE OF MERCY" Synagogue. In May 1981, therefore, the Synagogue completed 185th year of its existence and 85th Anniversary of its naming ceremony. Samuel Ezekiel Divekar died on 14th Kislev 5557 in Cochin — 187 years ago.

On this auspicious occasion therefore, it is but right that the Jews all over the world and the Bene-Israels in particular should know how the Synagogue came to be built— the first Synagogue to be built among the Bene-Israels and the Iraqi Jews, the first in Western, Central and Northern India.

WHY THE MONTH OF KISLEV HAS AN ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE TO BENE-ISRAELS

> The month of Kislev reminds the Jews all over the World about the victory of the brave Maccabees over Syrian Despots (167 BCE) in a fight for religious freedom and culture that rescued Judaism from annihilation. The Bene-Israels also celebrate this festival of lights with great joy.

But to the Bene-Israels the month KISLEV has an additional significance. It reminds them of the heroism of one of their brave sons. Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, Commandant in the British Army, who built the first Synagogue among the Bene-Israels and Iraqi Jews in 1796. The story is very fascinating, interesting and romantic, which tells how he joined in the armed forces of the East India Company in 1750 at the age of 20, his battles with the powerful kings of Mysore in Southern India, his capture by the enemy forces, his escape from the gallows because he boldly said he was a "BENE-ISRAEL", the fulfilment of his vow.... the building of the Synagogue at his own expenses and finally his journey to Cochin for procuring the sacred Sepher Torah in 1797 and his death on 14th Kislev 5557 at the age of 67, just 2 days prior to his departure to Bombay.

SAMUEL JOINS THE ARMY:

Samuel was the third of the eight sons of one Ezekiel Divekar of Diva—Borlai, in Habsan State. (The surname Divekar is derived from the village Diva which was the birth place of Ezekiel's ancestors). Ezekiel Divekar and his forefathers were farmers by profession. Since the Nawab (King) of Habsan State gave no facilities and privileges for cultivating lands, Samuel and four other brothers joined the Bombay regiments in 1750. Samuel at that time was about 20 years old. In course of time the remaining three brothers also joined the same regiment.

HIS CAPTURE AS A PRISONER :

There was no peace in India at that time. Besides, due to constant and continued attacks from the South by Hyderalli, King of Mysore State and later his son Tipu Sultan on the English possessions, law and order situation was far from satisfactory. In spite of all these difficulties Samuel and his brothers never deserted the army but faced the odds like brave soldiers. Often one could hear Samuel saying "What is born must also die. So why not die in action on the battle-field?" When it was a question of storming a Fort or an attack in the open, Samuel and his brothers were always in the front line. But for this act of bravery, Samuel's

---

Hypocrisy is the homage which vice renders to virtue — (La Rechefoucauld)

family had to pay a heavy price. Six of the brothers died on the battlefield. Only Samuel and his brother Isajee survived the bullets and the swords of enemies. Because of his brave deeds, his strategy in storming the fort and attack on open field, he was soon promoted to the rank of commandant of the Sixth Battalion, Bombay Native Infantry Regiment the highest rank alloted to an Indian. After serving in the army for 30 years Samuel was asked to lead a contingent to fight in the Second Mysore War which lasted from 1780 to 1784 against the powerful Hyderalli of Mysore. On the death of Hyderalli in 1782 his son Tipu who took the title of Sultan, sent a force in 1783 which captured Bombay Force. General Mathews, under whom Samuel served was captured alongwith 20 other Europeans and all were put to death. Samuel, his brother Isajee and other Bene-Israel Soldiers were made prisoners.

It is pertinent to state here that the greatest dream of Samuel was to build a Synagogue for his brethren since none existed in those days, although the Bene Israels adhered to the religion of their forefathers, Synagogues were unknown in Palestine before the destruction of the Second Temple and the forefathers of the Bene Israels had fled from Palestine before this destruction of the Temple. It was only when they came to Bombay in the early decades of the 18th Century that they were made aware of the existence of Synagogues in Europe and in Cochin after coming in contact with foreign Jews who used to visit Bombay for trade. Samuel had visited the "Pardeshi" Synagogue in Cochin built in 1568 while he was on his official visit to Cochin as Commandant in the Army.

Now that he was captured by Tipu who was known for his cruelty .....the prisoners were asked either to embrace Islam or face death, Samuel wondered how it would be possible for him to fulfill his cherished dream. So he took a vow that should he escape unhurt he would build a Synagogue at his own expense for the benefit of Bene-Israel Community. But how to escape was the big problem.

MIRACLE THAT SAVED HIS LIFE :

A miracle that happened saved his life. It was the practice of both Hyderalli and Tipu of asking prisoners to embrace Islam or face death in public view. Since the Muslim women observe veil, women were allowed to watch proceedings from behind the screen. Now although Tipu was very cruel he was taken up by the personality of Samuel who did not exhibit any fear but walked like a soldier towards him. Tipu admired his personality and his guts and was tempted to ask him about his religion, because something told him that he might not be a Hindu. The reply given by Samuel was to this effect "My brothers and I are Bene-Israels". Not only Tipu was surprised to hear these words, but also his mother, Fakhrunnissa. Because both Tipu and his mother were very orthodox Muslims, who had read The Quran several times, in which there was reference to Bene-Israels. Tipu, then began to have a little soft corner for the Bene-Israel prisoners and therefore,, when his mother pleaded for mercy to them, he yielded to her request and sent them to prison for two years. The war with the Britishers continued till 1784 when there was peace agreement between them. One of the conditions of the peace-agreement was that all the prisoners should be released by Tipu. Samuel, his brother, Isajee and other Bene-Israel soldiers returned home.

SAMUEL NOT ALLOWED TO RETIRE :

When Samuel returned home, he was 54 years old and had to his credit 34 years of service. He expressed his desire to retire from army life. But the Army Authorities did not allow him to do so. He was made Chairman of the General Court Marshall on July 4, 1791.

He was allowed to retire from the Army in 1792, after putting in 42 years of distinguished service.

FULFILMENT OF VOW :

He fulfilled his vow to build a Synagogue, which he had taken when he thought he was about to face the gallows. The Synagogue he donated was opened for public worship in 1796.

VISIT TO COCHIN AND HIS DEATH :

After retirement, Samuel and his brother Isajee settled down in Bombay and purchased a vast piece of land, near Masjid Bunder Railway Station. The street on which his house was situated was named after him by the Government as

An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees calamity in every opportunity.

"SAMUEL STREET". Just close to this street another street was named after his brother and is known as "ISAJEE STREET". The Synagogue he built at his own expense is also situated on Samuel Street.

The Synagogue was built but there was no Sepher-Torah. So Samuel proceeded to Cochin's Pardeshi Synagogue built in 1568 to procure a few Sepher-Torahs. He knew about the Cochin Jews and their Synagogue because of his visits to that part of the country in his official capacity as a Commandant of the Army. At the age of 67 years, the visit proved strenuous to him. Two days before his departure for Bombay he died on 14th Kislev 5557.

As a tribute to the memory of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, the General Meeting of the Synagogue passed unanimously a resolution at its meeting held on February 23, 1919, the English translation of which is as follows :

> "This meeting of the General Body of the "SHAAR-HA-RAHAMIM" Synagogue places on record its deep sense of gratitude to the late Mr. Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, Commandant in the armed forces of the East India Company and Muccadam (President) of the Synagogue for building the Synagogue at his own expense in order to cater to the spiritual needs of the community, and as a mark of respect to the departed soul, resolves that on every "Yom-Kippur" day, after Shaharit prayers are over, "HASHKABA" be recited loudly in the Synagogue for him."

On February 21, 1926, another resolution was passed under which it was resolved to recite HASHKABA for the late Samuel Ezekiel Divekar on the date of his death anniversary, 14th Kislev.

AN ORTHODOX JEW :

Samuel was an orthodox Jew. He never ate non-kosher food although there were lot of temptations for these whenever he used to attend banquets and dinner parties. He was proud to call himself BENE-ISRAEL. He fulfilled his vow of building a Synagogue. He was so religious that he personally travelled to Cochin at the age of 67 to bring the sacred Sepher Torahs for his Synagogue, without which he felt the Synagogue would not be complete. His death might have been due to strenuous journey to Cochin. In those days, there were no railways, no cars, no planes. One had to travel by ship, ship that used sails.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Samuel Ezekiel Divekar should be remembered even though he passed away 187 years ago. Poet Longfellow rightly said :

> "Lives of great men all remind us,
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And departing leave behind us,
> Foot-prints on the sands of time".

NOTE :

The names "Samaji, Isaji and Hasaji" mentioned in the introduction of this article are equivalent to Samuel, Isaac and Ezekiel. Since the Bene-Israels in those early days were residing in Muslim localities, their names appeared to have been influenced by the Muslim names.

Similarly, Samuel Street in the 18th and 19th century was known as "SAMAJI" Street and the Synagogue as "SAMAJI HASAJI" Synagogue.

The most under-developed territory in the world lies under your hat.
Conceit is God's gift to little men.

ALFRED BERNHARD NOBEL (1833-96) FOUNDER OF NOBEL PRIZES AND COMMANDANT SAMUEL EZEKIEL DIVEKAR (1730-97) FOUNDER OF THE FIRST BENE-ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE.

A COMPARISON

Nobel was a good and generous man, who created a foundation to encourage the study of science and literature and for PEACE.

Very few people know that he was the inventor of dynamite and amassed immense fortune from the trade in the explosive materials. It is said that the Foundation came into existence because of his remorse for being responsible for havoc the exposives created in wars.

Samuel Ezekiel Divekar had also amassed a large amount of wealth by way of gifts, because of his loyal service and valour displayed by him on the battle-field.

The man who was responsible for killing so many men in war, thought of building a House of Worship for his community.

Thus it is presumed that these two noble souls, tried to atone for the wrong they had done.

Another version of the escape of Commandant Samuel Ezekiel Divekar from the prison in Hyderabad.

From a Ms of the House of Rahabi.
(By N. E. Roby, Cochin)

"What motivated the late Commandant Samuel Ezekiel Divekar to build the Synagogue?"

In a biographical sketch published in this Book it is stated that the late Commandant Divekar had a desire to build a Synagogue for the Bene-Israels in Bombay, even before his capture.

However, according to the Manuscript from the House of Rahabi, Samuel Ezekiel Divekar wanted to donate his life-savings to the Cochin Synagogue.

"In 1776 when Hyder Ali reached Malabar, it was feared that he would attack Cochin and Thirthur where there was a Synagogue built by Ezekiel Rahabi. The Raja of Cochin to avert the attack approached Ezekiel Rahabi who was the Dutch Company's merchant. Ezekiel sent his three sons Elia, Moses, and David with rich presents to Hyder to spare Cochin from attack. On their arrival it was known in the camp of the Sultan that some Bene-Israels have arrived who were well received by the Sultan. Samuel Divekar, an Officer of the British Army was a captive in Hyder's hands. As soon as he had heard of the arrival of some Jews, he approached them to plead for his release to the Sultan. He informed them that he was a Bene-Israel from Bombay. The sons of Ezekiel were not aware of the fact. They approached the Sultan a second time and appealed to him to release Divekar. This request was also granted by the Sultan and he was released and was brought to Cochin. Samuel was struck by the beauty of the Synagogue and the Sepharim in Cochin, the like of which he had not seen elsewhere before. As a token of his gratitude for his release he begged Ezekiel Rahabi to accept his life-savings as a donation to the Synagogue. Ezekiel informed him that as the Synagogue had funds of its own and as there were rich people in Cochin, he advised him to proceed to Bombay and with his money to build a Synagogue for his community in Bombay. Samuel did as advised by Ezekiel and proceeded to Bombay in a boat which was given to him by Ezekiel. He built a Synagogue in Bombay in 1796. In 1797 he returned to Cochin to buy Sepher Torah but he died here."

Note:

It is for the historians and research students to find out the exact facts of the escape of Divekar. However, it may be stated here that Divekar was captured by Tipu Sultan in 1783.
Hyder Ali, father of Tipu, died in 1782.

In this world all things are changing — with days. Life has ceased to move along its old accustomed ways. Yet there are things which still endure.

KAMMODAN MUCCADAM DAVID HAEEM DIVEKAR



The First Dramatist

The late David Haeem Divekar was the grandson of Kammodan Muccadam David Samuel Divekar (who was adopted by the late Commandant Samuel Ezekiel Divekar). He assumed the office of Kammodan Muccadamship on August 18, 1872. He was a Poet, Writer, Dramatist and Journalist. He not only wrote plays but also acted in most of the plays that he staged. Some of the well-known dramas and plays written, produced in Urdu and staged by him were, 'The Merchant of Venice' (in which he acted as Bassanio), Laila Majnu (in which he acted as Majnu), Shah Jehan, Shahpuri, etc. His dramas were very popular and attracted large number of people. He was also a Journalist and edited the 'Israel Shram' a monthly magazine in Marathi.

He had also written Kirtans on Prophet Moses and History of the Bene-Israel in India. Besides he had written six other books.

Due to the impact of the dramas written and performed by the late Divekar, a number of Youths started taking interest in dramas and acted as amateur actors, particularly those who could not complete their education. Some of the youths had picked up Urdu or Hindustani very well which they had learnt from their fathers, who had retired from the army who had perforce to study it during their services in the regiment.

BENJAMIN SAMSON ASHTAMKAR

THE FIRST KIRTANKAR AMONG THE BENE-ISRAELS (18-8-80)

Besides being the first Kirtankar among the Bene-Israel, the late Ashtamkar was an author and a journalist. The first Kirtan staged by him was on August 18, 1880 on "Prophet Abraham" while he was the Hon. Secretary of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, the oldest Synagogue among the Bene-Israel.

Benjamin acted as 'Haridas' and the choir was composed of the members of the Committee of the Synagogue. He was very popular as a Kirtankar and not only the Bene-Israels flocked to hear him but also members of Hindu and Muslim communities. The main object of staging Kirtans by Benjamin was to impart religious education to the members of the community and therefore the topics on which his Kirtans were based were Biblical. Other Kirtans performed by him were Elisha, Samuel, Samson, King David, King Solomon and Joseph. As an author, he had 45 books to his credit — the highest number of books published by a Bene-Israel so far. He edited a monthly journal "Teruvah" in 1878 — the second publication. His younger brother, Aaron edited the First journal among the Bene-Israel "Satya-Prakash" (The True Light) in 1877.

The following are some of his publication, all in Marathi Language :

1.	Catechism of Religious and Moral Instructions (Translation)	1877
2.	Jews serving in the Bombay Army (Translation)	1879
3.	Religious faith of the Jews	1884
4.	Preachers of Jewish Religion	1887
5.	Religious Rites of the Jews	1887
6.	Novel newslets from the Jewish Religion	1887

A new broom sweeps well; but the old brush knows the corners — (Irish proverb)

7. Stories and Proverbs from Talmud 1887
8. Virtuous Damsel 1887
9. Hebrew is the Language of the Prayer 1891
10. Jewels from the Jewish Tales 1894
11. Life of Samson 1896
12. Life of Jonah in Lyrical form 1897
13. King David's Supreme patience 1898
14. Messiah
15. Rites are per the Biblical Laws
16. Marathi Translation of Talmud
17. Blessing after Mosaye Shabbath Prayers in praise on sighting of the moon (monthly) 1868
18. Biography of Patriarch Abraham in Poetry form 1882

He also published and edited the Journal, "Lamp of Judaism" from 1881-1885.

JOSEPH EZEKIEL RAJPURKAR J.P.

The first Fellow of the Bombay University (1879) The first Bene-Israel Hebrew Examiner (1871)
The first Justice of the Peace (1890)



The late Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar of Bombay was exceptionally religious and as a lay-minister he was respected not only by the Bene-Israeli and Iraqi Jews in India but also by foreign Jews. Besides attending to religious duties he was an educationist and had done much for the upliftment of the community..... this at a time when there were few educationists among Jews when they most preferred to distinguish themselves in military services.

Joseph Ezekiel (son of Ezekiel Joseph Rajpurkar — Superintendent of Schools established by the Free Church Mission in Bombay and Kolaba District) was born in 1834. He received his school and college education at the hands of such renowned British educationists as Rev. John Wilson, Rev. Dr. J. M. Mitchell, Rev. R. Nesbit and Rev. Murray Michael. He won several scholarships and prizes. They have made complimentary references to him as being a diligent student with clear logic and perseverence in their books of "Western India" published in England regarding their educational career in India.

He began his career as a teacher in the David Sassoon Benevolent Institute and within five years rose to become its head-master and held this post for over 49 years. Under his expert yet fatherly guidance, have passed out students who have made a mark in Govt. Services in India, England, China, other British Colonies and in America too. Even members of the Sassoon family — Sir Edward Sassoon Bart, British M.P. and Sir Sassoon David, Bart, who studied under Mr. Ezekiel had great reverence for him and held him in high esteem.

He received his elementary knowledge of Hebrew from his father but mostly it was his own efforts that helped him master the language

so perfectly — a self-taught Hebraist. He was Examiner in Hebrew language at the Bombay University for the Matriculation Examinations and at graduate and Post graduate levels, (1871) though he was not a Graduate — graduation courses were introduced later in the Bombay University.

In 1879 he was nominated a "FELLOW" of the University. He thoroughly studied and compared the Jewish and Christian scriptures and was well satisfied with his knowledge. This knowledge helped him in imparting religious education to the youth.

He translated several Hebrew books into Marathi language for the benefit of members of the Bene-Israel community. "The 5 confessions of the Day of Atonement"; "The Propitiatory Prayers", "The Daily Prayer Book" — to name a few. Altogether he has over 20 volumes to his credit — either as an author or translator. "The Daily Prayer Book" having the Hebrew and Marathi versions is highly in demand even now, more than a century since it was first published. But reprints are difficult because the copyright is not with his heirs.

He composed Special Prayers on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1896. He had also composed Special Prayers for the persecuted Russian Jews and for imploring divine forbearance and compassion on the public when Bombay was ravaged with plague. Both these meetings were held in the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

In 1890 he was honoured by the British as Justice of the Peace and he received praises for his patience, humility and good-will towards all, from people of all communities Indians and foreigners. He was the first Bene-Israel J.P. Quite often he even served as Special Juror in the Bombay High Court.

He had maintained a record of events in the community, excerpts of which are reproduced elsewhere in this book.

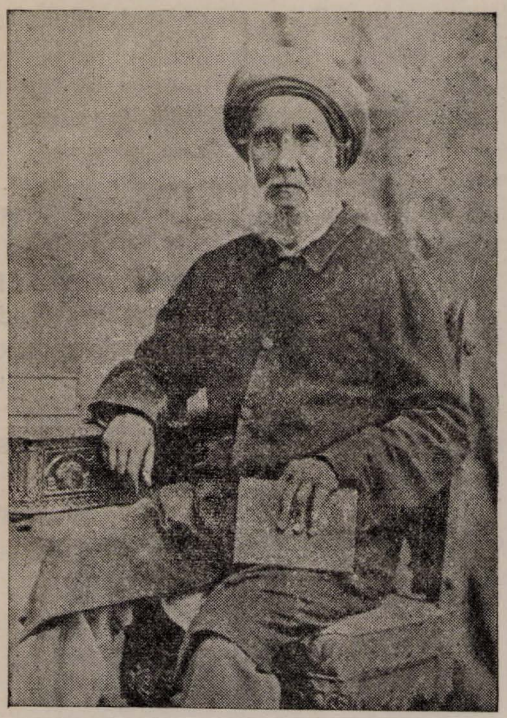
Catalogue of Published Works by Joseph Ezekiel

Sr. No.	Name	Original or Translation	Year of Publication
1.	The Confession of Sins on the Jewish Day of Atonement	Translation	1858
2.	The Jewish Marriage Ceremony	,,	1862
3.	The Jewish New Year's Day	,,	1862
4.	Remission of Vows and Prayer offered on the Sea-shore	,,	1864
5.	History of Antiochus Epiphanes on the Institution of the Feast of Dedication	,,	1866
6.	The Prayers of the Day of Atonement Volume-I	,,	1867
7.	The Prayers of Day of Atonement Volume-II	,,	1868
8.	The Ethics of the Fathers	,,	1870
9.	Scripture Proofs of Jewish Doctrines	Original	1876
10.	The True aspect of Judaism	Original	1879
11.	A Chronological outline of Ancient Jewish History	,,	1880
12.	Hebrew Primer '3rd Edition'	,,	1881
13.	An Elementary Hebrew Grammer	,,	1882
14.	A handbook of Hebrew Abbreviations (Hebrew and English)	,,	1887
15.	The Jewish propitiatory Prayer	Translation	1889
16.	The Daily Prayers (Hebrew with Marathi Translation)	,,	1889
17.	The Five Jewish Fasts	,,	189[illegible]
18.	Child's Hebrew First Book (3rd Edition)	Original	1893
19.	The three great Jewish Festivals	,,	1901
20.	Special Prayers on Special Occasions	,,	

Justifying a fault, doubles it. — (French proverb)

HAEEM SAMUEL KEHIMKAR

The first to write an authentic history of Bene-Israel (1897)



The late Haeem Samuel Kehimkar was one of the few leaders in the community who contributed towards the advancement of education among the Bene-Israels. As early as in 1853 he was mainly responsible for the formation of the "BENE-ISRAEL BENEVOLENT SOCIETY". The object of this Society was to provide education to the children with a religious base and to study of the Hebrew language; its other object was to provide a home for Destitutes and Orphans of the Community, giving first priority to Education.

The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society of which Kehimkar was the Hon. Secretary, rented out premises at Khadak and started a Marathi and Hebrew School on July 5, 1875. When he found that the School premises was insufficient to accomodate more children, he, on behalf of the Benevolent Society approached the Anglo-Jewish Association, the "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE and a few philanthropists; the small School was converted into a Secondary School in 1881. He had great influence in Government Circles and on account of this, the then Governor of Bombay Lord Harris presided at the Prize Distribution Ceremony of the School held on March 7, 1893, in Israel Moholla. The report of the School was read out by Kehimkar. When sufficient funds were accumulated he purchased a school building with a large compound at Mazgaon in 1896. After carrying out repairs and renovation to the building, the School was declared open in 1899 by the then Governor of Bombay, Lord Sandhurst.

The late Kehimkar established a Prayer Hall in the School Compound known as "Etz Haeem" Prayer Hall, in 1888. The object of establishing this Prayer Hall was, not only for giving an opportunity for divine worship, but also for redeeming monitory help to the school, helping and initiating publications of books on the Jewish religion and helping poor students with books and clothing. After the death of Kehimkar and the appointment of a New Committee, this Prayer Hall was shifted from the school premises and now exists as a separate institution.

The late Kehimkar was the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the school he founded. Some of the members of the community wanted the school to be administered on more Democratic basis, appealed to the Anglo Jewish Association to persuade Kehimkar to frame a New Constitution. In February 1907 therefore, H. Landau of London, a member of the Council of the Anglo-Jewish Association convened a Public Meeting of the Bene-Israel Community calling for suggestions about the appointment of a Committee to manage the school. Such a Committee was appointed but the actual administration was passed over to it after the death of Kehimkar in 1908.

In order to pay personal attention to the activities of the school, the late Kehimkar occupied premises in the school for his residential purposes after his retirement in 1878. which he continued to occupy till his passing away in 1908 at the age of 77 years.

He is the author of the famous and well-known book "HISTORY OF THE BENE-ISRAEL OF BOMBAY PRESIDENCY", manuscript of

---

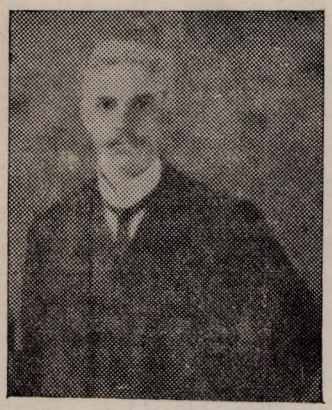
It has been the pride of Judaism that there is no illiteracy among its masses.

which was completed in 1897. About fifty years later this history was published by the late Dr. Emanuel Olsvanger in Jerusalem. This book has served as a guide to all those who have written books on the history of the Bene-Israels.

He is also the author of the "HEBREW PRIMER" and "HEBREW AND MARATHI SONGS". He translated into Marathi Daily Prayer Book.

The Committee of the Haeem Samuel Kehimkar Testimonial Fund presented the school with a portrait of Haeem Samuel Kehimkar in oil and a selection of books for the school library to commemorate the 'worthy' service rendered by him to the community.

D. J. SAMSON (KILLEKAR) L.C.E



D. J. was a brilliant student in his scholastic career. At the matriculation examination he secured cent per cent marks in Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry.

After passing the L.C.E. examination he joined the Bombay Improvement Trust and soon rose to the highest office by sheer dint of his ability. He was one of the Trustees appointed by the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1901. The two others were Solomon Moses Vakrulkar and Gershone Moses Malekar.

Had it not been for the part played by D.J. Samson in the suit filed by Cassumbhoy Dharamsey against the Synagogue for the recovery of his debts amounting to Rs. 1,00,000/-, the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue would have lost all its properties. It happened like this:

Cassumbhoy Dharamsey, who had filed a suit in 1890 for recovery of his loans, had succeeded in the Lower Court by getting the judgement in his favour and a heavy decree was passed against the Synagogue. This in effect meant complete loss of all properties plus the payment of huge amount to the creditor and in addition payment of Rs. 10/- as rent by the "Kenneseth Bene Israel Prayer Hall" which separated from the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue (1872) to the creditor. The Synagogue Authorities wanted to file an appeal, but the Attorneys of the Synagogue declined to proceed with the appeal unless certain amount towards fees were paid to them in advance. The Synagogue had no money and therefore it became a difficult problem. However, at this critical juncture, D. J. Samson came to the rescue of the Synagogue by giving personal securities to the Attorneys. In the Appeal, the judgement of the Chief Justice was in favour of the Synagogue Authorities and almost all the warehouses were restored to the Synagogue.

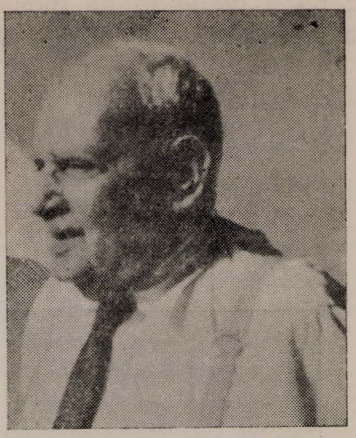
Being an engineer by profession, D. J. Samson was responsible for extending the property by constructing upper storeys on some of the godowns and thereby increasing the income of the Trust by way of rent from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 1,150/- per month. This was the situation in 1905. By 1925 the Synagogue had in its possession nearly Rs. 60,000/-. The "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue had been doing lots of good work in the community by granting grants particularly to educational institutions, for equipping the library, for establishment of an orphanage and for medical aid to the poor members of the community. All this was possible because of the large amount at the disposal of the Synagogue. D. J. Samson was also one of the founder members of the All India Israelite League and also took active part in the affairs of the Sir Elly Kadoorie School (then known as Israelite School).

He used to teach Mathematics to the senior students of Israelite School on Sundays. Those of his students who are alive still recall the lucid manner by which he used to explain the problems.

One pound of learning requires ten pounds ofcommon sense to apply it — (Persian proverb)

SOLOMON MOSES VAKRULKAR

B.A., LLB., Solicitor.



Solomon Moses Vakrulkar was one of the first three Trustees of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue appointed in 1901. In order to devote more time and attention for the welfare of the community he resigned from the Trusteeship in August 1905 and served the Synagogue as a President for quite a few years.

He was one of those who are mainly responsible for bringing about a compromise between the two parties of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1927, as a result of which a considerable amount of Synagogue money was saved by way of litigation and a tidy sum of about Rs. 60,000/- was put in an endowment fund instead of constructing a Central Hall. While a few friends appreciated his contribution to this compromise by arranging an AT HOME for him, members of the Synagogue elected him as their President for three consecutive years from 1928.

He was also President of Sir Elly Kadoorie School and a member of its Managing Committee for several years. He was a Trustee of the Bene Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans and its first Secretary for several years. He actively participated in the Bene-Israel Conference and was its President in the year 1925. He served the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund as its Secretary from its very inception in the year 1918 for four consecutive years and subsequently became its Vice-President and President. He was also a leading member of Jewish Religious Union. He was often requested to deliver sermons.

Besides his participation in the Communal matters, he was Chairman of the Board of Directors of (i) The Western India Tanneries Limited and (ii) Bombay Film Laboratories (since its inception in 1941 upto his demise in 1972). He was interested in the development of Konkan and was Trustee of the Konkan Education Society and took active part in starting Technical Schools in Kolaba District (now known as Raigad Dist.). He also took interest in constructing a bridge on Alibag Creek at Akshi.

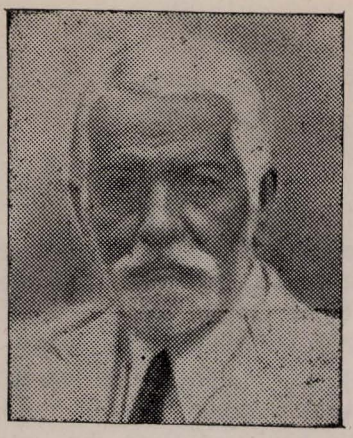
After passing his LL.B. Examination he started legal practice in Alibag in 1902. By passing the Solicitors Examination of the Bombay Incorporated Law Society in 1909 he became the first Bene Israel to have passed the Solicitor's Examination. He practised as a Solicitor for the Bombay High Court first as a partner of Mr. Judah and then independantly for more than 60 years.

He presided over the public meeting convened by the Israelite Brotherhood in 1927 to collect funds for the relief of the victims of the floods in Gujarat, Sind and Orissa. The famous poetess, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who was known as "Nightingale of India", had addressed the meeting.

He was born on February 28, 1879 in Alibag and passed away on January 26, 1972 in Bombay.

Difficulties strengthens the mind, as labour does the body.

GERSHONE MOSES MALEKAR



Gershone Moses Malekar, popularly known as G. Moses succeeded his father the late Subedar Major Sardar Bahadur Moses Bapuji (Benjamin) Malekar, J.P. as the Hon. Treasurer of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1893 and according to the reports available he continued the good work like his father till 1899.

He was elected a Trustee of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue Estate Trust alongwith the late D. J. Samson and Solomon Moses Solicitor in 1901. Alongwith his Co-Trustees he was instrumental in recovering the mortgaged property. He was also one of the leaders for amalgamation of "Kenneseth Bene Israel Prayer Hall" with the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, and was one of those who carried the Sepher Torah Scrolls from the Prayer Hall (Malya Warchi Masjid) to the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, early in the morning of April 6, 1906.

During the period he was a member of the Managing Committee of the Israelite High School, now known as the Sir Elly Kadoorie High School, he conducted Hebrew reading classes for the children of the school on Sundays.

He was the second son of Subedar Major Sardar Bahadur Moses Benjamin. J.P., who was attached to the 12th Regiment stationed at Aden.

If a child lives with critisism, he learns to Condemn,

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be Shy,

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty,

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient;

If a child lives with encouragement he learns Confidence;

If a child lives with praise, he learns to Appreciate;

If a child lives with fairness, he learns Justice;

If a child lives with security, he learns to have Faith;

If a child lives with Approval, he learns to like Himself;

If a child lives with Acceptance and Friendship,

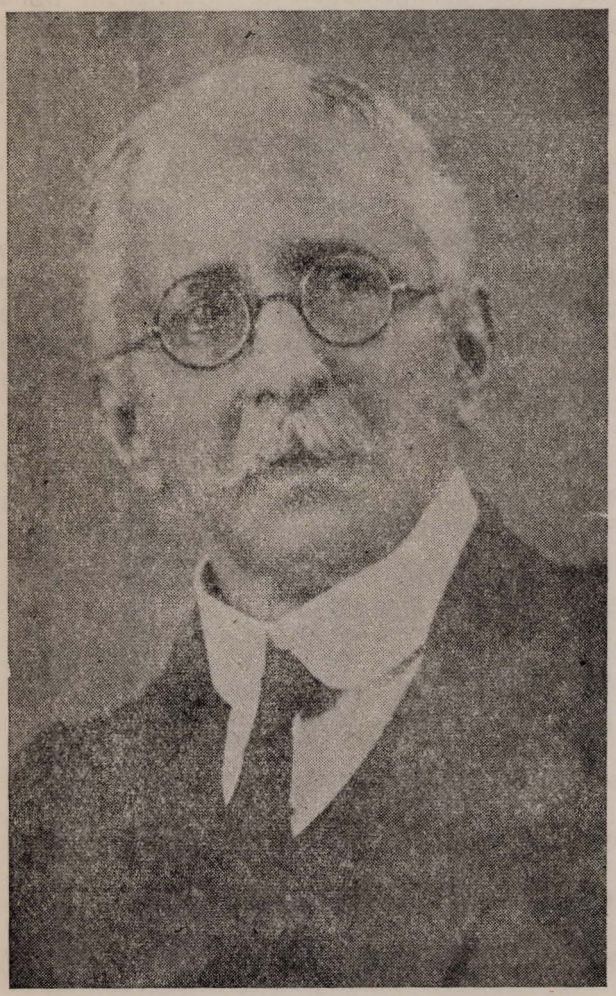
HE LEARNS TO FIND LOVE IN THE WORLD.

Be strenuous in effort, patient in endurance and strong in resolution.

Dr. ELIJAH MOSES RAJPURKAR, M.D.

Justice of the Peace

The only Bene-Israel to be elected to the Bombay Municipal Corporation (1920) and the only Bene-Israel Mayor (1937).



The late Dr. Elijah Moses had the distinction of being the first Bene-Israel to be a Municipal Councillor as also the Mayor of Bombay in 1937. His services to the City of Bombay extended over a number of years; in the very early years he was nominated by the Government as a Municipal Councillor. However, when he criticised the Government's Education policy at a school function in the presence of the Governor of Bombay, the Government did not re-nominate him when his three year term expired.

After being out of the Corporation for about twelve years he contested the election to the Municipal Corporation in 1923 from 'B' Ward (Mandvi). Although this ward contained a large number of Bene-Israel voters his victory was mainly due to the cosmopolitan support which he recieved from the voters of his constituency. He continued to represent this constituency for over 15 years. During his Councillorship he served on various Committees and was responsible for solving the Education and Health Problems of the City. In recognition of his abilities, he was elected Chairman of the Medical Relief & Public Health Committee and represented the Municipal Corporation and the Improvement Trust for several years. He was a member of Opium Enquiry Committee. For two decades he worked as Chairman of the King George V Infirmary and Lady Dhunbai Jehangir Home for destitutes.

Dr. Moses took an active part in the affairs of the Community. He was one of the trustees of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue Estate Trust, having been elected in 1919. He was also a Trustee of the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans. He also took an active part in the deliberations and activities of the Bene-Israel Conference and the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund. He was the President of the Conference in the year 1918 and of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund in the year 1919. He was the Vice President of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund from 1920-22. He was also the President of the Central Jewish Board of India.

He was the Managing Trustee of the Jewish Cemetery Trust. The acquisition of the burial ground at Dr. E. Moses Road (the road is named after him) was due to him. He did his level best for not converting the Jewish Cemetery at Two Tank Road and at Clare Road

---

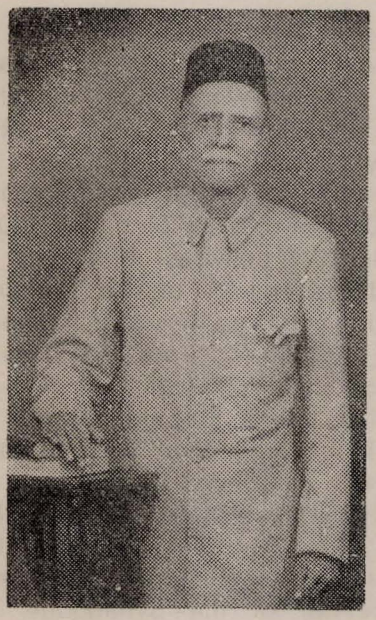
Innumerable cemeteries are filled with people who thought the world could not get along without them.

into a public garden. However, inspite of his sincere efforts for a number of years, he did not succeed.

The late Dr. E. Moses had written an article on "The Clare Road Jewish Burial Ground" which appeared in the Bene-Israel Review in the issue of July and August, 1926. This article contained the efforts made by the leaders of the community and Dr. E. Moses in particular to retain the cemeteries by the community.

The late Dr. Moses also used to deliver sermons and had published a Materia Medica. He was the first member of the Jewish Community to pass the M.D. Examination of the Bombay University. He was nominated a Justice of the Peace and held the post for 40 years. Born in 1873 at Ahmednagar, Dr. Moses passed away at a ripe old age of 85 at Pune in 1957. In a moving tribute, Shri M. V. Donde, the then Mayor of Bombay described him as an ardent social worker and a humanitarian. His name has been inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem.

SHALOME HAEEM RAJPURKAR KAJI



He was initially associated with the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. However when the split occured and the "KENNESETH BENE ISRAEL PRAYER HALL" was started, he was one of its leading member and represented the Prayer Hall in the Court case filed for the recovery of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue properties along with Kammodan Abraham Haskel Divekar. Heeding to the warning of the Chief Justice that if two parties did not compromise, the Synagogue properties might be lost, he played a leading role in bringing about the re-union of the Synagogue and the Prayer Hall. In appreciation of this very valuable service rendered by him the Jamat of the Synagogue elected him a Trustee in 1919 and decided to give "MISHEBERAKHA" on Ereb Kippur to him during his life time and to his heirs thereafter. This practice still continues. He continued to be a Trustee of the Synagogue till he passed away on 30-1-1970 and was Hon. Secretary of the Trust for quite a few years. He also took keen interest in the affairs of the Israelite School (Kadoorie School).

He was born on December 2, 1875.

The surest way to teach children the value of money is to borrow some from them.

ABRAHAM REUBEN BHINJEKAR

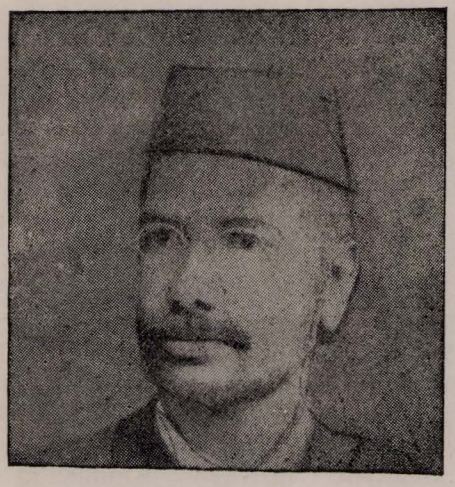


He was mainly responsible for publishing the journal "FRIEND OF ISRAEL" in 1894. However he gave this up after a few months and handed over the responsibilities of publishing the journal to Jacob I. Aptekar.

He had also published 100 year Hebrew Calendar from 1901. to 2000. He translated into Marathi Passover and Shabuoth.

Abraham Reuben Bhinjekar worked for the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue as Trustee and Treasurer of the Trust for quite a few years. Later he resigned from the Trusteeship and was elected as a member of the Synagogue committee of which he was Hon. Treasurer for some years.

ABRAHAM SAMSON SHAPURKAR



Abraham Samson Shapurkar, popularly known as Shapurkar Master (Master means teacher) had devoted practically his entire life for the progress of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue of which he was a paid Assistant Secretary and for the welfare of the community, particularly for the spread of religion. among the youths. His religion classes which used to be conducted on every Saturday attracted a large number of youths. This was because his method of conducting the class was quite different. Instead of preaching sermons, which he knew would not motivate the youths to attend the class regularly, he used to relate Biblical stories and then expand the themes.

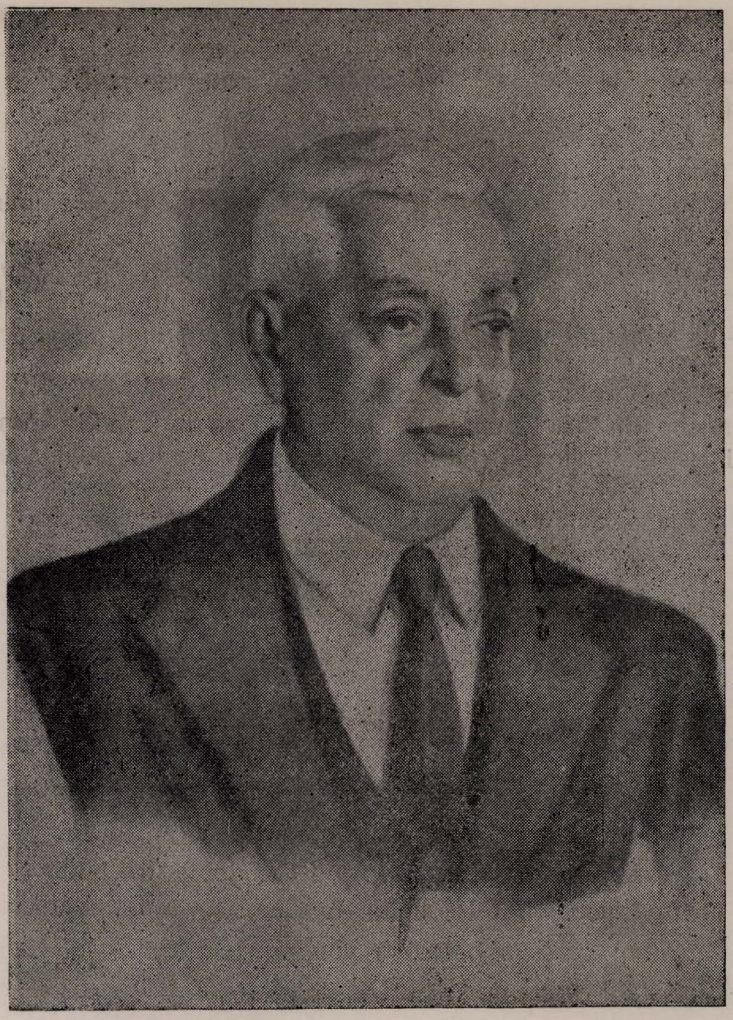
He religiously used to deliver sermons in the Synagogue on days of Festivals and Fasts which were very much appreciated by the congregation.

He was the first person to write a biography of the Founder of the Synagogue, Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, which was published in the journal. "THE ISRAELITE" edited by Barrister David S. Erulkar, in its issue of February, 1918. On the 128th death anniversary (14 Kislev 5686 — 1-12-1925) of the founder of the Synagogue, he delivered a talk on the life of the founder. Members of the congregation present on the occasion very much appreciated this talk and the late Mr. Samson Moses Jhiradkar Kazi requested the management of the Synagogue to publish the life story of the Founder, which suggestion the Committee accepted whole heartedly by passing a resolution to this effect at its meeting held on January 31, 1926. The publication of the biography created further interest and the Jamat (general meeting) of the Synagogue at its meeting on February 21, 1926 decided that Hashkaba be recited for the soul of the departed leader on his death anniversary. (Seven years earlier, the Jamat of the Synagogue at its meeting held on February 26, 1919 had resolved to recite Hashkaba for the soul of the leader on every Yom Kippur after the morning service.) For the yeomen services rendered by Shapurkar Master, the Jamat of the Synagogue decided to recite Hashkaba for his soul on Yom Kippur after the morning services.

You live only once. But if you work it right, once is enough. — Fred Allen

I. J. SAMSON (Killekar),

B.A., LL.B., ADVOCATE



I. J. SAMSON was one of the leading Advocates in Bombay Presidency. (In those days Bombay Presidency comprised of Maharashtra and Gujarat).

He was elected to the Bombay Presidency Bar Council in 1926 and continued to be elected to this August Body till he passed away in 1942. It is indeed creditable for a person of a minority community to get elected to the Bar Council by securing votes almost cent per cent from non-Jew Advocates. Jewish Advocates could be counted on one's finger-tips.

He was appointed an Acting Judge in the Small Causes Court in 1926 and again in 1927. After he completed the term of Acting Judgeship orders were issued for his appointment as permanent Judge of the Small Causes Court, Bombay and had not the Government to withdraw the order of appointing him a permanent Judge, he would have risen not only to the office of the Chief Judgeship of the Small Causes Court but would have also been elevated to the Bench of the Bombay High Court subsequently. The reason for the withdrawal of the appointment order by the Government was that some one had complained that while Samson was officiating as an Acting Judge he had signed the memorandum "SIMON GO BACK" issued by the All India Congress Committee. When questioned about the same Samson admitted that he did sign the memorandum as he was a member of the Congress.

We do not count a man's years until he has nothing else to count. — (Emerson)

He was one of the leading members of the All India Israelite League which commenced its First Session in 1918.

He worked for the League in the capacity of a Secretary and also as President. He took keen interest in the affairs of the Jewish Co-Operative Bank which was a creation of All-India Israelite League and continued to associate himself with the Bank for a number of years. He was also a member of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, "Tiphereth Israel" Synagogue, Sir Elly Kadoorie School for which he worked as Secretary and later as President. When the Bene Israel Home for Orphans and Destitutes started admitting Orphans in 1935 Samson was elected as one of the Trustees of the Home and worked as a Chairman till he passed away in 1942.

The session of the Bene Israel Conference and All India Israelite League which commenced in 1917 ceased to function in 1927. In 1937 the leaders of both these communal roof organisations came together and Bene Israel Conference was revived. At its very first session after its revival in 1937 he was elected as its President.

In those early days there were lot of activities in the community inspite of the existance of the two parties. I. J. Samson, D. J. Samson, A. S. Erulkar and D. S. Erulkar, who belonged to the All India Israelite League were often referred to as Samson brothers and Erulkar brothers.

Samson used to teach English in honarary capacity to the senior students of the Israelite School on Sundays.

DON'T QUIT

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high.
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit,
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow —
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out —
The Silver tint of the clouds of doubt;
And you never can tell just how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far,
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit —
It's when things seem worst that you
must not quit.

Life is Mathematics. Add friends, substract enemies, Multiply joys and divide sorrows.

SAMUEL JUDAH CHINCHOLKAR

Superintendent, St. John's Ambulance Brigade, Jewish Division.

In appreciation of his long and meritorious services towards the ambulance movement, Samuel Judah Chincholkar was nominated to receive "THE ORDER OF THE CROSS OF ST. JOHN" at the hands of King George VI at Buckingham Palace in London in April 1951. But fate robbed him of this unique honour. He passed away six months earlier. Samuel was associated with "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE for a number of years and was its Committee Member and Secretary also for a number of years. Besides, he held office in other communal institutions like Sir Elly Kadoorie School, Jewish Cemetery. The Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans, Chevra Kadisha, etc.



He was not only a prominent figure in the Jewish Community but was also well known outside the community. He was a member of the "INDIAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE" and a founder member of the "ST. JOHN'S AMBULANCE BRIGADE" in India (ST. JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE, Jewish Division, Overseas Section was founded by E. S. Baker in 1905). At the time of his passing away he held the rank of the "SUPERINTENDENT" of the Jewish Division Ambulance. Under his supervision and guidance, men and women of the Jewish Division not only attended various sports meet in Bombay in order to render first aid to those who were likely to be injured, but also during perilous periods of disturbances — communal riots, national liberation movement launched by the Indian National Congress when the police mercilessly beat the non-violent satyagrahis. He was the recipient of many awards and Certificates of Appreciation, the important of which were :—

(i) The Commanding Officer's Medal, in appreciation of his long and meritorious services to the St. John's Ambulance. This award was personally conferred on him in 1949 by the then Governor, Dr. Raja Maharaj Singh — Rajendra Singh.

(ii) Medal for rendering first aid to the injured at a great personal risk during the visit of King George V when serious disturbances broke out in the City.

(iii) And the most prestigious award — The Order of the Red Cross of St. John, which he could not receive as stated earlier.

Don't Judge a man by the clothes he wears, God made the one and the tailor made the other.

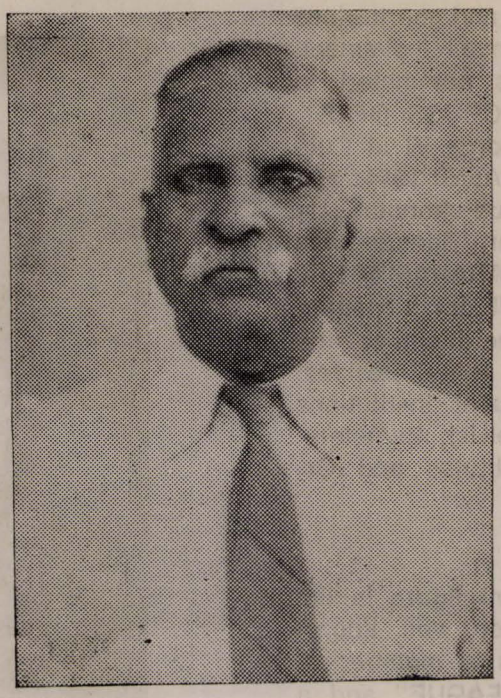
Don't Judge a man by his speech, for a parrot talks, and the tongue is but an instrument of sound.

Don't Judge a man by his failures in life, for many a man fails because he is too honest to succeed.

Don't Judge a man by the house he lives in for the lizard and the rat often inhabit the grandest of structures.

There is a difference between a man in Judaism and Judaism in man.

MOSES ABRAHAM JACOB GADKAR



Moses Abraham Jacob Gadkar, better known as "Simlawala Gadkar", was a very active, devoted and dynamic worker of the Bene-Israel Community. Even during the period he was cut off from the mainstream of Jewish communal life while he was posted at Simla, he did not cease to take interest in the community. He issued pamphlets from time to time and kept contact with the community in diverse other ways. This was perhaps one of the reasons he came to be known as "Simlawala Gadkar".

Later he was associated with the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue as its Secretary and also as its President; with the Sir Elly Kadoorie High School as Treasurer; and with the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans as Trustee and Secretary. Till 1928 under the Constitution of the School a separate franchise was provided for patrons and life members, who paid more than the minimum subscription and ordinary subscribers who paid the minimum subscription. When Mr. Jacob's party assumed power in 1928, with Mr. Solomon Moses, Solicitor, as its President, it amended the Constitution and abolished the discriminatory class membership.

During his tenure of Office as the Secretary of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, Mr. Jacob administered the institution well, kept the records upto-date and could at times reel off the names of the defaulters from memory.

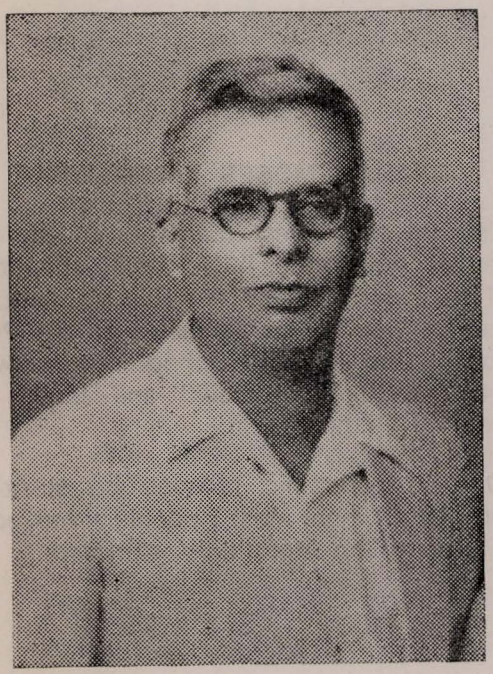
The late Mr. Jacob's activities extended beyond the community. He published ,Dharmopadesh', a fine and faithful translation into Marathi by the late Nath Mahadev of Dr. Mark's sermons. This earned Mr. Jacob great appreciation and compliments from the President, Eighth Bene-Israel Conference, the late Mrs. Abigael E. Moses.

MR. K. M. ELIJAH (Kamerlekar)

The late Mr. Moses Elijah Kamerlekar has rendered yeoman service to the orphans and destitutes. Long before the present Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans was established he had started a Home to house the orphans at Mazgaon known as "Beth Israel" in 1926. This Home was mainly maintained at his own expenses with some minimal amounts being contributed by others. Earlier he had distributed a pamphlet "Power of the Tithe" pleading that a general fund for the welfare of the community and the maintenance of the synagogues be established and every Bene-Israel should contribute 10% of his income as mentioned in our Bible towards this fund. In order to carry on this object he had even formed a Society known as "The Indian Bene-Israel Union". Unfortunately the response to his appeal was very poor and the scheme had to be abandoned.

An accountant by profession, Mr. Elijah kept a strict vigilant eye on the management and finances of various Bene-Israel institutions with which he was associated. He insisted on verifying the statements of accounts and balance sheets. It may be mentioned here that in those days Bombay Public Trust Act did not exist and accounts of the societies were audited by Honorary Auditors and not by Chartered Accountants. Perhaps many are not aware that the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans though constructed in 1924 did not admit orphans and destitutes for about 12 years thereafter. The person responsible for the admission of the orphans was none other than Mr. K. M. Elijah. He called upon the then existing trustees to admit the orphans and on their refusal, he alongwith Mr. Aaron B. Kandlekar and Mr. Benjamin Shirkolkar approached the court which not only compelled the trustees to accept the orphans but also made them resign as trustees. Six new trustees were appointed, three of whom represented the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and the remaining three trustees represented the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society. Under the agreement each of these institutions contributed Rs. 10,000/- and a certain amount per year for the expenses of the Home. When the Benevolent Society failed to contribute its share towards the expenses of the Home, Mr. Elijah moved the Court again to debar them from being represented on the Board of Trustees. Once again he succeeded.

It is people like Mr. Elijah who kept the wheels of the community moving while at the same time weeding out all malpractices to ensure clean administration.

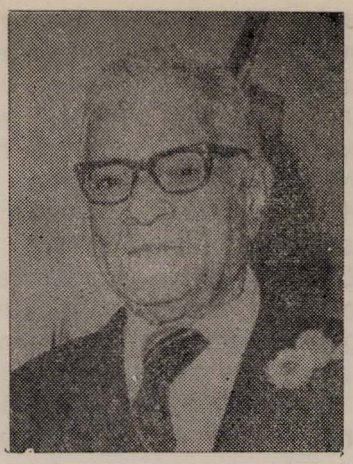


DAVID R. DAVID GADKAR

David had assisted in conducting High Holiday Prayers for a number of years at the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and had conducted Hebrew reading classes for the prospective Hazzans in and out of Bombay.

Abraham Lincoln advocated 'Ballot' but was killed by a 'Bullet'.

M. A. MOSES (Pingle)



There was hardly an institution in the community with which M. A. Moses was not associated.

He commenced communal and social work from 1917 when the first Bene-Israel Conference was held in Bombay in December of that year. And because of his keen interest in the educational field he was elected to the Managing Committee of the Education Fund at the Bene-Israel Conference session held in 1925. Ever since then he was always in the management of this important institution. He was the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer during 1932-34, Vice-President from 1960 to 1962 and President from 1963 to the middle of 1980. During this period, he was mainly responsible for the progress of the institution. In his youth days he was the General Secretary of the Israelite Brotherhood. It was the only social institution in the community and it was so popular that its branch was opened in Thane in 1918. Very few people knew that the late Mr. Moses was very good at organising games at picnics.

Mr. Moses was also on the Management of Sir Elly Kadoorie School. "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, Jewish Religious Union, the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes & Orphans, the Jewish Co-operative Bank, Central Jewish Board of India, the Haines Road and Grant Road Jewish Cemetery Trust, ORT India, etc. Among the secular institutions he was closely associated with the Bombay Vigilance Association, Social Service League, Social Workers Society, the National Institute of Personnel Management, the Children's Aid Society. The National Association for the Blind, The Maharashtra State Branch of Indian Council of Social Welfare, the Family Welfare Agency and the Nagpada Neighbourhood House.



ABRAHAM MOSES TALEGAWKAR

One of the oldest members of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, he is fondly remembered as "Talegawkar Master" by his numerous admirers. He was the Headmaster of the Primary Section of the Israelite School now known as "Sir Elly Kadoorie School" and taught there for over 43 years.

Due to economic reasons he started his career earlier than most people, immediately after passing the Marathi IV standard.

WORRY : Interest paid on troubles before it falls due.

MAJOR JACOB EZEKIEL (Talkar)

Major Jacob Ezekiel had taken a leading role in the affairs of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. He was an eloquent speaker both in English and Marathi. He was the President of the Synagogue on more than one occasion. He was also on the Managing Committee of the Sir Elly Kadoorie School.

Major Jacob Ezekiel took keen interest in St. John's Ambulance Brigade Jewish Division, of which he was the President for quite a few years. He was awarded a certificate, for having been elected a life member of the Bombay Branch of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, by the Bombay Government in 1937.

RAHAMIM BEN SAMUEL GADKAR

Rahamim Ben Samuel, popularly known as R. Ben Samuel, devoted his life for the welfare of his community and for the welfare of his colleagues working in the Central Railway. At an early age of twenty, he was one of the founder members of the "Israelite School Maccabeans" — ex-student's Association founded by the late Miss R. Reuben. The Maccabeans were responsible for organising Chanukah Week for eight days on the premises of the Israelite School and provided the School with furniture in the form of chairs, stage, ceiling fans, etc. He also worked on the Management of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. Being an ex-student of the only Bene-Israel School, he was one of those who used to go round from door to door collecting donations for the school building fund.



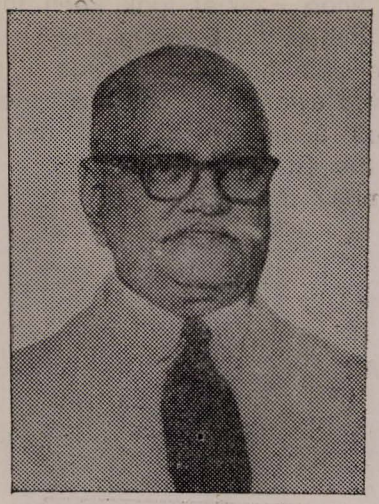
Due to partition of India in 1947, quite a few Bene-Israels fled to Bombay from Karachi. They had no roof over their heads. The leaders of the community, beyond paying lip sympathies, did not bother about their plight. One fine evening, R. Ben gathered those persons who were stranded on the road and housed them in the hall adjoining the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. The Synagogue Authorities complained to the Police, but the Police refused to interfere in the matter. For this bold action. R. Ben received the wrath of the Management of the Synagogue but stranded persons from Karachi profusely thanked him.

He was one of the leading members of his Union in his Office and fought for their legitimate rights. In order to brow beat him, he was got arrested by the Railway Authorities under the pretext that he was an active worker of the Communist Party of India. R. Ben was not a man to be threatened by such tactics. Finally the victory was his.

Such a selfless man passed away at a young age of 48, while he was the President of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

When the ship is sunk, everybody knows how it would have been saved — (Italian proverb).

JOSEPH N. REUBEN



A true and enlightened Bene-Israel, a veteran Mason, who took Masonary seriously, a selfless worker in the cause of education and uplift of our less fortunate brethren in the community, the late Mr. Joseph N. Reuben was a very active participant in community affairs.

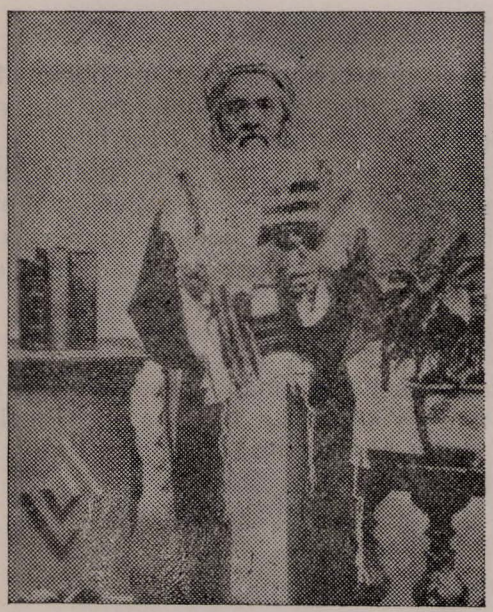
Jovial, large hearted and generous, J. N. Reuben was always ready with a helping hand for whosoever came to him for help.

He was actively associated with the Bene-Israel Conference for which he worked as the Secretary, General Secretary and finally the President. He was also associated with the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund and was its President from 1949 till his passing away in 1963.

J. N. Reuben took active interest in the Co-operative movement. He helped to organise quite a few Mills Employees Co-operative Credit Societies. He was also the President of Jewish Co-operative Bank.

As a fervent and enthusiastic Freemason, J.N.Reuben had a superb record. He was a founder member and Past Master of Lodge 'Radiance', Lodge 'Star of Rampur' and Lodge 'Raza Jubilee'. He was the Past Junior Grand Warden (G.L.I.), Past Grand Steward & Member of the Regional Grand Lodge of Western India, Board of General Purposes, Grand Lodge of India and also Representative of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel and the Grand Lodge of India.

SHALOM JOSEPH PENKAR



Very few Bene Israel Synagogues in India can boast of having with them Hazzans who not only know to read Hebrew fluently but also possess sufficient knowledge about Jewish religion. For want of record, the names of Hazzans from 1796 are not known. One Solomon was the Hazzan prior to 1835. From 1835 to 1871 Elijah (Eloba) Joseph Rajpurkar was the Hazzan and his son Reuben was appointed Hazzan from 1872 (As a mark of respect to Eloba appointment of a successor was postponed for a year).

Like Reuben who served as a Samash initially, Shalom Joseph Penkar also served as Samash before his elevation to the office of Hazzanim. He was appointed as Hazzan on May 10, 1888 and served the community with all his heart and soul. He had a melodious voice. It is said it was a real pleasure to hear him recite "Kol Nidre" and "Selihoths". It is said that there used

Meet thy neighbour, talk with him and there wilo be peace — Sanskrit proverb.

to be a keen competition between him and Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar in reciting "Selihoths". He conducted the prayers at the Centenary Celebrations of the Synagogue held on 12th and 13th May 1896.

In those early days, Hazzans and even Samashes possessing a thorough knowledge of Hebrew and religion were available.

To-day it is very difficult to get the services of a good Hazzan. A Samash may be available, but not of the type of those good old days.

ELIJAH BENJAMIN GADKAR (Pune)

Can one believe that at the age of 86 Elijah Benjamin Gadkar, the grand old man of the community, is still active in and outside the community? In 1983, he was felicitated by Poona Jaycee's Peace Committee and have taken him on its All-India Religion Committee to bring about harmony among the various communities. E. B. Gadkar was among the eight eminent senior scholars, social workers and spiritual leaders who was felicitated on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of Sharada Dnyanapeetham which coincided with Rishi Panchami on September 11, 1983. This was organized by Sharada Dnyanapeetham and 21 other educational, social and newspaper organizations. The Sharada Dnyanapeetham is publishing a volume of 'Mahatteche Man-danda' in which Elijah Benjamin Gadkar's life sketch will be included along with other senior scholars.

Gadkar is also nominated on the ad hoc committee of Bharatiya Dharma Vidyapeeth whose aims and objects are to work for peace, harmony, brotherhood, tolerance, respect and love among all religions. The Vidyapeeth mainly concentrates on guiding and inspiring youth, knowing that it is the youth who can by their daring deeds bring about peace and understanding among the nations and remould the world to their heart's desire.

He was born and brought up in Bombay. He is very proud of his Alma Mater — the Israelite High School, now known as Sir Elly Kadoorie School, where he studied from 1905 to 1916. He often recalls the good old days when he had the good fortune to study under Revered Teachers like the late Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, the late B. D. Shah, the late Mr. Dhurandhar, the late Mr. Abraham



Moses Talegaokar and the late Mr. Isaac Nehemiah, who was a Hebrew Teacher in the School and Hazzan in the "Gate of Mercy", Synagogue.

Apart from participating in the activities of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue of which he was a member, he also took an active part in the activities of the Israelite Brotherhood and St. John's Ambulance Bridge, Jewish Division, for several years.

On his transfer to Ahmedabad (he retired from Posts and Telegraph Department in 1953) he involved himself in the social and cultural activities of the Bene Israels there. He was on the Managing Comittee of "Magen Abraham" Synagogue and was one of the pioneer members of its Building Fund.

He is a sincere and devoted worker. Assign him a task and he will put his heart and soul into it till its completion. In Pune where he spent his major part of his career he has been taking an active part in the religious social and cultural activities. He is well-read

Advice is like snow, the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon and deeper it sinks in the mind.

in Hebrew and has a melodious voice even at the age of 86 that compels response. It is indeed a privilege and pleasure to hear him recite the prayers, which create a touching atmosphere of complete devotion to the Almighty. He has taken a keen interest in the affairs of the "Succath Shelomo" Synagogue and was its President, Secretary & Treasurer. At present he is the President of the Succath Shelomo Synagogue Trust. He also worked on the building committee of Novar Memorial Hall (This hall serves as a guest house). He is one of the managing committee members of the Jewish Welfare Association, Pune.

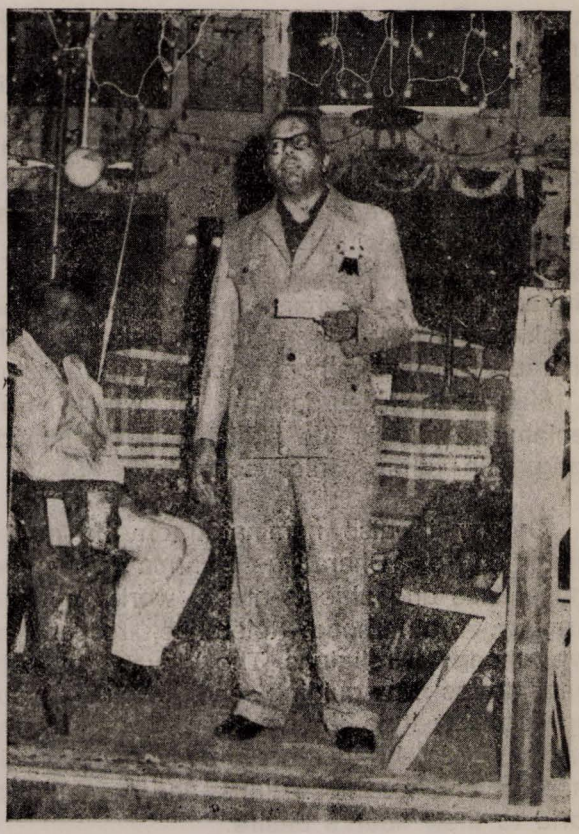
Owing to emmigration the number of Bene-Israels has dwindled down to as low as 6,000 in whole of India. (Once upon a time there used to be 25,000) Consequently there is a shortage of Hazzans, Samash, Mohels and even persons to conduct prayers on Sabbath. Gadkar has an impressive record of having trained some youths for Mazzanim, Samash and Mohels.

ALBERT ISAAC TALEGAWKAR

Date of Birth : 17th July, 1939.

Qualifications :

B.A. (Hons.) LL.B. Attorney-at-Law (Solicitor) and Advocate, High Court, Bombay and Advocate, Supreme Court of India. Partner of a reputed and leading firm of Solicitors Messrs. Bhaishanker Kanga & Girdharlal.



Mr. Albert is a Solicitor for State Trading Corporation of India Ltd., Minerals & Metals Trading Corporation of India Ltd., Indian Institute of Technology and many other Government and Semi-Government bodies. He was an active member of the Managing Committee of Magen Hassidim Synagogue, Sir Elly Kadoorie School and Managing Trustee of the School Estate Trust. He was the President of the Gate of Mercy Synagogue. He is the President of the Bombay Zionist Association. He was a delegate to the World Zionist Congress. He is the Executive Member of the World Confederation of the United Zionists and is a Dy. Member of the World Zionists Organisation. He has bagged individual prizes in Inter School and Inter Collegiate Elocution and dramatic competitions in St. Xavier's College and also bagged the best workers prize. He did his primary education from Sir Elly Kadoorie School and further school education from the Sheth Anandilal Poddar High School. He did his B.A. (Hons) with Sociology and Anthropology from St. Xavier's College. He did his Law from the Government Law College. He is the grandson of Late Abraham Moses Talegawkar popularly known in the Jewish Community as "TALEGAWKAR MASTER" and is the son of the Late Isaac Abraham Talegawkar, well known for his good work for the Jewish Community.

Like his father Isaac who was on the Managing Committee of the Bene Israel Conference Education Fund for a number of years till he passed away in 1983, Albert is also on the M. C. of the Education Fund since 1963.

A person eager to argue with the speaker at a meeting is perhaps the only one listening carefully and thinking.

THE BENE-ISRAEL

Why? Where? and Whence?

By D. J. SAMSON, Esq. L.C.E.

(Excerpts from the three articles that had appeared in "THE ISRAELITE" — a monthly magazine, in its April, May and June 1917 issues)

I believe the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came to India through the ports of Elath and Ezion-Geber at the head of the Gulf of Akaba**, between 740 and 500 B.C., by sea from Palestine in order to escape persecution. (**Gulf of Akaba is on the Eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula, the gulf on the West being called the Gulf of Suez).

My chief reasons in support of **the date** are as follows :-

(1) Our immediate forefathers always called themselves Bene-Israel and detested being called "Yehoodies" (Jews) i.e. the descendants of the tribe of Judah.

It will be noticed from the Bible, that after the death of King Solomon there were two kingdoms, one of Judah and the other of Israel, and that these two were very often at variance with each other. The fact of our ancestors detesting the appellation of Yahoodies tends to show, that they belonged to ten tribes of Israel, who were carried away into captivity by the King of Assyria about the year 740 B.C. (I Ch. V 26, II Kings XVI 7, II Kings XVII 6).

(2) Dr. Wilson considered it remarkable that the name Judah for males, was not to be found among the Bene-Israel (Dr. Wilson's "Lands of the Bible", 1847, p. 668). This fact further illustrates the abhorrence which the Bene-Israel had to the tribe of Judah.

(3) Dr. Wilson in his "Lands of the Bible" states that he was informed that the name Reuben was the most common among the Bene-Israel (Lands of the Bible, II Volume p. 668). This fact is significant and tends to show that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel belonged to the tribe of Reuben (one of the ten tribes of Israel, whose portion was bordering on the East of the Northern half of the Dead Sea). In this connection reference is invited to I Chronicles, V, 26, wherein it is stated that the King of Assyria carried away even the Reubenites into captivity. The Biblical Chronology given to this event the date of 740 B.C. or 721 B.C. according to 11 Kings, XVII, 6.

(4) The Bene-Israel considered prophet Elijah as their TRIBAL SAINT; they revere him above any other prophet, and invoke his blessings on all festive and joyous occasions; in fact vows are made in his name. In this connection it will be remembered, that there is a tradition among them that prophet Elijah had revealed himself to the ancestors of the Bene-Israel on a mountain near Khandala a village in Konkan (not the hill-station of Khandala on the Railway on the way to Poona). It is from this village that Khandalkars derive their surname. In connection with this peculiar tradition reference is requested to I Kings Chapter XVIII 19-39 and Chapter XIX 8 and II Kings 1.9.

(5) It was a peculiar custom of the Bene-Israel to burn frankincense, not Dhup or camphor, at their ceremonies, and even now this custom is followed by some. A peculiar reference to this is found in II Kings XVI, 3-4 where the King of Judah is described as following in the foot-steps of the Children of Israel in burning incense in the high places.

(6) Till recently the making of the Nazarite vow was common among the Bene-Israel. In the present time we find occasional instances of this vow.

(7) Dr. Wilson found the name Esther, which is a favourite one among the Bagdadi Jews, did not occur among the Bene-Israel (Lands of the Bible p. 669). This incident shows beyond a shadow of doubt, that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel had left Palestine before the time when the original drama of Queen Esther was actually enacted in or about 500 B.C.

The one exclusive sign of thorough knowledge is the power of teaching — (Aristotle).

(8) The Bene-Israel seems to have been ignorant of the fast of Tish-a-be-Ab which commemorates the two destructions of the temple. Dr. Wilson says :— "Some of the Jews of London, who lately opened a correspondence with the Bene-Israel have exhorted them strictly to observe it, to which for many years they had not been disinclined, having been admonished to the same effect by the Cochin Jews (pp. 673-674).

(9) The Bene-Israel were ignorant of the festival of "Hannuccah" i.e. the Feast of Dedication, which was introduced by Ezra and Nehemiah after the rebuilding of the second Temple in 515 B.C. according to the Biblical chronology of Ezra, VI, 16. The Bene-Israel have no vernacular name for this festival.

(10) The absence of the Scroll of the Law among the Bene-Israel tends to support the theory, that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel had left Palestine before the discovery of the Scrolls of the Law by Ezra and Nehemiah as described in a legend. It is also important to note that the Bene-Israel were ignorant of the traditions related in the Talmuds .

(11) There are about 130 surnames among the Bene-Israel, which must have taken several hundred years before they were stereotypes; and when the last surname was taken there must have been very many families in existence. This fact coupled with the last tends to show, that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel had been living in India for several centuries before the important towns of Alibag and Revdanda were founded. (There are no surnames "Alibagkar" and "Revdandkar" among the Bene-Israels).

(12) There is a tradition among the Bene-Israel that their ancestors came to India from Northwards several centuries ago, and that they were the survivors of those who were shipwrecked near Navgaon. Dr. Wilson states :- "Their ancestors, they say, came to the coast of India from a country to the Northward, about 1600 years ago". (Lands of the Bible [illegible] p. 667).

(13) There were facilities for travel to the North Konkan ports in those days. King Solomon sent a navy from Ezion-Geber, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, to fetch gold, almug trees, and precious stones; I Kings, IX, 26-28; I King X, 11-12; and that once in three years his navy brought gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. I Kings, X 22. There has been much speculation about the location of Ophir. The Rev. Mr. Lord following some former writers identifies Ophir with Sopara which is now a neglected village near Bassein. (The Jews in India and the Far East pp. 50-51). Father Vaeth S. J. describing the ancient ports of North Konkan states that Sopara had run a long and a glorious career from the year 1000 B.C. or even before. (Page 6 of his pamphlet). Cheul, which is only a few miles south of Bombay, was also an important port of North Konkan for some period prior to and at the beginning of the Christi. Era.

(14) The religious observances and ceremonies of the Bene-Israel used to be (a) Sabbath, on account of which they were styled "Shanvar Telies" (i.e. oil-pressers observing Saturday), (b) the dietary laws prescribed in Levitcus, (c) circumcision of their male children on the 8th day, (d) the feast of Passover called by them "Ansi Dhakacha San" during which period a sour sauce called 'Anas' (which was the only leaven used by them) was kept aside. (e) the Atonement day called "Darfalnicha San" i.e. the feast of closing the door.

(15) The Bene-Israel would not have been ignorant of the fast of Tish-a-be-Ab and the feast of Purim.

(16) The Bene-Israel would not have confined themselves almost entirely, to the names found in the Bible up to the destruction of the first Temple, but would have had a variety of names as are met with among the present Bagdad Jews. Dr. Wilson says that the names Hezkiel and Daniel (derived from personages who figured in history about 500 B.C.) were current among the Bene-Israel in his time (about 1847). But there is nothing to show that they were also current among the Bene-Israel at the time David Rahabi worked among them.

(17) The old system of sacrifices (remnants of which are still found among the Bene-Israel) which had been entirely stopped after the destruction of the 2nd temple in 70 A.D. would not have been found among the Bene-

---

Smile at people — it takes 72 muscles to frown; only 14 to smile.

Israel. The peculiar custom of burning frankincenses at important ceremonial occasions would not have been found among them.

(18) Some other peculiar customs and some peculiar phrases would not have been found among the Bene-Israel. An example of a peculiar phrase is ..... (i.e. to wash the hands of some persons) meaning to feast some people. This phrase so far as I am aware, is found chiefly among the Bene-Israel. This phrase has a peculiar reference to II Kings III ii. where Elisha is described as being the person who poured water on the hands of Elijah. This phrase illustrates the peculiar respect which the Bene-Israel have for prophets Elijah and Elisha, who prophesied mostly among the tribes of Israel. In passing I may state that it is very important to collect such peculiar and archaic phrases which are, or used to be found among the Bene-Israel, as they will ultimately supply one of the links in forging the chain of the true nationality of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel and the time of their coming to India.

The ten tribes of Israel were carried into captivity by the King of Assyria, and placed in Halah and in Habor by the river Gozan, and in the city of the Medes in 740 B.C. according to Chronicles I-V 26, or 721 B.C. according II Kings, XVII 6. The tribe of Judah was carried into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnessar in 588 B.C., II Kings XXV, 11, 12, and 21 and 11 Chronicles XXXVII 20.

It has also been pointed out that it was the custom in those days to carry away into captivity not only the mighty men, and men who were apt for war, but to carry away also the craftsmen, possibly because they might be able to assist in the industrial advancement of the country to which they were carried, 2 Kings XXIV 15-16. It is to this custom, we have got to look for a reason of the escape of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel to India.

In or about 742 B.C., Rezin King of Syria, or Pekah, King of Israel joined hands and came up to Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, the King of Judah. At that time Rezin, King of Syria took Elath (the port at the head of the Gulf of Akaba) and drove away the Jews (Yehoodim in the Hebrew text) from there. Then it was that Ahaz, the King of Judah bought over Tilgathpilnesser King of Assyria, with gold and silver he took from the Temple at Jerusalem. The King of Assyria, then attacked the King of Syria in the rear, and took Damascus, the Chief City of the King of Syria. The Siege of Jerusalem was thus raised, and the King of Judah was saved, II Kings XVI 5-9. The same event is described somewhat differently in II Ch : XXVIII 5-21. There it is described how the King of Israel slew 1,20,000 men of the tribe of Judah, and carried a large number of men, women and children into captivity, but released them soon after at the instance of prophet Obed; it is also described there how Ahaz bought over the King of Assyria.

It is important to note that the port of Elath which is about 5 miles (8 Km.) from Ezion-geber was wrested from the hands of the King of Judah, and was occupied by the Syrians who were allies of the King of Israel.

In or about 730 B.C. Shalmaneser King of Assyria invaded the territory of the King of Israel and subdued it. II Kings XVII. Six years thereafter the King of Assyria having found conspiracy in Israel invaded their country, and after 3 years siege took Samaria the capital of the King of Israel, and overran the whole of his territory, and in 721 B.C. carried the children of Israel into captivity, II Kings XVII 6 and XVIII 9-11.

A reference to a Biblical map of Palestine and the surrounding countries is necessary to follow this subject. It will be noticed from it that the ports of Elath and Ezion-geber were at the head of the gulf of Akaba within a distance of about 5 miles of each other, and that they were about 150 miles (241 km.) from the territory occupied by the Reubenites. It will also be seen from it that between the territory of the Reubenites and the head of the gulf of Suez there was a desert; in order to avoid this desert the Reubenites would have had to go past the ports of Elath and Ezion-geber, or to go through the territory owned by the King of Judah. It will also be seen from the map that the distance from the territory occupied by the Reubenites to the head of the gulf of Suez was about 220 miles (354 km.) as the crow flies.

Call people by name — the sweetest music to anyone's ears is the sound of his name.

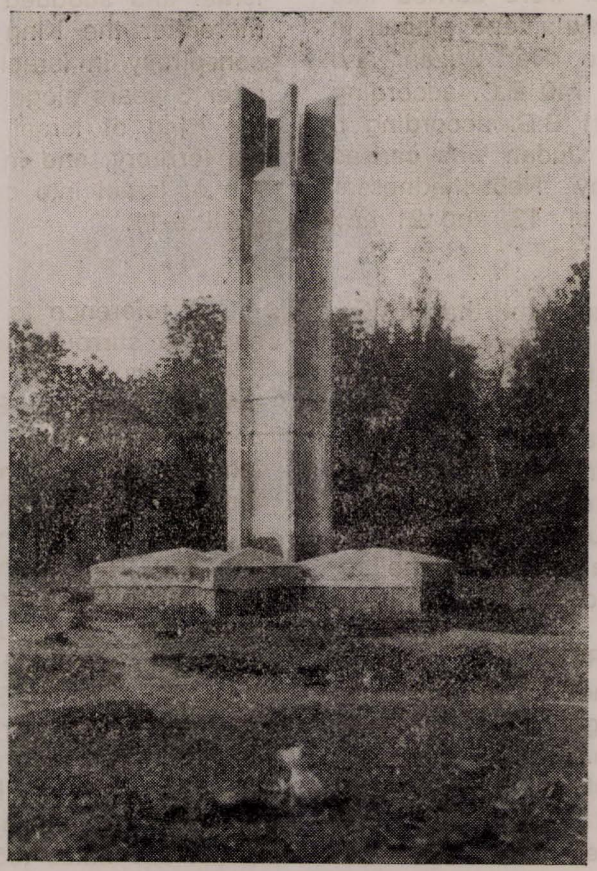
If therefore the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were mostly Reubenites, as suggested by me, and if they escaped being carried away into captivity by the King of Assyria in 721 B.C., then the most convenient place from which they could make their escape was from the ports of Elath and Ezion-Geber because the King of Assyria had over-run the whole of the territory north of the land occupied by them. They could not go eastward because there was the Syrian desert.

In considering the probability of these fugitives coming to Indian shores we must remember that Jewish sailors of Elath and Ezion-geber of those times must have known the way to India, as King Solomon has obtained gold, silver, Almug-trees, ivory, apes and peacocks from "Ophir which as stated last time has been identified with "Sopara" near Bassein. Since the time of Solomon, trade between Palestine and Sopara must have been kept up. Some of the Jewish sailors who had visited "Sopara" must have carried news to their brethren in Palestine, that Indian princes were tolerant as regards religious views. It seems probable that the fugitive ancestors of the Bene-Israel must have sailed from the ports of Elath and Ezion-geber to Sopara or Cheul, which were then ports of first rate importance in the hope of escaping bondage and religious persecution.

The fact that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were ship-wrecked near Navgaon shows, that they were bound for a port, which was of first rate importance at the time of their coming.

It is possible, that a number of those that ieft Palestine with the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were craftsmen, who fled from Palestine to escape being carried away into captivity by the Assyrian Kings to Babylonia, and had their ship not been wrecked off the shores of Navgaon, we might have found many craftsmen among the earliest settlers. It is possible that a careful excavation of the two mounds at Navgaon, under the guidance of experts, will reveal some implements of old, which might assist us in deciding whether the immigrants were craftsmen or not. It is significant to note that the Bene-Israel carpenters have been known to be experts in their trade.

At the meeting of the Jamat of "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held on January 24, 1926, it passed a resolution voting Rs. 450/- for payment to the Collector for diversion of the cart-track and removal of the encrochment, and Rs. 1,500/- for the completion of the compound wall of Navgaon cemetery.



MONUMENT AT NAVGAON CEMETERY

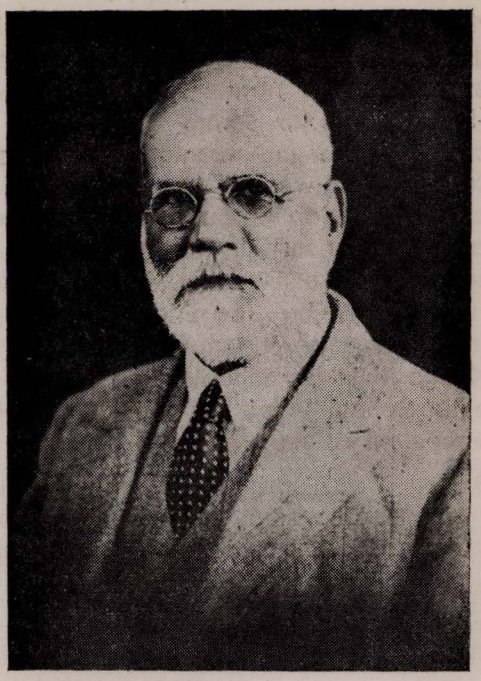
There is a tradition among the Bene-Israels that their ancestors who landed in India were ship-wrecked about two thousand years ago and that except for the seven couples, others were drowned and their bodies were washed ashore, and buried in the ancient cemetery.

Be genuinely interested in other people — you can like everybody if you really try.

EZRA REUBEN,

B.A. LL.B.

Ezra Reuben was perhaps the first Bene-Israel to be successful in the Arts and Law graduation examinations. It is indeed creditable that inspite of several difficulties, he persued his education. Due to economic condition of his parents they could not afford to burn oil lamps continuously at home. Reuben therefore used to study under the street lamps and also walk long distances to attend to his school and later college.



After graduation he took up Legal Practice for a short time and then was appointed as a Judicial Officer. He retired as a Chief Judicial Officer of the Junagad State. Reuben's family is one of the few families in the Community that has produced eminent personalities. His eldest son Solomon after passing the M.A. Examination, took up Government service and soon rose to the post of "Superintendent of Land Records" in Thane. Unfortunately he passed away on November 3, 1918 at the age of 27 years, being one of the victims of the Influenza epidemic in those days. His daughter Rebecca was the first among the Bene-Israel to top the list in the Matriculation Examination in 1905 and the second Bene-Israel lady to pass graduation examination. She devoted her entire life for the cause of education. His son David is the only Indian Jew to be successful in I.C.S. Examination, which was considered very prestigeous.

He was the President of the third Bene-Israel Conference and after retirement he was an Honorary Teacher in Sir Elly Kadoorie School. He has donated a cottage in Matheran, a Hill Station, to the Israelite School Maccabeans for the benefit of the Bene-Israel Community.

DR. A. S. ERULKAR,

M.D. (London)

The first Bene-Israel to have passed M.D. Examination, standing Second in the University.

The late Dr. Erulkar, was the first Bene-Israel to obtain his M.D. from the London University. A brilliant student throughout school and college career; he stood second in the M.D. Exam., no mean achievement for an Indian in London. He was later elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, London.

Yet he preferred to return to India and serve his countrymen. As a Physician he was well-known not only in Bombay but also in the whole country. In fact he was physician to the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhiji. His service to humanity did not end with only attending to the rich or higher-ups. The poor and the down-trodden and the economically backward people also received equal attention. They knew that he would never distinguish between them and the others. He was charitable

You live only once. But if you work it right, once is enough — Fred Allen.

by nature and refrained from taking fees from the poor.

He believed firmly that charity begins at Home and has done much for the community. In 1918 an epidemic of Influenza swept Bombay, claiming many precious lives. The "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue decided to open a free dispensary on its premises to render medical aid to poor Bene-Israels, but for some reasons the resolution could not be implemented immediately. So, Dr. Erulkar who was a member of the Hindu Medical Association persuaded them to open a temporary dispensary in the Israelite School Compound. Several Bene-Israels took advantage of it without feeling the pinch to their purses. Dr. Erulkar was on the management of the Sir Elly Kadoorie High School (then known as the "Israelite School") for several years. He was also President of the School.

During the World War-II when European Jews, some of whom were doctors came to india to escape Nazi persecution. Indian doctors objected to their stay here on the plea that it would affect their profession. But Dr. Erulkar pleaded on their behalf and convinced the Indian National Congress on the wisdom of letting them stay here.

Dr. Erulkar was the eldest son of Dr. Solomon Abraham Erulkar of Ahmedabad, who was mainly responsible for building the Synagogue in Ahmedabad, which has been named as "Magen Abraham".

Dr. A. S. Erulkar took active part in the All India Israelite League and was one of its Presidents. The League was responsible for the starting of the Jewish Co-operative Bank. He used to contribute articles to the Journal, "THE ISRAELITE", which was published by his younger brother, Barrister David S. Erulkar. Special mention must be made of one of his articles which appeared in March-April 1921 issue on the subject of Anti-Semetism. Dr. Erulkar was a staunch nationalist.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY of Dr. JERUSHA J. JHIRAD

THE FIRST WOMAN TO SECURE GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP MEANT FOR MEN ONLY (1914) AND THE FIRST INDIAN CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, CAMA AND ALBLESS HOSPITAL (1928)

FAMILY CIRCLE :

My great-grandfather Sardar Bahadur Solomon Balaji Jhiradkar, was one of those who served in the British Army during the Indian Mutiny (1857) and in Abyssinian War. In recognition of his meritorious Service he was awarded the "Order of the British India" Medal and also land at Poona about 120 miles inland from Bombay. This was our ancestral home for a few generations till about 60 years ago. A Bene-Israel Synagogue now sanctifies these grounds. We feel particularly happy as our grandfather and later an uncle, used to conduct regular Sabbath and High Holiday services in our large hall. Of course, they had acquired a Torah Scroll.



My mother's grandfather Subedar Samuel Moses Nagavkar had also served under the British Army and won several medals. He also ser-

Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.
— James Baldwin.

ved in the Abyssinian war. He lived to a good old age and we children used to play many pranks on him. The family had property in Thana, about 40 miles from Bombay. The Synagogue in Thana was built under his able and vigilant supervision.

My mother's father Abraham Samuel Nagavkar was the first graduate in Engineering (1871) in the Community. He took up civil engineering and served in Mysore State (South India) with distinction. He had a large family and thus we used to have good gathering of aunts, uncles and cousins, particularly during High Holidays, when my father conducted the services. My mother's youngest sister Mrs. Leahbai D. Solomon was the first woman graduate in our community, followed by my cousin. I am the third, but the first woman in the community to take up medicine.

In our family we were four sisters and three brothers. One brother died young. My father was studying at the medical college in Bombay when he was married at the age of 18 years. My mother was only 14, and as the family started arriving, father had to give up his studies. Just about that time our maternal grandfather had acquired a Coffee Estate in Mysore State and our father was given charge of it. We had wonderful, enjoyable times at the estate, roaming through the estate, chewing ripe coffee berries, paddling in a stream nearby and watching the crushing process and so on — the estate being quite isolated even from the nearest village and ours the only family, except for the labourers. All went off well for years when suddenly the planter's pest overran all the surrounding plantations as well as ours. Our circumstances changed, and father had to seek service in order to maintain the family. He went up north and secured employment in the railway. Our mother, never very strong but most hard-working among her sisters, contracted rheumatoid arthritis and was eventually crippled and remained so for about 20 years, but always ever so cheerful and helpful. Many British women friends would come over to be cheered by her! We passed through difficult times but I was happy to give our mother real comfort and joy when I began to earn. During our schooling days, father could just manage to meet the educational expenses of my brother, a year and half older than me. My younger sister Leahbai was kept at home to look after mother and younger brother. It was only after my brother and I qualified that she could take up the study of fine art, even going abroad after some years. I was already a boarder when mother took ill.

My two sisters were married young. My elder brother took up medicine along with me and spent a number of years in charge of a railway hospital. My younger sister, in addition to art, had a predilection for social service, devoting much time and thought — working among young girls from the lower middle class families, mothers and children as also the elderly people. Among my nieces, there have been three doctors, two of them now in Israel. A nephew a surgeon, had also settled in Israel.

MY SCHOLASTIC CAREER :

For my school education I was sent to a well recognised High School for girls at Poona where I continued until I matriculated. (I could not afford private tuition in Hebrew so took up Sanskrit, the second language taught in School, even winning the Sanskrit scholarship for women at matriculation). I won enough scholarships, to enable me to go through the medical course. Soon after I qualified in 1912 and set up a general practice in Bombay.

THE FIRST WOMAN TO GET GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP :

Early in 1914 a friend suggested that I should apply for a Tata Loan Scholarship in order to go abroad. On this being sanctioned, I prepared to proceed to London in May 1914. Just before I sailed, a friend from the Secretariat brought a message for me to apply for the Government of India Scholarship — apparently a Councillor had noted my career and wished to put up my case. Every year at college I used to see the Government Notice for post-graduate scholarship abroad, open only to men. Anyway, within less than six months, I was agreeably surprised and relieved when Government sanction came, I being the first woman to be given this Scholarship. I registered at the London School of Medicine for women and started studying, first for the M.B.B.S., as required. Then came the hurdle — I was keen

on taking the M.D. in Obs & Gyn. of London University and this meant a resident post of at least six months. London was very conservative in those days. Medical women were not admitted to other colleges or hospitals except the Royal Free and the Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson Hospitals, and it was natural that British Women would get first preference. Howevre, when the First World War broke out, medical men were called up, and Britist women were welcomed at the General Hospitals. I was thus fortunate enough to be taken on at the E.G.A. Hospital, where I spent nearly two years, receiving valuable experience in practical obstetrics and gynaecology under Miss Chadburn, who was very sympathetic and permitted me even to perform abdominal operations. In 1918 I was house-surgeon at the Maternity Hospital, in Birmingham.

COMMENCEMENT OF MY CAREER:

I qualified M.D. in 1919 and returned to India. There was still the last wish of my day-dream to be realised. Dr. Turner Watts was in-charge of the Cama Hospital. I offered honorary services but there was no such opening at that time.

I set up my consulting practice in Bombay. In 1920 I was asked to fill a leave vacancy in the Obstetric and Gynaecological department at Lady Hardings Medical College and Hospital in Delhi, the only one in India reserved for Women students. While there, I was offered a post at Bangalore (South India) in-charge of the Maternity Hospital. This was quite a small hospital with facilities only for obstetric work — no operation theatre. However, arrangements were made for me to take cases requiring major surgery to the General Hospital. My stay in Bangalore meant much uphill task. I had to organise A.N.C. — P.N.C. proper intranatal care as well as Child Welfare Clinics. Social workers in Bangalore got interested and we formed a Child Welfare Council to Organise clinics and feeding centres. Donors interested in the hospital came forward so that we could have a model labour-ward (puerperal sepsis was rife in those days), an operation theatre and a gynaecological ward.

FULFILMENT OF MY AMBITION :

I left Bangalore at the end of 1924 and returned to Bombay. Fortunately honorary posts had been sanctioned at the Cama Hospital and I was accepted (1925). Dr. Turner-Watts retired in 1928 and I was appointed medical officer, the first Indian to be given this post. A real fulfilment of my childhood Day-Dream. While I was yet at School, I got news of my second married sister's illness in Bombay. She was barely 17 years old. She had a premature delivery of twins and was seriously ill (1902). A relative of my father happened to visit Poona and I met her. She related how ill my sister had been and how she had been treated and her life saved by Dr. Bensor, M.D. (Lond.) and in-charge of the Cama Hospital. This struck my fancy and I wished I could also be a doctor, take the M.D. (Lond.) and be in-charge of the Cama Hospital (one of the first hospitals for women under Government, staffed entirely by women) a dream I never mentioned to anyone. I was only eleven years old at that time and my schooling was entirely dependent on merit scholarships, standing first in the first class throughout.

I had an up-hill task here too. Work all around increased. Quite shortly, resident posts were doubled and even trebled and more honorary posts created (Cama Hospital resident posts are recognised for post-graduate degree at the Bombay University). Much organisation had to be carried out. A.N.C., P.N.C. were stabilised as also child welfare. Special investigations for cases of sterility were started and work in the labour ward regularised, particularly as often cases were admitted late in labour. Osteomalasia was common, especially in purdah women (mostly Muslim) and it was quite a task to persuade men-folk to consent caesarean section. Once a Muslim woman was admitted of an evening, with suspicion of ectopic gestation. On my arrival, I was met by an irate husband, who raised his thick stick, threatening to kill me if I touched his wife: I just smiled and told him I must first see her. The patient fortunately was sub-acute and we could temporise. However, during the night the wife persuaded her husband to yield and was operated in the morning. About a year later this

woman developed similar symptoms. The couple rushed up to the hospital and requested that she be operated immediately !

EXTENTION TO THE HOSPITAL :

A number of women post-graduates came from different parts of India and needed residential accommodation. All round work seemed to have increased. Necessary extensions were carried out : spacious outpatient department on hospital grounds, a pathological laboratory and diagnostic X'rays, extension of quarters for accommodating the nursing staff, and for residents, as also a post graduate hostel (the first of its kind in Bombay).

Most of these extensions were possible through donations and contributions, during the Golden Jubilee of the Hospital, celebrated in 1936. Lady Beaumont, wife of the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, was our Chairman. Many leading British and Indian ladies volunteered to organise attractive and entertaining functions. A number of ordinary women, attending our out-patients brought donations. A Muslim patient handed me Rupees One Hundred ! What appreciation and gratitude ! In England Drs. Benson and Turner-Watts (Rtd. M.Os of C.H.) along with other retired women brought out a brochure for the occasion. I did feel encouraged and thankful. The year following I was awarded the M.B.E. I am sure Lady Beaumount was responsible.

One of my Assistant Honoraries, in the early years of my tenure at Cama Hospital was Dr. Jamnabai Dhurandhar (later Desai). A few years after she retired from honorariship, she had severe attack of enteric fever and developed intestinal haemorrhage requiring intensive treatment including blood transfussion - I spent that night near her and again a few days later when she was sinking. I wonder if this solicitude of mine made Dr. Desai to walk into my office at the hospital with a cheque for Rupees One Lac. I explained to him the plan I had in mind for having a modern Aseptic operation theatre above an Administrative Block, between Cama & Albless hospitals. This building actually materialised after my retirement. A well sculptured statue of Jamnabai adorns the entrance.

Another addition I had planned was a separate ward for new-born, as I had noticed too much of handling of these by patient's relatives. I wrote to Dr. Miss Cama, a relative of the donor of Cama Hospital and one of the first Indian women to qualify from Grant Medical College. She very graciously gave a donation and this ward was also built after my retirement.

DR. JHIRAD POST GRADUATE LIBRARY :

Cama Hospital had hardly a library to speak of when I took over. I was keen on keeping up with the times and apart from subscribing to B.E. Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology as well as the American Journal, I would purchase some of the latest publications. These I would lend to my residents and post-graduates until I could persuade Government to sanction grants atleast for subscribing to the journals. My residents and post-graduates were really appreciative of my interest in them. This is evident, as some of them, now senior honoraries, got together funds and Government sanction to open a Post-Graduate Library at the Cama Hospital to be named after me, at my eightieth birthday (1971). When I retired in 1947, I had endowed a post-graduate scholarship in my mother's memory.

BIHAR EARTHQUAKE :

I recollect an incident which gave me joy during my tenure at the Cama Hospital. The State of Bihar in the north was struck by a severe earthquake in 1934. Indian Congress workers took a lead in rescue work, their leader was Dr. Rajendra Prasad (later the first President of Independent India). One night I got a telegram from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, requesting an immediate despatch of six medical women to the quake-affected area, to work among purdah women. I was puzzled. First thing in the morning, I phoned up three senior medical women to meet me. One of them, Dr. Kashibai Nayrange, a popular general practitioner, immediately volunteered to lead the delegation. I went to hospital and to one of my wards for my routine round. A group of residents and post-graduates were awaiting me. I just passed round the wire and to my gratification, in less than half an hour my five volun-

Appreciation is like an insurance policy premium. It has to be renewed now and then.

teers came up to me. The group left the same after-noon and spent more than a month in various villages.

UNIVERSITY EXAMINER :

I have been examiner for the M.D. at Bombay, Madras and Poona Universities for many years. I have worked on the Senate and Medical Faculty at Bombay, Poona and Baroda Universities. I was appointed on the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of I.R.F.A. (now I.C.M.R.) for years and was its Chairman for several years. I undertook investigations into Maternal Mortality in Bombay 1937-38, and brought out a report. Besides this, I have written many papers, Ectopic Gestation and Varico-Vaginal Fistulae amongst others. Puerperal Sepsis was a nightmare at Bangalore and in Bombay, but I was glad that near the time of my retirement this was almost wiped out. I was invited to give orations at Bombay, Baroda and Calcutta.

I joined the Association of Medical Women in India soon after I returned to India and have since been actively connected with it.

The Lady Hardings Medical College for Women in Delhi (sponsored by A.M.W.I.) has a representative on their Governing Body which I represented for years. During that period I had to agitate strongly against the Government proposal to introduce co-education and in order to sustain our point of view, called on the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Education Minister and Health Minister. Although purdah is almost extinct in India, our main objection was that many families were still conservative and particularly that it was a residential college. We have succeeded so far.

I was chosen Member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1935 and elected Fellow in 1947, now on the retired list. I had an absorbing practice, even through my services at the Cama Hospital as also for some years after. While in charge of the hospital, I always made it clear to my private patients that an emergency at the hospital would take precedence but assured them that I would arrange for an equally qualified substitute.

Apart from my medical work, I had wide interests. I was very fond of teaching and used to hold special sessions of an evening and even Sunday mornings. Men post-graduates from other colleges also attended.

FORMATION OF STREE MANDAL :

Soon after I qualified for M.B.B.S. in 1912 I set up a General Practice in Bombay. A group of young teachers and college students in the Community got together to present me with an address. It was the first time women in our community had thus met. Women of other communities were far advanced. This gave me an idea to organise a women's association in our community to bring them together for cultural and social advancement. (The Bene-Israel Stree Mandal, 1913). At that time I was 22 years old.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS UNION :

Ours had been a good religious upbringing. When, a boarder at School, I won a prize, I promptly purchased a copy of the Bible for Home Reading. Vol. I by Claude C. Montefiore of England and read it with deep interest and devotion. Soon after I went to London for my post-graduate studies I joined the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and attended Sabbath and High Holiday services regularly. This brought me in contact with Dr. C. G. Montefiore, the Hon. Lily H. Montague and Rabbi I. I. Muttuck, who were very friendly and helpful even after my return to India. In 1925, when I finally settled down in Bombay, I sponsored the establishment of the Jewish Religious Union on progressive lines. We have regular services and religious classes and discussions and have our own Synagogues. The Union celebrated its Golden Jubilee in March 1975. Much encouragement has been given to us by visits of Rabbis from abroad off and on.

My interests in general have made me take a leading part in organising and encouraging work for general welfare and particularly welfare among mothers and children in Maharashtra State, as also work for the blind, the physically disabled, vigilance work, rescue homes and children's aid society. I was awarded the Padma Shree (an Indian distinction) nine years ago.

(Dr. Jhirad passed away on 2-6-84).

It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned. It is in dying, that we are born to eternal life.

Two Bene-Israel Personalities who Enlightened the Illiterates in the 19th Century

By : Mrs. RACHEL GADKAR



REBECCABAI SIMON WAKRULKAR

INTRODUCTION :

This is a fascinating and enchanting story of two social workers and social reformers viz. Rebeccabai and Simon Vakrulkar, who enlightened illiterate women of Maharashtra in personal hygiene and social welfare through writings, talks and actual work among the downtrodden women. The two, husband and wife, with determination and courage tried to tackle the problem at a period when there were hardly any social workers. The two, particularly Rebeccabai have left a lasting memory for their endeavour to raise moral, physical and intellectual base of the poor.

SIMON VAKRULKAR :

Simon was a prolific Marathi writer, social worker, social reformer, a poet, a great critic and orator of the first rank. After the death of his father, Banaji Vakrulkar, a Cloth Merchant, he left Alibag and settled down in Bombay.

In Bombay he found that due to ignorance, the percentage of child-birth death was very high. He therefore did his best to educate the illiterate women, particularly of the Harijan community in personal hygiene. In 1882 he started "NITI PRASARAK MANDAL" (an institution for imparting moral instructions) and opened several branches in the surrounding villages. He used to go on tours to these branches, lecturing on women's health, personal hygiene, moral rectitude and prohibition among the Harijan Community. In 1899 he established in his own house an institute known as "AROGYA MANDIR", where talks by eminent Social Workers were arranged.

He inspected the books prescribed by the Government for the Schools (poetry — Kavita) and sent in a report to the Education Commission in 1883 that the portion prescribed for the students was difficult, pedantic and misleading. This report raised a storm of protest and Education Commission agreed to omit those poems from the Books. He has written 13 books on various subjects in Marathi. The Maharaja of Baroda, the late Shrimant Sayajirao Gaikawad patronized his books and invitted him to Baroda and asked him to write some books and to inspect the schools in his State and suggest reforms. Mr. Simon's reports and suggestions pleased the Maharaja and he offered him a high post in Education Department. But Mr. Simon declined the offer as it would hamper his social work elsewhere.

REBECCABAI VAKRULKAR :

Rebeccabai, daughter of Bhauji Abaji Ghosalkar, a Subedar in the 25th Native Infantry, was fond of acquiring knowledge. Her early education was in Alibag, in a Missionary School. When she married Simon on April 2, 1873 (The Israelite School was started on July 5, 1875), the bridegroom's first present to his 16 year old bride was books for studies.

It's more important to reach the people who count than to count the people you reach.

CRITICISM FOR JOINING MID-WIFERY COURSE :

In order to render faultless and scientific treatment to the poor, Rebeccabai wanted to be a Doctor, but in those days, women were not admitted in Grant Medical College. So she joined Mid-Wifery Course in the same College inspite of severe criticism and even threats of personal assault by the members of the community, as the Course involved touching of dead bodies.

SIMON BECOMES A DOCTOR :

Since the wife could not be a qualified Doctor, husband joined the Medical College and passed out successfully. Simon then taught his wife all that he learnt in the College with the aid of sketches and models. Simon did not stop at this. He took weekly oral and written tests on what he had taught in the previous week.

A SPECIALIST IN FEMALE HEALTH PROBLEMS :

Due to this intensive instructions and trainˆing by her husband, Rebeccabai became a Specialist in Female Health Problems and her fame spread far and wide not only in Maˆarashtra but also in Gujarat and Madras.

Both husband and wife did not utilise their knowledge for exploiting the poor, but for the benefit of mankind. Their Motto was "SERVICE ABOVE SELF".

LOVE FOR THE POOR

In her profession she came in conact with the richest families of the Indian States and the poorest labourers. In her spare time she called labourers to her place and instructed them in the use of Cheap Household Remedies. Since the Native women were extremely shy to disclose their ailments to the Doctors, much less undergo medical examinations there was a move by some leading citizens of Bombay to get two English Lady Doctors to solve the problems, Rebeccabai Simon exploded the myth by her strong article challenging "How could a Doctor diagnose in the absence of the problem of language?" She appealed for medical course to be introduced in the Native Language keeping it open to those who had passed the Mid-Wifery Course. She went into the poor localities and the illiterate such as the Dhor-Ali in Mhatarpakhadi and Kamathipura areas. In her dispensary at Khetwadi she attended to the needy without remuneration and even helped their children for their education. Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda in appreciation of her Noble and selfness service had invited her to Baroda so the populace could benefit too.

ADOPTION OF POOR CHILDREN AND SPREAD OF LITERACY :

She adopted poor but deserving students to help them become self supporting. She conducted classes for imparting basic knowledge to the illiterates at "NITI PRASARAK MANDAL", established by her h4usband at Mazgaon and Lal Baug. The age of the students both male and female ranged from 7 to 50 years. She had truly followed in the footsteps of the "LADY WITH A LAMP" — the great FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES ON PERSONAL HYGIENE

In 1878 she wrote "KUTUMB MANTRI" giving advice on Homely aid and Remedies to the poor. It was hailed as a worthy conrtibution to benefit the poor middle class and was reprinted. In 1879 her medical guide "SOOYIN" was given a whole-hearted welcome in Maharashtra and was translated in Gujarati too.

She also wrote articles as guidance to the Expectant Mothers which appeared in the local Marathi and Gujarathi newspapers. In 1880 her articles on "Infertility, its causes and remedies" was published in Gopal Ganesh Agarkar's paper "Sudharak". It was reproduced in the Bombay Journal "The Gujarathi" in Surat "Gujarath Mitra" and in Ahmedabad's "Hitechu".

COMPLIMENTS FROM THE LATE JUSTICE RANADE & OTHER EMINENT PERSONALITIES :

Justice Ranade called those publications "Hemant Series", "The Hindu" of Madras and Western University of Chicago, from far away America sang her praises.

In 1880, the great Social Worker Shri Agarkar praised her articles appearing in a series in a Marathi Magazine "Sudharak". Many eminent specialists and worthy Doctors spoke

highly of them. In a letter Shri Agarkar writes to her "Educated Ladies giving helping hand to the needy poor women is our prime concern at the moment".

HER CHILDREN :

Her two sons became Engineers and the two daughters Elizabeth and Sarah obtained M.D. from Cleveland College of Physicians and Surgeons, Elizabeth, the elder who got her Doctorate on 30th April 1903 was the first lady Doctor among the Indian Jews. The younger one followed in the same footsteps.

In all her letters to her daughters, Mrs. Rebeccabai Simon ever kept the need of the country as the goal of service to the poor. After serving the suffering Humanity selflessly for 28 years this Great soul ascended to meet her Master on the 26th June, 1904. Many a newspaper gave a fitting ode to the Glorious "Mrs. Rebeccabai Simon Vakrulkar".

(The above article is translated into English from a Marathi article written by Mrs. Rachel Gadkar, which appeared in the Sunday Edition of "Sakal" a Marathi daily in its issue of 23-11-1980. It is an excerpt from the original Marathi article).

Miss REBECCA REUBEN

B.A., S.T.D. (Cambridge)

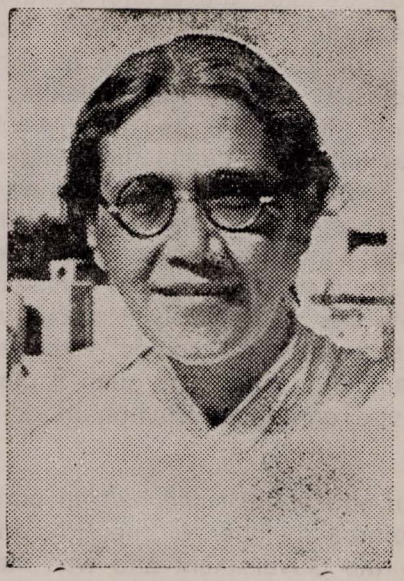
Principal, Sir Elly Kadoorie High School (1922-1951) Advisor : 1951 — 1957.

The first Bene-Israel to top the list at the Matriculation Examination.

It was 1905. The educational authorities had noticed year after year that girls had more difficulty in Maths. than boys, hence the percentage of girls passing the Matric Examinatoin was miserably low. They seriously contemplated revising the Maths Syllabus for girls to help them overcome this problem. But then they noticed that one particular girl had scored 100% marks that very same year in Maths. They changed their decision immediately. "If one girl can achieve this feat any other can" they thought.

That brilliant girl was none other than the late Miss Rebecca Reuben — topping the list of Matric Students that year. She scored nearly 100% in most other subjects — including Hebrew, though she had switched over to it from Sanskrit just a year earlier.

Her educational excellence brought her offers for Principalship in several reputed schools but she readily sacrificed these prestigeous posts to become Principal of the Israelite High School (now known as "Sir Elly Kadoorie High School") and work for the Welfare of the Community.



As Principal Miss Reuben improved the standard of the school immensely. Besides academic work she introduced several extra curricular activities :

She started (i) the Boy-Scouts and Girl Guides movement which secured prizes in atheletics and other events; (ii) a co-operative society entirely manned by students

to supply stationery etc. to students; (iii) a model "Parliament exclusively managed by students themselves; (iv) Debating Society on interesting and topical subjects and elocution competitions; and (v) revived the Ex-Students' Association and named it "Israelite School Maccabeans".

She took personal interest in all these activities and made sure that students enjoyed themselves and did not think that school meant only studies and examinations.

Miss Reuben organized Isruhag picnics every year — and one particular picnic will linger longer in the memory of all participants. She depicted the scene of Jews leaving Egypt under the leadership of Prophet Moses, often grumbling, sometimes quarrelling and finally demanding water in the wilderness where none existed.

During her tenure the school was faced with a major problem. The Bombay Municipal Corporation certified the school buliding as too old for repairs. They had to either close down the School or build a new one at short notice at the colossal cost of Rs. 2 lakhs (in those early times). It had to be quick thinking and quicker action. The community managed to raise Rs. 33,000/-. Then she personally met the Board of Directors of the Anglo Jewish Association and conviced them of the urgent need, persuading them to donate a handsome grant. And finally she got Sir Elly Kadoorie to donate a large sum. Only a woman with her perseverence and grit could face such a monumental problem and come out triumphant.

As an educationist she had no parallel. She was appointed member of the Education Committee by the Government and was marked out to become Minister of Education of the then Bombay Presidency. But the glamour of this coveted post did not deter her from strongly condemning the Government's education system and they later admitted that she had been right. She was fearless and outspoken even at the cost of displeasing those in authority.

A noted authoress she has several books to her credit — some of them are prescribed as school text books. For community she had a monthly publication "NOPHETH" consisting of Biblical Stories and Jewish life. She also wrote "BENE-ISRAELS OF BOMBAY" and "SHABUOTH". She had spared no pains in making the compilation of the Bene-Israel annual and year Book as complete as possible. The value of the publication was greatly enhanced by a short review of the past year and an article on the reorganisation of the Community. She had given religious instruction a high place in her scheme for the reorganisation of the community. Besides the book contained a short information on various Synagogues and communal institutions in India, names of degree and title holders, Military Officers and professional ladies and gentlemen of status, outstanding communal workers, authors, writers and their publications.

She was an active participant of the Bene-Israel Conference and a Managing Committee Member of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund for several years and also its Secretary in 1927.

In 1942 she visited Israel and a grand reception was held in her honour in Jerusalem. (it should be remembered that there were no Indian Jews in Israel then) .... and she surprised everyone by giving a speech in perfect and fluent Hebrew — for which she got a standing ovation.

Miss. Reuben was the First Bene Israel Lady to perform Kirtans. As she did not approve the word 'Kirtan' she called it Sangeet Vyakhyan (Oration accompanied with music and songs).

Miss R. Reuben will always be remembered by those who knew her. As it has been said 'To live in the hearts of people is to never die at all". This can rightly be said of her.

"That which the intelligence cannot do, time (work, application, worry) will do". — A saying of Jewish sages.

MESSAGE FROM MISS R. REUBEN

TO

THE BENE ISRAEL YOUTH DAY (1937)

(Youth day used to be celebrated from 1936 to about 1944 in which youths below 35 years of age were allowed to participate).

(The advice given by Miss R. Reuben in 1937 is even more approrpiate to-day : Hence the reason for reproducing it)

"Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions"—Joel ii. 28.

This old, unsatisfactory world of ours seems to be crashing about us in ruins. Men lacking vision have made a sorry mess of it all. And yet, this same old world has been sustained, all these ages, by the visions of those who dream, and who see new worlds in their dreams.

Thus did Joseph, among his stocks of corn, under a star-bespangled sky, dream dreams and gathered strength, and rose triumphant out of the depths of a dungeon pit, to ensure peace and plenty in a hungry world.

Thus did Moses discover the eternal varieties in the blossoming of a desert-bush and fired by it, he led forth an enslaved people out of bondage and shaped them till they were fit for freedom.

Thus Devorah, under her palm tree, meditated and waited until the hour struck when she whipped the apathy out of a dispirited nation and roused faint-heart to action.

So, David the shepherd boy, leading his sheep to quiet pastures, his soul attuned to beauty, drank in the music of the spheres, and with its might, charmed away the ugly humours of a moody King.

Thus Amos, headsman, brooding amidst his native hills, on sights and sounds of wrong doing, dared confront a king in all his glory, to castigate him for his unrighteousness.

So did Hosea, grieving over an erring wife, learn the lesson of understanding love out of a broken heart, and teach it to the World.

Thus did Jeremiah, thrilled with the beauty of the wakeful almond blossom in spring, wake to the spirit of hope that watches over man, and sing comfort into the hearts of a broken people when no flicker of hope appeared in the darkening gloom.

And so, through the ages, and throughout the nations, has youth dreamt and dared and wrought.

To-day — starving in the midst of plenty, enslaved by false ideals : despairing, apathetic : a prey to evil humours and follies : oppressed with cruel injustices and bitter resentments : drained dry of the milk of human kindness : blind with hopelessness : — today, as never before does the World need the vision of youth — of 'SILLY, Charming, Beautiful Youth', of youth that dreams and dares all.

The World is being shattered to bits before us. What will remain? One thing surely — the opportunity to "remould it nearer to the heart's desire". And it will be the privilege of the youth of to-day to do it.

Meditation and action — daring dreams and daring deeds — that is the spirit of youth — the lightening that sleeps within the cloud, to flash forth out of thick darkness.

Arise, Barak !

A shattered world lies before you. What are you going to make of it?

An angry man opens his mouth and shuts up his reason.

Padmashri "REUBEN DAVID" (DANDEKAR)
— the Miracle-man of Ahmedabad Zoo



Padmashri Reuben accomplishes a novel occupation as the Zoo Superintendent of the Ahmedabad Zoo Complex. 'To communicate with animals by Reuben' isn't amusing to one and all. This Zoo, the outcome of Reuben's singular performance in life, has earned him international name and fame because of breeding in captivity exotic and endangered species of animals, birds and reptiles like crocodiles and pythons and suitably display them with magnificent architectural expressions. He trapped alive half a dozen man-eater crocodiles. Now these man-eaters who were trapped alive have settled down so well that they have bred in the Zoo. Reuben, to his credit, has almost 100 crocodiles. Ahmedabad Zoo is in the limelight and is perhaps the only Zoo in the country to have successfully bred Flamingoes in captivity which has become a regular event every year.

The tigers, lions, binturongs and almost all other animals including the rare albino animals and birds have been bred here with success. A number of successful experiments on the concept of co-existence of different species of animals have been carried out. The last and the sixth experiment was that of a lion and a dog who were brought up together as lovely playmates. Montu, the lion and Tommy, a Mongrel dog became hand and glove with each other. In one instance, years ago a dog, a monkey and a tiger were kept together in an enclosure and the trio had the proud privilege of enjoying the ennobling company of Reuben at times.

The entire Zoo Complex viz., the Zoo Garden, the Children's park (Balvatika) and the Natural History Museum at Ahmedabad are the creations of Reuben David which he developed from scratch and still at this age of 73, he sticks on to it like an avid father to his children. This is all due to the consideration and exalted appreciation of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for which Reuben David had unflinching devotion and transparent dedication.

In recognition of his performances in all spheres, the Govt. of Gujarat has appointed him as the Honorary Advisor for the huge Museum Complex encompassing an area of 1250 acres at Gandhinagar. But Reuben admits

---

Success comes to those who dare and act. It seldom goes to the timid — Jawaharlal Nehru

that behind all his achievements in life, his wife Sarah was always in the background. All these superb accoplishments would not have been possible save Sarah's constant cheer-up and barnacle-like tenacity. It is most unfortunate that Reuben developed in larynx a carcenoma and he was operated on in the year 1968 at the Tata Memorial Hospital in Bombay and thereafter he lost his natural voice. Sarah took great care to nurse him like a child and became his voice to attend to his friends, officials and staff. She was fully dedicated to him, helped him to pluck up courage and showed him the ways to live with voice robbed. Sarah had Master's, Degree and in her School as a Teacher, she was a friend, a fond mother, a philosopher and a guide to those she taught. Thus she was loved and held in high esteem by one and all who came in touch with her. After Sarah's sad demise, Reuben has lost his indefatigable enthusiasm and unflagging interest though even now he has official offers to take up many projects from all over the country. Reuben is blessed with only a daughter, Esther, who graduated with honours in Fine Arts from M. S. University, Baroda. Esther has her sculptures exhibited at Bombay and Ahmedabad with great success.

Reuben David, Ex-Superintendent, Ahmedabad Zoo, now Honorary Advisor to the Zoo Complex, hardly requires any further introduction. The local press has dubbed him "Disney of Kankaria."

The day dawned when Reuben's exhileration knew no bounds. Panditji arrived at the Zoo Complex on 4-4-61 and jubilantly spent two and half hours with Reuben browsing through the Zoo Complex holding back the next appointment. Here Panditji remarked "This is a delightful place of which I heard so much. I wish there were many more like it in India". Thus Reuben's long-felt dream attained fulfilment.

Prof. John Galbraith, Ambassador of U.S.A. to India, has highly eulogized Reuben's performance. Reuben, in his book "Ambassador's Journal" which is a personal account of the Kennedy years on page 335 and 337, was mentioned as a remarkable Zoologist. Similarly, Rt. Hon'ble Sir Malcom Macdonald Ex-Governor General of Malaya & British Borneo and High Commissioner for U.K. in India, remarked "This morning I have visited the most beautiful Zoo I have seen and the finest Children's playground in the world. I shall never forget them."

The author Dr. Collen Groves from Australia while presenting his book "Horses, Asses and Zebras to Reuben, endorses to dear Reuben as a beautiful animal with all best wishes while his wife Mrs. Phyll Groves endorses that not only beautiful but also a rare endangered species.

Reuben's father David was a Doctor of great eminence who was also very fond of animals and had a number of dogs, birds, a deer etc. Reuben being brought up in the company of such a surrounding and climate, his heaps of love for animals was inborn.

Reuben was also an athlete in his young days whose feats of strength included breaking of iron chains, stopping cars, tearing of Telephone Directories, bending of iron bars etc.

The Ex-Governor of Gujarat, H. E. Nawab Mehdi Nawaz Jung Bahadur & Begum Sahiba would never forget to invite Reuben and his wife Sarah whenever there was a Gazal, Shayri or Qawwali programme at the Raj Bhavan.

Reuben started his career as a Canine Consultant which he still continues and apart from this he has expertise in repairing arms. He is very fond of antiques. His house as well as office are so decorated which would immeasurably delight the Taxidermists, Zoologists, antique collectors and artists.

Some of the thrilling experiences and trying times Reuben had when a full-grown Bear escaped and plumetted the Hospital terrace. Reuben is known to have Darwinian patience and therefore did not lose his patience and presence of mind. Immediately he lured the agitated Bear to sip at a palatable honey mixed with heavy dose of tranquilliser and in no time the Bear was stupefied. Thus the ferocious animal was trapped with meticulous care and he was put back in his cage.

True friendship is a plant of slow growth —George Washington

Once friendly female Elephant "Sumitra" in a fit of petulance, threw Reuben down but he had a hair-breadth escape from serious injuries. Reuben had experience with almost all types of animals and he says, based on experiences, that he would rely on lions, tigers, panthers or any other animals but not on an elephant.

Reuben strongly believes in conversation with animals and says "Human beings are outgrowing the balance of nature and in time to come, we will be left to eat one another, leaving the birds and animals aside". If the animal has turned fierce, man is largely to blame. He in his own ferocity has forgotten the valuable role of animals in balancing nature. One day he will pay for it".

Possibly Reuben David is the first and only man who came out with a declaration publicly against snake exhibitions at an inauguration of one such exhibition at the New Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad and offered a sum of Rs. 5,000/- to any person who can cure snake bites from poisonous snakes by miraculous wand of magic, sleight of hand, mantra-tantra or by virtue of red or black stone as it is usually published here and there without any iota of truth in it. Reuben is not an affluent man and he can ill-afford to squander away money. He is well aware and fully confident that nobody would dare accept his open challenge because that is all fabrication and nothing else. The challenge is conditional in the sense that the venomous snakes would only be provided by Reuben for the administration of bites and not by anybody who accepts this challenge. Reuben strongly holds that it is simply balderdash that red or black stone or mantra-tantra or any stone application is a crude method of extracting money from the unfortunate people. Such a challenge was offered by Reuben because he wants that the unfortunate victims of snake bites or their relations should never be defrauded or lured that they can be cured by miraculous ways. The victims and the public in general must know that poisonous snake bites can only be cured by anti-venom serum and life can be saved if it is attended earlier and in the nick of time. The victims are automatically cured of snake bites if they are administered only by non-poisonous snakes but the show of mantra-tantra etc. is misleading and fictitious.

Reuben has been awarded the 'Padmashri' a coveted award by the President of India. A "Tamra-Patra" from the Karnataka Veterinary Association for 25 years of yeoman service rendered to wildlife and he is also the Honorary member of the Cheetah Rescue Club, Canada and has many other awards to his credit. A full volume can be written on Reuben's unique achievements but the space is restricted.

DAVID EZRA REUBEN (NAVGAOKAR)



The first Indian Jew to pass I.C.S. Examination and Wranglership (1917)

The Late David E. Reuben, second son of the late Ezra Reuben was the first Bene-Israel Wrangler having successfully passed from the Cambridge University. He was also the first Bene-Israel to pass I.C.S. Examination — a competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service. In fact he topped the list in this prestigious examination in 1917. He retired as Chief Justice of Patna High Court.

After his retirement, his services were requisitioned by the Government and he was a Judge in a Labour Court for a few years.

JOSEPH DAVID PENKAR (1879-1949)

Script-writer for the first Indian Talkie — ALAM ARA (1929).

By : A. H. Elias



It is indeed a matter of pride that the script-writer for the first Indian Talkie was a Bene-Israel, the late Joseph David Penkar. He was the eldest son of Subhedar David Penkar of the Bombay Grenadier Guards (Grenadier is a soldier of a company selected for height and strength). Joseph lost his father at an early age and was burdened with the responsibility of supporting his mother and three brothers. With only secondary education to his credit he built up his career with great diligence and a rare determination. He started as prompter in a theatrical company and rose to become an Assistant Director by thoroughly acquainting himself with stage-craft. He also wrote script for the dramas and for that purpose mastered and wrote scripts in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarathi and Marathi.

As a voracious reader he was well versed in Jewish, Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Scandinavian mythologies. His private well-stacked library ran into several thousand books including literature imported directly from Britain and other countries. He was also a connoisseur of Indian dancing and classical music.

He was best known as a 'dramatist' and under his direction such well-known plays as Nur-e-Vatan and Bag-e-Iran ran continuously to packed audiences on the Bombay stage thrice a week throughout the year. The stage craft under his direction reached a high level and the scenes and settings were gorgeous. Several stage and cine actors acquired their training from him.

He was also deeply religious. He wrote and staged several Kirtans, the proceeds of which were donated to the Bene-Israel Charities in Bombay and Pune. The widely remembered among these are "Merapi", "Queen Esther", "Abshalom" etc. For these he was both Script-writer and Song-composer. Later they were published in book form. While he immersed himself in fine arts, he neglected the business side of his career. His dishonest partners took advantage of this and he ran into financial losses.

Undaunted he started afresh and wrote the script for the first Indian Talkie — "Alam Ara". Later he was associated with J. B. H. Wadia, a film producer who greatly respected him. He lived true to his art and declined several assignments in films because he disapproved the distortions to get box office appeals.

His love for music and literature was acquired by his children. His daughter Soshanna

---

If you find someone without a smile, give him one of yours.

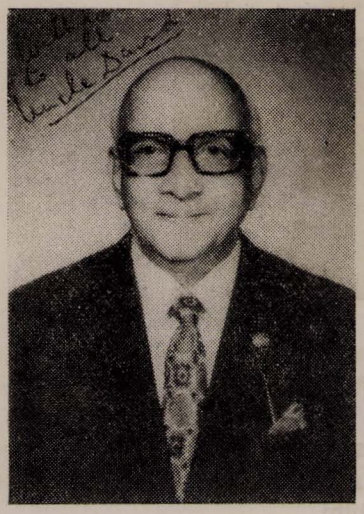
was vocal classist of the Kirana style. She staged several concerts for charity one being for the Bene-Israel Stree Mandal in 1958.

He was presented with a Silver Casket and an address by the Bene-Israel Community in 1921. He passed away in 1949. A brief resume' of his life is placed in the Archieves of Jerusalem.

Padmashri DAVID ABRAHAM (Cheulkar) — The IMMORTAL ACTOR

(Born on June 21, 1908 — Died on January 2, 1982)

The first Indian Jew to officiate as a Judge in the International Sports meet. (1951)



David Abraham, the famous cine-artist, popularly known as DAVID, will live in the hearts of millions all over the World. His natural style, professional excellence and ready wit endeared him to the public at large. He was in the film industry for several decades and acted in numerous films. He reached the highest watermark for his role in "Boot-Polish".

His commanding personality mingled with a lively wit put him in high demand as Master of Ceremonies and compered at entertainment shows held all over the country in aid of Armed Forces Benevolent Funds, Cancer, T.B., Leprosy, Famines and Floods Relief Funds in an honorary capacity. He acted as the Master of Ceremonies of the National Film Award Functions held from 1964 to 1969.

David was President of the Maharashtra weight-Lifting Association from its inception in 1946; Vice-President of the Indian & British Commonwealth Weight-Lifting Association; Council member of the International Weight-Lifting Federation and an International Weight-Lifting Judge and Referee from 1951. He judged Weight-Lifting at the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952, was a member of the Jury of Appeal for Weight-Lifting at the Olympic Games in Rome in 1960 and in Tokyo 1964. He also served on the Jury of Appeal for Weight-Lifting at the Third World Youth Games, Moscow in 1957 and Judged Weight-Lifting at the Maccabiah Games in Israel in 1953 and 1957. In 1961 he was deputed by the International Weight-Lifting Federation to supervise Weight-Lifting Competition as a Technical Delegate. In 1963, David attended the World Championship for Weight-Lifting in Stockholm and was appointed to scrutinise the Judging of the Class-II Referees by the Council of the International Weight-Lifting Federation. He judged the "MR. UNIVERSE" Best Physique Competition for amateurs in Croydon, London in 1963. He was the Weight-Lifting Judge at the Mexico Olympics in 1968 and served on the Jury of Appeal at the World Weight-Lifting Championship in Warsaw in 1959 and at the British Commonwealth Games in 1970.

In recognition of his professional achievements as a Film Actor and his activities in the Social, Cultural and Sports fields, David was awarded the "Padma-Shree in 1969. He received the "Shiv Chhatrapati Award" for the year 1970-71 for his services to sports, from the Government of Maharashtra and was also appointed Justice of the Peace for Greater Bombay on 15th August, 1972.

David actively participated in the deliberations of the sessions held under the auspices of "THE BENE-ISRAEL YOUTH DAY" organised in 1936 and 1937. His performance in 1937 in the monologue, "I'm not mad" was

par excellence. (The Bene-Israel Youths between the ages of 18 and 35 years, used to organise this "DAY" from 1936 to 1943).

He was a keen Freemason, was Master of several Lodges in Bombay, a Rotarian, member of the Cricket Club of India, National Sports Club of India, Royal Western India Tarf Club, The Poona Club, The Park Club, The Madras Gymkhana Club, The Fateh Maidan Club, Hyderabad, the Western India Football Association, Bombay Hockey Association, Greater Bombay, Region Amateur Athletic Association, etc.

He was always ready to coach an individual or group in any field he could, specially in physical culture or dramatics.

During his semi-retirement in Canada, he spent most of his time in reading books — he had spent quite a fortune on books on varied subjects. Canada accepted him as an active Freemason and just before he passed away, he received the 32nd degree Masonary, the highest award in the world bestowed on a Mason. He was the first Jew from India to receive it. Unfortunately, he passed away before he could complete his Memoris. Even though whatever he has written so far would be quite interesting and educative to one and all.

Film Societies, World Boxing and Weightlifting Councils, the press paid him rich tributes. But the Bombay Doordarshan were rather negligent on the subject and several viewers wrote to leading newspapers/magazines demanding an explanation for this negligence. Perhaps if David had continued to live in India, he would have received richer tributes. He was a nationalist to the core and his settling in Canada came as a surprise to all.

Dr. (Miss) ESTHER ABRAHAM SOLOMON (Kasookar)

The First Bene-Israel Recognised Sanskrit Scholar (1949)



The small Bene-Israel Community is justly proud of Dr. Esther A Solomon of Ahmedabad, a renowned Sanskrit scholar, even in these days when Sanskrit is almost a dead language and shows little signs of revival in spite of all out efforts by the concerned authorities. She has won several laurels. No doubt there were others proficient in Sanskrit e.g. late Solomon Moses Vakrulkar, Miss R. Reuben, etc. but Dr. Solomon is the only one to achieve such great distinction during the 2,000 years of the Bene-Israels' stay in India.

Dr. Solomon had a brilliant scholastic and academic career throughout. She stood seventh in the All-India matriculation examination (first among the candidates of the state), first class, first in Inter Arts in Bombay University, First class in B.A. with Sanskrit as principle subject, First class in M.A. She won Zala Vedant Prize also. Thereafter she got her Ph. D. from Bombay University for her thesis "Avidya and the Cognate Concept in Vedic, Buddhist and Jain Darsanas." At present she is a post-graduate professor and Ph. D. Guide, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, School of languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, which post she has held for over two decades.

She is the authoress of nine Sanskrit books and has four more in hand — all this in spite of the fact that she was brought up in an Anglicised community.

Dr. Solomon has attended a number of Seminars and Conferences and participated in discussions and paper reading. Among the important Seminars attended were the "First

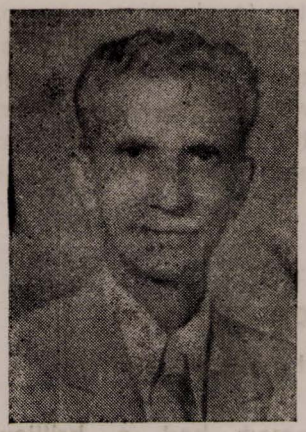
World Sanskrit Conference" in Delhi in 1972 as an invitee of the Ministry of Education, Government of India and the "Fourth World Sanskrit Conference" Seminar, GDR as a representative of the Government of India.

Esther is the eldest daughter of Abraham and Mrs. Yakobethbai A. Solomon Kasookar (Mail Guard Western India Railway). Her paternal grand father, Solomon David Kasookar was T.I. in Morvi Railway and maternal grandfather, Solomon Reuben Sogaonkar was "Wahiwatdar" in Vadia State.

Prof. MOSES EZEKIEL (Talkar)

The first Bene-Israel M.Sc.

(30-11-1891 — 15-4-1969)



A well-known Botanist, Prof. Ezekiel was the first Bene-Israel in India to receive the Master's Degree in Science.

He started his career in the Agricultural Department of the Princely State of Gwalior, later joined the teaching staff of Wilson College and rose to become a post-graduate professor in the Bombay University, Immediately, after retirement in 1947, he took up the responsibility of the Principal-ship of the newly opened College in Nadiad and later in Petlad, both in Gujarat.

Besides having a distinguished career, Professor Ezekiel took keen interest in eradicating social problems. Even in the early days he pioneered the Consumers Movement and focussed attention on the evil of food adulteration. He was also an active member of the Society of the Friends of Trees and alerted the nation on the importance of trees — a problem that people have only just woken-up to.

Prof. Ezekiel has authored many books on Botany, Social problems and Solutions and "The History of the Bene-Israels in India".

Prof. Ezekiel was actively involved in various Bene-Israel Congregations in Bombay, particularly in the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund. His father Ezekiel Talkar was in the Army and rose to the rank of Subedar Major.

JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO CIVILIZATION

(By : Cecil Roth)

Modern civilization is an amalgam of three elements.

From Rome we have received our conception of law and to some extent our politics.

From Greece, we have our philosophy, as well as our aesthetic standards, whether in literature or in any other arts.

But to Israel, the western world owes its religion and its ethics.

Be thoughtful to the opinion of others. There are three sides to a controversy YOURS, HIS AND THE RIGHT ONE.

ARTHUR DANIELS (KORLEKAR)

The First Indian to be admitted as Pilot Apprentice in Calcutta Port, and Port Commissioner in Bengal Pilot Service.

Recruitment in the Calcutta Port was exclusively reserved for the Europeans. Arthur Daniels of Poona was not only the first Bene-Israel to be recruited as an Apprentice in the Calcutta Port, but also the First Indian. His appointment was due to the influence exerted by Barrister David S. Erulkar of Scindia Steam Navigation Company.

The European crew members, however, did not cherish his appointment as they did not like to work along with an Indian and started harassing him to a great extent. He was made to survey the river-bed from Garden Reach to Sand-Heads — a distance of about 100 miles each way. This job was so arduous that blood used to ooze out from the palms of his hands. This was due to the sliding of the rope through his hands while swinging the lead for the purpose of taking depths of the river Hoogly. This work was usually done by more than one person in rotation; but Arthur was made to do it alone by himself in order to harass him. On several occasions he wanted to resign on account of this ill-treatment; but at the persuation of Barrister Erulkar who was in regular touch with him, he continued in the service. Subsequently his harassment was brought to the notice of the International Labour Organization by Barrister Erulkar and then onwards Arthur was given equal treatment like other members of the crew.

In course of time he was promoted to the Post of Port Pilot Officer and subsequently as Port Commissioner, which was the highest post in Bengal Pilot Service.

Mrs. SHEBA GEORGE ABRAHAM SION (Garapkar)

The only lady Dyeing-Master in India



Though women have entered several vocations and fields dominated by men, a lady Dyeing-Master is hard to find. Mrs. Sheba Sion is a woman of real grit and has proved herself equal to and even greater than any man in the line.

Born in Budapur (Assam) to Mr. & Mrs. Michael Daniel Divekar, she is the wife of late George Abraham Sion, the journalist.

Realising the capability, efficiency and devotion to work, she was appointed as Dyeing-Master in 'Stretchlon Pvt. Ltd.' which is the only Hosiery unit with a Dye-house having the capacity to Dye all its products.

Sheba is proud of two things. (i) She is the descendant of the builder of the first Bene-Israel Synagogue, the late Commander Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, and (ii) she is the only lady Dyeing-Master in India today.

One man with courage makes a majority.

PROF. NISSIM EZEKIEL (TALKAR)
The First Bene-Israel Poet of International Repute. (1960)



Prof. Nissim Ezekiel is seen receiving a token gift on 6-12-1981 from Dr. (Mrs.) Ruby Solomon.

Few Bene-Israels have earned such international fame as Professor Nissim Ezekiel, Head of the English Department, Bombay University. He is the second son of the late Professor Moses Ezekiel and the late Mrs. Dianabai Ezekiel, educationist and social worker. Nissim Ezekiel is a renowned journalist, poet, art critic, teacher and author.

A Leading Author and Poet :

Nissim Ezekiel has an exhaustive collection of poems including such world famous titles as "The unfinished Man", "The exact Name", and "The Hymns of Darkness". The last named was published by the Oxford University Press, New Delhi, as part of its New Poetry in India Series. He has also authored several books, "An Emerson Reader", A Martin Luther King Reader", "Indian Writers in Conferene", "Writings in India", to name a few.

A Renowned Journalist :

Nissim Ezekiel has also edited publications like "Juest" (a bi-monthly of Arts and Ideas) "Imprint", "Poetry India", "The Indian P.E.N.", "Poetry of the Commonwealth" (London) and "World Poets in English" (Indian Section).

He writes regular columns in leading newspapers and periodicals like "Times of India", "Mid-Day", "Imprint" etc. He has to his credit over 500 book reviews; regularly wrote the Radio and Television columns for the "Times of India" and was also its art critic. He has also written on Art and Artists. A media-man to the core he has often appeared on Radio and T.V. He lectures on Art Appreciation in classes conducted by institutions like the J. J. School of Arts, The Sophia College Open Classroom, etc.

At present he edits "Freedom First" a political weekly and is art critic for "Sunday Mid-Day".

Foreign Assignments Galore :

Nissim Ezekiel has had several foreign assignments. He was a visiting professor at the University of Leeds when he lectured on the "History of Indian Writing in English" (January-June '64). At the University of Chicago he delivered five lectures on "Indian Writings in English". He was an invitee of the U.S. Government for the Cultural Exchange Programme in 1974 — he lectured, addressed seminars and gave readings of his poems to an international audience of noted writers. In 1976 he was invited by the East-West Centre Hawaii and participated in the conference on "Inter-Cultural Encounters in Literature". He was also recipient of the Australian Government Cultural Award in 1977 when he toured major Australian cities delivering lectures and readings of his poems. Again in 1978 he was invited to the Rotterdam International Poetry Festival and the West Berlin Literature Week where he read his poems to a packed admiring audience — translations into Dutch and German were provided by the sponsors. In June 1982, he attended the First Jewish International Theatre Festival and Conference in Tel-Aviv, Israel.

He was recipient of the "Sahitya Akademi" Award in 1983. A part of the Award money was donated to the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund to be invested in a Security, annual interest of which is to be utilised towards the supply of free uniforms to poor children.

Men will go on breaking records as long as they run. There is no limit to the great thrust of human spirit.

(Dr. Roger Bannister — the first man to cross the four-minute-mile barrier in 1956).

SOLOMON SAMUEL SOLOMON (NAVGAONKAR)
WIZARD OF DESIGNING GARMENTS



Solomon is a man of amiable and philanthropic disposition. Although there is hardly anyone in the Community who does not know him, how many know he has achieved International fame because of his valuable and unique contribution to the garment industry ? By his ingenuity and originality he has made dazzling designs thus enabling the export of garments to even affluent countries. He is however very unassuming and modest. And therefore the Community does not know his significant contribution to the garment industry.

Reproduced below are the excerpts from an article under the title, **"35 Eventful Years of Solomon"** that had appeared in the magazine **"Clothing Journal"** in its January issue of 1976. (This article was reproduced in the **"Financial Express"** in its issue of March 22, 1976.

"If per chance you have recently brought a Safari Suit or a Shirt or Jeans abroad from any one of the exclusive stores catering to men's fashions in London, New York, Frankfurt or Stockholm, there is every chance that it might have been designed by a gifted man; an artist in his own right; a man who has devoted his entire life to perfecting readymade garments and enriching the rapidly expanding clothing industry in India".

"On 21st March, 1941, 23-year old S. S. Solomon started his career at a small factory with seven pedal-driven sewing machines in Bombay. Thereafter, he opened a retail shop, specializing in men's shirts under the banner "Stylo", opposite the then Army & Navy Stores in Fort, Bombay. This shop exists even today, although under a different management.

Some of His First Ventures :

(1) "The first Indian to graduate from the Tailors and Cutters Academy, London, in 1952. This in itself is a coveted accolate to which only a handful have a claim.

Few of us can be great athletes; but all of us can be physically fit.

(2) The first Indian to export clothing to the Middle East with the exports of overalls and warehouse coats to Kuwait Oil Company Limited in 1952.

(3) The first Indian to take part in the Earls Court Exhibition in London in 1959, when he introduced India's fashion Garments to Western Europe & U.S.A. and to the avidly fashion conscious world. It was indeed a notable landmark in the history of the Indian clothing industry as the Europeans were then incredulous about the possibilities of importing Indian fashion garments. The participation of Solomon in this Exhibition India was put on the international fashion market.

(4) The First Indian to participate in the International Men"s Fashion Fair, Cologne in 1966 and to introduce and effect sales of Indian clothing which he did with great success.

(5) The First Indian who pioneered the introduction of Denim Jeans to the U.S.S.R. from India, which have subsequently proved very popular in the Soviet Union. This was because of his participation in the International Clothing Fair held at Odezhda, U.S.S.R. in 1967.

(6) Solomon was among the six founder members of the Clothing Manufacturers' Association of India, formed in 1962.

"Solomon added yet another feather to his cap and for India in May 1964, when he was appointed to represent a consortium of several Indian Manufacturers to carry out market research on the potentialities of exports of Indian Readymade Garments to U.S.A. An elaborate report on the study was submitted by Solomon to the consortium of leading manufacturers.

His other Important Achievements are :

1. "J & K Government requested Solomon to advise them for starting a ready-made garment unit in Srinagar for exporting Kashmir — embroidered readymade garments on a large scale. Solomon submitted a detailed report on this subject after studying the various aspects to the Office of the Textile Commissioner. Subsequently in 1975 he was appointed by the Union Public Service Commission to interview candidates for the posts of Scientific Officer, Directorate of General Inspection, Defence Production Department, Ministry of Defence.

2. "When Thomson and Taylor, the big departmental store was opened in Bombay, it was Solomon who was in-charge of the apparel section".

"Solomon has generously rendered his Export Knowhow to many friends and enabled them to set and establish export oriented readymade garments units in various parts of the country".

"Today, apart from holding his challenging post at Milton's he designs garments for internationally reputed firms, like Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, Bonwit Teller, Bloomingdales, Van Heusen, Jones of New York, Jordon Marsh, etc. in America, Merkur and Zonabend in Sweden; Gilcodan in Denmark and Take 5, Lord John and Rael-Brook-Ltd. in London. These, he modestly claims are only some of his world-wide clientele".

"Solomon has received on behalf of his Company M/s. Milton's Limited, several national and State Awards. He received a Special Award from the Government of India for outstanding export performance in the field of handloom exports in 1970 and 1971. He was the recipient of another award, this time from the State of Maharashtra for being the best exporter of readymade garments for the year 1974-75."

"An inveterate globe-trotter, he has visited practically all the fashion centres of the world, from where he draws his inspiration and which he translates into the most attractive garments any one could want to wear". "We at Milton's Limited are indeed fortunate to avail of his services and wish him many more constructive years in his illustrious career".

BENJAMIN ABRAHAM (NAGAVKAR)

First Bene-israel to obtain Chief Engineer's Certificate (1923)

Benjamin Abraham was the First Indian Engineer to work on the Dredger in Karachi for the Sukkar Barrage Scheme.

He was the first Bene-Israel to obtain Chief Engineer's Certificate (1923) and within a few years was promoted as Chief Engineer.

Initially he served in the British India Company. Later he joined the Scindias and remained there till he retired.

RABBI SION AARON DAVID (Shapurkar)

The first Bene-Israel Rabbi

Sion is the first Bene-Israel to have successfully passed the Rabbinical Course.

His first appointment was at New Synagogue at Glasgow, Scotland. Three years later he served the Johnstown Jewish Religious Union for four years and is now employed as Rabbi of Temple Israel in UNIONTOWN.

He is the son of Aaron and the late Mrs. Bathsheba A Shapurkar. Aaron has been regularly conducting prayers at "Rodef Shalom" Synagogue. He also conducted Hebrew classes for youths on Sundays.

THE JEWS OF AHMEDABAD

By : I. D. REUBENS

"Fear not Abram, I am thy shield...." (GEN. 15 : 1)

The first Bene-Israel to arrive in Ahmedabad was Dr. Abraham Benjamin Erulkar in 1846 and became the most prominent person of the Bene-Israel community of Ahmedabad. He was born in 1822 at Erul. He joined the British Military as doctor and was transferred to Ahmedabad in 1846 as House-Surgeon in the Civil Hospital. After his retirement from the military, he opened his own dispensary, and also conducted prayers in his own house for the Bene-Israel communty of Ahmedabad. For this religious services rendered by him, the Synagogue was named after him as "MAGEN ABRAHAM", when it was consecrated in 1934.

Haeem Samuel Ziradkar Kazi who was the first Hazan, brought about religious awakening among the Ahmedabad Bene-Israel Community.

After the death of the venerable Dr. Abraham B. Erulkar in 1887, his son the late Mr. Solomon A Erulkar, donated to the Ahmedabad community the house in his possession, for the purpose of carrying out religious rites and ceremonies which was later known as Prayer Hall.

Dr. Joseph S. Dandekar was the second person to come to Ahmedabad in 1860. He was born in Malegaon in 1840 and studied at Satara. He had seen the horrors of the mutiny of 1857. While he was in the Army he was transferred to the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital in 1860. In 1866, he was incharge of the Lunatic Asylum. After 45 years of service he retired in 1900. He has become an unforgetable personality in the history of the Ahmedabad Jews

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambition. Small people always do that. The really great make you feel, you too can become great. — Mark Twain.

as he had donated the present cemetery to the community in 1876. The first person burried in the cemetery was the late Solomon Abraham Dandekar in 1876.

The Late Dr. David Joseph was an elected member of the Ahmedabad Municipal Committee.

The late Dr. David Jacob was a well known doctor of Ahmedabad. His dispensary, after his death, was carried on by his son Dr. Jacob David. Dr. David's daughter Dr. (Miss) Rachei David was the first Jewish lady in Ahmedabad to get the degree of M.D. in the year 1932.

The famous Kankaria Zoo of Ahmedabad and the children's park Bal Vatika — are the creation of Shri Reuben David who is the youngest son of the late Dr. David Jacob.

Another prominent figure was the late Dr. Joseph Benjamin Bamnolkar (his resume appears elsewhere in this book). The late Ezra Reuben was Judicial Commissioner in Junagadh State.

The late Dr. Jacob E. Solomon (Varsulkar) was a nominated Counciller of Ahmedabad Municipality and was a recipient of the Kaiser-i-Hind Silver Medal. He was a working member of the Theosophical Lodge, and meetings were conducted in his bungalow.

In 1933, the late Elijah Hayeem Killekar took up the Synagogue building work. He was also a recipient of Kaiser-i-Hind Silver Medal. He was very keen on Synagogue Building work and was assisted by the enthusiastic social worker, the late David Hayeem Agarwarkar.

The foundation stone of the Synagogue was laid by Dr. (Mrs.) Abigael B. Bhonkar on October 19, 1933, and the consecration ceremony of the Synagogue was held on September 1, 1934 when the sacred edifice was named "MAGEN ABRAHAM". The sermon was delivered by the late Prof. E. M. Ezekiel. In December 1934 the Governor of Bombay. Lord Brabourne visited the Synagogue when he was presented with an address in a Silver casket

One also cannot forget Dr. E. M. Best, Retd. Dy. Director, Medical Education, Gujarat, retired Dean of the B. J. Medical College for many years as an eminent personality in the Ahmedabad Jewish community and Dr. Esther Solomon, Head of the Sanskrit Dept., Gujarat University and a gold medalist in Sanskrit.

The "MAGEN ABRAHAM" Synagogue will ever remain a mark and embodiment of the will and the spirit of the Bene-Israel Community of Ahmedabad. Its Golden Jubilee will be celebrated in 1984. One outstanding feature of the Community is that there are nine schools owned and conducted by the Bene-Israels. "The BEST Kindergarden & Primary School has a strength of 3422 from K.G. to Higher Secondary.

The Bene-Israel Community of Ahmedabad at present consists of about fifty families is fairly well educated and has produced eminent doctors, lawyers, professors, bankers, engineers, educationalists, etc.

THE TITLE OF KAZI

We, the Bene-Israels, have among us "Rajpurkar Kazi" and "Jhiradkar Kazi".

What was the reason for giving this title? And what were the functions of a Kazi?

Reproduced below are excerpts from the book, "A Historical Sketch, 1672-1916" by S. M. Edwards, who was the only I.C.S. officer to be appointed a Commissioner of Police. Just before his retirement, he was appointed Municipal Commissioner of Bombay.

"The object of associating Kazis with the Bombay Magistrates of Police at the beginning of the nineteenth century was doubtless to ensure that in all cases brought before them, involving the question of law, customs and traditions of the chief communities and sects inhabiting the Island, the Magistrates should have the advantage of consulting those who were able to interpret and give a ruling on such matters. The Kazi proper was the authority on all matters relating to Mohemmadan community.

"Jew Cauzee" on matters relating to the Bene-Israel, who from 1760 to the middle of the nineteenth century contributed an important element to the Company's Military Forces.

The Bhat presumably gave advice on subjects affecting Hindus of the lower class : while 'Andaroo (Parsi priest) for Parsis.

OLD DOCUMENTS PRESENTED TO JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

Mr. Shalom Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi, a scion of the ancient and historical family of Rajpurkar Kazis, has donated to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America two old documents which were in his possession. These documents speak for themselves. Document-I is reproduced below :—

1. "This is to certify whom it may be concern that the bearer Samuel Cadjee the son of Nassemjee Musajee is the present Cadjee of the Jew Caste. That both his Father and Grand Father have maintained the Cadjeeship of their caste with the honour and respect, after the death of Musajee Arronjee the Grand Father of present Cadjee the Cadjeeship descended to his son Nassemjee Mussajee with all the honours and privileges due to the Cadjee's Station, when Nassemjee happened to die. In the year 1799, the present Cadjee Samuel succeded to the aforesaid Office with the same honour and privilege with the sanction of the caste in general to a paper granted by the caste, with their respective signatures under date the 24th July, 1799, which has been confirmed by me.

I further certify that the late Nassemjee deceased and his son Samuel the present Cadjee have served me honestly, diligently and faithfully in the Police Office in the capacity of serving the Israel people for a long period".

Sd/- S. Halliday

Supdt. of Police.

Bombay, 31st January, 1808.

Document-II is a paper referred to in the above Sanad and is dated 24th July. 1799. It was originally written in Gintoo character and was subsequently translated into English and attested by S. Halliday. It deals with the appointment of the Cadjee as a hereditary spiritual leader of the Bene-Israel community and with the honours and privileges to be enjoyed by him. It also nullified a circumcision ceremony performed by one Cumberlayker (Kamerlekar), because the Cadjee was not invited.

2. Translation of paper writing in Gentos character to Samuel Cajie — by the X Summatt Cast of the Esrail Date the 21st day of Accor in Eira or Saunt 5559 Wednesday :—

This day we Cast or Summat, do under write that one Moossajie Cajie whose son Nassimjie Cajie whose son Samuel Cajie, they were continuing the office of the Cajieship to this present day, — That any of the performance religious ceremony which shall not be go on without given invitation at this Cajie's house — and if in case any one person being in poor situation, who meant to go on without the Cajie, in this respect, is the rule and custom generally observed by our Esrails Cast, that no ceremony performance be go on without the Cajie, — this manner continued before, and it will be same hereafter, — and further that one. Bappoo Cumberlayker, who without calling Cajie had been performed certain ceremony called @ (Soontah) which is an unjust act, and no such custom ever observed from the time of our late ancestors, but contrary he had did it, which is not fair and proper is true — This what we are five Sumatt or Casthath granted this writing to the Cajie is true — this 24th day of the month of July in the year 1799 — in Gentos Month *Accod Vud 7th in Year of Suckay 1721 — Sedharut — name of the year, having wrote this in Bombay.

@ Circumcision.

* Hindu month of Aashadh.

Tolerance is the only real test of civilisation — (Arthur Helps).

RECENT MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM

By : Dr. ABRAHAM S. ERULKAR, M.D. (London)

(Reproduced from "The Israelite" March-April 1921 issue).

"Passover has again been with us to remind us that three to four thousand years ago the Lord brought Israel out of slavery to freedom, out of misery to happiness, out of sorrow to joy. And yet alas : to-day the children of Israel in many a land in Europe live in misery and sorrow, their property devastated, their Synagogues desecrated, their women outraged, thousands massacred, many more thousands homeless, helpless and starving. Then it was the Pharoh of Egypt — now it is the demon of anti-semitism that has taken thousands and thousands of human sacrifices from amongst the Jews within the last few years. The revival of Hebrophobia in one form or other in various European countries and U.S.A. during and after the war has been one of the most remarkable developments of recent times, and as it has found an echo in some Englishmen and English papers in India, it behoves us to take a survey of the whole question.

The recent outbreaks of anti-semitism have varied in intensity in different lands and it will suffice to give only a few examples of the sufferings of the Jews within the last few years".

(After citing incidents of horrible crimes committed against men, women and even children in Europe and elsewhere, he concluded the article thus :)

"May not the Bene-Israel thank the Lord that it has not been his lot to suffer like his co-religionists all over the world, that he has found in this ancient and holy land of Hindoostan religious toleration, peace and prosperity? Should he not feel ever grateful to this country?".

OBSERVANCE OF "YOM KIPPUR" AND "SHAB BATH BY THE ANCIENT BENE-ISRAELS

YOM KIPPUR (DAR-FALNICHA SAN)

Among the ancient Bene-Israels, Yom Kippur was known as 'Dar-falnicha San' — Festival of Closing of Door. The people fasted on this day and remained indoors. Why they closed the doors on this day is not known, but according to one tradition, it was indicative of 'Neilah' service on Yom Kippur, which marks the closing of the gates of heaven and the final inscription and sealing of our individual records in the heavenly books. They dressed completely in white, did not wear shoes, nor touched people of other religions, nor exchanged words with them. In the evening they broke the fast on 'Puris' (a special preparation of wheat flour, suji or scraped coconut, sugar, or jaggery, almond, pistachio, cardamom, etc.), and greeted each other with the kissing of hands. The elders received the homage of the young persons who fell at their feet. Even wives fell at the feet of their husbands, and this glorious and soul stirring custom is rigidly oberved in villages even to this day. In cities like Bombay, the custom is gradually disappearing, due to western influence.

The day preceding 'Dar-falnicha San' was called 'Malma' (EREB KIPPUR) and was observed with awe and devotion. On that day the people bathed themselves in hot and cold water and gave 'Hashkaboth' to all their departed nearest and dearest. It was believed by them that the souls of the departed visited them on Ereb Kippur and departed on the morning of Simhat Cohen which they called 'Shila San' — Stale Festival. 'Malida', flowers or subja (basil leaves) or myrtle, fruits, puris and a cup of wine, were placed on a table and then prayers for the departed read both on 'Malma' morning and on 'Shila San' morning. 'Shila San' was observed with great rejoicing. The people prepared a special kind of dish called 'Gharis', (Donuts) exchanged visits among their relatives and friends and distributed alms to poor lavishly, particularly to members of Cohen and Levi families, whom they gave exceptional honour.

The measures of a man is not the number of servants he has,
but the number of people he serves.

SHABBATH OBSERVANCE

Story About The Unshakable Belief of Ancient Bene-Israels in The Traditional Practices.

There was a family of Talker residing in Sarsuli, a village near Tale Khar where also there was a Bene-Israel congregation. His name was Abraham alias Bandu Shet Talker. He had a big family consisting of sons and daughters. One Saturday afternoon, two Hindu neighbours came to Bandu Shet and asked for the loan of his cart. Bandu Shet replied that it was his Shabbath and as such everyone, even his cattle was resting and nobody was supposed to work. The Hindu neighbour again said that he was asking for the cart and not for his bullocks. To which Bandu Shet replied that he did understand the position, but as such a thing had never occurred in the past, even putting his cart on its wheels, he could not take the risk of doing it and thus contravene the age-old customs of his forefathers. No one in the family knew Hebrew or had any Hebrew education. What was significantly noticed was the unshakeable belief in the traditional practices of our forefathers.

A MIRACLE THAT OCCURED IN TALA VILLAGE

A story depicting a staunch faith in "SHEMA"

We read in the Holy Bible how God saved Patriarch Abraham from certain death because of his confidence, staunch faith and belief in Him.

We also read about the miraculous escape of Prophet Daniel from the lions. But how many of us know about the miraculous escape of a Bene-Israel in similar circumstances ?

The account below is reproduced from the Bulletin published by the United Syagogue of India, in its May-June 1961 issue.

During the days when Siddi Nawab of Janjira was ruling over Tala, and Peshwa, the Viceroy of the Maratha King, over the neighbouring parts, there lived one Shelomo Abraham Talker who was a rich oil-presser and who owned many agricultural lands and cattle in the Tala Village. Being a man of importance and of God-fearing nature, he was respected not only by his community and villagers, but even by the Muslim and Hindu rulers. The courtiers of both the rulers used to come to his residence and enjoy his hospitality. But as the relations between the two rulers became strained, it was reported to the Court of the Peshwa that Shelomo was conspiring with the help of the Siddi ruler to overthrow the Hindu rule. Accordingly, Shelomo was called to the Court of the Peshwa, and when he reached there with four of his associates of whom Shimon was one, Shelomo noticed that he was not given his usual place of honour. Shimon suspected foul play and warned Shelomo to be on his guard. When the charge against Shelomo was read out, he flatly denied it and declared openly that God of Israel would protect him. According to the custom of those days Shelomo was ordered to be thrown at the feet of a mad elephant, but Shelomo was not afraid. He kept on repeating the Shema Israel, the only refuge, solace, prayer and weapon of the Bene-Israel of the ancient days. When he was thrown before the elephant, there happened a miracle and God of Bene-Israel rushed to the rescue of Shelomo. It is said, the mad elephant, no sooner saw Shelomo, at once became quiet and picked him up by its trunk and instead of dashing him to the ground placed him on its back royally and majestically. There was a commotion in the audience, the Peshwa repented, the innocence of Shelomo was proved and he was immediately given a special seat of honour in the Court. Not only that, to compensate him for the loss of prestige, he was given a Jagir of the village of Gangli in the Mangao Taluka.

NOTE : Tala is about 155 miles from Bombay. It is on a hill, about five hundred feet above the sea level.

It is better to wear out than to rust out — (Cumberland)

SHEBAT 15 - NEW YEAR FOR TREES :
Why The Bene-Israels Adore This Festival The Most ?



Thunder and Lightning Announces the Arrival of Prophet Elijah : Chariot-Wheel Track at Khandala

The unique observance of the day will be found only among the Bene-Israels of India. To them the festival was unknown for several centuries, but an interesting incident which occurred in their history led to its revival, but under a different name.

It is said that on this eve, Elijah, the Prophet, visited the people of Khandala, a village about three miles from Alibaug, and about 80 miles from Bombay. There was a loud thunder and lightning that night, and the people of the village came out to see as to what had happened. What they saw was a vision of a white bearded holy figure mounted on a white horse ascending to heaven. Immediately the Bene-Israels of the village (Khandalkars) recognised that the white bearded holy figure was no other than Prophet Elijah. The next morning the people again visited the place and saw to their amazement a long strip of mark of a horse's hoof on the rock. The people were convinced of the vision they had seen the previous night and of the identity of Prophet Elijah. They celebrated the day by reciting Eliyahoo Hannabi. Ultimately Khandala (now known as Sagav) became the place of pilgrimage and on 15th of Shebat, a Fair called 'ELIYAHOO HANNABICHA URUS' was held there. 'Eliyahoo Hannabi' was recited and choicest of fruits and dishes were eaten. The Fair was transferred to Bombay and was held at Isaji Street. It was discontinued when Yehudi Kindil, a Jew from Cochin who was the Hazan of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue told the Bene-Israels that the holding of Fair amounted to worshiping the Prophet as a deity, an act that was forbidden under the Second Commandment.

(Note : Isaji Street is very near the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue at Samuel street and was named after Isaji Hasaji Divekar, brother of Samaji Hasaji Divekar (Samuel Ezekiel Divekar) the founder of the first Bene-Israel Synagogue).

The festival is now observed as 'Festival of Elijah-cum-New Year of the Trees. Devout Bene-Israels observe this day by reciting in the evening 'Eliyahoo Hannabi' and 'Weitten Lecha', various kinds of fruits (particularly new) as also flowers, myrtle or subja (basil leaves) are brought and placed on a table. After reciting the Blessings members of the family eat new fruits after saying the Berakha of Sheheyanu and then partake of the sweet dish Malida fol-

Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with it. — (Huxley)

lowed by a sumptous dinner. When the festival falls on a Friday evening it is celebrated on Saturday night which is also the night of Prophet Elijah.

Prophet Elijah and the Bene-Israels :

Prophet Elijah stands exalted almost to the status of a patron saint of Bene-Israels and the deep veneration for him is unflinching and unwavering, till this day. No auspicious ceremony is performed unless appropriate blessings are recited first inviting him to bless the occasion. Each and every vow made is redeemed in his name. Bene-Israel Synagogues and prayer halls have a special place for keeping a highly decorated chair and a special lamp in his honour. It is a belief that whereas any Bene-Israel can redeem his vow in his name at any place it is obligatory for the original residents of Khandala to redeem their vows only at the place of the miracle. Perhaps as one tradition says our fore-fathers who first landed in India belonged to the period of King Ahab and were the staunch followers of Elijah. The custom followed by the Bene-Israels on the Tub' Shebat day is based on a sound philosophy. Spring time is symbolic of Elijah the Prophet who will at his coming, transform all waste and barren lands into fruitful landscapes, and, just as the naked trees and the bare earth once again clothe themselves with blossoms and fruits so will the dead once again awake when He, the Messiah shall appear. The beautiful festival existed in the Jewish Calendar since ancient times. It was an occasion for planting new trees, which custom however was neglected for a long time due to the reasons that are quite obvious but has now revived again in Israel.

The place of the miracle and the mark of the Horse's hoof mentioned above can be seen even to this day. The place is held sacred also by the other sections of Alibaug villages



Horse-Hoof Print at Khandala

viz., Firangis, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. It is known as Ghod Katal (Ghod = horse and Katal = rock) pious Bene Israels visiting the place recite the following beracha.

"BLESSED art thou, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe who wrought miracles for our fore-fathers at this place."

(Malida and the glass of wine kept near it represent sacrificial offerings to God. "THOU SHALT POUR OUT THE WINE TO THE LORD IN THE HOLY PLACE AS A DRINK OFFERING". (Numb 28. v 7.).

WHAT THE LORD HATES

Six things the Lord hates,
Seven are an abomination to him;
Haughty eyes, a lieing tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood;
A mind that plots mischievous schemes,
Feet that are quick to run after evil;
A false witness who utters lies;
And he who sows discord among brothers.

Freedom is not the right to do as one likes, but the liberty to do as one might.

BOMBAY AND BENE-ISRAELS DURING THE 17th, 18th and 19th Century.

E. M. JACOB Gadkar

Introduction :

It is pertinent to know when the Bene-Israels started settling down in Bombay, their progress and what Bombay was (i) just before the arrival of the Bene-Israels, (ii) during the eighteenth century when the First Bene-Israel Synagogue was built; and (iii) during the nineteenth century when the Centenary Celebrations were held and the Synagogue was named **"SHAAR HARAHAMIM"** — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE.

Old Bombay :

Bombay then consisted of seven Islands — Colaba, Fort, Byculla, Parel, Worli, Sion and Mahim. (Now Bombay is known as Greater Bombay and its territories extend to suburbs and extended suburbs upto Dahisar on West and Mulund in East). The place where the Bene-Israels settled down first was near Masiid Railway Station, which is between Fort and Byculla.

On June 23, 1661, Bombay was given in Dowry to King Charles-II of England on his marriage with Princess Catherine de Braganza of Portugal. By Royal Charter it was handed over to the East India Company in 1668.

Arrival of Bene-Israels in Bombay :

As long as the Portuguese were in possession of Bombay, Bene-Israels dared not even dream of settling down here, which was more prosperous than Konkon Region. This was because they seemed to be aware of the anti-Semitic policy of the Portuguese Government and the persecution of Jews in Cochin. After it was given in dowry to England, there was added attraction of joining the British Army. Besides, there was a great demand for skilled labour such as carpentary and masonry, in which trade the Bene-Israels were proficient.

A document in the handwriting of Samuel Nissim Kazi in 1800 states that the Bene-Israels first arrived in 1749. According to the late Dr. E. Moses, the first Jewish Burial ground used was at Parel Road (now known as Sir J. J. Road), near J. J. Hospital (the cemetery was inside the compound — the compound wall was built after 1922 or 1923, adjacent to J. J. Road). The exact date of the use of this cemetery is not known, although it is known that it was used upto the year 1785. Since the Clare Road Cemetery was used for forty-four years (from 1785 to 1829), it may be presumed that the cemetery at J. J. Road might have come to be used from 1755 for thirty years. According to the research made by Mrs. Rachel A. Gadkar, the Awaskar family which was the first to settle in Bombay came here in the year 1746.

In response to the certain queries raised by the Anglo-Jewish Association of London, the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society of Bombay and the late Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, who was then working and residing in Poona — "there were four burial grounds in Bombay, the oldest being situated in Mazagon. but its exact situation cannot be ascertained at present. The most ancient inscription found on a tomb in the next oldest graveyard, situated near Sir Jamshedji Jijeebhoy's Hospital, bearing the Jewish date 5530 (1770). A part of this grave yard has been turned into a tank, so that we cannot say if there were tombs much older in it".

The authors of this report also say that "The Bene-Israels have been settled in Bombay for upwards of 150 years. The Bagdadi and the Cochini Jews attended our Synagogues and we theirs, and we ate together. We had the same **burial ground** till recently".

(The letter to the Anglo-Jewish Association appears to have been sent before the Mhatarpakhadi (Dr Mascarenhas Road) cemetery was taken in possession in 1898).

Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot.
To him we cannot answer "TOMORROW". His name is "TODAY" — (Gabriele Mistral).

Part of Bombay where the Bene-Israels Settled First :

The names "Samuel Street", 'Isajee Street" and "Israel Moholla" suggest that a majority of the Bene-Israels settled down in the vicinity of the present Masjid Railway Station. This part of Bombay is nearer to the Docks — Indira Dock, Victoria Dock and Princess Dock — and therefore on arrival from Konkan our ancestors found it convenient to settle down in the vicinity of the Docks. Besides, this part of Bombay was in proximity to the Head Quarters of the then native regiments, in which so many Bene-Israels were employed.

In course of time the Bene-Israels acquired wealth from their trade of artisanship, which they invested in constructing or buying residential buildings. In those days most of the buildings in the area were owned by the Bene-Israels. Surplus wealth was also invested in purchasing gold, diamond and pearl ornaments. Even men used to wear necklaces which was displayed proudly by them. However, after some time this wealth vanished as if by a magic wand. Buildings changed hands and Bene-Israels became tenants of the buildings owned by them once upon a time.

When the trade of the Port increased, the Bene-Israels who are naturally lacking in business acumen, were gradually ousted from this locality by Khoja and Bania merchants and perforce settled down in cheaper locality of Umerkhadi and Dongri. Samuel Street is locally known as Vadgadi **(Vad** means Chemicals and **gadi** means Office). It is interesting to note that Vadgadi, Khand Bazaar (Zakeria Masjid Street) and Bhaat Bazaar (Narsi Natha Street) all near Samuel Street, Isajee Street and Israel Moholla have the highest transaction of business in India today. The daily turn over is over Rs. 10/- crores.

Topography of Masjid Bunder Area :

On the South-East of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue is Isaajee Street named after Samuel Divekar's brother. Israel Moholla is on the North-West of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. On the East of Israel Moholla is Samuel Street and on the South, Yusuf Meherali Road (Masjid Bunder Road).

At the time the Synagogue was built, there was a hill on the East side of Samuel Street and Isajee Street, which extended upto Noor Baug, near Sandhurst Road Railway Station. This hill was reduced to the ground by about 1925.

Law and Order :

In the absence of Law & Order machinery, there was no peace in Bombay. No one dared to move outside his house after sun-set since the streets were not provided with lights. The first lighting of the streets with oil lamps took place in 1842. The first gas lamps were provided on the streets in 1865.

1749 : Arrival of Bene-Israels in Bombay.

1750 : Samuel Ezekiel Divekar and four younger brothers joined the Army.

The credit for the first establishment of a force for the prevention of crimes goes to Gerald Aungier, Governor from 1669 to 1677. From **1753,** Bombay Government was composed of the Governor and thirteen Councillors, all of whom were Justices of Peace and Commissioner of Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery. Sheriff was the Executive Officer. In 1798, Court of Oyer and Terminar and Gaol Delivery were abolished.

1771 : Patrols were appointed, whose duties were to maintain peace, seize persons found rioting, arrest robbers and house-breakers, seize Europeans without passes and COFFREES (African Slaves). The East India Company agreed to pay the Bhandari Police Rs. 10/- for every coffree arrested, Re. 1/- for every slave absent from work for three days, Rs. 2/- for absent for a month, Re. 1/- for every soldier or sailor absent from duty for 48 hours, and annas eight for every soldier or sailor found drunk.

1785 : Non-use of the First Bene-Israel Cemetary at Sir J. J. Road and commencement of Clare Road Cemetery.

1792 : Samuel Ezekiel Divekar (Founder of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue) settled down in Bombay.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. — George Santayana

1796 : The First Bene-Israel Synagogue built by Samaji Hasaji Divekar was consecrated. Tanaji Samuel Malyankar Mistri presented Teba to the Synagogue in memory of his son 'Rahamimji, who died in 1786 on condition that it should not be removed till "MESSIAH" arrives.

(Population of Bene-Israels — About 2,000).

1797 : Death of Commandant Samuel Divekar in Cochin. David Samuel Divekar (Son of Isaji) elected as Kammodan Muccadam.

1799 : One Ismail Shaikh was hanged for theft.

1804 : A woman was sentenced for five years imprisonment for perjury, during which period she was required to stand once a year, on the first day of October Session, in the pillory, in-front of the Court House (afterwards the Great Western Hotel, with labels on her chest and back, describing her guilt.

1813 : Ban on the activities of the Christian Missionaries lifted.

1815 : Twenty-five Marathi Schools opened in Bombay and in the villages in Konkan.

1819 : Genesis and Exodus published by the American Christian Mission in Marathi.

1823 : Grant Road Burial ground taken in possession but used from 1829.

Subedar Silemanji Bapuji Sankar and his followers formed a separate group in the Samaji Hasaji "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

1826 : (1) Michael and Abraham Sargons, David Barukh Rahabi, Hacham Samuel, Judah David Ashkenazi and others from Cochin taught Hebrew Prayers and Jewish ritual observances to the Bene-Israels for ten years.

(2) Report on education published by the American Christian Missionaries. An interesting item in the report was that the Jewish Teachers were preferred because the Jews believe in monotheism.

1827 : Hebrew School established at Alibaug by American Christian Mission.

1829 : (1) 130 Jewish students attended in 17 schools run by the American Christian Mission, out of which seven schools were in Bombay and the rest in Kolaba District.

(2) Clare Road cemetery closed and use of Grant Road Cemetery began.

(3) Dr. John Wilson, to whom the Bene-Israel Community owe so much was having meetings with the Bene-Israel community in Bombay on every Saturday evening.

1832 : (1) Two European constables, stimulated by the reward of eight annas (fifty paise) for every parriah dog destroyed, were killing one in the proximity of a house when they were attacked by a mob consisting of Hindus and Parsis.

(2) David Sassoon, founder of the Sassoon business empire in India settled down in Bombay.

1833 : Reprint of Genesis and Exodus in Marathi by the American Christian Mission.

1836 : 250-Bene-Israel Students, including 60 girls were attending Dr. Wilson's Schools.

1837 : The Iraqi Jews' plea to the Government for granting them permission to erect a partition wall to divide the European Jewish cemetery so as to enable the burial of Iraqui Jews in the other half of the cemetery was turned down by the Government. (In the initial years, Bene-Israel cemetery was used by the Iraqui Jews).

1838 : (1) Dr. John Wilson, a Christian Missionary of the Free Church of Scotland and an educationist read a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (now known as Asiatic Society) in which he came to the conclusion that the Bene-Israels are indeed Israelites, a remnant of the tribes which were expelled by the Assyrian King.

(2) One Pingle was hanged for murdering his brother-in-law, Subedar Sillemanji Bapuji Sankar (due to family dispute).

1840 : (1) New Synagogue, Prayers commenced in a Prayer Hall.

(2) The first publication in the community — Hebrew Propitiary Prayers; by Hazzan Shelomo Sharabi — a Cochini Jew.

A politician thinks of next election; a statesman of next generation. — James Freeman Clarke

1841 : Foundation stone of the New Synagogue was laid on 2nd August, 1841.

1842 : (1) Streets in Bombay provided with oil lamps.

(2) 38 Bene-Israel students attended Wilson's College.

1843 : (1) The New Synagogue was consecrated on 4th June, 1843. Abraham Isaji Garsulkar, Surveyor from Aden, presented a Sepher Torah to the New Synagogue.

(2) Establishment of David Sassoon Reformatory. It was named after David Sassoon on account of the munificent donation given by the Sassoon family.

1846 : (1) The first publication by a Bene-Israel — Haeem Isaac Gazsulkar, "Illustrated Haggadah".

(2) Haskel Abraham Divekar, grand son of Isaji Ezekiel Divekar seized power of Kammodan Muccadamship of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, after the death of David Samuel Divekar.

1847 : The Old Synagogue (Gate of Mercy) secured a Sepher Torah, fifty-one years after its establishment.

1852 : Dr. John Wilson published a pamphlet "Bene-Israels of Bombay, an appeal for their Christian Education". In this pamphlet Dr. Wilson advanced the theory that the Bene-Israels came from South-West Arabia and therefore descendants of Yemeni Jews. His reason for coming to this conclusion was the resemblance between the Yemini Jews and the Bene-Israels.

1853 : Formation of the "Bene-Israel Benevolent Society", with the objects of giving relief to the poor and helpless widows, supportless orphans and infirm men and women and providing free education to the poor children and youths, both religious and secular. It was responsible for establishing a Primary School for the Bene-Israel children in 1875. In the year 1909, it purchased a building for housing orphans and destitutes. This building was taken over by the Improvement Trust in 1916, perhaps for the non-payment of taxes. However, later it contributed Rs. 10,000/- for the building of the present "THE BENE-ISRAEL HOME FOR DESTITUTES AND ORPHANS".

1855 : From 1855 to 1963, Bombay had the good fortune of having Charles Forjett, Superintendent of Police who had great linguistic faculty, wide knowledge of Indian caste, customs and habits and had a masterly capacity for assuming native disguises. After warning Lord Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, who had then his bungalow at Lalbaug, that the Governor should take strict measures to prevent unauthorised persons entering the bungalow, he greeted the Governor next morning disguised as a sweeper.

(2) David Sassoon Benevolent Institution was founded by David Sassoon.

1857 : (i) Indian Mutiny.

(ii) Bombay University opened.

1860 : (1) One Bene-Israel and two Hindus were convicted of piracy and sentenced to seven years transportation for having plundered a vessel at anchor off Alibaug of ten thousand rupees in silver.

(2) Extension to the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue was carried out and completed on 4th March, 1860.

(3) **Vihar Water Supply :** Vihar Lake Water supply project which was completed in 1858, filled with water upto 9 ft. in 1859, commenced supplying water to the City in March, 1860.

1861 : Magen David Synagogue — consecrated.

1863 : David Sassoon donated Rs. 60,000/- for housing the Mechanics Institute Library which was established in 1847.

1864 : Under the Foreigners' Act III of 1864 pimps and prostitutes were deported who found way to brothels in and around notorious Cursetji Sukhlaji Street. It is known as Safed Gally on this account.

1865 : Gas lamps provided on Streets.

1867 : Death of David Sassoon. The Mechanics Institute was named as David Sassoon Mechanics Institute, which later came to be known as David Sassoon Library.

Don't condemn other people for having queer ways. God didn't make folks all the same. Some keen, some lazy — some sane, some crazy. It's all part of the game.

1868 : The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society commenced collecting donations for building an asylum for the aged.

1870 : Huzurpaga Training College in Poona started. Till 1882, 34 girls received training, among whom were a few Bene-Israel girls.

1871 : Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar appointed Hebrew Examiner.

1872 : (1) Appointment of David Haeem Divekar, great grand son of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, as Kammodan Muccadam in place of Haskel Abraham Divekar, who was removed from the Office by the Jamat on 19th August, 1872.

(2) Opening of a new Prayer Hall known as "KENNESETH BENE-ISRAEL" as a result of dispute among the members of the Samaji Hasaji Synagogue.

1875 : (1) The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society established a Primary School on 5th July, 1875 at Khadak, which was later known as "The Israelite School" and from 1934 as "Sir Elly Kadoorie School".

(2) The late Simon Benjamin Vakrulkar (Walker), well known social worker author, powerful writer and orator, was excommunicated on account of his peculiar views on religion. His wife, Rebeccabai joined Grant Medical College for Mid-Wifery Course **— the first Bene-Israel Nurse.**

1877 : The First Bene-Israel Journal — "SATYA PRAKASH" published by Aaron Samson Ashtamkar.

1878 : First publication of the report and the statement of accounts of the "Gate of Mercy" (Samaji Hasaji) Synagogue from 13th May, 1878.

1879 : (1) Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar nominated as a Fellow of the Bombay University.

(2) Two foreigners, Reverend and Mrs. Skyors visited the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

(3) On 7th October, 1879 (Rosh Hodesh) the doors of the Synagogue were locked — dispute between the parties. Opened the next day.

(4) Tulsi Lake water supply project completed.

1880 : (1) Isaac Solomon Ghosalkar and Dr. Joel Samuel Shirkolkar were the first Bene-Israels to visit Jerusalem on 1st February, 1880 and returned on 14th April, 1880.

(2) "Ner Tamid" lamp presented by Rahamim Solomon Talkar, Writer, to Samaji Hasaji Synagogue on 8th July, 1880.

(3) Tobat (conversion ceremony) was given to one Daniel David Bhastekar, soldier, 28th Regiment at his wish, since he could not attend the Synagogue for one complete year as he was undergoing one year imprisonment in the Army Jail. The purification ceremony was performed on 2nd August, 1880.

(4) First Kirtan performed on August 8, 1880. Kirtankar was Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, Hon. Secretary of the Samaji Hasaji Synagogue and singers were (i) Rahamim Solomon Talkar, (ii) Samuel Nasemji Korlekar and (iii) Hannock Solomon Talkar (All were Committee Members of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue).

(5) Special Prayers for the persecuted Afghan Jews at Samaji Hasaji Synagogue on August 29, 1880.

1881 : Anglo-Jewish Association of London adopted the Israelite High School, established in 1875, now known as "Sir Elly Kadoorie School". As a result of the grants received from the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Government and the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, it was converted into "ANGLO-VERNACULAR SECONDARY SCHOOL".

1882 : Sunday, the March 19, 1882, was observed as "Fast and Humiliation Day" by the Bene-Israel Community in Bombay for the fierce persecution of Russian Jews.

1884 : (1) Kenneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue, Fort, Bombay consecrated.

(2) High School established in Huzurpaga. Out of 58 students 10 Bene-Israel girls.

1885 : (1) Haskel Benjamin Penkar established Anglo-Jewish and Vernacular Press.

Hide your tears, but show your smiles. Keep your fears but share your joys.

(2) Abraham Haskel Divekar, great grandson of Isaaji Samuel Divekar, appointed as "Kammodan Muccadam" of the New Prayer Hall till 1905.

1886 : Tiphereth Prayer Hall opened for conducting prayer. (It was consecrated as Synagogue in 1923).

1888 : (1) Opening of a new school for the teaching of Hebrew and Marathi by the New Synagogue (Shaare Rason) as according to the Management of the Synagogue teaching of Hebrew in the Israelite School was much neglected. This notion of Hebrew being neglected in the Israelite School persisted till 1935.

(2) A Prayer Hall in the Israelite School, started by the Late Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, known as "ETZ HAEEM" Prayer Hall. (ETZ means tree and HAEEM means Life).

1889 : Kammodan Muccadam David Haeem Divekar, Poet, Writer, Journalist, dramatist and pleader, died on November 16, 1889.

1890 : Powai Water Supply Project completed. (Tansa lake in 1926 and Vaitarna and Upper Vaitarna in 1957).

1891 : (1) Members of the three Synagogues i.e. Old, New and Kenneseth Bene-Israel convened a meeting of the Community on January 2, 1891 and decided to issue an appeal for donations for the Relief Fund for the persecuted Russian Jews.

(2) Two Parsi Girls, Pherozebai and Bachubai, 16 and 20 years of age were found dead at the foot of the Rajabai Clock Tower.

1892 : (1) The Israelite School became a full fledged High School, teaching upto the Matriculation Class and had 300 students on its roll. The school consisted of (i) Marathi Boys' School; (ii) Marathi Girls' School; and (iii) English School for Boys & Girls.

(2) One David Samuel Varulkar issued leaflets, giving notice to the Bene-Israel Community that his father, Samuel Eliya Varulkar was insisting in performing the circumcision of his new born son much against the wish of David Samuel Varulkar and that legal action would be taken against those who perform the circumcision and also against those who attend the ceremony.

1893 : Publication of the Journal — "LAMP OF JUDAISM" — by Samuel Samson Mazgaonkar.

1894 : Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Ezekiel Pingle returned from Jerusalem.

1896 : (1) The year 1896 is memorable in more than one respect. For the Jews in general and the Bene-Israels in particular; it was a very important year. It was on the 12th and 13th May, 1896 that the Centenary of the Oldest "Bene-Israel Synagogue" was celebrated and it was named as **"SHAAR HARAHAMIM — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE".**

(2) The year 1896 is also important for the people all over the World. It was during that year, that the first awardees for the "NOBEL" Prizes awards were given in the Court of King of Sweden. Later a special Peace Prize was instituted.

(3) Two other local events took place, one in India and the other in Bombay. The first was introduction of "Finger Print" System by Sir Edwards Henry, Inspector General of Police, Bengal. In Bombay it was introduced in 1898 by R. H. Vincent, C.I.E.

(4) The fourth incident pertains to the epidemic of plague in Bombay from 1896 to 1900. In order to prevent the spread of this deadly disease, a party of plague searchers went round the city to remove such patients. However, when one such party wanted to remove such a patient from a Juhai's House at Ripon Cross Road, trouble arose and disorder spread to almost all parts of Bombay. (Please read Article on Dr. Samuel Satkel Varulkar in this connection).

(5) "Special Prayers Composed and recited by Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, on October 29, 1896 at the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, for imploring divine forbearance and compassion on the public at large in view of the Bubonic (Plague) Fever that laid such a heavy hand. The day was also observed as "Fast".

(6) The sixth incident pertains to the slump period in trade due to which some tex-

tile mills were closed and the rest were working only on three days in a week. Due to the slump period a few Bene-Israel families settled down in Burma, which was then a part of India.

(7) Olympic games sprang to life again after 1,500 years.

1897 : Haeem Samuel Kehimkar completed writing "HISTORY OF THE BENE-ISRAELS IN BOMBAY PRESIDENCY" (now known as Maharashtra State).

1898 : Mhatarpakhadi (Dr. Mascarenhas) Road Burial Ground taken possession of on October 16, 1898 (used upto January 8, 1927).

1899 : The Israelite High School shifted to Mazagaon, present site of the School. The inauguration ceremony was performed by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Sandhurst.

(1927 : Use of cemetery at Dr. E. Moses Road, commenced from January 9, 1927).

SOURCES :

(1) Bombay City Police — A Historical Sketch 1672-1916 By S. M. Edwards I.C.S., C.V.C.

(2) Records left by the late Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar.

(3) Report of the Samaji Hasaaji "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue) from May 13, 1878 to December 31, 1899.

(4) The Bene-Israel Annual and Year Book — By the late Miss R. Reuben.

(5) History and Culture of the Bene-Israels in India — By the late Prof. Moses Ezekiel.

(6) "Religious Evolution" among the Bene-Israel of India since 1750 — By B. J. Israel.

(7) Article on Kenneseth Bene-Israel Prayer Hall — By the late Shalome Haeem Rajpurkar Kazi.

(8) Article on "Our New Synagogue" — By the late I. I. Shapurkar.

JEWISH BURIAL GROUNDS IN BOMBAY

"THE ONLY THING MAN CAN CALL HIS OWN AND THE ONLY CLAIM WHICH THE RICH AND THE POOR CAN HAVE UPON IS SIX FEET BY FOUR FEET OF EARTH FOR HIS ETERNAL REST" — **(Mrs. ABIGAIL E. MOSES)**

(1)	Upto the year 1785	: :	Parel Road (now known as Sir J. J. Road), near J. J. Hospital.
(2)	1785 to 1829	: :	Clare Road.
(3)	1829 to 1898	: :	Grant Road near Kamathipura (possession of the ground was taken in 1823).
(4)	1898 to 8-1-1927	: :	Mount Road (now known as Dr. Mascarenhas Road).
(5)	From 9-1-1927	: :	Dr. E. Moses Road.

The names of the Institutions or persons who acquired the first two burial grounds is not known.

NOTE : According to the information supplied by the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society and Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar (who was then stationed in Pune), the oldest cemetery was at Mazgaon village whose exact situation could not be located.

Time alone can prove the worth of friendship.

ELIYAHOO HANNABI AT SEDER

By : Mrs. Hermon W. Gordon, New York, U.S.A.

Introduction :

Elsewhere in this volume an account is given about the visit of Eliyahoo Hannabi on the Eve of Shebat — New Year for Trees at Khandala, a village near Bombay.

Here is another real story of the visit of Prophet Elijah at Seder Service in 1983 in New York, U. S. A.

It is a custom among the Jews all over the world to keep the door open on the Seder Night to facilitate "Eliyahoo Hannabi's" entry. A cup of wine is provided for him and a chair is also kept at the table. It was also a custom that on the Eve of Passover, the head of the family used to go out in the open and call out. "He that is hungry, he that is needy, come and join our Pesach."

"The story that I am telling may sound like fairy tale. But it is the truth. It was during Pesach — the most cherished festival of Jews, signifying festival of freedom in the year 1983 that a strange and unique event occurred which I will always cherish. It happened like this.

We were holding "Seder" service on Ereb Pesach. My husband was sitting at the head of the table and I occupied the other end. We were nine including friends of my sons. Before my husband could proceed with the services, he saw a figure at the door, just in front of him, which prompted him to say, "ELIYAHOO HANNABI". I wondered as to whom he was addressing and therefore went to the door and saw a stranger. At first I was taken aback and was puzzled as to why a total stranger and an uninvited guest be at our door. I wanted to telephone to the Police, when suddenly I remembered that we had provided a cup of wine for Prophet Elijah at the Seder ceremony. I also said to myself that should any untoward incident takes place we nine who were already in the house could over power him. So, hesistantly I invited him to join us in the Service, which he did. We inquired of his name, the place he came from, his profession, etc. but to all these questions his reply was "Is it necessary?"

We told him it was not.

During the Service he sat still, but when my husband was explaining about the plight of the Russian Jews, he appeared to be disturbed. He met all my three sons at the table declined to take food when requested to do so and finally said that it was time that he should be going. He requested my son to show the main road and as my son was accompanying him towards the exit, two grand daughters of my sister entered the room. He placed his hands over their heads, said something and vanished.

Was it Prophet Eliyahoo Hannabi who participated in our Seder Service? I have a strong feeling he was.



Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar

(Popularly known as "YOSEPH MASTER")

(Master means Teacher)

Some important excerpts from his record.

ADDRESS OF APPRECIATION BY THE MEMBERS OF THE BENE-ISRAEL COMMUNITY :

In the name of God shall we work and prosper.

To.

JOSEPH EZEKIEL Esq.,
Head Master
David Sassoon Benevolent Institution
Fellow of the University of Bombay
and — Justice of the Peace.

Respected Sir,

You are the only member of our Bene-Israel Community, that has distinguished himself by his learning and worth. Since 1871 you have been regularly and continually invited by the Syndicate of the University of Bombay to examine in Hebrew at the Matriculation and Higher Examination. In 1879 you were appointed by the Government a Fellow of that Learned Body and this year a Justice of Peace. These distinctions are held by many among other peoples, but as you are the only person among us by whom these are simultaneously held we deem it a great honour to you.

By selecting you for these appointments Government has rewarded merit. These distinctions that have been thus bestowed upon you are not only a cause of honour to yourself but also to all the Bene-Israelites.

You have endeared yourself to the Bene-Israel Community by publishing different religious, moral, historical and educational works and delivering lectures for the benefit of your Community. by your exertions to promote the study of our Holy Language, and by the humility of your disposition and good wishes towards the rich and to the poor alike.

We, therefore, the members of the 'Bene-Israel Balottejak Sabha' beg to express our high gratification and to tender our hearty congratulations to you for these distinctions which you so richly deserve.

May the Almighty grant every grace to you and the whole House of Israel. Amen.

We remain, Respected Sir,

Yours faithfully,

GERSHON MOSES — PRESIDENT,
ABRAHAM REUBEN — TREASURER,
ISAAC SHALOME — SECRETARY,
SAMUEL MOSES, SAMSON SAMUEL & 45 OTHERS.
BOMBAY :
5th May, 1890.

LETTER OF THANKS

FROM : The Secretary,
Bombay Plague Committee.

TO : JOSEPH EZEKIEL Esq.

PLAGUE COMMITTEE OFFICE
Bombay Custom House,
31st May, 1896.

SIR,

I have honour to convey you the thanks of the Chairman of the Plague Committee for your regular attendance in the work of the Grievance Committee during the past two months and for the valuable assistance to the Government, rendered by you in that connection.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
Sd/-
(Secretary, Plague Committee)

There is no use in doing a kindness, if you do it a day too late.

SPECIAL PASS :

WHEREAS MR. JOSEPH EZEKIEL is a **JUSTICE OF THE PEACE** this pass entitles him to travel without detention within the Presidency proper, subject to the usage medical inspection and provided he signs a certificate in the form noted on the reverse, this pass entitled his family and two servants to similar extension.

Sd/- PLAGUE COMMISSIONER

No. 112 BOMBAY POLICE OFFICE
19th March, 1899.

Mr. Joseph Ezekiel has been appointed as a special class Constable in the Bombay Police Force and is vested with the Powers, Functions and Privileges of a CONSTABLE.

Sd/- COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

ADVOCATE OF INDIA, BOMBAY
25th JANUARY 1898

HELP FROM PARIS :

In response to the Appeal, the Baroness De Hirsch of Paris has sent £ 400 (Rs. 5,941-15-6) for the "Bene-Israel Plague and Famine Relief Fund Bombay" of which Samuel, S. Mazgaonkar is the Hon. Secretary and Joseph Ezekiel, J. P., the President.

Out of the sum, Rs. 1,500/- have been given to the Israelite School Building Fund" and Rs. 200/- to the "Bene-Israel Benevolent Association Asylum Fund" and the balance of Rs. 4,241-15-6 is now available for distribution amongst the members of the community as are in distress on account of plague and famine who are asked to send their applications immediately to the above named Gentlemen, who will lay them before the Committee.

ARE THE BENE-ISRAELS OF MIXED ISRAELITE & HINDU DESCENT?

FRIEND OF ISRAEL—BOMBAY— DECEMBER 1898

In giving explanation of the objects for which funds are required in connection with the Zerana Bible and Medical Mission, Miss Edge a Christian Lady in the 'Times of India' of 14th December last while referring to the Bene-Israelites stated they were of mixed Israelite and Hindu descent. Upon this, Joseph Ezekiel, J.P., Head Master of David Sassoon Benevolent Institution and Fellow of the Bombay University called on her for explanation. After some time the lady admitted her mistake and at once wrote to the Editor and requested him to contradict the statement. The contradiction had appeared in the 'Times of India' of 20th December, 1898.

Such hasty opinions are formed only by those who have merely a superficial knowledge about our people. But those who have laboured long among us and have been minute in their investigations have upon sufficient and strong grounds, come to the conclusion that the Bene-Israelites are of pure Israelite blood. We are glad to see that Miss Edge has after all acknowledged her mistake.

The door-step to the temple of wisdom is a knowledge of our own ignorance. — (Spurgeon)

We are glad to note that the number of Jewish candidates for the various examinations of the Bombay University continues to increase steadily year by year. For the Matriculation examination there have appeared 16 students, out of whom four were girls. There are six candidates for the Previous examination and four for the Intermediate Examination in Arts. There is one student each for the examinations for the degree of B.A. and M.A. There are three candidates for the first LL.B. Success to all of them. Another demonstration to this effect appears in the same number. It is this — these native Jews opened a new burial ground with religious ceremonies at Mount Road, (now known as Mascarenhes Road). The Hebrew ritual, however voluminous, it is, but has no praises or hymns for this occasion. Joseph Ezekiel Composed a lengthy prayer for this occasion in good Biblical Hebrew, which not only proves him a fine Hebrew Scholar, but also shows the congregation to be quite conversant with the Holy tongue.

THE REVEREND DR. H. N. ADLER, PH.D.,
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew
Congregations of the British Empire.

Reverend Sir,

We, the undersigned member of the 'Bene-Israel Culture' Society, on our behalf and on behalf of the Bene-Israel Community in general, beg to express our extreme gratification and to offer our cordial and respectful congratulations on seeing that you have been found fit to be invested with the mantle of your father, the late venerable Dr. N. M. Adler, and have been elevated to the exalted office of the spiritual guide of Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire.

JOSEPH EZEKIEL, J.P.,
EZRA REUBEN, B.A.LL.B.,
BENJAMIN ABRAHAM and 62 OTHERS.
BOMBAY :
10th July, 1981.

Letter of Congratulations was sent to Sir Edward Sassoon, on his being elected a member of the House of Commons by Joseph Ezekiel (Rajpurkar) on 10th March, 1889.

SATYA-PRAKASH OR LIGHT OF TRUTH :

Revisions of the Bible :

We are glad to have to learn that the committee appointed for the revision of the Bible have requested our Israel Brother, Mr. Joseph Ezekiel, the head of the David Sassoon Benevolent Institution and a Fellow of the University of Bombay to make suggestions with regard to the revision of the Old Testament. This is indeed best selection that the Committee could make on this side of India. We are also further glad to learn that Joseph Ezekiel has consented to make the necessary suggestions and has already sent some portion of Genesis. We sincerely hope Joseph on his part will spare no pains to do the work and he, no doubt, fully understands his responsibility with regard to the subject. We also hope that the committee will not fail to take the suggestions into their consideration and make changes as may be proved essential.

9TH JEWISH CALENDAR : On the first Sunday, the 9th August, 1896, Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, while speaking on the peculiarities of the Jewish Calendar described some curious features of the Hebrew language and showed how to find out the date of almost all the Feasts and Fasts from the days of Passover Holiday with other facts worth knowing by every Israeli.

If a man could have half his wishes, he would double his troubles — (Franklin)

EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE FROM 13TH MAY, 1878 TO 31ST DECEMBER, 1898.

The following appeared in the issue of "INDU-PRAKASH" a journal, belonging to a non-Jew :-

Management of Funds

INDU-PRAKASH.
1st September, 1879

We have received a copy of the first report of the Israel Synagogue situated at Samaji Hassaji Street. It appears from the report that formerly the funds of the Institution were in the hands of a single hereditary Officer of that Community under whom its funds were much mismanaged. The Israel Community felt aggrieved at this and tried to have a voice in the Management of the Institution. The report gives an account of the difficulties that were thrown in their way but it seems they have succeeded in transferring the management of the funds to a Committee elected by the Community. The property and funds of the Synagogue are represented to be still in the hands of the former manager between whom and the Community a dispute is on that account now pending. We hope that it will soon be amicably settled.

JERUSALEM & THE BENE-ISRAELS

"The dream of our life is the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the country of which it forms the natural capital. Happy, therefore, shall be the day for the Jews and the Bene Israel when the proud dream of theirs is realized, and glorious will be the condition of Palestine when Jerusalem is rebuilt by the Chosen People of God. But until this desired event is brought to pass, the Bene-Israel, as well as all the Jews on the face of the Earth, loyally regard the country in which they are living as their Fatherland".

(Haeem Samuel Kehimkar said this 51 years before the birth of the State of Israel).

HACHAM SHELOMO SALEM SHURRABI

The first publisher of Prayers — Selihot Services. (1840)

Among the Cochini Jews who had rendered service to the Bene-Israel community in the matter of religious education, the name of Hacham Shelomo Salem Shurrabi deserves a special mention. The late Haeem Samuel Kehimkar described him in his "History of the Bene-Israels of India" as "THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF THE BENE-ISRAEL". He was a sweet singer. His mode of reciting prayers was so persuasive and his deliveries of sermons so impressive that men from all sides flocked to hear him. He was very zealous and like Rabbis of old, he did not depend on the salary the New Synagogue gave him right from its establishment, but eked out his livelihood by the labour of his hands as book-binder. He was earnest in teaching the Bene-Israels the true spirit of Judaism. He helped in the publication of the Selihoth Services in 1840. Due to the encouragement and inspiration of Hacham Shurrabi, the first three Synagogues in Raigad District, i.e. "BETH-EL" Synagogue in Revdanda, "MAGEN ABOTH" Synagogue in Alibag and "BETH-EL" Synagogue in Panvel were built.

He served the community on a meagre salary of Rs. 8.3 per month or Rs. 100/- per annum till he passed away on April 17, 1856 despite persuasion and even threats from the leaders of the Old Synagogue.

Other Cochini Jews' contributions were :-

1. Obadiah Jhakkai — 1845
   Shiroth. (Hebrew songs sung during festivals and ceremonial occasions)
2. Hacham David Judah Ashkenazi
   (Hebrew Calendar for 500 years) — 1854

The mind is like a window, sometimes bright, sometimes dull.
If the panes are broad and clean, they will admit the light.

HISTORY OF THE BENE-ISRAELS

By : E. M. Jacob

Preamble :

The Indian Jewry has a romantic and fascinating story to tell inspite of its being an obscure factor in the context of world Jewry. They belong to a country which is like a sub-continent in which empires rose, flourished and vanished. But the Indian Jews continued to lead a life unmolested by religious bigotry for over two thousand years. Perhaps it is on account of this factor that the Indian Jews are unknown to Jews in most parts of the world. It is interesting to note that inspite of the freedom enjoyed, the Indian Jews have remained faithful to the religion of their fore-fathers. The percentage of inter-marriages is much less compared to their brethren in affluent countries. (It is seen from the history that people stick to their religion when persecuted and tend to be irreligious and quite a few inter-marry when they enjoy freedom of worship).

Another important factor to be borne in mind is that the Indian Jews have adhered to all precepts and practices of Judaism to the best of their ability inspite of there being no Rabbi amidst them. In all other countries, Jewish life is modulated by Rabbis. This is indeed creditable. The Indian Jews have built FORTY ONE Synagogues, out of which TWENTY SEVEN were built by the Bene-Israels — one in the Eighteenth Century, EIGHTEEN in the Nineteenth Century and the remaining EIGHT in the Twentieth Century. The first synagogue built in India was in Cochin in the year 1568. Due to the heavy drop in the population on account of emigration mainly to Israel and few to other countries like U.S.A., U.K., Canada and Australia, the number of synagogues has dropped down to TWENTY-SIX, many of which find it difficult to get a Minyan, except on Sabbath and Festivals. Out of the existing TWENTY-SIX Synagogues, SIXTEEN belong to the Bene-Israels, EIGHT to Iraqui Jews (Minyan is arranged by rotation in the FIVE Synagogues in Calcutta), TWO to Cochini Jews (Services are held at Pardeshi Synagogue only). The Indian Jewish population prior to the formation of the State of Israel, was over 35,000. Due to emigration as stated earlier, the population is steadily decreasing and to-day it does not exceed 5,000 out of which the Bene-Israels are nearly 4,500 (3,000 are in Bombay).

Jews of India :

There are three distinct Jewish Communities in India — the Bene-Israels who have always remained the largest community, the Cochini Jews who once formed the second largest community and the Iraqi Jews who now form the second largest community. All the three sections follow the same religious rituals and recite prayers in Sephardi intonations.

Before I deal with the History of the Bene-Israels, it is necessary to state here in brief the history of the other two sections — Cochinis and Iraquis.

Jews of Cochin :

The ancestors of Cochini Jews used to visit India, particularly the Malabar Coast for trade during the reign of King Solomon, long before they settled down in India. There are two versions for their exodus to India — (i) the rich products of the land attracted them to settle down here; and (ii) in order to escape persecution during the reign of King Kobad they fled from Persia. There is another version also that they fled from Palestine. Whatever be the reason for their immigration to India, one fact is clear, that the settlers who arrived during the first few years were not strangers to the country of their adoption. The hospitality offered to them by the local people was far better than that offered to the Bene-Israels. The very fact that the "Pardeshi" Synagogue is separated from the family temple of the Rajas of Cochin only by a wall goes to prove the love and affection with which the ancestors of the Cochini Jews were received. After their settlement in Cochin their contact with the foreign Jews continued particularly with Spanish Jews. It was from the Spanish Jews that the Cochini Jews learned to recite prayers in Sephardi intonations, who in turn imparted this training to the Bene-Israels. ("Pardeshi" means foreign — since the Jews had come from foreign land their synagogue came to be known as "Pardeshi Syangogue").

A newspaper is not just for reporting the news as it is, but to make people mad enough to do something about it. — Mark Twain.

Iraqi Jews :

The ancestors of this section came from the Middle East, particularly from Baghdad about 200 years ago. They mainly came for trade and therefore settled down in important cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Pune and Surat. They maintained contact with the Jews in Baghdad. A Haham from Baghdad would visit India and give spiritual guidance to their Iraqi brethren, who had settled in India.

Economically, both Cochini and Iraqi Jews are better off than the Bene-Israels. The Sassoon family built up a large business empire in India. The two Iraqi Synagogues in Bombay, one in Pune and Jewish School in Bombay were built out of the funds of the Sassoons. The maintenance of these institutions is still carried on from the funds left by the Sassoons. In Calcutta also the funds for the building of the synagogue and the school came from the purses of a few rich people. The story of the Bene-Israels is quite different. With the exception of three synagogues (which were later maintained by the community) the remaining 24 Synagogues, one High School and one Home for Destitutes and Orphans were built and maintained from the donations and contributions received from the members of the Community. At present there are 16 Synagogues and Prayer Halls, one School, one Home for Destitutes and Orphans, besides quite a few social clubs, the administration of which is carried on by a committee elected by the members of the particular institution, unlike those in Iraqi section which are managed by Trustees who are not responsible to any one.

Bene-Israels :

Like the Jews of Cochin on the Malabar Coast in the State of Kerala, India, the Bene-Israel of Maharashtra is an ancient community. But unlike the former the origin of the latter is shrouded in mystery and legend. There is however, a tradition handed down from father to son that the ancestors of Bene-Israels were ship-wrecked on the Konkan Coast, at Nowgaon, near Hennari and Kenneri Islands about 6 miles (9.6 Km. as the crow flies) to the South of Bombay about 2,000 years ago. The word handed down was that only 7 couples survived after the ship-wreck; that these Bene-Israels had travelled from the Provinces in the North of Palestine (in Marathi they used to say "Uttarekadil pardeshatun alo"). The bodies of the many who were drowned and washed ashore were buried. Men and women were buried separately in large graves which exist even to this day. It appears that the ancestors of the Bene-Israels fled from Northern Palestine occupied by Ten Tribes who called themselves Israels. The Southern part was occupied by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who called themselves 'Judahs'. In about 730 B.C. when the Assyrians captured Samaria, the capital of the State of the Ten Tribes most of the Israelis fled from the country for fear of persecution and conversion by the Assyrians. Those few who chose to remain in the land of their birth intermingled with Assyrians and in course of time inter-married. The descendants of these inter-married couples were known as "Samaritans". When Dr. John Wilson told the Samaritans whom he met while on his visit to Palestine and Arabia about the Jews of India — the Cochinis, the Iraquis and Bene-Israels, the Samaritans perhaps finding a similarity between them and the Bene-Israels sent a letter of greetings to them through Dr. Wilson. The seven couples who adopted the Konkan villages continued to call themselves Bene-Israels for two reasons — (1) they came from that part of Palestine which was called Israel; and (2) the Muslims who were their neighbours in India had respect for the Bene-Israels but hatred towards the Judahs (Yehudis).

In the article, "THE BENE-ISRAELS" in this volume, the late D. J. Samson has given reasons to show that the ancestors of the Bene-Israels came to India from the Kingdom of Israel in north Palestine and not from south, the kingdom of Judah.

There is one more reason in support of this theory, which also explains the absence of Cohanims amongst the Bene-Israels.

In order to severe connection completely with the Kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam (931-910 B.C.), King of the Kingdom of Israel, forbade pilgrimages to Jerusalem which was in the Kingdom of Judah and created fresh priesthood, which owed its position to the favour of the

King, unlike the hereditary priesthood of the Levites.

In course of time they forgot to recite prayers, most of the religious rituals and the Hebrew language. There appears to be three reasons for this :

(i) Unlike the Cochinis and Iraqis they remained isolated from the mainstream of the Jewish culture for want of contacts. This was because the original settlers did not plan to proceed to this part of India and therefore were strangers. This part of Konkan Coast had seen many ship-wrecks due to heavy storms. In 1947 a ship "S. S. RAMDAS" sank with more than 700 passengers three of whom were Bene-Israels. A Bene-Israel bride and bridegroom were also its victims.

(The newly married couple were Mr. & Mrs. Rahamim Sassoon Talkar. The third victim was Rahamim Benjamin Kandlekar).

(ii) It is therefore impossible that they should have planned to land on this part of Indian Region. They were influenced by the social system then prevailing which was foreign to Judaism. They adopted their mode of dress, some of the customs and local language (Marathi). They began to identify themselves with the villages of their adoption. The family names were derived from the names of the villages i.e. Kehim — Kehimkar, Pen — Penkar, Cheul — Cheulkar etc. However, the assimilation of local customs was confined to social matters only and did not make any in-road into Jewish religion. Regarding the non-observance of the forms of Laeverite Marriage or release therefrom and of Divorce, it is interesting to state here that when the Bene-Israels who were members of a Synagogue in Rangoon, were debarred from exercising their rights to vote since they did not observe Laeverite marriages, the Bene-Israels had filed a suit in the Court of Law for permitting them to exercise their right to vote. The learned Judge after hearing the arguments from both the sides gave the decision in favour of the Bene-Israels stating that the Bene-Israels appeared to be more modern in their outlook and that non-observance of out-dated customs did not prevent them from being Jews.

(iii) Though they were offered asylum and were not persecuted like their brethren in foreign countries they were compelled to stay in the localities occupied by people who belonged to the lower strata of society and who were illiterate. This was because of the social and caste system of India which was then very strictly observed. This is evident from the fact that although they spoke the Local Language (Marathi) it was not the standard Marathi as spoken by the high caste Hindus. It was colloquial language spoken by the lower caste people. Even today a few Bene-Israels speak Marathi which is not standard but colloquial. Due to the contact with the people of lower strata of society they developed inferiority complex. Israel Cohen, a Zionist Emissary, who had visited Bombay for collecting funds in the year 1920, had this to say about the Bene-Israels — "But although timidity seems to have been one of their characteristics while their community was still young, they have nevertheless produced a great number of soldiers, many of whom have been distinguished for their gallentry and valour". (The Journal of a Jewish Traveller — Page 257). In absence of schools in those days, they remained illiterate for a long time.

(iv) Compared to the local women, the Bene-Israel women were more beautiful and attractive. Fearing their molestation and abduction, the women were not allowed to leave their homes for a number of years till they got the confidence that no harm would be done to their womenfolk. Even after they were allowed to move out of the house, the women never mixed socially in the company of men till about first 25 years of the present century. At the time of marriages, circumcisions, socials etc., the Bene-Israel women sat at some distance from the menfolk. If a stranger or a relative called at their homes, they told them to return after their male relatives had come back home.

But the Bene-Israels did not forget to observe Sabbath, Passover, New Year Day and Day of Atonement. The Bene-Israels came to be known as "Shanvar Telis" — Saturday oil men — since the oil presses of the Bene-Israels were closed on Saturdays. They also circumcised the male child on the 8th day of his birth and recited "KIRYATH SHEMA" upon

rising, before going to bed in the night and on all religious occasions. They also observed dietary laws scrupulously. Women were mainly responsible for the observance of the dietary laws and religious rituals.

Renaissance :

Had it not been for David Ezekiel Rahabi, a Cochini Jew, who "discovered" the Bene-Israels in about 1000 A.D. the community might have remained in ignorance for many more years and would have perhaps gradually disintegrated. Due to the efforts of David Rahabi, they learnt to recite prayers in Hebrew language and observe those feasts and fasts which they had forgotten to observe. About 800 years later, Michael and Abraham Sargon, David Barukh Rahabi, Haham Samuel, Judah David Ashkenazi and few others came from Cochin to teach the Bene-Israels to recite prayers in Hebrew and in religious rituals.

This was the first test of renaissance the Bene-Israel had.

Second Renaissance :

But beyond reciting prayers in Hebrew, meaning of which they did not understand, they could not read the Bible since its translation in Marathi was not available. It was the American Christian Missioneries, particularly the late Dr. John Wilson, who motivated the Bene-Israels to acquire the knowledge of Bible by first opening Marathi medium schools of which the Bene-Israels took the best advantage and then by translating the Genesis and Exodus into Marathi. (First published in 1819 and reprinted in 1833. A Hebrew School was also started in Alibag in 1827). But Dr. Wilson did not stop at that. In 1830, he alongwith his co-workers particularly women workers from the Christian Missioneries used to visit Bene-Israel Homes on Saturdays for the purpose of imparting knowledge and Jewish religion. He was also responsible for the inclusion of Hebrew language in the syllabus of the Matriculation and Higher Examinations of the Bombay University and for instituting the "Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar Hebrew Scholarship."

This was the second time that the Bene-Israels were awakened from their ignorance and began to learn, to read and write in Marathi, English as well as in Hebrew.

Third Renaissance :

The climax of this awakening came after the first Bene-Israel Synagogue was built in Bombay in the year 1796. This Synagogue served not only as the place of Worship but also as a meeting place. For the first time the educated men had an opportunity to meet together and discuss various problems facing the community. It motivated them to acquire more knowledge about their religion, discuss problems facing the community like providing Jewish education through sermons, organizing Biblical classes, translating Hebrew prayers into Marathi, providing Jewish and secular education to children by establishing a school, providing a home for destitutes and orphans etc. From the very inception of the establishment of the school in June 1875, Hebrew was made compulsory to Jewish students. It was on account of this teaching of Hebrew that the University of Bombay included Hebrew in the Syllabi of the Matriculation and Higher Examinations.

Publication of Books :

Contributions to the literature by Bene-Israels themselves began with a translation of Hebrew Prayers, songs sung during festivals, culminating into original works. The first publication by a Bene-Israel was in 1846 when Haeem Isaac Garsulkar translated the "Illustrated Haggada". Subsequently quite a few others published books which were either translations of Hebrew into Marathi or original works. Elsewhere in this volume resumes of some of the writers like Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, Kammodan Muccadam David Divekar, Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar and Joseph David Penkar are given. Names of others who contributed towards the literature are given under a separate article under the title, "Authors and Publications". The first original contribution by a Bene-Israel was by B. Joseph Talkar who published "Gul and Sanobar" novel in 1867. It may however, be stated here that seeds for building a communal school and a home for desti-

tutes and orphans were sown during this period. The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society which was formed on April 18, 1853 was responsible for building these two important institutions.

Shahirs & Kirtankars :

It was during this period that the Bene-Israels had among them a number of Shahirs (Bards) who used to sing songs based on some story from the Holy Bible. It was also during this period that Kirtans were performed which contributed a great deal for the religious awakening among the people. The most popular Kirtankar was the late Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar who performed the first Kirtan on "Prophet Abraham" on August 8, 1880. At that time the late Ashtamkar was the Hon. Secretary of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. This institution of kirtan has now declined, perhaps for want of efficient kirtankar. However, even today Mrs. Rachel A. Gadkar, an authoress and educationist acts as a Kirtankar whenever called upon to do so. (In a Kirtan a story is selected from the Bible. After singing the songs by a choir accompanied by musical instruments, the Kirtankar elaborates the story in a prose form punctuated with the morals of the story treated. A good kirtankar is called "Haridas" (servant of God).

Publication of Periodicals :

With this awakening and thirst for more knowledge, periodicals began to appear. The late Aaron Samson Ashtamkar, younger brother of the famous Kirtankar, edited the first paper "Satyaprakash" (Light of Truth) in 1877. This publication was followed by a monthly magazine, "Teruvah" in 1878 edited by the late Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar. This was followed by the "Lamp of Judaism" in 1881 by the same author, "Bene-Israel" in 1893 by the late Abraham Solomon Pezarkar, "The Friend of Israel" in 1894 by the late Abraham Reuben Bhinjekar (Bhinjekar gave up the editorship after a few months and the late Jacob Isaac Aptekar who later became a distinguished lawyer took up the editorship while he was a College Student), and the "Israelite" edited by Barrister David Solomon Erulkar. The Friend of Israel and the "Israelite" continued publication upto the first quarter of the Twentieth Century and then met with the same rate like other journals. Between 1877 and 1947 there were as many as 20 journals and periodicals published Since 1947 a couple of periodicals were issued but only the Marathi journal "Maccabi" has continued its publication till-today. For want of enthusiasm and financial support from the community this journal has switched over to quarterly publication instead of monthly.

Attraction towards stage & screen :

Kirtans, songs of which were recited by a choir (consisting of young men in the initial stages and later by young women) accompanied by musical instruments gave rise to music clubs in localities predominantly occupied by the Bene-Israels. This in turn cultivated interests for participating in dramas organized by their Indian brethren mostly Muslims. Soon, some educated men commenced writing dramas mostly in Hindustani, staging and directing them and even taking part in them. It was the late Kammodan Muccadam David Haeem Divekar, great grandson of the Founder of the oldest Bene-Israel Synagogue, who initiated the process of writing and staging dramas, most of which were in Hindustani or Urdu. The late Joseph David Penkar, popularly known as "Natakwala" (Dramatist) Penkar and the late Benjamin Aaron Varulkar, well known "Character Actor" of his time and an intimate friend of Sohrab Modi, followed in the footsteps of Divekar.

It is interesting to state here that till about the first 30 years of the Twentieth Century, women and girls were tabooed from participating in dramas. It was the youths of the community who staged the first Bene-Israel Youth Day in 1936 and continued it for about a decade that encouraged young women to participate in plays, skits and dramas. The climax of this participation has led to Young Bene-Israel women to take to dancing both Indian and foreign and also in Beauty Contests.

NOTE : During the Nineteenth Century, some of the Bene-Israels could speak and write Hindustani fluently because as ex-Army men they had learnt the language while in Service, which they continued to speak at Home.

Change in Profession :

From farmers and oil pressers some of the Bene-Israels changed their profession. They joined the armies of Angres (Navy people), Peshwas (Prime Ministers in Maratha Kingdom, who were Chitpawan Brahmins, originally supposed to be Jews) and later the British Army. By their valour they rose to high ranks and positions in their respective spheres. They participated in Angre-Peshwa, Angre-Siddi and Angre-English wars. For these achievements some of them got Watans (Gift of lands), some were appointed as Khots (Chief of security guards) and some got the title of Naik (Leader). A Malekar was given the title of Kotwali by the Peshwa and they were known as Khots. Samuel Abraham Charikar was given a Watan and was awarded the title to their surnames. A Wadavkar was made a killedar of Sagargad by the Peshwa and the family name was changed to Gadkar. Similarly a Waskar was put in charge of a fort near Rohe and his family came to be known as Killekar.

When the East India Company started interfering in the Indian politics in the 17th Century, Bene-Israel youths joined the English army. In the initial stages most of them joined as artisans and soon their fame spread as best carpenters. As the building activities in Bombay gathered momentum, their scope widened and they settled down in Bombay doing the work of carpentary. However, few youths preferred army life. In 1818 the East India Company had put Subhedar Solomon Joseph Umerdekar and Jamadar G. Umerdekar in charge of Karnala Fort at Panvel and Raigad Fort respectively. The Bene-Israel soldiers have made their mark while in the armies of Peshwas, East India Company, British and Indian. Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, the builder of the first Bene-Israel Synagogue rose to the rank of a Commandant — the highest rank allotted to an Indian by the East India Company. During the British rule and later after India achieved its independence in 1947, 30 Bene-Israels served in the army their names appear at the end of this article.

It is pertinent to state here that the Bene-Israel soldiers were so religious that they did not want to violate Sabbath on any account. To suit their convenience the Indian Princes had to postpone the battles.

Love for Zion :

The Bene-Israel cherished love for Zion from the time they settled down in India and were eager to visit Jerusalem. The first Bene-Israel to visit Jerusalem were isaac Solomon Ghosalkar and Dr. Joel Samuel Shirkolkar in early 1880. Fourteen years later Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Ezekiel Pingle also visited Jerusalem. In the Twentieth Century before the formation of the State of Israel quite a few Bene-Israels visited Jerusalem. This sense of feeling towards Zionism was noticed by Israel Cchen, a Zionist Emissray who visited Bombay in 1920. He writes in his book. "The Journal of a Jewish Traveller" on Page-257 as under :—

> "I found strong Jewish consciousness and a strong desire to take their share in the National task of restoring the land of Israel".

At a meeting of the community addressed by Israel Cohen the Bene-Israels contributed Rs. 8,000/- towards the Zionist fund. Cohen was followed by Madam Pevsner of "Karen Kayemeth". Subsequently Dr. Gold stein visited Bombay and addressed a meeting of the Bene-Israel Community. His appeal for contribution towwards "Karen Hayesod" was well received. Dr. Goldstein was responsible for the establishment of the Bene-Israel Branches of "Karen Hayesod" and "Karen Kayemeth." This was in 1926. In 1933 Adolf Mayers of the "Karen Kayemeth" addressed a public meeting of the Bene-Israels. It may thus be seen that the Bene-Israels were very much involved with Zionism much before the establishment of the State of Israel.

It may be stated here that when the State of Israel was formed in the year 1948 there was an urge among the Bene-Israels to emigrate to Israel. This urge was not for material reasons but spiritual. It may also be stated here that in the early stages when the Youth Aliyah was started many Bene-Israel children emigrated to Israel much against the wishes of their parents. The parents followed them later. It is only lately that some of the Bene-Israels migrate for material reasons.

Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know, it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. (Ruskin).

The survival of the Bene-Israels is a miracle of God. It sounds like a Fairy Tale. No one would have dreamt, leave alone thought that the generations of the first seven couples who survived the ship-wreck in a village near Bombay two thousand years ago would survive till to-day and pray in Hebrew, the language of the Prophets and build Synagogues.

The Bene-Israels are mainly confined to Maharashtra, whose capital is Bombay and to Gujarat, whose capital is Ahmedabad.

Contact with Foreign Jews :

As stated earlier, the Bene-Israel community remained isolated from the mainstream of the Jewish culture for want of contact. The first contact they had when David Rahabi visited them. This was followed by visits of some more Cochini Jews and Jews from Baghdad and Jerusalem.

When the Bene-Israels learnt to read and write Hebrew and English, besides their mother tongue, correspondence with their brethren in foreign lands commenced. This was towards the end of the Nineteenth Century and is evident from the exchange of letters and news with the leaders of the Jewish Communities abroad, an account of which has appeared on the last page of the article, "HIISTORY OF THE 'GATE OF MERCY' SYNAGOGUE" and the correspondence with the late Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, both of which have appeared in this Book. Further particulars on the subject are as under :—

(i) Congratulations were sent to the Reverend Dr. H. N. Adler when he assumed the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congragations of the British Empire by Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, Ezra Reuben and a few others on behalf of the Community.

(ii) The account of the Centenary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held on 12th and 13th May, 1896 had appeared in Jewish papers in U.S.A., U.K. and France.

(iii) An appeal for funds to Jews in all parts of the World was made by the Bene-Israel Plague & Famine Committee when Bombay was ravaged by plague from 1896 to 1900 to which the Baroness de Hirsch of Paris sent £ 400/-. The news appeared in the "Advocate of India", Bombay in its January 25, 1898 issue.

(iv) In its issue of February 16, 1899, the "American Israelite" had expressed its gratification at the University Examination results.

The Bene-Israels, who celebrated the 185th Anniversary of their oldest Synagogue — "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" — "GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE in 1981, have remained faithful to the religion of their forefathers — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, unlike the Chinese Jews who have almost vanished about 1,500 years ago, most of them having embraced Islam and the rest Buddhism.

(The Chinese Jews who embraced Islam are known as "Blue Cap Muslims").

Are we Sephardi or Ashkenazi?

Neither. But our teachers were Sephardi who taught us Sephardi rituals. David Rahabi was a Sephardi. Our Livorno Prayer Book is Sephardi. We also had Ashkenazi teachers, like Hakham David Judah Ashkenazi who compiled a Hebrew Calendar (Almanac) for us. They however, introduced no change in our Minhag, but we have some Ashkenazi pronounciations introduced in our Synagogue liturgy, e.g. Jonah Haftara, Simhat Torah Haftara. Marriage service beginning with Beshem Rahamon Mole Rahamim.

Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice.

JEWS IN THE DEFENCE SERVICES

(In the British Army prior to 1947 and after India became an independent nation)

SERVING OFFICERS :

1. Lt. Col. R. J. Mordecai	....	Engineers.
2. Major E. M. Daniels	....	Army Service Corps (A.S.C.)
3. Major H. M. Daniels	....	Infantary.
4. Major B. M. Daniels	....	Infantary.
5. Major S. J. Mordecai	....	Signals.
6. Major Reuben Jacob	....	Artillery.
7. Flt. Lt. A. Reuben	....	Air Force.
8. Major I. D. Joseph	....	Infantary.

RETIRED :

1. Lt. Gen. J. F. R. Jacob (Bangladesh War Fame) (From Cochin)	....	Infantary.
2. Rear-Admiral B. A. Samson	....	Indian Navy.
3. Major-Gen. J. R. Samson A.V.S.M.	....	Engineers.
4. Brigadier David Abraham (Jabalpur)	....	Army Service Corps (A.S.C.)
5. Lt. Col. R. J. Solomon	....	Infantary.
6. Lt. Col. M. A. Isaac	....	Army Service Corps (A.S.C.)
7. Lt. Col. J. Abraham	....	Army Service Corps (A.S.C.)
8. Major E. R. Sampson	....	Engineers.
9. Major M. J. Shallom	....	Signals.
10. Major R. M. Reuben	....	Infantary.
11. Major M. S. Daniels (Secunderabad)	....	Artillery.
12. Sqn. Leader E. Hyames	....	Air Force.
13. Sqn. Leader Charles Samson	....	Air Force.
14. Wing Commander George Judah	..	Air Force.
15. Lt. Col. C. A. Elias	...	Army Service Corps (A.S.C.)
16. Flt. Lt. N. A. David	...	Air Force.

SETTLED IN ISRAEL :

1. Commodore S. M. Samuel	...	Indian Navy.
2. Col. G. Benjamin	....	Engineers.
3. Major J. M. Kollet	...	Infantary.
4. Major J. Ralph	...	Infantary.
5. Wing Commander J. M. Joseph	....	Air Force.
6. Wing Commander Isaac Ezekiel	....	Air Force.

DIED IN SERVICE :

1. Lt. Col. J. M. Jhirad	....	Infantary.
2. Lt. Col. E. M. Elijah	....	Artillery.

DIED WHILE UNDER TRAINING :

1. Flt. Cadet Nissim E. Jacob Gadkar	...	Air Force.

MISSING IN INDO-PAKISTAN WAR OF 1971 :

1. Flt. Lt. L. M. Sassoon	....	Air Force.

To be spiritual is not to reject reason but to go beyond it. — Dr. Radhakrishnan.

PROMINENT PERSONALITIES OF THE PAST

Prof. EZEKIEL MOSES EZEKIEL TALKAR, B.A., LL.B., J.P.

(Honorary Presidency Magistrate).

The late Prof. Ezekiel Talkar is fondly remembered as "RABBI" for his religious insight. His melodious voice instilled in the congregation a solemnity that is hard to find now. He understood Hebrew well and emphasised where necessary and cried for forgiveness with devout humility. Prof. Ezekiel was invited to read the "SHEBA BERAKHA" for very many marriages and was invited to "SUCCATH SHELOMO" SYNAGOGUE, Pune, for Sabbath Services whenever time permitted. He conducted the religious ceremony at the consecration of the Bene-Israel Burial Ground at Dr. E. Moses Road in January 1927.

He was the popular choice for the inaugural service at the "New Synagogue" on 29th May, 1925 which happened to be the Shabuoth Day. He delivered a sermon at the consecration ceremony of "MAGEN ABRAHAM" SYNAGOGUE, Ahmedabad on September 2, 1934. As an orator, his sermons drew crowds by the hundreds and in fact the congregation complained of his not giving one every Sabbath.

He taught at the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School for 34 years and retired as its Principal. He was the Hon. Prof. of Hebrew at St. Xaviers College for 14 years and Hebrew Examiner of Bombay and Punjab Universities. He has several Books to his credit — (i) Bene-Israels in India, (ii) Osar Israel — 2 volumes published in U.S.A. and (iii) Treatise on Women's status in Rabbinical Literature, etc. He was well acquainted with "Talmudic Lore".

Nicknamed "Shetu Master", he came from a wealthy family holding prestigeous and trusted positions during the British rule. His great grand-father, the late Joseph Isaac Talkar was Commissioned Officer in the 12th Regiment of the East India Company in 1800. His grand-father the late Ezekiel Joseph Talkar was an artist of repute and one of the founders of "SHAARE RASON" SYNAGOGUE which was then known as "New Synagogue". His father, the late Moses Ezekiel Talkar was a wealthy



merchant, and because of his wealth the late Prof. Ezekiel Moses Ezekiel was known as "SHETU MASTER" (Rich Teacher). As was the practice then, he always wore a gold chain and rings on all his fingers. But later the family wealth declined and at one time "SHETU MASTER" had to take a loan from the landlord for his Education. When trying to return it, the landlord could not be traced and during the long and difficult search, he had even expired. So Prof. Ezekiel repaid it to his son. Besides being a member of "Shaare Rason" Synagogue of which he was a Trustee and President, he was also a member of "SHAAR HARAHAMIM" SYNAGOGUE and President of the BENE-ISRAEL BENEVOLENT SOCIETY for a few years.

When he passed away in 1936 at the ripe age of 76 years thousands thronged at his funeral to pay their last homage.

Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves. — Henry D. Thoreau.

Mrs. ABIGAEL E. MOSES (Rajpurkar)

B.A., S.T.C., T.D.

4-4-1894 — 17-7-1934



Here was a woman of action, a shining personality with a keen interest in educating Bene-Israel youth. Way back in 1917 she was one of the Leaders who was instrumental in the formation of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund to give loans/Scholarships to enable poor but deserving students to take up Secondary, Technical, Commercial, Industrial and higher education. During the Session of the First Bene-Israel Conference held on 25th December, 1917 when she seconded the resolution, she gave an emotional speech that moved the delegates into immediate action. She initiated the fund collection by charitably removing the bangles she had on and handing them over for auction. In those days gold was only Rs. 20/- per tola; but her unprecedented act invoked spontaneous response and the community rose to the occasion. The auction fetched a sum of Rs. 4,000/- (in those early years). She was elected President of the 8th Bene-Israel Conference held in 1924. The late Mrs. Abigail Moses was President of the Bene Israel Conference Education Fund for two years and continued to be on its management committee for several years.

She schooled at High School for Indian Girls — Pune and graduated from Wilson College — Bombay. Then she taught in the same school in Pune. While yet in service she passed her S.T.C. and later became Head-mistress at A. V. Girls School — Thane. In 1921 she passed her T.D. examination in London and returned to the post of Principal of High School for Indian Girls — Pune. She married Dr. E. Moses in 1922.

An outstanding orater she captured instant attention and held the audience spell-bound. She was a woman of action — she urged the committee to improve the cemetery and make it cleaner. She urged Jews to take to literary works and praised some of the immortal works of Bene-Israels.

She urged the youth to enthusiastically work for communal welfare and face trials and tribulations bravely and "to bring down the Walls Of Jericho" She condemned superstitions, false pride and ignorance.

She was a women's libber long before others woke up to its reality.

N.B. — Her views on position of women among the Jews appear elsewhere in this Book under the title "Bene-Israel Women".

The difficult part in an argument is not to defend one's opinion but rather to know it.
— A Marirois.

ADVICE TO THE YOUTHS WHO DESIRE TO DEVOTE SOME OF THEIR TIME FOR SOCIAL AND COMMUNAL WORK

Reproduced below are some important excerpts from the Presidential address of Mrs. Abigail E. Moses at the 8th Bene-Israel Conference held in December 1924 :

"When we are novices in the community fresh from schools and colleges, full of hope and fine sentiments, we feel we can do wonders in our community and as if by a magic wand raise it to a higher level in a short time. In those days of enthusiasm all the difficulties, seem to melt away in the beautiful world of imagination, but, when we are actually brought face to face with difficulties, we realise our position and find we have more chances of breaking our own heads by knocking against ignorance. Still I do not despair. I have been cherishing views as a well-wisher of community and feel certain that by our united efforts the walls of Jericho will come down. The eagle, the king of birds, takes its little ones on its back and not in its claws like other birds as it flies high up in the air. The skylark, as it soars on its wings has its heart and eyes upon her nest on the earth. In the same way while we aspire to soar high on the wings of education, we should not forget that there are our own people who are weaker and more unfortunate than ourselves and we should always remember that it is our sacred duty to lift them up along with us. The task is arduous, I admit, and instead of helping others to rise we may be dragged down by greater magnetic force from below. The life of the honeybee as an individual does not exist. It is one with the life of its community. Be it prosperous or poor, the individual bee regulates its needs in strict accordance to its superfluity or poverty.

Have we nothing to learn from these insignificant creatures?

DANIEL ABRAHAM SATAMKAR



On 31st October, 1926 there passed away from the stage of life Daniel Abraham Satamkar, who figured so prominently in the narrow field of communal philanthrophy.

Daniel Abraham was born on 9th August, 1869 without any advantage of birth or fortune. Owing to poverty, he was obliged to take up an employment at an early age. He worked in Bombay Port Trust for about ten years. His love of adventure, however, made him turn his attention to Commerce, and established a firm of shipping agents under the name "MESSRS. D. ABRAHAM & SONS" in 1905. During the World War-I fortune smiled on him and he became a rich man. But his love of the poor made him give more than one-tenth of his fortune to the different institutions in the Community. Being fully alive to the value of education, he helped the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund with Rs. 2,500/-, The cries of widows and orphans touched the tender chord of his heart and he donated Rs. 7,500/- to the Home for Destitutes and Orphans. He mortgaged his own property to help the Home at the time of its need bears an eloquent testimony to his spirit of self-sacrifice. His love of the Holy land made him take a tour to Jerusalem in 1921, where he donated Rs. 500/- to the Zionist Association in honour of his visit.

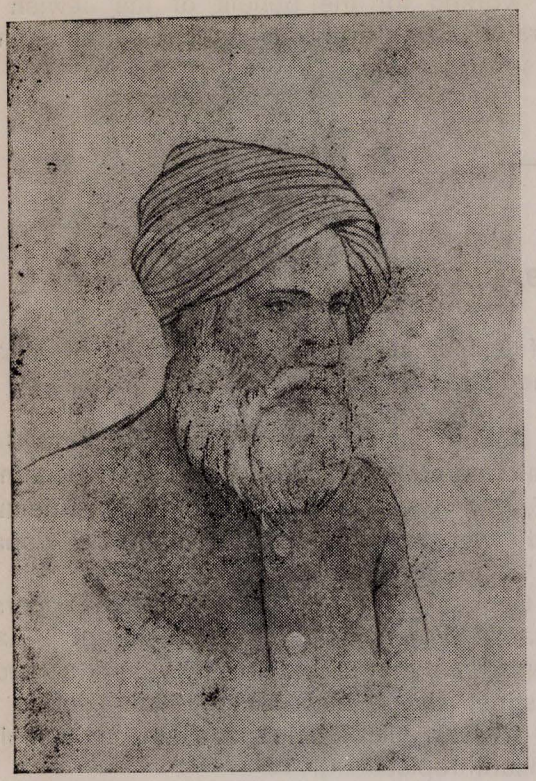
As a man, Daniel was kind and generous, sociable and accessible. Though rich, there was not even a grain of pride in him.

Today, the firm of M/s. D. Abraham & Sons Limited is one of the leading firms of Shipping & Customs House Agents and also as IATA Agents. This firm is managed by Samuel D. Abraham, along with Aby Aaron Abraham and Donald Moses Abraham, grandsons of the late Daniel Abraham Satamkar and others.

A man without imagination is like a bird without wings. — Wilhelm Raabe.

Dr. SAMUEL SATKEL VARULKAR

(The man who with tact saved the Arthur Road Hospital (now Kasturba) from burning, by the mob).



It was the year 1896. Just after the Bene-Israels completed the Centenary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, Bombay city experienced the most fatal disease — Plague, which lasted upto the end of the century. In order to prevent the spreading of this deadly disease, the Government had arranged to send a party of searchers, who went around the city to bring such patients to Arthur Road Hospital. This task was not an easy one. Members of the public felt that instead of curing the patients, they were put to death by administering poison, in order to carry out postmortem.

One afternoon. Dr. SAMUEL SATKEL VARULKAR was attending to the patients as usual. Suddenly there were shouts of 'burn the hospital' and when Dr. Varulkar came out from the ward he saw a very big mob in the compound. By nature, Dr. Varulkar was a brave man. Add to this, he had served in the army as a doctor for 32 years, before joining the Arthur Road Hospital. When he heard the allegation of the mob that poison was being administered to plague patients, he immediately went inside, brought the bottle of medicine meant for the plague patients and drank it in the presence of the mob. The mob being satisfied that poison was not being administered, went away peacefully.

Had it not been for this act of tact and bravery on the part of Dr. Varulkar not only the hospital would have been burnt down but also the doctors, the nurses and others in the hospital premises would have succumbed to burn injuries. He carried out his duties in the hospital for well over twenty years.

He was a member of Tiphereth Israel Synagogue and as an Hon. Treasurer, kept its accounts meticulously — something for the office-bearers in the institutions to emulate.

The late Mr. Varulkar was born in 1839 and passed away at the ripe old age of 82 years.

AARON BENJAMIN KANDLEKAR

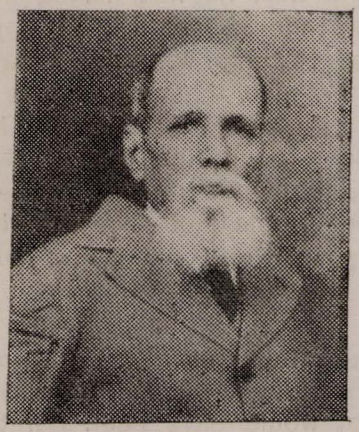
The late Kandlekar, played an important role in procuring a permanent building for the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue. The Management of the Synagogue had collected about half the required amount through donations and fund raising drives, etc. Seeing the problem Kandlekar willingly advanced the balance and the building was purchased in 1924. Kandlekar took an active part in the management of the Synagogue to the extent that it is often talked of as "Kandlekar's Synagogue."

He was a voracious reader with a huge collection of books on the Jewish Religion. He housed his library on the Synagogue premises so that others could also share his books and knowledge. He also donated a Sepher-Torah to the Synagogue.

When we are not sure who we are, we are uneasy.

In those days the Israelite School now known as, Sir Elly Kadoorie School had a branch at Jacob Circle (Primary School only) where lived several Jewish families. But due to inadequate finance the management closed it down in 1928. So Kandlekar took upon himself the onerous task of continuing the school. But for this the Bene-Israel children would have found it difficult to trudge all the way to Mazgaon. Kandlekar also promoted and worked for the benefit of the Jewish Co-operative Bank and was its committee member for several years.

Dr. JOSEPH BENJAMIN BAMNOLKAR



Dr. Joseph Benjamin Bamnolkar of Ahmedabad was (i) the Honorary Secretary of the Indian National Congress during the Presidentship of Shri Surendranath Banerjee; (ii) a member of the Ahmedabad Municipality for a number of years; and (iii) also associated with the All India Medical Licenciates Association — Ahmedabad Municipality, Red Cross Society, Deaf & Mute School and Secretary of Madhya Nishedhak Mandal from 1901 to 1948.

During his Presidentship of the First Bene-Israel Conference held at Bombay in December, 1917, the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund was inaugurated to which he donated Rs. 1,800/- in memory of his parents, the late Dr. Benjamin Bamnolkar and Mrs. Sipporabai Benjamin Bamnolkar. His son, Capt. Aaron Joseph was in the Indian Army and served in Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia during the 1914-18 war. His other son, Samson Joseph is a Philanthropist.

The late Dr. Bamnolkar had written an interesting retrospect on the Bene-Israel Community which was published in the Bene-Israel Annual and Year Book, 1917-18, published by the late Miss R. Reuben.

Dr. Bamnolkar passed away on May 30, 1951.

ALEC MOSES ELIJAH (Kamarlekar)

Alec was one of the few in the community who had earned national and international fame as the director of the Institute of Creative Development. He was the son of the renowned communal and social worker, the late K. M. Elijah. He established the Institute in 1971 in Pune, which is the second institute of its kind in India.

During the course of the last twelve years Alec had presented nearly hundred programmes in "Creative Problem Solving" in India and abroad. The fact that he was in great demand for organising such programmes proved that his programmes were very highly appreciated and commended, both here and abroad.

Foreign Assignments :

He was invited to lead sessions on (i) "The Interweave of Syntropy and TA" at the international conference of the European Association

---

of Transactional Analysis at Brighton, England, (ii) "The SYNTHINK Model" at Creativity Week sponsored by the Centre for Creative Leadership, at Greensbore, N.C. U.S.A.

Author & Journalist :

His book "Thinking Unlimited" is having a very favourable reception in India, Canada, the United States and West Germany. He edited and published "The Syntropic Thinker" until 1978. This paper had an international readership.

He was a member of the Creative Education Foundation of U.S.A. and regular member of the Transactional Society of India.

Alec was a Metallurgical engineer and was awarded the Hadfield medal for metallurgy. Prior to the establishment of his Institute in 1971, he was engaged in industry and Management for 30 years. He was Technical Director of a metallurgical firm in Bombay and also on the Board of two other engineering firms. He represented India at the International Foundry Conference in Vienna in 1961 and at the International Copper Symposium at Amsterdam in 1970. Inspite of his very tight schedule Alec found time to devote his attention to the community work. He was a member of the founding committee of ORT India, Jewish Welfare Association of Poona and Life member of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund and represented the Jewish Religious Union on the International Board of the World Union for Progressive Judaism from 1962-1970.

In March 1984, the Jewish Welfare Association, Poona, had presented a quarterly newsletter, "Mikhtav Shelanu". Alec was the moving spirit behind its publication. After the second publication of the quarterly in early June 1984, Alec suddenly passed away on 15-6-84 at the age of 64 years.

MOSES SAMUEL (Penkar)
Justice of the Peace :



Moses Samuel Penkar, nephew of Prof. E. M. Ezekiel Talkar was one of the few who worked for the welfare of the community behind the scene. He was a member of the "SHAARE RASON" Synagogue and was its Trustee and Hon. Secretary for several years. He was also associated with other institutions in the community i.e. The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society, The Israelite High School etc.

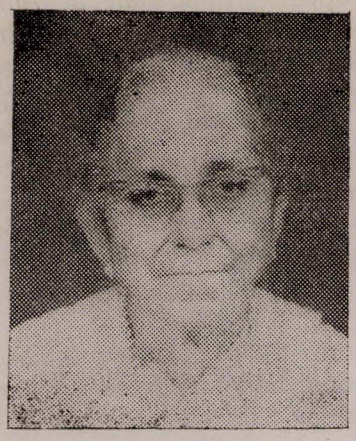
Although he was not a member of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue he was mainly responsible for bringing about a compromise between the two parties which resulted in saving a considerable amount of the Synagogue money which would have been spent by way of litigation. It may be recalled that the party in power in the Synagogue wanted to construct a Central Hall at an estimated cost of Rs. 60,000/- (the Synagogue had only Rs. 70,000/- then) Penkar, after consulting an Architect informed the Management of the Synagogue that the cost of constructing the proposed Central Hall would not be less than Rs. 1,25,000/-. This meant that the Synagogue would have to borrow atleast Rs. 65,000/- and pay interest on it, till it was refunded. Fortunately the Management of the Synagogue agreed to give up their scheme.

Unfortunately Penkar died at a very young age.

If you confer a benefit, never remember it; if you receive one, never forget it.

Mrs. DIANA MOSES EZEKIEL (Talkar)

(24th December 1898 — 2nd June 1974)



Dianabai Ezekiel, as she is fondly remembered was an ambitious educationist and in 1941 set up her own school 'Vijay Vidyalaya' at Dongri. The school that started with just two pupils on its roll rapidly expanded into a full-fledged primary school entirely due to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Ezekiel who organised functions and charity drives single handedly, only to fulfil her desire to see the educational welfare of the deprived classes. To cater to the needs of her wards she introduced tailoring classes on its premises which prepared students for Govt. recognised Diploma.

In 1957 she and her well-wishers founded the Adarsh Education Society which took over the responsibility of 'Vijay Vidyalaya' but Mrs. Ezekiel remained actively associated with it till her death.

It was actually in 1931 that this enthusiastic educationist started her career as headmistress of a junior school run on the premises of the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue. Later she joined the King George School and the Saraswat School before establishing her own school to put into practice her modern and progressive ideas on children's education.

She had done her Secondary Teachers Course and was among the fortunate few who attended a training course conducted by Madame Montessorie — the founder of the Montessorie method of Pre-School Education.

It was her innate understanding of the psychology of children and her overflowing love for them that made her a successful teacher — revered by students and teachers alike.

In the formative years of the Bene-Israel Stree Mandal Mrs. Ezekiel was an active member and an office-bearer. She frequently held discussions on how to better the standards of Jewish families — specially women and children.

AARON DAVID SHAPURKAR

Aaron David is one of the seniormost member of "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. After the passing away of late A. M. Chincholkar, he has been regularly conducting prayers at "Rodef Shalom" Synagogue since 1962 in an honorary capacity for about eleven years and there after on a small honorarium.

His first love is 'Education' and therefore he had conducted a number of Hebrew & Religion classes for the benefits of youths in the community and has also donated considerable amount of sums to educational institutions, both in and outside the community.



For good or ill, your conversation is your advertisement.

SOME IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS

THE BENE-ISRAEL BENEVOLENT SOCIETY (1853)

Some forgotten chapters in the recent history of the Bene-Israels.

(Compiled from some old documents by Judah Shalome and D. S. Erulkar, Bar-at-Law). Reproduced are excerpts from "THE ISRAELITE " in its February, May & June, 1918 issues.

It is indeed very unfortunate, that we, Bene-Israels cannot go back even fifty or sixty years in the history of our people with precision and authority. The history of the origin of several of our most important institutions dating beyond half a century is known to very few, and within a few years more the same might be lost into oblivion for want of a correct record.

It is with this view that the Community may have before them a correct history of two of the most important institutions of our Community, that we crave leave to lay before them the following few facts based on what authoritative material we have at our disposal.

The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society :

In 1853 Abraham Daniel Pezarkar, Haeem Samuel Kehimkar and Satkel Benjamin Chandgaokar, realising the hardships of dire poverty prevailing in a large section of the Community, decided to start some sort of public charity whereby the misfortunes of the deserving Bene-Israel poor might be alleviated and their prospects bettered. After consulting several other members of the Community. "The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society" was started on the 1st of June, 1853. As far as we are aware this was the first movement of its kind among our people, having the object of relieving the distress of the poor and helpless widows, supportless orphans and aged and incurable members of the Community. The Committee consisted of (i) Succoba David Shahpurkar (President), (ii) Haeem Samuel Kehimkar (Secretary) and (iii) Satkel Benjamin Chandgaokar (Treasurer) and six other Committee members, one of whom was Kammodan Muccadam Ezekiel Abraham Divekar, who succeeded his uncle David Samuel Divekar as "Kammodan Muccadam" of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1846.

The first three annual reports were not available as these were not published. The fourth annual report was read at the Annual Meeting held on 12th Jan., 1858, under the Presidentship of Dr. John Wilson, D.D., F.R.S. From the donors' list it appears that most of the donors were non-Bene-Israels, prominent among whom were Lord Elphinstone-Governor of Bombay, Lord Bishop of Bombay, Sir Robert Hamilton, Major General Charles Wardington, J. D. Invaririty, Captain W. F. Marrot, Rodrique Mackenzie Esq., David Sassoon, Colonel A. Roland, Bomanjee Framjee Cama, Bayramjee Jeejibhoy, John Campbell, J. W. Musprett, Colonel J. Grant, John Ritchie, B. H. Ellis and W. Macaulay.

The fifth annual report was read at the Annual Meeting held on January 31, 1859, which discloses Rev. Dr. Wilson as the Chairman of the Meeting, though the Presidentship continued to vest in Succoba David.

Unfortunately this Society like most Bene-Israel Institutions had not escaped from petty disputes and differences leading to personal attacks even in its infancy.

The paucity of help from Bene-Israel is complained of in the report. Relief was granted to 22 persons.

The donors' list is a long one and contains many persons of note at the time. Besides the Governor Lord Elphinstone and the Lord Bishop of Bombay, there appear in this list Viscount Dangon, Hon. H. W. Reeves, Hon. A. Malet, Sir Henry Davien, Sir George Wellesley, W. Hart, C. S. Mangaldas Nathoobhoy Esq.

Our thread of material is broken after this report, and the next report available for our guidance is for the year 1861 being the Eighth Annual Report of the Society. There appears to have been no change in the personnel of the Office-bearers and the Managing Committee except for the deletion of one name from the latter which dwindled from six members in 1857 to five in 1858 and four in 1861. Rev. Dr. Wilson continued to be the Chairman.

I can prove anything by statistics except the truth.

It appears from the report that even some young persons received help during the period of their temporary unemployment.

A copy of the letter to an influential gentleman in Bombay respecting the social position of the Jewish Community of Western India in reply to a note is reproduced in the report and runs as follows :--

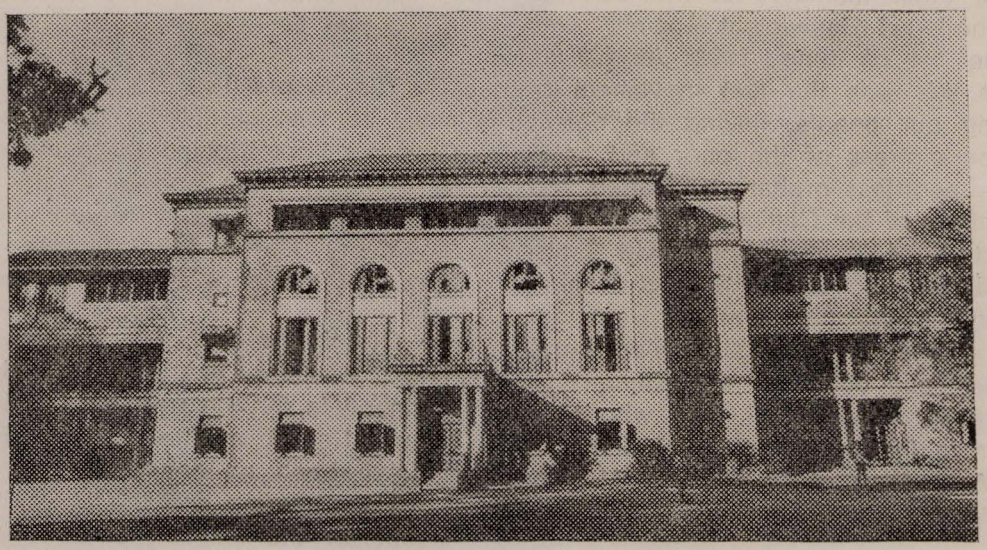
"I beg respectfully to acknowledge your note of the 16th inst., intimating that the pamphlet containing the seventh annual report of the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society no where stated that there exists any large body of poor Jews, and in reply to inform you that the Bene-Israel Community of Western India is estimated in round numbers to comprise about 6000 souls, out of which one-tenth only are in easy circumstances, one-third are merely dependent on their monthly and daily wages; one-half are daily labourers, but whose wages are barely sufficient for their maintenance of themselves and families and who often need partial help from the Society; and about one-fifteenth of the whole of 400 souls are in a wholly destitute condition but the funds have not up to the present time been sufficient to take the cases of more than thirty one of that number into consideration, and these were lamentably indigent both from old age and disease."

"The present object of the Society is that of collecting sufficient funds for establishing the Society on a firm footing, and erecting a small asylum for those who are in need of a place of abode; and by desire of the Directors, I beg earnestly and humbly to solicit your kind aid, and further, if you consider the Institution (and I trust it will sufficiently present itself to you as such) a praiseworthy one, that you will kindly commend it to the notice of those of your friends who may give their assistance to the object in view".

The question of a permanent Asylum seems to have been opened at the Annual Meeting for the adoption of report of the Society for 1860 and again dilated upon by Mr. Moroba Vinoba at the meting where the 8th Annual Report was passed.

(In the year 1909, the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society purchased a building for housing Orphans and Destitutes. But this building was taken over by the Improvement Trust in 1916. Perhaps for non-payment of taxes)

THE ISRAELITE HIGH SCHOOL (1875)
alias
SIR ELLY KADOORI SCHOOL (1932)



GIVING first preference to EDUCATION, The Bene-Israel Benevolent Society, started a Marathi and Hebrew School, beginning with one class only on July 5, 1875 at Khadak, a place

situated in south Bombay between Mohamedali Road on the west and Samuel Street on the east, near 'Israel Moholla' (Moholla means locality). A large number of Bene-Israels resided here, some of whom owned buildings.

In order to encourage parents to send their daughters to school, girl students were not only exempted from paying school fees, rich or poor, but scholarships were also provided.

After retiring from service in 1878, Haeem Samuel took an active part in the management of the school. With the regular annual grants from the Anglo Jewish Association, Government of Bombay, 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue and others the Anglo-Vernacular Secondary School was started in 1881. The Governor of Bombay, Sir James Ferguson sanctioned an annual grant of Rs. 1,560/- which was increased to Rs. 2,000/- by Lord Reay. The building fund was started under the patronage of Lord Harris in 1898 and the inauguration ceremony of the school at the present site at Mazgaon was performed by Lord Sandhurst, the then Governor of Bombay in 1899.

The school consisting of (i) Marathi Boys' School (ii) Marathi Girls' School and (iii) English School for Boys and Girls, became full-fledged High School in 1892. Joseph Moses Kehimkar and Abraham Elijah Talkar were the first two students to pass the Matriculation in the same year.

The Prayer Hall, known as ETZ Haeem was started in 1888 by Haeem Samuel Kehimkar with the object of helping the school financially, and continued to pay Rs. 300/- annually towards the School Fund. In addition, the Prayer Hall was assisting the poor children of the school with clothes every year before the commencement of the Jewish New Year.

In order to run the school on more democratic basis, H. Landau, a member of the Anglo-Jewish Association, London, came to Bombay in February 1907 and called for suggestions about the appointment of a committee to manage the school. (H. S. Kehimkar was Hon. President, Secretary and Treasurer of the school from 1893 till he passed away in 1908). At the meeting of the community convened for this purpose it was decided that the school be managed by a Committee of Management. In June 1908, A. J. Association appointed a Provisional Committee with Prof. James Nelson Fraser as its Chairman. In choosing the member of the committee, the Association was guided by the advice of Prof. Fraser, who interviewed each member before recommending his name. Prof. Fraser was the President of the new Committee and continued in the office till he passed away in 1918. It is interesting to state here that Prof. Fraser was an appreciative student of Marathi language and his translation of Sant Tukaram's poems testify to his love of Marathi poetry.

Miss R. Reuben was appointed as Principal of the School in April 1922 and continued her connection with the school even after retirement till she passed away. She was co-opted on the Committee in 1915 — the first time a woman being appointed in the Committee.

In 1928 the Bombay Municipal Corporation served a notice on the School Management to demolish the school building as it was in a delapidated state and construct a new one. Since the community could not raise sufficient funds to erect a new building, Miss. R. Reuben met Sir Elly Kadoorie when he was in Bombay while on his world tour several times and prevailed upon him to donate a large sum for rebuilding the School. Kadoorie agreed to donate but on condition that the school should be named after the donor.

Since April 1932 the school came to be known as SIR ELLY KADOORIE SCHOOL.

There was a time when there used to be over 800 Bene-Israel students in the School. To-day there are hardly eight out of about 1,200 students !

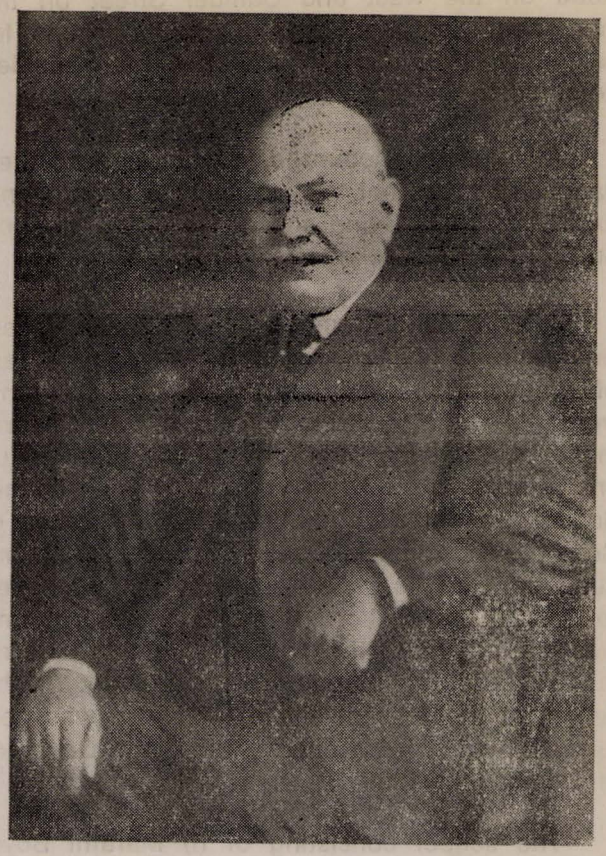
Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended upon man. — (Francis Cardinal Spellman)

SIR ELLY KADOORIE

Speaking at the grand reception given to Sir Elly Kadoorie by the Bene-Israel community — (over two thousand persons were present in the Kadoorie School compound) in February 1934 the late Miss Rebecca Reuben said "the story of munificent donation by Sir Elly Kadoorie reads like a 'fairy-tale.' Who could have believed that when all our hopes of rebuilding the school had completely vanished, there should come a person unknown to the Bene-Israel community to their succour?" And then she mentioned about her visit to London in order to persuade the Anglo Jewish Association to give a substantial grant to rebuild the school, her disappointment, when her request was not accepted in toto (the Association agreed to waive the loan previously granted to the school). It was the Association, however, which requested Miss Reuben to contact Sir Kadoorie. Miss Reuben contacted him and to her great joy, Kadoorie agreed to a substantial amount as donation.

In the initial stages, there was no condition to rename the school by Kadoorie. However, when it was found difficult to collect more contributions from the community (the community contributed Rs. 33,200/- only), Kadoorie was once again approached and he donated the require sum to make up the cost of rebuilding the school at Rs. 1,82,800/- on condition that the School be renamed after him. Sir Kadoorie's total contribution was Rs. 1,35,000/-.

Having his business contact in China, Sir Elly Kadoorie used to have a Chinese woman as his Secretary. After the large meeting at which the address was presented to him as mentioned earlier, a cultural programme was held in the school compound after about 2 or 3 days in honour of Sir Elly Kadoorie. One of the very interesting item of entertainment was to be performed by a small boy, a pupil of the school then studying in the first standard. Being very handsome and clever, he was given intensive training for his performance. However, when this boy (Mordechai, son of Menashe Joseph Dhatavkar) saw the Chinese woman, he started crying. (In those days some of the parents used to frighten their children with the threat that if they did not obey their parents, they would be handed



over to Chinese). What a pity! The boy did not participate even after the Chinese woman was requested to vacate the dais.

Sir Elly Kadoorie had a fascinating career. At the age of only 15 he joined the Sassoons in Hong Kong in 1880. At that time he passed through Bombay from his birth place Baghdad. Later he started his own business and made millions in Malaysian and Indonesian rubber. Later he had trade connection with Shanghai and Hong Kong also.

He gave tremendous importance to education and therefore he built many educational institutions i.e. in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, France, England, Portugal, China and Israel — one for Arabs and one for Jews. Those in Israel are Agricultural Schools. He also built a number of hospitals. He contributed to the construction of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and served as President of the Shanghai's Palestine Foundation Fund.

Prejudice is the child of ignorance (Hazlit).

The Kadoories have the tradition of Philanthropy says Lord Lawrence Kadoorie. "The Kadoories were able to do a lot because we were big fish in a small pond" and desired to remember our less privileged brotheren than just go on accumulating wealth". Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, (now in Hong Kong, presides over a vast commercial domain, on the 24th floor of St. George Building) made friendship with the youths when he attended the public meeting in February 1934 in Bombay and also the cultural programme, a couple of days later, he invited some of the youths to visit "Empress of Britain", by which ship both father and son were travelling around the world. Among the invitees were the late Joshua A. Reuben Bhinjekar, the late R. Ben Samuel, the late Elijah Jacob Awaskar, the late Ezra Kolet (of Bombay) the late Raymond Samuel Killekar, R. B. Raymond Gadkar and E. M. Jacob Gadkar. The youths spent nearly three hours with him on board. the ship. Lawrence is a religious man. He says, "In order to respect yourself, it is very important to have respect for your religion. I am indeed proud to be a Jew."

Lawrence (82) and his brother Horace three years younger to him inherited their father's fortune in 1944 when Sir Elly Kadoorie died in Shanghai that year. Since then the estate left to the two sons has swelled into countless holdings and are owners of nearly every notable landmark in Hong Kong (or shareholders). Some of these are the Star Ferry, the Victoria Peak Tram, the Peninsula and Repulse Bay Hotels, the Cross Harbour Tunnel, etc. Chairman of the "China Light and Power Company" which supplies electricity to the entire Hong Kong city.

In addition to the material wealth inherited from their father, the sons also inherited the spiritual wealth. It is to their credit that the brothers have used these two inheritance wisely. They rebuilt "Ohel Leah Synagogue" in Hong Kong, which was built by the Sassoons and which was transformed into a military warehouse by the Japanese during the World War II. They are mainly responsible for the "Jewish Recreation Club," which caters to the needs of the community. Besides providing recreation, this club houses kindergarten and classes in ballet and gymnastics and on Sundays Hebrew and Religion classes. Besides, the monthly Shabbat dinners, the festival of Purim is celebrated here when men, women and children donned in different costumes dine and dance late into the night. However, their greatest contribution to the Hong Kong is the "Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association," launched in 1951, shortly after the defeat of the nationalist forces led by Chiang-Kai-sheik (who visited India to meet Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders before India got its independence). Many of the million refugees who surged into Hong Kong were farmers. More than 3,00,000 Chinese refugees were granted interest-free loans, gifts of dams, wells, orchards, fish ponds and subsidized grants of livestock and farm buildings.

Inspite of all this, Kadoories are modest. Say they, "We are the richest Jews in the town and therefore there is some obligation that goes with it.

Kadoorie family was interned by the Japanese in Shanghai during World War II.

K. M. ELIJAH AND A. M. ELIJAH

The photo of K. M. Elijah is not printed along with his resume on page 45 as per his instructions left with his son Alec.

Similarly, photo of A. M. Elijah (pages 108-109) is not printed as per his condition.

Many can argue; not many can converse. — Alcott

SIR JACOB SASSOON HIGH SCHOOL



The House of "SASSOONS" have conferred invaluable benefits to Indian Jews in particular and Indians in general.

The most important contribution made to the Jews of Bombay is Sir Jacob Sassoon High School. This is the only Jewish School in India where Hebrew is taught even to-day.

The first-Bene-Israel teacher to teach in this school was none other than the late Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar. He joined the school as an Assistant Teacher in 1860 and was promoted as Head Master in 1865. He retired from the school after serving it for over forty years. At that time the school was known as "David Sassoon Benevolent Institution." (started in 1855). The other Bene-Israel teachers who were Principals of the school were — (i) the late Prof. Ezekiel Moses Ezekiel Talkar, (ii) Shalom Abraham Cheulkar and (iii) Dr. (Mrs.) Nancy Ezekiel Ashtamkar.

THE BOMBAY ELECTRIC SUPPLY & TRAMWAYS CO. LTD.

ONE ANNA TICKET COUPON

FOR JEWS ONLY.

No.....

(Good only for Sabbath & Holidays)

To be handed over to the Conductor who will issue a ticket in lieu thereof.

Initials

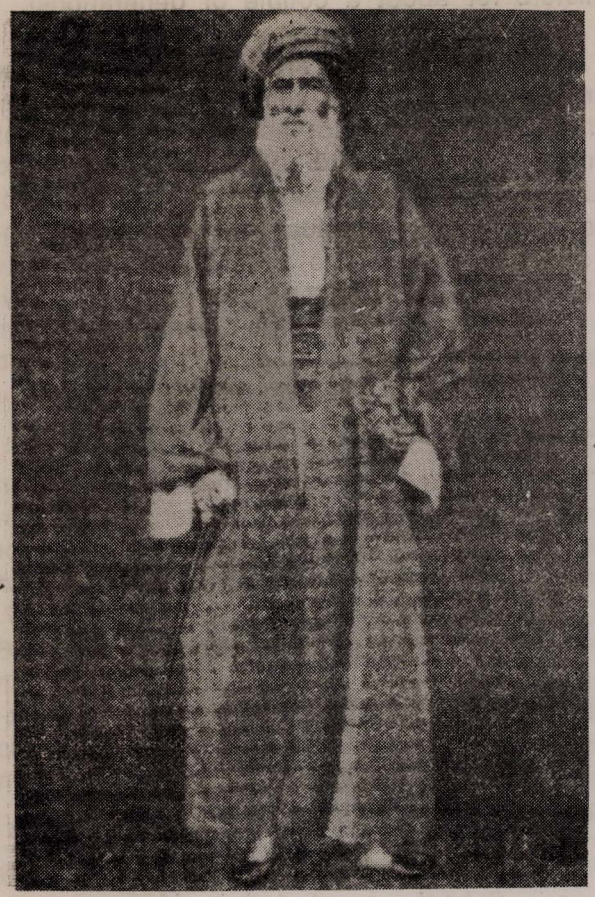
Asst. Manager
C. LUCAS

The above ticket was devised since it is taboo for the orthodox Jews to handle money on Saturdays and Holidays. The House of Sassoons was responsible for this suggestion.

In this world a man must be either an anvil or a hammer. — Longfellow

DAVID SASSOON

Settled down in Bombay in 1832. Died in 1867.



DAVID SASSOON, founder of the Sassoon business empire was Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and various other big companies and banks. He was mainly responsible for the construction of the Sassoon Dock (it is named after him). Because of his munificent monetary contributions quite a few institutions have been named after him i.e. Sassoon Hospital in Pune, David Sassoon Industrial School, David Sassoon Library and Reading Room etc. He also contributed liberally towards the Elphinstone High School, Royal Institute of Science and St. George's Hospital.

The House of Sassoon has provided funds under the Management of the Board of Trustees for the betterment of the poor and the needy of the Iraqi community.

SCHOOLS IN CALCUTTA



The Jewish Girls' Infants School (1881)

It was the Christian Missionaries who took the initiative in setting up a free "Christian Hebrew Mission School".

The first Jewish School : "The Jewish Girls' Infants' School" came into existance when the Jewish community (which was generally pros-

---

There is no education like adversity — Disraeli

perous) learnt that a Jewish girl attending the Christian Mission school was willing to be converted to Christianity. Rev. E. M. D. Cohen brought this incident to the notice of the community by publishing a number of leaflets which awakened it to their sense of responsibility. Three or four men responded to this appeal spontaneously which resulted in the establishment of the first Jewish School in 1881. In 1882 The Ezra Benevolent Institution was founded for the benefit of the poor Jewish children for learning Hebrew and Jewish Religion in particular and other subjects in general.

After a couple of years an independent section for boys was started in The Jewish Girls and Infants' School and was named as the "Jewish Boys' and Girls' School". However, in 1885 the two schools were amalgamated and thereafter it came to be known as "The Jewish Girls' School." (Boys were admitted even though it was known as Girls' School). Had it not been for the Government grant in 1904, the school would have been closed. Due to the motivation of Rev. Cohen, funds were collected for a new building and its corner stone was laid by Sir David Ezra in 1926.

Another school was started at the initiative of Rev. Cohen, known as "Jeshurun Free School" for the benefit of poor children. In 1937, a Jewish Girls' Hostel was set up. (Cohen family catered to the spiritual needs by conducting religion classes and also serving as Ministers for about a couple of generations).

"The Elias Meyer Free School and the Talmud Torah : "The aim of this institution, started in 1882 was to inculcate the taste for learning — Hebrew and religiouas customs and traditions. Education was free with lunch provided. The level of education was upto Standard III only. After the creation of the State of Israel, like the Kadoorie School in Bombay, the almost exclusively Jewish character of the Jewish Girls' School underwent a drastic change. The other schools did not survive for long even before 1947.

NOTE : It may be noted that the Christian Missionaries were the first to cater to the educational needs of Jewish children even for learning Hebrew. Christian Missionaries started the First Hebrew School at Alibaug in 1827. They started other schools also and by 1836 over 250 Bene-Israel students were studying in these schools. The first Jewish School established in Bombay in 1855 was by the famous Sassoon family, known as "David Sassoon Benevolent Institute."

The Israelite School, now known as Sir Elly Kadoorie School was started in 1875.

BENE-ISRAEL NIRASHRIT FUND (1901)

Koli Samaj Bhuvan, 79, Dr. Maheshwari Road, Bombay-400 009.

It is enjoined in our religion that those who are little better off economically should invite a couple of poor people to share their meals on festival days. While this injunction is good it is difficult to put it into practice. There is no guarantee that ALL the poor would be invited for meals. In order to solve this ticklish problem three noble men — Rahamim David Gadkar, Maistry, Abraham Samuel Wasker and Ezekiel Samson Kurulkar came together and after some discussion drew up a comprehensive formula. "WHY NOT", they said, "help the poor and needy persons to celebrate and enjoy the festivals in their respective homes?"

These three gentlemen discussed their formula with their friends and when they found that their idea was welcomed, they commenced collecting donations from the members of the community and provided the destitutes, widows and orphans with clothing and cash prior to the commencement of each festival from the year 1901. In the year 1904, these gentlemen with the co-operation of other colleagues put the movement on a permanent footing. They formed a society and named it "BENE ISRAEL NIRASHRIT FUND" — Funds for the orphans and destitutes.

Since 1901, the Fund enables the poor to enjoy Jewish Festivals by collecting donations from the members of the Bene-Israel community in India and abroad particularly in Israel.

To see what is right and not do it, is want of courage — Confucius

THE BENE-ISRAEL STREE MANDAL (1913)

The Bene-Israel Stree Mandal was started by Dr. (Miss) Jerusha Jacob Jhirad in November 1913 with the co-operation of some lady friends. This is the first and the only institution of its kind in the community. What motivated Dr. Jhirad to start this important Institution? In her autobiography, which is published on pages 56-60 of this book, Dr. Jhirad says that after qualifying for M.B.B.S. in 1912 and setting up a General Practice in Bombay, a group of young teachers and college students in the community got together to present her with an address. She says it was the first time women in the community had thus met. Women in other communities were far advanced. This, she said gave her an idea to bring them together for cultural and social advancement. At that time she was only twenty-two years old.

The object of the Mandal is to train Bene-Israel women and girls and prepare them for all possibilities and emergencies of life and so to educate them that in whichever paths of life may lie their spheres of action they should be able to acquit themselves ably and honourably. The means proposed for the attainment of the object are such as would meet its wide scope in as much as they are suggestive of numerous activities and projects almost all the branches and avenues of work and cover fields, social, moral and religious. The work so far done by the institution consisted principally by holding fortnightly meetings, where lectures on useful subjects were delivered, arranging for public lectures by eminent ladies of established educational fame, starting and conducting sewing and English classes and a free library.

The Mandal did not limit its activities for the welfare of the community only. Its members collected funds in aid of the distressed and suffering Indians in South Africa, sewing clothing for Britain's wounded soldiers during the First World War (1914-1918) and for the orphans in Beth Israel and poor children, the Israelite School, collected funds towards the relief for the poor victims of the devastated floods in Gujarat, Sindh. and Orissa in 1927. Since quite a few men in the community had taken to drinking liquor, the Mandal organised a lecture by Miss M. J. Campbell on "TEMPERANCE" in February 1924. As a result of this talk, Bene-Israel Temperance Union was formed. Miss. R. Reuben, a cousin of Dr. Jhirad was given the responsibility to propagate the message of Temperance.

A representative of the Mandal worked on the Bombay Presidency Women's Committee on the Educational Reforms and Women's Flood Relief Committee. Its delegates used to attend the Annual Conference of the Bombay Presidency Women.

The Stree Mandal admits as its members only ladies of Jewish faith and its entirely managed by ladies.

Taking into consideration the work done by its members so far, there can be no hesitation in saying that it has more than justified its advent and existence and has established its claim to the admiration and support of every right-minded person in the community.

Miss R. Reuben conducted classes for ladies on every Saturday.

THE BENE-ISRAEL CONFERENCE EDUCATION FUND (1917)

4-c/6, Vijayavihar, Chembur, Bombay-400 071.

The above Society has been granting study loan by way of Scholarships for the last 66 (sixty-six) years to the needy and deserving students to prosecute their Higher Studies. The Society also gives monetary assistance to poor but needy children towards Uniform etc. This assistance has helped many scholars to obtain high qualifications which otherwise, they might not have been able to do, and we have several executives and professionals to bear testimony for the good work done by this Institution.

In order to assist exceptionally brilliant students i.e. Primary and Secondary Departments, the society grants non-refundable Scholarships.

There are two items in a man's life when he should not speculate; when he can't afford it and when he can. — Mark Twain

In addition, the following non-refundable Scholarships are alsc available, subject to the DISCRETION of the committee.

(1) Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Benjamin Bamnolkar Fund : FDR Rs. 1,111/-

The annual interest to be given to a Bene-Israel boy who has passed S.S.C. or equivalent examinations and who wishes to prosecute further studies in Drawing and Painting, Architecture, Science (but not Physics and Chemistry), Commercial Technical, Medical, Industrial, and Art Degree or Diploma or to a deserving student studying in KG, Primary and Secondary who is exceptionally brilliant.

(2) Mr. & Mrs. Menashe Haeem Bamnolkar Fund : FDR Rs. 1,000/-

The annual interest to be given to Bene-Israel girl who wishes to prosecute further studies in Home Science, for B.Sc., Teacher's Training Diploma, Science (Except Physics and Chemistry), Commercial, Technical, Medical, Industrial and Art Degree/Diploma or to a deserving student studying in K.G., Primary and Secondary School who is exceptionally brilliant.

(3) The Parel Bene-Israel Prayer Hall Scholarship Fund : Rs. 10,000/-

The Annual interest to be utilised for awarding non-refundable Scholarship for Higher Studies or as refundable Scholarship.

(4) Mrs. Rebeccabai Joel Ashtamkar Fund : FDR Rs. 4,000/-

The Annual interest tc be utilised for awarding non-refundable Scholarship or for Uniform to poor school children.

(5) Principal Samson Joseph Benjamin and Principal Rachel Samson J. Benjamin Bamnolkar Endowment Fund : FDR Rs. 5,000/-

The Annual interest to be utilised for providing educational and other facilities of life to destitute Bene-Israel Orphan or to an Adult, young/old who is pursuing or willing to pursue or equip himself/herself with knowledge of Jewish Religion.

(6) Sarah Abraham Samson Killekar Scholarship : FDR Rs. 5,000/-

The Annual interest to be utilised for providing Higher Studies to a poor and deserving student preferably Medicine.

THE ELIZABETH DAVID GERSHONE AND DAVID GERSHONE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

A sum of Rs. 50,000/- donated by David Gershone is invested, the interest of which is distributed as scholarships amongst Bene-Israel children of either sex to enable them to prosecute their studies for medical, technical or industrial education in any of the colleges or institutions in the State of Bombay (now Maharashtra). The applicant must have passed at least the Matriculation or Senior Cambridge Examination. The scholarship may also bc awarded to Bene-Israel applicants studying in any institution in India, preparing candidates for qualifying in any institution in India, preparing candidates for qualifying examinations for admission to the Indian Administrative, Military, Naval or Air Force Services. The income of the Trust that remains unexpended at the end of every three years is paid to the Sir Elly Kadoorie School, to be expended as part of the general funds of the school.

Young people desirous of taking advantage of this scheme may contact any of the following office-bearers :

DR. (MRS.) RUBY S. SOLOMON, L.C.P.S., L.M.
Chairman,
5-A, Fereira Mansion,
Sitladevi Temple Road,
Mahim, Bombay-400 016.

MR. TOBBY AARON,
96, Penso Villa,
Dr. M. B. Raut Marg,
Shivaji Park, Bombay-400 028.

The falling of rain is an event greater than the giving of the Law, since the Law is for Israel only, but the rain is for the entire world — Midrash Tehillim, 117 : 1

BOMBAY ZIONIST ASSOCIATION (1920)

Narang House, 41, Ambalal Doshi Marg, Bombay-400 023 (Tel : 27 31 87)

Bombay Zionist Association was established in 1920 and still exists inspite of some ups and downs.

In 1975 its membership had fallen down considerably. However, at present there are over two hundred members.

It publishes a Quarterly bulletin, "INDO-ISRAEL REVIEW."

THE YOUNG JEWISH SOCIAL ASSOCIATION (1934)

Since 1934 the Association has been organising "Purim" Social at which cultural programmes are presented. This Purim Social has become very popular in the community and everyone, young and old eagerly looks forward to participate in it.

In the earlier years, the Association used to organise lectures, Kirtans (for the purpose of spreading knowledge about the religion) debates, socials, film shows, dramas "Simhat Torah" Festival, in aid of Educational and Religious institutions. Its ISRU HAG excursion was very popular. The Association was formed by youths who were ex-students of Sir Elly Kadoorie School (known as The Israelite High School from 1875 to 1932). This school was in great need of financial assistance and the Association rose to the occasion by donating the entire proceeds of such activities to the School. Such donations were also given to other educational and religious institutions. Its highest donation of Rs. 5,000/- was given to The Bene Israel Conference Education Fund which is attending to the educational needs of poor but deserving students.

THE JEWISH CLUB, BOMBAY (1938)

The Jewish Club, Bombay, is situated at "Jeroo Building," 137 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Fort, Bombay-400 001. The Club was started in 1938. It is now open to non-Jews as well.

The Jewish Club is centrally situated with large premises and provides facilities to Jewish Institutions and Organisations for holding their functions. It caters for Kosher food for Members and Guests. Any Jew is welcome to have his meals in the Club. The Club from time to time holds functions and dances and is helping to promote Social life in the Jewish Community.

BETH-HAWRA : HEALTH HOME, MATHERAN (1955)

At the 8th Bene-Israel Conference held under the Presidentship of the late Mrs. Abigael E. Mases in 1925, it was resolved to have a sanatorium outside Bombay.

On May 22, 1955, 30 years after this resolution was passed, a Health Home in Matheran — a Hill Station about 80 miles away from Bombay known as Beth-Havra was opened to the members of the community, thanks to munificent donation of the late Ezra Reuben for the purchase of the land, the late Miss R. Reuben for the construction of the Home and the late Mrs. Elizabeth Shellim Corley for the construction of the Pavilion. The idea for the HOME struck a few members of the Israelite School Maccabeans when they visited Matheran in December 1947. The Fellowship took up the idea and J. M. Benjamin, a member of the I.S.M. and renowned architect drew its plan and design free of cost.

Location : The HOME is situated between the upper and lower Luisia Road, next to Sunder Villa. The Corley Pavilion serves the need of Picnikers and Scouts.

For further particulars please contact R. B. Shirkolkar, Worli Seaside Society, A-4/11, Khan Abdul Gaffarkhan Road, Bombay-400 018.

(Telephone No. 378084)

The heathen is thy neighbour, thy brother; to wrong him is a sin. — Tana d'be Eliyahu, 284

O. R. T. INDIA (1962)

(Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training)



In Bombay, ORT started its activities in 1962. Since then the Jewish youth is taking full advantage of the training imparted by ORT in the trades of Mechanical Draughtsmanship and Machinists. For the first two years the students follow the Government Syllabus. At the end of this period, they appear for an examination conducted by the Government. During the third year the students are given additional training which is useful in securing good jobs. After completing three years training, the students have to appear for the ORT examination. Two new developments are in the offing that will render the ORT India's training more attractive, i.e. (1) proposal for installing a mini-computer laboratory, and (2) World ORT Union has initiated a scheme under which the best student of the Drawing Section and even the Machinist could be sent abroad for higher training for three years.

WHAT EDUCATION CAN DO !

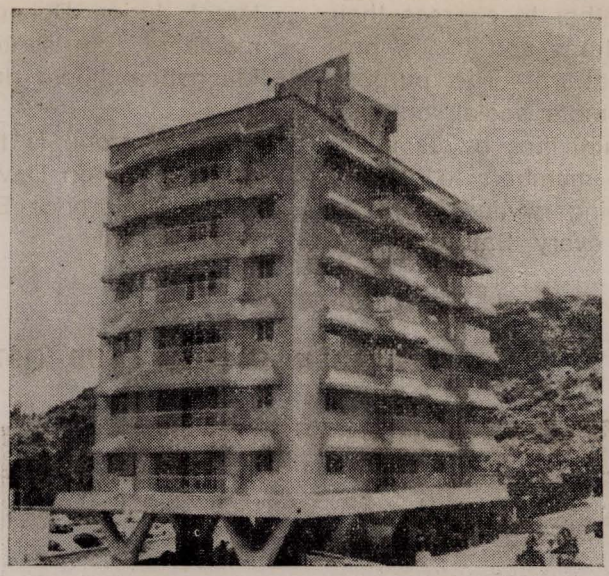
About a hundred years ago, a rich man's son was saved from drowning by a farmer. When the farmer refused to accept monetary reward from the rich man, the latter requested the former to allow him at least to foot the bill for the education of the farmer's son. The farmer agreed though reluctantly.

Do you know who were the two youths?

The farmer's son was none other than the discoverer of Penicillin, Sir Arthur Fleming, and the rich man's son became the greatest Prime Minister of Great Britain, Sir Winston Churcill.

Many candles can be lit from one candle without diminishing it.

ORT INDIA GIRLS' SCHOOL (1970)



Started eight years after the establishment of the School for boys, this Centre is training girls which will not only make them good housewives but also enable them to seek good jobs, if they wish to. Since 1983 a new scheme has been drawn under which girls will be allowed to pass Standard XII and at the same time get ORT training in Office Skills and Computers.

J. R. U. YOUTH GROUP



The JRU youth group is the largest and most active Jewish youth group in India.

It is affiliated to the Jewish Religious Union (J.R.U.), which has a Liberal Congregation. However, youth group membership is open to Jewish boys and girls of various other Synagogues and approximately 75% of its members attend religious services at Orthodox Synagogues.

Truth is heavy; therefore few wear it.— Midrash Samuel on Abot, 4

This is a dynamic young organisation where young Jewish girls and boys between 13 to 30 years of age come together to express their views, discuss their aspirations and tackle problems from a common platform. The purpose of this institution is to promote social, cultural, educational and religious activities by its members, as well as encourage members to acquire knowledge and understanding of Judaism. The group members meet on every Saturday.

Two of their members had attended the World Sephardi Youth-Adult Convention held in Israel during December, 1980 and some of its members represented India for the recent XI Maccabeah, held during July, 1981.

The group is thankful to the Lay Minister, J. R. U. Aaron David Shapurkar and the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund for their encouragement.

MACCABEN SPORTS CLUB (1975)





D. M. Talegaokar, President

There was a time when there used to be a lot of sports activities in the community for young and old. In the twenties the Israelite Brotherhood used to conduct annual sports for both the young and the old. In the forties and fifties the Israelite School Maccabeans also used to organise sports-meet, though not regular annual sports events. Cycle racing were regularly organised by Nissim Reuben Pezarkar for a number of years till he emigrated to Israel. George Reuben (Bhorupkar) had started a Cricket Club in the thirties, known as "Reuben's Sports Club", which continued its activities for over ten years. This Club had also organised a couple of athletic meets in Bombay. This was upto fifties. From then onwards till 1975 there were no sports facilities for Jewish Youths. These youths did not get opportunities in other recognised non-Jewish clubs either due to the heavy fees that they charged or due to favouritism of nepotism.

In such an atmosphere of despair, frustration and discontentment a few Jewish youths dreamt of organising a sports organisation which would cater to the sports need of the community. Their dream was realised when "Maccabean Sports Club" was born in 1975. The club was inaugurated by the well-known sports commentator A. F. S. Talyarkhan on November 10, 1975. The five founder members strived very hard to increase the strength of

---

the club membership. However, it was not an easy task. There were many obstacles which they had to face, such as meeting place, playing ground, sports kit and above all finance. Inspite of all these hurdles, the founders of the club put their shoulders to the wheel and succeeded in gaining more and more members. At present the strength of the club members is forty.

The club has participated in various tournaments and its members have won many individual prizes. Some of the club members participated in the 11th Maccabiah Games held in Israel in July 1981. On account of the participation they came in contact with the other youths who had also participated in the Maccabiah with the result they were able to influence these youths to join Maccabean Sports Club.

So far the activities of the club are confined to Bombay. It is now proposed to organise affiliates in those parts of India where there are Jews. It is also proposed to have social gatherings, community picnics and religious camps. This will give the youths a chance to meet and talk about religion, culture, country and themselves thus breaking down the barriers and narrowing the gap between different sections of young people. The aim is to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding in a way that will have lasting effect on the Jewish youths. Moreover, most of the members are keen Zionists, actively participating in the activities of the Bombay Zionist Association.

The club has gained recognition and affiliation to the Maccabi World Union and has been authorised by the above said organisation to organise a contingent of Indian Sportsmen to the 12th Maccabiah, the world's largest Jewish Sports Festival, to be held in Israel from 15th July to 25th July, 1985. Preparations are under way for organising and selecting the contingent from India and it is hoped that many youths will join the club and compete for selection in the contingent for the Maccabiah. By participating in the Maccabiah Games each one would learn that despite economic and political difficulties, Israel has demonstrated to the civilised World that the spiritual and physical well being of Jewish youths is as important to it as the survival of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, in a world troubled by racial and religious discrimination.

POONA JEWISH READING ROOM AND LIBRARY (1887)

P.J.R.R. & Library is one of the oldest institutions not only of Poona Jewish Community but of the Indian Jewry having been established on January 1, 1887. One of the founder members was the late David (Malkhiel) Eliezer Koletkar. It was housed in a small room rent-free of charge by Mrs. Estherbai Talkar of 287, Rasta Peth.

The Library was reorganised and shifted to its present address ....374, Rasta Peth in April, 1924. This was the time when Poona Jewry could boast of a fairly high standard of living both economically and educationally. Some of the eminent members were (i) Solomon Samson Penkar, who used to deliver 'derush' at the Synagogue regularly, (ii) David Abraham Tarankhopkar, a Sanskrit Scholar and Commissioner of Income Tax; (iii) Abraham Isaac Rohekar, Magistrate; (iv) Dr. W. B. Solomon; (v) Khan Bahadur Judah Hyam (Mhashilkar), G.B.V.C., a Veternaty Surgeon (The Prayer Hall in Delhi as named after him); (vi) M. Ezekiel; (vii) B. A. Aaron; (viii) David Benjamine Bhonkar, Patron and who had unveiled the portrait of David E. Koletkar in 1926.

The activities of the Library were at its peak from 1924 to 1947, during which period Solomon Samson Penkar was its Hon. Secretary. The late Penkar was so much devoted to the Library work that he came to be known as 'Librarywala Penkar'. He was also instrumental in securing monetary help and donations in the form of books. He was mainly responsible in securing Grant-in-Aid from the Municipal Corporation, Poona from 1924 to 1947.

In the year 1924, the Library had one patron (David Benjamine Bhonkar) and about 12

He who seeks more than he needs hinders himself from enjoying what he has.

members. By 1930, the membership rose to 50. The membership was not restricted but was also opened to non-Jews. With the passing of time, and due to several other reasons i.e. emigration to Israel etc. the number of members gradually decreased and in 1947 it stood at 25.

During 1942-43 the condition of the Library was far from satisfactory. Solomon Samson who used to take keen interest in the affairs of the Library, could not continue the good work done by him because of his age. Municipal grants had stopped and its funds had almost reached the bottom. It was on the verge of being closed down.

However, in 1944 Moses S. Mapgaonkar joined the Library and assisted Solomon Samson in obtaining some donations from friends. In fact, Mapgaonkar took over the responsibility for all practical purposes of keeping the Library continueing its existence. After the passing away of Solomon Samson in 1948, Menahim Kolet, Ezra, Killekar and Issakhar Killekar (All three have since expired) took up the Hon. Secretaryship of the Library and assisted Mapgaonkar to manage the Library. Today (1984) this 97 years old institution is still continueing its existance — Thanks to B. I. Bhonkar and David S. Pezarkar, who are helping Mapgaonkar in keeping the Library alive.

From June, 1983 the financial needs of the Library are being looked after by The Jewish Welfare Association, Poona. At present the Library has 15 members two of whom are non-Jews. It has more than 1,500 books in English and about 250 in Marathi. The books are however very old. The Library is kept open on Sundays only and provides several English and Marathi periodicals to its members.

THE JEWISH WELFARE ASSOCIATION, POONA (1971)

Its activities commenced in 1971 to assist the helpless and aged whose young ones had migrated to Israel and left their elderly parents and relatives unprovided for. This primary need is now of lesser significance with passing away of many of the beneficiaries. It has now extended activities to cover medical care, students' needs, Jewish education etc.

From March 1984, it has started publishing a quarterly bulletin "Mikhtav Shelanu" (Our Letter) in response to a need felt for an intimate, informative and educative Jewish news letter.

THE JEWISH WELFARE ASSOCIATION, NEW DELHI. (1949)

The Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi, was started soon after Independence, to cater to the needs of the Jewish community in and around the Capital. This is a non-political organization, to serve the religious, cultural and social requirements of the community. The unique feature of this organization has been its service not only to the local residents, but also to the number of tourists coming from all parts of the world. At the time of the partition of India, the office bearers of the Association, several of whom held very high positions in the Government of India, were able to assist many Jews from Karachi and other places, who opted for service in India. Likewise, the services of the Association were available also for problems connected with passports and visas. The Association established the Judah Hyam Hall, the only Synagogue in New Delhi, in 1956 and this has attracted many visitors from all over the world, including Ben Zvi and Moshe Sharett. Recently the Association established the Centre of Jewish and Inter-faith Studies in a new building which houses a well-stocked library of books mainly on religion. This is often used not only by Jews, but by people of other faiths also. The Association has also brought out a book on the "Jews of India," written by Benjamin Israel and is planning to bring out other booklets and pamphlets on various aspects of Indian Jewry. Among other bulletins published by the Association from time to time, is

"I am not an intellectual. I cannot write an article on 'human rights.' I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done."
— Mahatma Gandhi

on listing the Synagogues and prayer halls in South Asia. Representatives of the Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi, participate regularly in all functions arranged by the Authorities — like the prayer meeting held on the 27th of May every year on the occasion of the death anniversary of the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as well as on other similar occasions.

CONGREGATION, "BINA" U.S.A.

Congregation BINA is one of the well knit organisations of the Bene-Israels in U.S.A. Its president is Elijah E. Jhirad and secretary Samuel M. Daniel (Divekar).

Its various activities may be judged from the number of committees it has formed — (1) Membership and Social Affairs Committee, (2) Religious Affairs Committee, (3) Educational and International Committee, (4) Finance Committee, (5) Youth Committee and (6) Publication and Press Committee. Each Committee is headed by a chairperson. It celebrates all the Jewish festivals and helps individual Bene-Israel in organising "ELIYAHOO HANNABI" and other social functions. It maintains contact with the national and international Jewish Organisations.

BINA is the only organisation which extended its full cooperation for the celebration of the 185th Anniversary of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in 1981. Its president Jhirad sent a message on the occasion which is reproduced in the Souvenir. It also organised celebration to commemorate the 185th Anniversary of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in co-operation with "Yeshiva University, New York" on December 17, 1981 when Hacham Gaon of London and New York, Rabbi Searles addressed the congregation. Jhirad gave a short resume of the history of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and its founder Commandant Samuel Ezekiel Divekar. Its Secretary Daniel gave lot of publicity for securing donations in the U.S.A., Canada and U.K. for the publication of the Souvenir and the Book.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

Introduction :

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Bene-Israels has been the attraction towards music. As soon as the ancestors of the Bene-Israels learnt to speak Marathi fluently and later Hindi (or Hindustani) the women folk started composing songs suitable to the occasion — marriage, circumcision, anniversaries, etc. These were known as "shahiris." The tunes of these songs were quite different. As per the tradition of the Bene-Israels, no one cared to record even one song. During the 18th Century there were a number of shahirs and bards. By the nineteenth century, the youths began to be attracted towards the few who had taken to the stage — writing plays, directing and acting. Prominent among them was David Haeem Divekar, the great grand son of the founder of the oldest Synagogue of the Bene-Israels, Samaji Hasaji Divekar (Samuel Ezekiel Divekar).

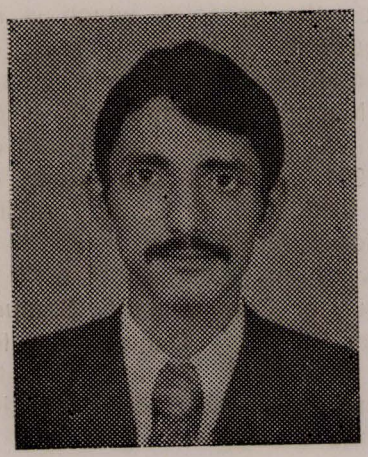
They were also attracted towards 'Kirtan.' From the year about 1880 till 1920 there used to be a number of 'Kirtans', which rendered in Marathi the lives of prophets, saints and other Biblical stories. From the commencement of the twentieth century till about the year 1926, a number of musical clubs were formed in Bombay, which staged dramas in Marathi. These dramas were patronised by non-Jews also and were generally held in the theatre known 'Play House'. However, Joseph David Penkar and Benjamin Aaron Benjamin Varulkar dominated the scene of staging dramas. In thirties, the "Bene-Israel Youth Day" used to organise annually. After the serious discussion on the burning topics of the day, an entertainment programme followed. This served as a platform to youths to display their hidden talents. This was perhaps the first time that girls commenced participating in skits and dance performances. From the year 1928 the Israelite School Mac-

A good example is the best sermon.

cabeans used to organise 'CHANNUKAH WEEK' annually for about twenty years. On every day of the Channukah, except Friday evening, there used to be some form of entertainment by way of sports, elocution, essay and story writing, drawing and painting competitions. One of the most popular competition was the 'singing competition'.

After about 1950 there was almost a lull in this important activity, though some individuals had taken to Ball Room and Tap Dancing. The names of Judas and Aaron are still remembered. However, one cannot forget Joshua Abraham Reuben (Bhinjekar) who undoubtedly was the pioneer in this profession among the Bene Israels.

JEWISH CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (1983)



Ben-Hur Bhastekar,
President.

With the object of creating awareness amongst the youths towards Indian Folk dances, a few youths met to-gether and formed the JEWISH CULTURAL ASSOCIATION in early 1983. To begin with, it has organised Bhangra Dance — a very popular folk dance of the brave Punjabis. It held a public performance on the occasion of the inauguration of the "Rebeccabai Samuel Hall" of the "Magen Hasidim" Synagogue, anniversary celebrations of the "Tiphereth Israel" Synagogue and at the International Film Festival (Filmotsav) in November 1983.

The Association had sent its troupe to Israel to participate in the "ISRAEL FESTIVAL" of dance and music, in which Jewish contingent from almost all over the world had participated.

In order to raise funds to augment its almost depleted finance, the Association had held a fund raising drive in February 1984 in one of the most prestigious theatres in Bombay — the Birla Matushree Sabhagraha. The auditorium of 1000 capacity was fully packed.

WHAT IS INDIAN CULTURE ?

Many foreigners enquire about the influence of Indian culture on the Indian Jews. I think the best answer would be to relate it in form of a true story.

In 1968 my wife, my niece and I had visited Israel. We happened to visit a Bene-Israel family (I forget the full name but I still remember the surname was Charikar). Charikar was known to me but not intimately and neither I nor my wife or my sister-in-law, who accompanied us, had met his wife. Charikar had gone out in search of a job. He and his family had emigrated to Israel very recently. Though our visit was a surprise to Mrs. Charikar, since we had arrived at her place without prior intimation we were welcomed and offered a cup of tea. When we wanted to take leave of her to proceed to our destination (we were on sightseeing programme then) Mrs. Charikar, who was about 25 years of age then said that according to the Indian tradition the hosts must share his food with the guests if they happen to visit during lunch or supper time. We very much

---

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved as to love.

appreciated this fine gesture, particularly when we had not met each other earlier and were total strangers, and agreed to sit for lunch. We were five of us — three from India, my sister-in-law of Israel and her daughter.

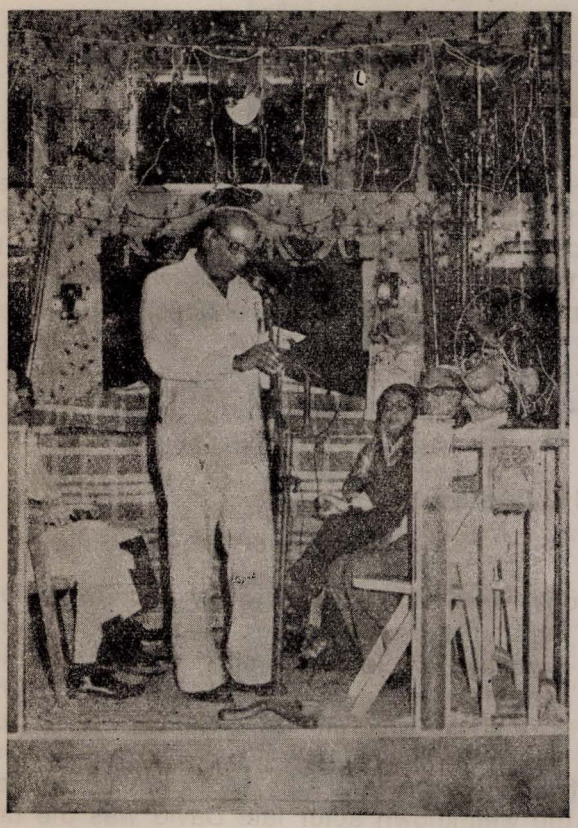
When my niece (of Israel) went into the kitchen to fetch a glass of water for me, she observed that the four children were also having their food inside the kitchen, but with a difference.

Rice served to them was plain and dry, without curry and there was not a single piece of fish in their plates.

E. M. JACOB

Guests at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations

ABRAHAM SAMSON MHEDEKAR



Abraham Samson Mhedekar was the Chief Guest at the 185th Anniversary celebration of the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue held on October 25, 1981. Abraham (popularly known as Aby) has a special attachment to the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue. His father, Samson Mhedekar came all the way from Karachi (before partition of India) to Bombay and got married in this Synagogue. Aby is well-known for his charitable disposition. There is hardly an institution which he has not patronised.

Aby was born in Karachi but was compelled to leave his birth place when he was hardly thirteen years of age. This was because of the partition of India in 1947. When his parents and their children came to Bombay they had to struggle for their livelihood. Being the eldest child in the family Aby had to seek employment. He joined the B.E.S.T. workshop on a daily wages of less than a rupee — to be exact seventy-five paise only. He soon switched over to business and now is well placed in life. He achieved this status by sheer hard, dedicated and sincere work. His achievements should serve as a model to youth — difficulties and obstacles in life should be taken as a challenge and try to solve these, instead of leaving these to fate.

He was the President of the 'Magen Hasidim' Synagogue, is Patron of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund and is associated with several other institutions. He takes keen interest in youth activities and provides them with amenities to exhibit their talent in the field of sports.

Two men look out through the same bars — one sees mud, and one sees stars. — (Frederick Langbridge)

NISSIM SAMUEL PINGLE



Nissim Samuel Pingle was the Guest of Honour at the 185th Anniversary celebration of the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue held on October 25, 1981 of which he is a member for many years.

Nissim is a daring man — does not hesitate taking risk in business. In his career he has seen ups and downs. By sheer determination and confidence in his ability he has overcome the hurdles and to-day he is well placed in life. He has been of assistance to some members in the community by assisting them in forming co-operative housing societies.

DR. SAMUEL SOLOMON (Vakrulkar)

B.Ag., M.Sc., Ph.D., M.S. (California)



In the year 1936, youths in the community started drawing attention of their elders. They organised annual sessions in which the deliberations were conducted by the youths below the age of thirty-five years. After deliberations on important subjects affecting the community an entertainment programme followed. The items of these programmes were contributed by the youths of the community. In 1937, the wonderful monologue. 'I AM NOT MAD' enacted by the well-known actor late David was the talk of the town for days.

The youth mainly responsible for the celebrations of the Youth Day was Sam Solomon Vakrulkar, who nurtured it for the first two years as its Hon. Secretary.

Sam is the son of the late Solomon Moses Vakrulkar, Solicitor. He had his education at St. Mary's High School, Bombay; St. Xavier's College, Bombay; Agricultural College, Poona; Royal Institute, New Delhi; College of Agricul-

---

An obstinate man does not hold opinions, but they hold him. — (Pope)

ture, Davis, California; and University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A. He is an awardee of "Woodhouse Memorial Prize."

He joined the Agricultural College, Poona, as Research Assistant and Assistant Professor of Botany. His promotions were rapid. He was Plant Physiologist at Dharwar, Dy. Director of Agriculture, Poona — Superintending Agrl. Officer, Nasik and finally Principal of the Poona Agricultural College & Parbhani. He retired in 1968.

He has visited the U.S.A., Israel, England & European countries and Australia. He was Guest of Honour along with Dr. (Mrs.) Ruby Solomon on the occasion of the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue on December 6, 1981.

DR. (MRS.) RUBY SAMUEL SOLOMON (Vakrulkar)

L.C.P.S., L.M., (ROTUNDA)



Dr. Ruby Solomon has followed in the footsteps of her father, the late Dr. E. Moses — the First and the Only Bene-Israel Mayor of Bombay. This is evident from her social activities mentioned as under :

She has continued the good work done by Dr. E. Moses for the upkeep of cemeteries — Trustee of the Haines Road, (now known as Dr. E. Moses Road), and Grant Road Cemeteries, Trust, in whose aid a large amount of donations were collected as a result of the Fund Raising Drive organised by the Special Fund Raising Committee in 1978 of which she is the Chairperson. Like her mother, the late Mrs. Abigael E. Moses, she assists the needy youths for their higher education. She is the Trustee and Chairperson of D. Gershone Memorial Scholarship Fund since 1970.

She was President of the Bene-Israel Stree Mandal for three years and looked after its Baby-Clinic for the poor and needy children for over two decades. She was President of the 'Women's Branch of Orthodox Union, Bombay for three years.

She was educated in High School for Indian Girls, Pune (Huzur Paga), National Medical College, Bombay, Rotunda Hospital and National Children's Hospital, Dublin.

After working with Dr. E. H. Coyajee, Main Street, Pune for thirteen years she started private practice in Bombay in 1959, which practice she still continues.

She has visited England (twice), Eire, Scotland, European countries and Israel.

She was the Guest of Honour, along with Dr. Samuel Solomon on the occasion of the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue on December 6, 1981.

Enthusiasm is the genius of Sincerity — (Bulwer Lytton)

B. B. BENJAMIN (GADKAR), B.A.

Barukh Bension Benjamin Gadkar is an old member of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue and was the Chief Guest on the occasion of the celebration of the 185th Anniversary of the Synagogue, on December 13, 1981. He retired as Under Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India, in 1959. He was deputed with the Indian Delegation to the 49th Session of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, held at Geneva in 1949.

Benjamin takes keen interest in the affairs of the community. He was the President of (1) Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi, (2) Sir Elly Kadoorie High School, (3) Etz Haeem Prayer Hall and (4) The United Synagogue of India. He was also the Vice President of the World Council of Synagogues, New York. At present he is the President of the Kurla Bene-Israel Prayer Hall, and patron of (1) Sir Elly Kadoorie High School, (2) Etz Haeem Prayer Hall, (3) The Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund, (4) Tifereth Israel Synagogue and (5) Jewish Welfare Association, Poona.

While he was the President of the Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi, the Project for building a Prayer Hall cum Community Centre was realised. The foundation stone of "The Judah Hyam Prayer Hall" on February 12th, 1956, was laid by him.

As the President of the United Synagogue of India, he used to publish a Bulletin "Welimmadthem Otham" (And ye shall Teach Them). These bulletins contained valuable information on the Jewish Religion and some important events that occured in our community.

He has also travelled abroad—the U.S.A., England, France, Belgium and Switzerland. In the U.S.A. he was invited to speak on the "Bene-Israel history, their customs and traditions," by nearly 30 Synagogues. In other countries he attended the Synagogues to study the MINHAG of their services. He visited Israel in 1960 and 1962. In 1960, he had an audience with the then Sephardi Chief Rabbi Hacham Nissim to whom



he explained convincingly certain Bene-Israel customs and manners which had been falsely reported to him and which had gravely prejudiced his mind, against the Bene-Israels. In 1962, he addressed the World Council of Synagogues Convention on the racial purity of Bene-Israels.

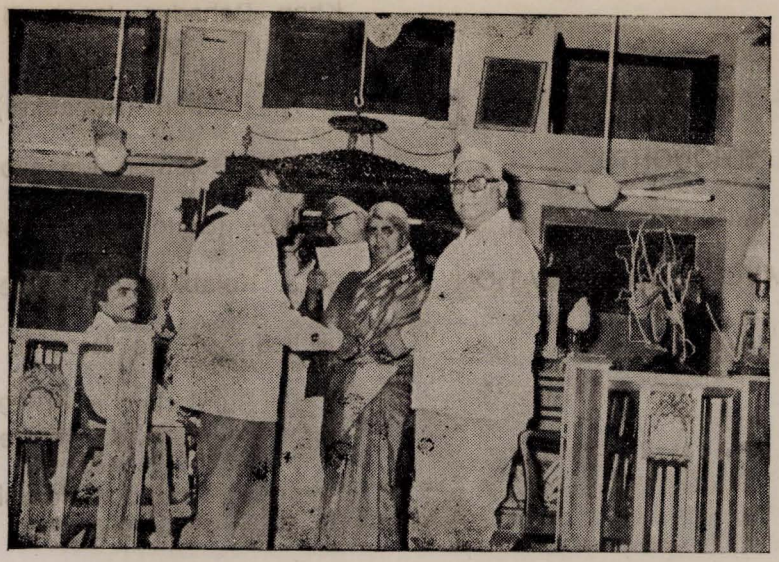
Since he has acquired vast knowledge on the Jewish Law and Religion, he is often invited to deliver sermons on the occasions of the Anniversaries of quite a few Synagogues.

A major portion of the information pertaining to the activities in the community during the 19th century, appearing in this Book is on account of the valuable records preserved by him and which he was good enough to loan to the Chairman of the Souvenir Committee.

A brief sketch of his biography has appeared in the Encyclopaedia Judiaca, published in Israel.

The reason why many people don't see things in the right perspective is that they are always looking at an engle.

R. S. DIVEKAR



R. S. Divekar, a descendent of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar's family, founder of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue, came all the way from Israel with his wife, to participate in the 185th Anniversary Celebration.

He recited the Hashkaba for the soul of the late Samuel Ezekiel Divekar on his 184th death Anniversary at a Prayer Meeting held on December 9, 1981.

JOURNALS AND JOURNALISTS

Chronological order of Journals published in the Community
(As per information received)

1. "ORE EMETH" (In Marathi, Satya Prakash)	Aaron Samson Ashtamkar 1877 David Reuben Korlekar 1881 to 1885
2. "TERUVAH"	Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar 1879.
3. "ISRAEL SHRAM"	David Haeem Divekar, great-grandson of the founder of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.
4. "LAMP OF JUDAISM"	Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar 1881 to 1885. Samuel Solomon Mazgaonkar 1893 to 1896.
5. "THE BENE ISRAEL'	Abraham Solomon Pezarkar 1893 to 1900
6. "DHARMADEEP"	1896 — 1900 (Editor, Publisher not known)
7. "FRIEND OF ISRAEL"	Abraham Reuben Bhinjekar was its Editor from 1894 for few months. Jacob Isaac Aptekar, who was then a College student and Abraham Ezekiel carried on the work of printing and publishing the magazine upto 1910. Isaac Abraham Talegaokar restarted it in 1919 but gave it up soon due to ill health. J. I. Aptekar revived it and continued it till 1927.

When a person borrows money, it is not only against his principle to pay interest, but also against his interest to pay the principle.

8.	"THE ISRAELITE"	Barrister David Solomon Erulkar. 1917 to 1922 I.J.Samson 1922-25 Khan Bahadur Jacob B. Israel, (Vargharkar), 1926
9.	"THE BENE ISRAEL REVIEW"	J. N. Reuben (Nagaokar) 1918 to 1927.
10.	"OCCASIONAL THOUGHTS"	Samuel Solomon Mazgaokar 1924 to 1930.
11.	"THE JEWISH MINISTER"	1936-37 (Editor and Publisher not known).
12.	"KOLABA TRAVELS INVESTIGATION"	S. J. Kolabkar (in thirties).
13.	"MESSENGER"	(Bulletin of the Israelite School Maccabeans).
14.	"MACCABI"	S. R. Bundarkar from 1947. Still in existence, but now published quarterly.
14A.	"MEBASSER"	Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregation of India 1956-1958.
15.	"VELIMADATTHEM OTHAM" (And Ye Shall teach them)	Bulletin of "UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF INDIA" (1959-1962).
16.	"RODEF SHALOM NEWS"	Published by Jewish Religious Union.
17.	"INDO ISRAELL REVIEW"	Bombay Zionist Association.
18.	"O H R"	Jewish Welfare. Association, Delhi from 1983.
19.	"IMPACT"	J. R. U. Youth Group — July, 1983.
20.	"MIKHTAV SHELANO" (Our letter)	Jewish Welfare Association, Pune—March, 1984.

OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY :

Bombay Sentinel, Indian National Herald, The People, Sunday Advocate, Lok Satta.	1. I. A. Ezekiel (Talkar)
(i) Illustrated Weekly of India. (ii) Imprint. (iii) Quest - Poetry of India. (iv) Freedom First.	2. Prof. Nissim Ezekiel (Talkar)
Economic Times.	3. Dr. Hannan Ezekiel (Talkar)
Free Lance.	4. George Abraham Sion (Garapkar)
Free Lance.	5. Mrs. Rachel A. Gadkar
A leading Public Relations Consultant and Film Critic.	6. Bunny Reuben (Nagavkar)
(i) Sarvodaya Sadhana (1960-1978). (ii) Sarvodaya Sevak (1978 onwards) both in Marathi.	7. Eli Raymond Gadkar

Disappointment is the nurse of wisdom — Kingsley

Lok Swaraj (in Hindi).

Commercial Banking.

The Syntropic Thinker (1971-73).

Apsara and later Samaritan from 1970 for the Rotary Club of Chembur.

8. Daniel Moses Mazgaokar
9. A. H. Elias
10. Alec Elijah (Kamerlekar)
11. E. M. Jacob (Gadkar)

SAMUEL SOLOMON MAZGAONKAR

Samuel Solomon Mazgaonkar was also a journalist who used to publish "LAMP OF JUDAISM" during the later part of the 19th Century. In the early part of the 20th Century he used to publish "OCCASIONAL THOUGHTS."

Mazgaonkar was a journalist of a different type. Unlike other journalists he was a sharp critic and also humourous in his writings. He also acted as Kirtankar on two occasions, when he was requested to perform this duty in the absence of the actual persons who failed to attend. Both the kirtans on "Samson" performed on September 29, 1918 and "Judith" on January 1, 1921 were well appreciated.

JACOB ISAAC APTEKAR

Jacob Isaac Aptekar commenced taking part in communal affairs at quite an early age. In 1894 when Abraham Reuben Bhinjekar gave up the editorship of the "FRIEND OF ISRAEL" after publishing it for a few months, it was Aptekar, who was then a college student took up the responsibilities of publishing it under the guidance of Abraham Ezekiel. This publication ceased in 1910. It was re-started by Issac Abraham Talegaonkar in 1919, but soon gave it up because of his illness. It was again Aptekar who took up the responsibility of publishing it and continued the publication till 1927. 'FRIEND OF ISRAEL' not only contained articles in English but also in Marathi.

Aptekar was one of those who took a leading part in deliberations of the Bene-Israel Conference, and he was the President at its Eleventh Session in 1927 and was a Committee member of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund from almost its inception until his passing away. He worked for the education fund as a Secretary in 1923, Vice-President in 1927 and 1949 and President in 1928, 1931 to 1935 and 1941 to 1948. Aptekar was also on the Management of the "Israelite School" (now known as "Sir Elly Kadoorie School"). He was a member of the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue and also its President. He was also attached to the Jewish Co-operative Bank and worked for its progress for a number of years.

When Dr. Miss Jhirad started the "Reformed Movement" and formed the Jewish Religious Union in 1925, Aptekar joined the Union and was its active member for a number of years.

He was one of the leading Lawyers in Bombay.

This letter had appeared in August 1926 issue of the monthly Magazine, "THE BENE-ISRAEL REVIEW." Since a reference has been made to Simon Benjamin Vakrulkar, whose short resume has appeared under the article "Two Bene-Israel Personalities" on page 61 of this book, we have taken the liberty to reproduce it.

To,
The Editor,
"The Bene-Israel Review"

Dear Sir,

It is a matter of great regret that in our attempt to Anglicise ourselves, the genius of producing Marathi literature has waned considerably with the sad result that we have produced not a single Marathi author or poet of note in the twentieth century, whilst I can count some in the nineteenth, of whom we ought to be proud of. Of a truth, they were a great acquisition to the land of their birth. I remember the late David Haeem Divekar, a charming writer of romance and an orator; the late Aaron Samson Ashtamkar, a poet and sober writer of ethics and Simon Benjamin Wakrulkar, known in his time in the Bombay Presidency as Walker, a powerful Marathi prose writer, a great critic, a reformer and an orator of first rank. The last named gentleman is a specimen of the old stock of writers and is still alive passing his days in obscurity.

There is an interesting incident connected with him, which will not be out place to mention here. I came across him accidentally in Calcutta in the year 1907. It came to my knowledge that an old gentleman of the Bene-Israel community was putting up at a certain place. I became anxious to see him and accordingly went to visit him. At the gate I was accosted by his durwan as to who I was and what my business was, at the same time, he handed me a slip of paper to be filled in with my name, business and the gentleman I desired to see. I complied. The durwan returned in a few minutes with the remarks written in pencil : "I do not wish to see a Bene-Israel as I have severed my connection with the community fifty years ago." (Vakrulkar was excommunicated for his reformed views). I was not prepared for such a rebuff. My curiosity was raised and I wanted to sift the meaning of such a stern reply. I wrote back : "I do not want to meet you or greet you as a Bene-Israel, but as a man to a man." This had the desired effect and he relented. I was ushered into the presence of a venerable looking old gentleman, beaming with intelligence. After an hour's conversation referring chiefly to the community, he suddenly asked : "How many Bene-Israels of your type are there in the community?" Unhesitatingly. I replied that there were many, highly educated and better informed than myself. "Well," he exclaimed, "had I come across one of your type, I would not have left the community." I laughed and told him that within the last fifty years the World had changed greatly and the Bene-Israel community had made rapid and progressive strides. To this he bowed his head. I then ventured to request him for the copies of some of his works. These he was good enough to give me.

These men were masters of Marathi literature. Their disappearance is a great loss to us and their chairs are still vacant with all our boast of education and progress.

That Marathi is our mother-tongue cannot be gainsaid. Why should we be ashamed of the language and neglect it? Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest modern poet of Bengal, first wrote his charming works in Bengali before he took to writing English poems and delivering English addresses and gaining a world-wide reputation.

Our resourceful co-religionists in Russia, Austria and Germany have produced a new language called Yiddish from Hebrew and German of which they are perfect masters and a vast literature has sprung up in that language. To-day, there are in England and America Yiddish theatres in which Jewish actors and actresses excel. Why should we be ungrateful to our lingua-mater which has stood us in such good need for centuries? A scholar is universally respected for his learning and service to the country, be he a Marathi, Gujarathi, or Hindi, English, German, Russian or French. A scholar is a scholar irrespective of language. I appeal to you in all sincerity to cultivate the language to the scholarly end. If you strive to respect her, she will repay you a thousand fold.

Yours faithfully,
I. A. ISAAC

Tolstoi Cottage,
Balugaon, (Distt. Puri)
Dt. : 11-8-1926.

I like the noise of democracy — James Buchanan

DAVID SOLOMON ERULKAR B,A,. Bar-at-Law

David Solomon Erulkar was perhaps the first Bene-Israel to have passed the Barrister-at-Law Examination. On his return to India, he practised in the Bombay High Court. However, he soon left this Legal Practice and joined the Scindia Steam Navigation as a convenated service man. After retirement from service he settled down in United Kingdom. But he could not lead a retired life. His services were requisitioned by the International Labour Organisation. In 1948 while he was with I.L.O., he was requested by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the then Prime Minister of India to take up an important assignment and on his return to India he was appointed 'NAVIGATION ADVISER' to the Government of India. He left for U.K. for good after serving India for a few years.

David, like his elder brother Dr. Abraham Erulkar had love for his community. Immediately after his return from U.K. after passing the Barrister's Examination he straight-away plunged into community welfare activities. Knowing that a journal plays an important role in the matter of communication and information, he started publishing "THE ISRAELITE". This journal like "THE FRIEND OF ISRAEL" contained articles both in English and Marathi contributed by eminent persons from India as well as abroad. The publication ceased when it was found that there were hardly any contributions towards Marathi articles.

He was one of the Founder Members of the All India Israelite League, which used to hold annual sessions from 1917 for a few years. At the fifth session of the League held in Bombay in 1921 he moved an important resolution in the matter of NAWGAON CEMETERY. During his speech he informed the members about the satisfactory result arrived at in the negotiation with the Government Authorities and appealed to the Members of the Community to support the scheme wholeheartedly. He reminded the delegates that the cemetery was an ancient one and was of historic interest to the community as it was the means of rebutting the charge levelled at the community that it was of mixed descent. He pointed out that the cemetery was still in use and was being desecrated by carts passing over a portion of it and reminded the community that if it did not look into the matter urgently all traces of the mounds in which according to tradition their ship-wrecked ancestors had been buried would be lost.

During his short stay in Rangoon, capital of Burma, (Burma was a part of India in those days) an important incident occurred which brought victory to the Bene-Israels. (A few Bene-Israel families had left Bombay in 1896 and settled down in Rangoon on account of the slump period in Bombay). On their arrival in Rangoon the Bene-Israels were welcomed by the Iraqi Jews who had already settled down there. They were allowed to enroll as members of their Synagogue and also were counted in the Minyan. However, just before the election of the trustees of the Synagogue in 1935 the names of the Bene-Israel members were removed from the membership register and were not allowed to exercise their franchise on the grounds that they were not decendants of pure Jews. The reason for coming to this conclusion was that the Bene-Israels did not observe the Jewish laws of Yiboon* and Halisa*. However, the real reason for removing the names of Bene-Israel members was different. When the party in power became aware that the Bene-Israel members might not support their candidates for the Trusteeship, their names were removed from the membership in order to enable the ruling party to have the majority at the time of election. Barrister Erulkar took up the cudgels on behalf of the Bene-Israels and filed a suit in the High Court there. The case was forcefully argued by Erulkar and succeeded in getting the verdict from the Court in favour of the Bene-Israels. It is interesting to note what the Learned Judge said while delivering his judgement. He said that it appeared to him that the Bene-Israels were more advanced in their out look than the Iraqi Jews as they did not continue to practice the old laws, which though needed in good old days, had become obsolete. This ruling created wide interest in the Jewish world and it was believed that the matter of origin of the Bene-Israels was settled once for all. However, subsequent events upto the present time belie this belief.

To thine own self be true — thou canst not then be false to any man. — Shakespeare.

Barrister Erulkar was also a member of the Managing Committee of the Israelite School and had taken a leading role in the formation of the Jewish Co-operative Bank.

* Yiboon : The marriage of a man to the widow of his deceased brother who had died childless is known as Yiboon.

* Halisa : The procedure which follows the refusal of surviving brother to marry his sister-in-law is known as Halisa, and when it is carried out it has the effect of setting the widow free to marry again according to her own choice.

S. R. BUNDARKAR

The history of journalism in the Bene-Israel community is not at all satisfactory. There were not more than thirty journals, bulletins and periodicals published from 1877 so far. Not one of them with the exception of "MACCABI" and "FRIEND OF ISRAEL" completed a decade of its existence, leave alone a quarter century.

The first Bene-Israel journal "SATYA PRAKASH" published in 1877 was by the late Aaron Samson Ashtamker. The late Kammodan Muccadam David Haeem Divekar used to publish a monthly magazine, "SHRAM". Other journals published were "FRIEND OF ISRAEL", "THE ISRAELITE", "KOLABA TRAVELS INVESTIGATION" by the late S. J. Kolabkar, "VELIMADATTHEM OTHAAM" published by Barukh Benjamin Gadkar for the United Synagogue of India. The late Miss Ruben used to publish "NOPHET" in Marathi and the Bene-Israel Year & Annual Book in the twenties, "BENE-ISRAEL REVIEW" used to be published by the late Joseph N. Reuben.

It is to the credit of S. R. Bundarkar that he has been regularly publishing the journal "MACCABI" for the last thirty-six years. From 1947 to about 1967 it was a monthly publication. Later it was switched over to quarterly.

Let us hope that Bundarkar will continue to publish "MACCABI" atleast till it celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 1997.

("Gate of Mercy" Synagogue will celebrate its Bi-centenary in May, 1996).

I. A. EZEKIEL (TALKAR)



I. A. Ezekiel was a renowned journalist of his time and had written several full-length books. For over 20 years he was associated with the well-known British Journalist in India — the late B. G. Horniman and also Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Being gifted with facile pen he made a mark in varied spheres.

As a journalist he was Assistant Editor of "Indian National Herald." News Editor of "The Bombay Sentinel." Editor of "The People," "Sunday Advocate," and "Lok Satta." He was a fearless writer and during the freedom struggle he published some of the thundering front page reports/articles with screaming headlines, thus proving to the British that the pen was mightier than the sword. He began his career as a Scout Master of the Israelite School, later known as Sir Elly Kadoorie School and was very popular with the Scouts. Under his guidance the Israelite Scout troup No. 35 won several prizes in athletic meets that used to be organized for the scouts in Bombay.

He was a powerful orator, both in English and Marathi, and used to take very active part in the politics of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

When he died he was principal of the Siddharth College of Mass Communication and Training School for Entrance to Politics.

A husband is a person who is under the impression that he bosses the house, when in reality, he only houses the boss.

MAURICE DAVID JAPHETH



Maurice Japheth was well-known in the Jewish Community — and had done much for its welfare. He endeared himself to Jews and non-Jews alike. As a well known journalist, he was Editor of "Eves Weekly", "Mirror", and other leading publications. He authored several books including "The Truth about Gandhi", "The House that Freedom Built", "Jews of India", "What to say and How to say it" — a book on the art of public speaking, etc.

Among his various plus points, he will best be remembered as a great orator. His colloquial style and assertive voice, his grace and platform artistry, his humour and witty examples won him instant attention and continued interest. He was often invited to give speeches and raise toasts at functions by people of all castes and classes. Though he was an Iraqi Jew he won the hearts of Bene-Israels and identified himself with them (even at a time when Iraqi Jews did not consider Bene-Israels as their equals). He brought about greater unison and understanding between the two Jewish communities. In fact he even married a Bene-Israel-Mary Samson Killekar of Pune. Japheth edited "The Jewish Advocate" a monthly journal published by the Bombay Zionist Association. He also founded the Indian Zionist Organisation and was its President. He also published the popular journal "Shalome" on behalf of IZO.

He was religious without being a fanatic and usually delivered sermons at Rodef Shalom Synagogue. So interesting were his sermons that in spite of the dwindling attendence at Synagogues, he attracted a crowd when his sermons had been announced earlier. Some of his best sermons have been published in his book "Glimpses of God".

He was selfless and charitable by nature and the proceeds from his books were donated to various organisations.

SHELLIM SAMUEL (PINGLE), M.A., LLB., ADVOCATE-SUPREME COURT OF INDIA



Shellim Samuel has published the following:

(i) A Treatise on the origin and early history of the Bene-Israel of Maharashtra State (1963).

(ii) Civics for the general reader (13th Edition).

(iii) Intermediate Economics.

(iv) Co-author of Principles of Economics.

He was founder-editor of "Indo-Israel Review" published by the Bombay Zionist Association.

He was a lecturer in Economics and History at Khalsa College (1945-46); Prof. of Economics & Politics at Xavier's College (1945-55).

Shellim Samuel is the President of Sir Elly Kadoorie School, Chairman of the Jewish Relief Association; Chairman of Local Committee of Waldemar Mordecai Haffkin Memorial Committee and President of Akhil Bharat Sahakari Prakashan.

A man's best Companion is his intellect; his worst enemy, his desire.

DR. HANNAN EZEKIEL (TALKAR)

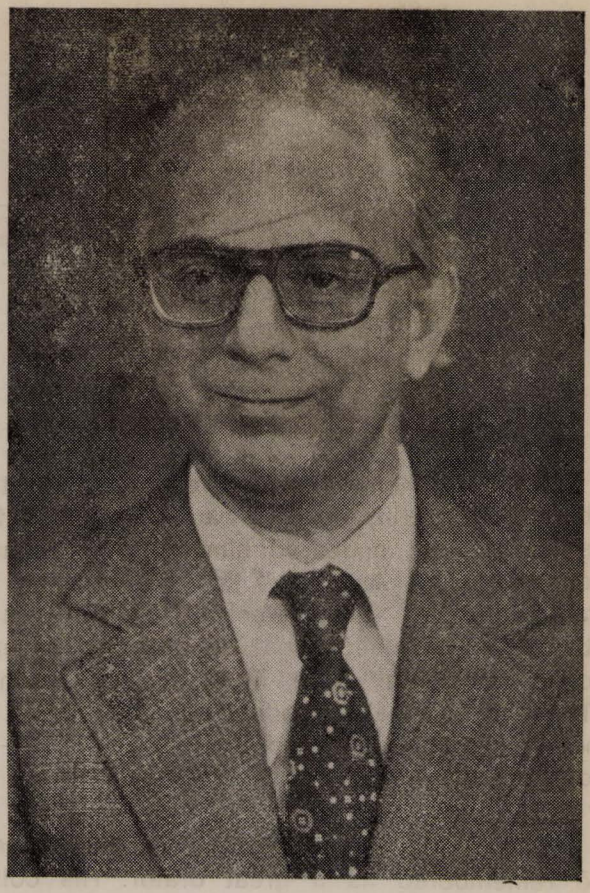
The well-known author, journalist and educationist, Dr. Hannan Ezekiel is the third son of the late Prof. Moses Ezekiel, who was the Professor of Biology in Wilson College and the late Mrs. Dianabai Ezekiel, educationist and social worker.

Dr. Ezekiel obtained his doctorate in economics from the University of Bombay. He was a lecturer at St. Xaviers College, Bombay and then at the Department of Economics, Bombay University. From 1976 to 1979 he taught at the York University in Toronto in Canada and also worked there as an independent consultant.

He is the author of four books. His views on the strategy for development that should be followed for dealing with the country's poverty are expounded in the most recent book entitled "Second India Studies — Overview" published by MACMILLIANS in 1978.

As a journalist, he first worked as an Assistant Editor for the Economic Times for few years and then he went to the Research Department, International Monetory Fund in Washington, where he became Chief of the Financial Studies Division. During this period he was involved, among other things, in the preparation of the scheme for issue of Special Drawing Rights.

After his return from Canada in 1979, where, as stated earlier he taught at the University, he took up the editorship for the "Economic Times" since May 1977, which is published simultaneously from Bombay, Delhi, and Calcutta.



Dr. Ezekiel's eldest son, Nissim H. Ezekiel is a Senior Economist in U.S.A.

This miscrospic community did not lag behind in any sphere as it contributed its mite during independence struggle, social welfare, produc ed Doctors, Engineers, Advocates, Solicitors, Educationalists, etc.

EVERBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, NOBODY

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about this because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody would not do it.

It ended up, "Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done."

To do our fellow men the most good in our power, we must lead where we can, follow where we cannot and still go with them, watching always the favourable moment for helping them to another step — Thomas Jefferson.

GEORGE ABRAHAM SION (GARAPKAR)

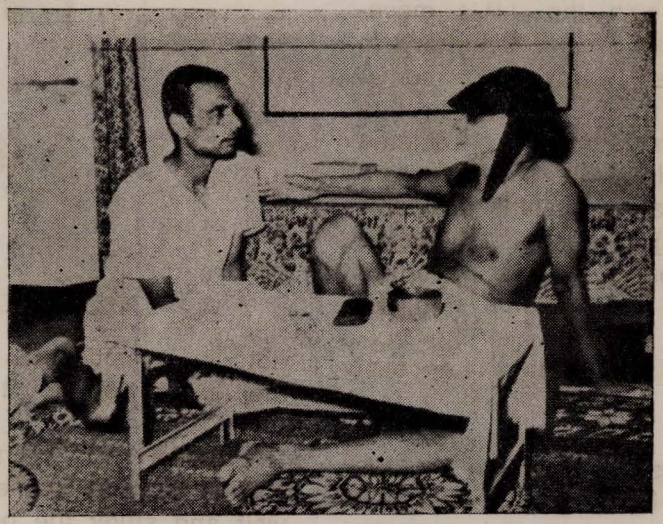


George was an enigma. The more he disclosed, the less he revealed. This was partially due to his own nature, and partially due to his training in journalism which he received in New York, U.S.A.

On his return to India, he worked as a Sales Executive, but soon became the Editor of "Book Lover", a micro-paper wherein George reviewed books and wrote illuminating editorials which were highly appreciated by the reading public. He toured Raigad District in 1976 along with his wife Sheba and wrote three manuscripts (i) "The Vanishing People", (ii) "Speak Shalome Speak" and (iii) "Prophecies That Shock The World." The scripts were sent to U.S.A. presumably for publication, but unfortunately it is not known to whom they were sent.

On 22nd February 1980, George died suddenly, thus ending a life that would otherwise have proved illustrious.

ELLI RAYMOND GADKAR



The Bene-Israels in India though very very small in number have taken to many professions and vocations and have participated in almost all walks of life. We have eminent Doctors, Nurses, Lawyers, Architects, Engineers, Teachers and Educationists, Agriculturists, Craftsmen and even brave Jawans who have served and are serving in Armed Forces etc. We also had in our midst a few political wokers, people who did social work among the economically backward people in India.

But how many of us know that we have among us at present two social workers who are devoting their life to the upliftment of the underprivileged, illiterates and poor people in India? Out of the two, one is "Elli Gadkar" eldest son of R. B. Raymond Gadkar of Bombay. He is the first among Bene-Israels to have joined the Bhoodan Movement started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, after completing his B.Sc. (Maths.) in 1954.

TEARS : The hydraulic force by which masculine will-power is defeated by feminine water power.

He participated in some pad-yatras led by Acharya Vinobaji himself and also organised some with his fellow workers in Maharashtra and led one to Madras. His work in villages took him to Bihar and different parts of the country. During these travels he and his fellow workers propagated the Bhoodan Movement which later on widened into Sarvodaya Movement. In the year 1960 he started a Marathi monthly with his fellow-worker and became the Joint Editor of "Sarvodaya Sadhana." Since 1978 he started his own monthly in Marathi "Sarvodaya Sevak" (non-political) receiving blessings from Acharya Vinoba Bhave along with Mrs. Shobhana Ranade a devoted social worker of Kasturba Gandhi Trust.

As Elli started working under the guidance of Acharya Vinobaji his work received admiration from Acharya who gave him differentt assignments in person. Acharya Vinobaji always questioned Elli with regard to regular progress carried on in Israel and when late Mrs Golda Meirs was the Prime Minister, Acharya once expressed his desire to meet her at his Pawnar Ashram.

DANIEL MOSES MAZGAONKAR

Secretary to J.P.

During the emergency in 1975 many were put behind the bars. This everyone knows. But did you know that a Bene-Israel was also jailed for fourteen months? Daniel Mazgaonkar was closely associated with the J.P.'s movement in Bombay. He worked as a Secretary to the late Shri Jayaprakash Narayan for sometime. His imprisonment, therefore, was in this connection. He is presently actively associated with the J.P.'s total revolutionary activities called Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini (Students & Youths Struggle Front). He is also engaged in the organisational work to form people's committee on behalf of the National People's Committee which is an off-shoot of the post emergency period started under the guidance of J.P.



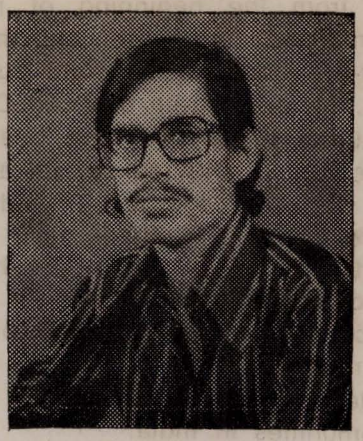
In the initial stages he worked for the Sarvodaya movement initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and participated in pad-yatras to acquaint the people about the significance of land revolution.

As a member of Shanti Sena (Peace Brigade) of Vinobaji, he played a useful and important role in bringing about peace and understanding between the communities during the riots in Ahmedabad, Bhiwandi and also during the textile workers strike in Bombay.

Daniel was sponsored by an U.S. based organisation "Movement for a New Society" to visit and study the peace movement and organisation from August 1979 to May 1980. Under this scheme he visited some countries in Europe and North America. Earlier in 1979 he visited Israel for four and a half months to study farm management and extension methods. During his stay there, he saw and participated in the activities of the Kibbutzim and Moshavim.

Sincerity and truth are the basis of every virtue. — Confucius.

EDWIN R. ROHEKAR



Edwin R. Rohekar is a Novelist (Marathi) and has to his credit so far three novels viz. Tiche Natay, Hindoli and Sigretchee Rakhadi.

Besides being a novelist he is also a poet and has read out several of his poems on Bombay Doordarshan. He has quite a few skits to his credit, which were broadcast on the All India Radio. His story 'Prawas' was awarded the first prize in a state level competition sponsored by the monthly magazine "Raaz." This story has been published in various magazines.

While appreciating the recognition bestowed on him by the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue he said "What more can an author hope for than recognition from one's own community?"

DAVID MOSES BENJAMIN ROHEKAR



ROHEKAR Hebrew-Marathi & Hebrew-English Calendar is prepared by DAVID MOSES BENJAMIN ROHEKAR and is published since the Jewish year 5714 (1953-54). This is a unique Calendar similar to which perhaps is not published anywhere in the world Jewry. The Calendar gives not only Hebrew dates with their corresponding English dates but also indicates days auspicious for performing certain religious ceremonies, portions to be read from Parasha and Haftara on Shabbbath, Festival & Fast and also portion from Nebieem, Kethubbim & Mishnayoth. This Calendar also gives short note and a descriptive (illustrative) picture suitable to the Festival or Fast in the particular month. Gems from the Bible and useful information from Shulhan Arukh and Pirke Aboth are also given. This Calendar has response from England, Australia and Singapore etc. and of course from Israel.

David belongs to the well known Rohekar family. His father the late Moses Benjamin Rohekar imparted best education to his children and therefore all of them are weii versed in Hebrew and Jewish religion. David rendered honarary service to the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue for some years and has been carrying on the work of Hon. Minister for prayers from the year 1975.

David published a booklet in Marathi. It contained important daily prayers and rituals for all Jewish ceremonies and a separate booklet containing only songs for Sabbath and ceremonies. In the second edition both these were combined together with additions in 3rd, 4th, and 5th edition and the sixth which is the latest in circulation. He has also transliterated into Marathi (1) Tehilim (Psalms) with their use (ii) 2nd edition of Simhath Torah songs and Hakkafoth with addition of songs of Joseph and Prophet Moses etc. A booklet in Hebrew containing Simhath Torah Songs and Hakkafoth prepared by him is also published.

Keep your words soft and swift; you may never know when you may have to eat them.

MRS. RACHEL GADKAR M.A., B.Ed.

Rignt from the beginning of her career she was interested in children and therefore all the twenty-five books written and published by her so far are for children on "CHILD PSYCHOLOGY." Out of these, five have been awarded prizes. She has contributed several articles and stories to various Magazines in India as well as in Israel. As a contributor to "All India Radio & Doordarshan" (T.V.) she has written stories and enacted plays based on our Bible, for instance her skit on Chanukah on T.V. was very well received. Since she writes in Marathi, she is able to give publicity to our Religion in other communities in India.

SHE IS THE SECOND LADY KIRTANKAR AMONGST THE BENE-ISRAELS. Her flowery language, her sweet voice and the technique she uses to draw the attention of the listeners is marvellous. That is why most of the members of the congregation assembled for participating in the anniversary of a Synagogue, flock to her. The present generation which is deprived of the knowledge of Jewish Religion for reasons which are obvious, should be encouraged to listen to her.

She is a teacher in Sir Elly Kadoorie School.



She is now appearing for her Doctorate, the subject being the "Contribution of Bene-Israels of India to Marathi Literature."

It is indeed creditable that without any encouragement from the community and in spite of having to look after so many things — home, work and education she finds time to write books.

'STATUS AND ACTIVITIES OF BENE-ISRAELS IN OLD BOMBAY

By Mrs. Rachel A. Gadkar

Introduction :

History of the Bene-Israels begins about 2,000 years ago when they were shipwrecked on the coastal-strip of Konkan near Nowgaon after the destruction of the Holy Temple. They settled down there and set up oil-pressing business.

They observed Jewish tenets and laws and shut down their establishments on Saturday (Sabbath) and spent the day in rest and prayers. Hence they were called 'Shanwar Telis' (Saturday Oilmen). As they prospered they took dairy farming, cattle rearing, agriculture as well as carpentary and were proficient in their trades.

In course of time they forgot Hebrew Language and religious teachings but still adhered to a few customs and rituals and kept up their separate identity. One of the reasons for this is that perhaps in the absence of persecution, there was no desire and urge to have contact with their brethren in foreign countries. They spread over the coastel strip of the Konkar, their names took the form of the local people and added the surnames after the names of the villages of occupations.

A book should serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us. — Frank Kafka

Religious Tolerence :

During their long sojourn in these places, they were not affected by the turmoil, upheavals and ravages perpetrated by various dynasties ruling these territories but lived in peace practising their religion. They did not demand any special rights or privileges or status but abided by the laws of the places they lived in and eschewed religious conversions. Hence few people knew about this community or their religion.

Change in Profession :

Bene-Israels started joining army of Angres, (Navy People), Peshwas (Prime Ministers in Maratha Kingdom), who were Chitpawan Brahmins, originally supposed to be Jews) and later the British and by valour rose to high ranks and positions in respective spheres. For this some of them got Watans (Gift of land) and Khots (Chief of Security Guards) and titles like Naik (Leader). Wadhawkar was made a 'Killedar' of Sagargad and their surname was changed to Gadkar. Malekar was given the title of 'Kotwali' by the Peshwas. They were known as Kotwal Malekar. Ashtamkar was made a revenue collector and they became 'Khots'.

Samuel Charikar (Samaji Abaji) was given a 'Watan' and was awarded the title of 'Naik' by Angre. His descendents added this to their surname.

Bombay under British :

When British got the island of Bombay as dowry from Portugal in 1661 it was a group of Islands inhabited by fisher-folk (Kolis).

The British began the development of these Islands due to its advantageous geographical position. People from neighbouring places flocked here and it turned into a trading centre, military centre, commercial and industrial centre as well as educational and cultural centre.

Missioneries were spreading education in towns. English and Hebrew languages were taught in these schools. Bene-Israels took advantage of these facilities, which created new opportunities and thus began the migration of Bene-Israels from Konkan to Bombay.

The First Bene-Israel Family to settle down in Bombay:

Awaskar family was the first to come to Bombay in 1746. Later Hasaji Divekar of Korlai-Borlai followed. Samaji Hasaji Divekar settled down in Bombay in 1792. The early settlements of Bene-Israel in Bombay was at Khadak in Masjid Bunder. Many built their own houses. Later they spread to Dongri, Mazgaon, Byculla, Jacob Circle, Parel, Dadar and Bandra. There was also a large settlement of retired persons in Thane.

As education took deep roots in the community and their contacts with Cochini and Bagadadi and foreign Jews increased it invoked in them a desire for religious studies and later to have their own place for worship which fruictified in 1796 when Samaji Hasaji (Samuel Ezekiel Divekar) built the first Bene-Israel Synagogue in India at Mandvi.

At first Bene-Israel Youths came to join the British Army as soldiers, carpenters etc. Bene-Israel carpenters were in demand. As the building activities gathered momentum their scope widened. They made their mark in various spheres. In the army, Samaji Hasaji rose to the rank of a Commandant — the highest rank allotted to an Indian.

After studying the statistics for the previous years, in 1904/5, the education authorities in Bombay came to the conclusion that since arithematic was a difficult subject for the girls, it should be made easier for them by changing the syllabus.

Their notion about the poor opinion of the girls was exploded in the year 1905 when a girl student not only topped the list at the Matriculation Examination but also secured cent percent marks in Mathematics and in almost all the subjects including Hebrew, to which subject she switched over from Sanskrit when she was promoted to Matriculation Standard. That fine lady was none other than the Late Miss R. Reuben.

Who is the brevest hero? He who turns his enemy into a friend — Abot d'R. Nathan, 23.

DRAMATISTS, CINE ARTISTS & MEN CONNECTED WITH FILM INDUSTRY

1.	David Haeem Divekar*	WELL-KNOWN STAGE ACTOR (19th Century)
2.	Joseph David Penkar*	SCRIPT WRITER OF THE FIRST INDIAN TALKIE FILM "ALAM ARA".
3.	Benjamin Aaron Benjamin **Varulkar**	of "Arya Subodh Natak Mandli" — Character Actor.
4.	David Abraham (Cheulkar)*	BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR — Award in "BOOT POLISH."
5.	Judah Solomon (Kurulkar)	Producer : 'JORUKA GULAM' FILM CRITIC
6.	Bunny Reuben (Nagavkar)	LEADING PUBLIC RELATION CONSULTANT FILM CRITIC, FILM JOURNALIST
7.	DAVID Gershon (Umerdekar)	HELPED FOUND THE BOMBAY FILM LABORATORY.
8.	Solomon Moses Vakrulkar*	FOUNDER DIRECTOR, BOMBAY FILM LABORATORIES PVT. LTD., (1941); CHAIRMAN FROM 1941 TILL HE PASSED AWAY IN 1972.
9.	Benny Nathan Satamkar	MUSICIAN in FILM LINE.
10.	Selim Elijah Benjamin Gadkar	FILM CRITIC
11.	P. Isaac	CAMERAMAN
12.	REUBEN MOSES & RAYMOND	TECHNICIANS
13.	Ruby Mayers (Sulochana) *	She epitomized the golden age of the silent period.

* Resumes of these persons appear elsewhere in this book separately.

While Moses was grazing the sheep of his father-in-law in the wilderness, a young kid ran away. Moses followed it until it reached a ravine, where it found a well to drink from. When Moses reached it, he said, "I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty. Now you are weary, I will carry you back." So he carried the kid back. Then God said, "Because thou hast shown pity in leading back one of a flock belonging ta a man, thou shalt lead My flock, ISRAEL." — Shemot, Rabbath, 2 : 2.

It is easy to acquire an enemy, but difficult to acquire a friend. — Yalkit Snimeoni.

BENJAMIN AARON BENJAMIN VARULKAR

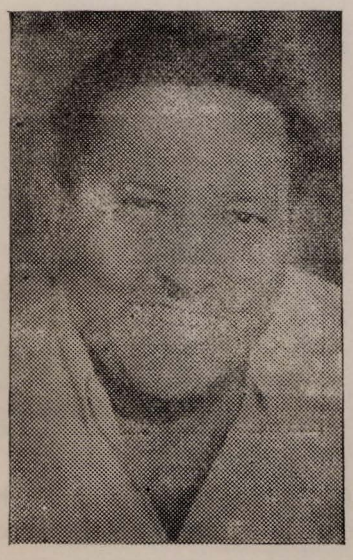


In this picture Benjamin Aaron Benjamin Varulkar of Aryasubodh Natak (Theatrical) Company is seen as "Hamlet" in 1910. He was well known as a dramatist and character actor. The distinct feature of his staging plays was adoption of selective Shakespearean plays into Urdu and Marathi. He even staged plays in Gujarathi.

It is said that the well known stage actor who later became a doyen of Film Industry. Sohrab Modi worked with Benjamin in the early years of his stage career. Benjamin used to stage dramas in several places as in Maharashtra (Then Bombay Presidency), particularly in Bombay and Pune.

He was born in Pune in 1885 and died in Burma in 1937.

BUNNY REUBEN, (B.A. (Hons.), LITERATURE



Bunny Reuben is an acclaimed author. His short stories have been published in American Literary Magazines. His books include a volume of short stories, a novel, a biography of the Fabulous Kapoors of the cinema world and a book on the making of "Shalimar," India's Hollywood Co-production. Eldest son of late Joseph N. Reuben and late Mrs. Hannah Reuben. Bunny Reuben is best known as a prominent film critic, film journalist and a leading public relations consultant in the Indian film industry, with which he has been actively associated for more than a quarter century. He has also made two valuable study tours of Hollywood.

Great is the man who ignores his own dignity and is not angered at affronts — Midrash Gadol

RUBY MEYERS (Sulochana)



The passing away of Ruby Meyers in May 1983 brings back to the minds of the Bene-Israels old memories in more than one sense — (1) She epitomized the golden age of the Silent Films, (2) The Bene-Israels who till about fifty years age were not counted for constituting a "MINYAN" by the Iraqi Jews, helped to form the "MINYAN" at the time of her burial. There were not more than three or four Iraqi Jews at the cemetery to perform the last rites. Incidentally not a single person from the film industry was present. Since at least ten adult Jews form "MINYAN," a word was sent to the authorities of the "TIPHERETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE" whose members always oblige for such types of religious rites and about ten members of the Synagogue immediately rushed to form the "MINYAN."

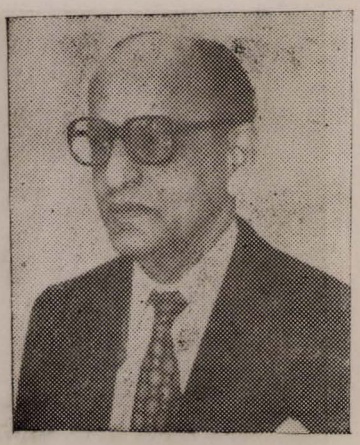
Ruby Meyers adopted the name Sulochana after she had acted in a few films. It is said, it was probably Director R. S. Chowdhary who gave her the new name. "SULOCHANA" means one with beautiful eyes. She was like a queen — regal and aristocratic voluptuous figure. But she was never arrogant or temperamental. She was warm and mixed freely with all, unlike the film stars of to-day.

In those good old days she was one of the super stars and became a craze, so much so that the Police Commissioner had to arrange for a Police Constable to keep her fans away.

Executives

AARON HANOCK ELIAS, B.Com. (Bombay), C.A.I.I.B.

One of the few among the Bene-Israels who occupied a very high position in Government services and perhaps the only one in Banking profession is A. H. Elias. He retired from the State Bank of India as Chief General Manager and was mainly responsible for the integration of the subsidiary banks and initiation of various development activities of the State Bank.



After retirement he was Adviser to the Central Bank of India for one and-a-half-years, official Director on Boards of 7 subsidiary banks of the State Bank for about 5 years, Government — nominated Director of the Central Bank of India for 4 years after nationalization. He was also appointed as Principal of the State Bank Staff College for 4 years where he was in charge of integrated training programmes of

Do not overlook the opinions of those who keep silent.

the Bank at the Staff College and its training institutions all over India. He has specialised as a Consultant to Banks and Industries in the following fields:

Management and behavioural sciences, industrial relations, training technologies and course designs, personnel management, organization development and re-organization of banks.

He has conducted a programme on "Project implementation, monetary and evaluation — irrigation" for the executive/superintending engineers of the Government of Andhra Pradesh and sponsored by the training division, department of personnel and administrative reforms, Government of India (Ministry of Home Affairs).

At present he is consultant to commercial banks and industries on matters connected with costing, finance, organizational development and managerial aspects, and man-power development.

He is an author and has to his credit a commercial pamphlet on "Rural Banking." He is also co-editor of the compendium volume entitled "Commercial Banking," published by the Indian Institute of Bankers, Bombay.

He has also contributed several articles on technical and non-technical subjects.

Elias is the son-in-law of the late Joseph David Penkar, the famous Dramatist and Kirtankar.

Dr. (Mrs.) JOYCE SANKARAN
(nee Joyce Bhastekar)



Joyce is the First Indian Lady to be appointed as Collector of Thane, about thirtyfive Kilometres from Bombay. She is also the First Jewish Lady to hold such an important office.

Born and brought up in Bombay, she successfully passed her M.A. with English and American Literature from Bombay University and entered the Indian Administrative Service (I. A. S.) in 1972. Ever since she has been involved in the formulation and implementation of development policies in the rural districts in Maharashtra.

Not satisfied with her academic achievements, she proceeded to U.S.A. in 1979 for higher studies and did her Ph.D. in Public Policy at the University of Hawaii/East West Centre Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.

Prior to her promotion as Collector of Thane, she held the post of Deputy Secretary in the Social Welfare, Cultural Affairs, Sports & Tourism Department.

Her husband, Dr. D. K. Sankaran is also in the Indian Administrative Service and did his Ph.D. in U.S.A. along with Joyce.

EZRA BENJAMIN KOLET

The Bene-Israels of Delhi is a small but well-knit community in which Kolet plays an important role. As the President of JEWISH WELFARE ASSOCIATION, Delhi (formed in 1949) he was mainly responsible for the construction of 'annexe' to the "Judah Hyam Prayer Cum Community Centre (built in 1956) which was dedicated on December 26, 1979. It houses the Centre for Jewish and Inter-Faith studies with well stocked library, which seeks to project Indian Jewry to the world. The Centre has so far published (i) "Jews of India" by B. J. Israel in 1982; (ii) List of Synagogues and Prayer Halls in India, Burma and Pakistan 1983.

Kolet was Additional Secretary and Chief Controller of Shipping & Transport. He used his good offices with Central Government Ministers and Officials to abolish the practice of issuing separate passports for visiting Israel. He also arranged meetings between Cabinet Ministers/Prime Minister and World Jewish leaders.

Kolet is also Secretary of Delhi Symphony Orchestra and member of O.R.T. Bombay.



Kolet represented the Jewish community at the World Religions in New Delhi. He also gave an impressive speech when he was invited to talk on Judaism at a meeting of Ramkrishna Mission in both India and Israel. On 27th of May every year he joins representatives of all other faiths in offering prayers at Shanti Vana. For over three decades he has represented the Jewish Community at annual Religious meetings of All Faiths organised by the Jewaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

Miss ESTHER SAMUEL TALKAR, (B.A. (Hons.), Diploma in French.



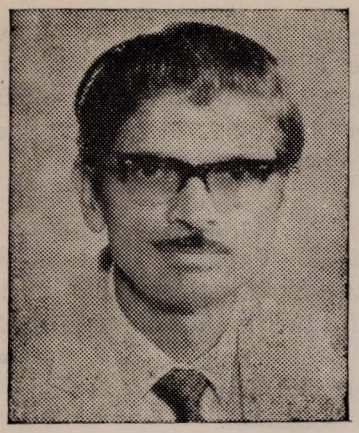
Esther is the First Lady to be appointed to the post of Special Officer (Protocol), Government of Maharashtra.

Needless to mention that she is holding a Class I Post of Under Secretary. She is a keen and devoted social worker in and outside the community. She is also a keen sportswoman and has represented the Government of Maharashtra in various sports at the All India Civil Services Tournaments and has won laurels for the Government in the game of Badminton.

If anyone is keen to meet her then he should visit her place early in the morning when he will find her on the Badminton Court.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. — Tennyson.

JOSHUA MOSES BENJAMIN (BHONKAR)



J. M. Benjamin is an accomplished Architect and was the Chief Architect in the Ministry of Works & Housing, Government of India, New Delhi, from 1972 till the time of his retirement in 1978. On account of his expert knowledge and experience he was appointed as Secretary to Delhi Urban Art Commission immediately after his retirement for two years. Since 1980, Benjamin is a Consulting Architect to several Institutions in India and abroad.

Benjamin has to his credit quite a few important buildings that he had designed and executed. A few of the important ones are, the Parliament House Annexure, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi and the India House in Paris. Benjamin is also responsible for the tasteful design prepared by him for the Judah Hyam Hall in New Delhi. He had also designed the Health Home known as "Beth Havra" at Matheran, which was built by the Israelite School Maccabeans and for which a handsome donation was received from the Late Ezra Reuben and Miss R. Reuben.

He is Vice-President of the Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi.

Mrs. LILY EZEKIEL

Mrs. Ezekiel, nee Lily Samson, youngest daughter of the late I. J. Samson, has left a mark in the office of the Director General of the Shipping Corporation of India. She was mainly responsible for drafting THE INDIAN SHIPPING ACT of 1960. She was also in charge of the Directorate of the Shipping Corporation when its branch was opened in Cochin. She retired as "Freight Investigating Officer."

Her eldest son, Samson is one of the most highly qualified Sea Captains in India to-day. The Australian Government recognised his services and presented him with a gift when he saved his ship from sinking at great personal risk. When the hull of his ship had developed a crack due to the typhoon, he personally went down into the hold of the ship and carried-out the welding work, at a great risk of not only his life (he would have been the first victim though) but at the risk of the lives of his crew also. He had to do this risky job because the persons concerned refused to comply with his orders for which of course they were punished.

Her youngest son Gabriel is one of the well-known Chefs in Bombay.

He was a Professor in the Catering College at Bombay and at Somani Technological Institute at Bombay.

He has worked in several 5-Star Hotels.

"When I look back on the process of history, when I survey the genesis of America I see written over every page : That the nations are renewed from the bottom, not from the top."

—Woodrow Wilson.

To thine own self be true; thou canst not then be false tc any man — Shakespeare.

DR. (Mrs.) NANCY EZEKIEL, M.A., M.Ed., Ed.S. (U.S.A.)



Nancy is the Principal of "Chembur Comprehensive College of Education." She is a member of Senate, University of Bombay and has written a number of articles and papers on education research etc.

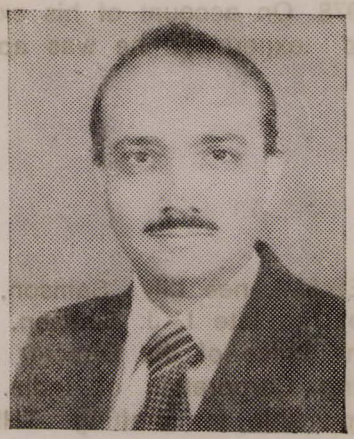
She is the youngest daughter of the late Moses Samuel Penkar who took the initiative in bringing about compromise in the disputes between the two parties in 1926-27 of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue. Had it not been for this compromise, lot of money would have been wasted in litigation.

PROF. NATHAN M. ASTON, M.A.

Nathan was one of the 17 college students selected by the Government to represent Maharashtra in West Bengal on a National Integration Programme.

Immediately after graduating from the Nowrosjee Wadia College, Pune, in 1969 with English as his Special Subject, he was invited to join the same College as a tutor in English. He obtained (i) his Master's Degree from the University of Pune in 1971 with entire English; and (ii) Diploma in teaching of English from the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad. At present he is a professor of English in his Alma Mater. He is now working for his Ph.D. in Stylistics.

He is also a Commissioned Naval Officer (Sub-Lieutenant), Joint Editor of the N. W. College magazines and Staff Incharge of the Wadia Enlightenment Scheme of the College. He is on the N.C.C. Advisory Committee for 1982-1985.



Besides, he is the Member of the Institute of Creative Development and the Institute of Parapsychology, both of Pune.

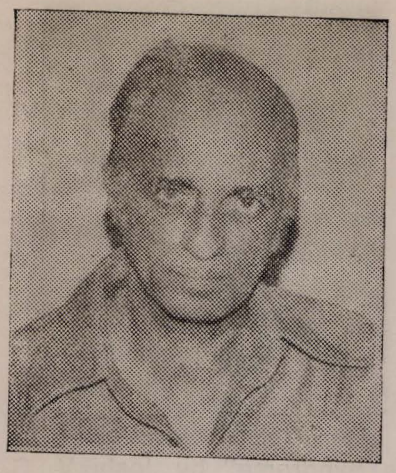
Nathan does not confine his activities to the University Campus only. He is one of the founder member of the Jewish Welfare Association, Pune, of which he was the Secretary for a number of years, a Trustee of the Succath Shelomo Synagogue and Hon. Representative of the Jewish Agency, in Bombay.

WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

You can't control the length of your life,
but you can control the expression.
You can't control the facial appearance,
but you can control the expression.

Suspect each moment, for it is a thief, tip-toeing away with more than it brings. - - John Updike

PROF. JOE EZEKIEL (TALKAR), IMP (Retd.)



Joe served in the Royal Indian Navy for fifteen years in several senior appointments.

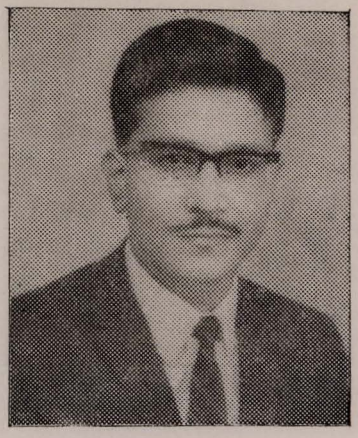
He also served in Senior Executive positions in Rourkela, Durgapur, Calcutta, Ranchi, Dusseldorffe (West Germany) and London and participated in several top management conferences. He was a visiting professor at National University, San Diego, California. After retiring as "Deputy Director" at the Steel Authority of India Limited, he was Senior Consultant and Head of Training Division of Messrs. Besant Raj Consultants (Private) Limited, Madras till 30th June, 1982.

On July 1, 1982 he was appointed as a Director of Studies, Studies Division, Indian Association of Materials Management, Madras. This is a post of National Importance.

Joe is the eldest son of the late Professor Moses Ezekiel and the late Mrs. Dianabai Ezekiel, educationist and Social Worker.

ELIAS HANNOCK HYAMES (Shapurkar)
A.C.I.I. (London), A.F.I.I. (Bombay,
Dy. Manager, National Insurance Co. Ltd.

Elias Hannock Hyames joined the Oriental Fire & General Insurance Company Limited and later promoted as Deputy Manager of the National Insurance Company Limited.



He qualified for Associateship Examinations of the Chartered Insurance Institute, London and of the Federation of the Insurance Institutes, Bombay. He also attended the Management Training Programmes at Administrative Staff College, Hyderabad and the Oriental Staff Training College at Faridabad. Lectured in Company Training Programmes and College of Insurance.

SHOFAR

A ram's horn is chosen as a Shofar because Abraham glorified the name of the Almighty by blowing the horn of the ram that Angel showed him and asked him to sacrifice instead of Isaac. Four notes are sounded upon it : (1) Tekiah, (2) Shebarim, (3) Teruvah and (4) Teruah Gedolah.

TEKIA : was sounded to alert the people when in danger and to rouse the army. It also announced the arrival of Shabath, New Moon, Jubilee Celebrations and such other momentous occasions. SHEBARIM : denotes wails of the oppressed and the sign of the depressing.

(Continued on page 154)

Express an opinion, but send advice by freight — Charles Clerk Munn.

ESTHER V. DUBEY M.A. (ILLINOIS) U.S.A.



Mrs. Esther V. Dubey has about 35 years of experience in the field of Clinical/School/ Academic Psychology of which over 15 years have been in the U.S.A. At present Esther is the Director of the Institute for Exceptional Children, Bombay, a non-profit organisation which she has been instrumental in founding.

She is also associated as Honorary Psychologist with the Grant Medical College and Sir J. J. Group of Hospitals, and the Family Planning Association of India. She is also a member of a number of Indian and International Professional Organisations.

She has to her credit the following publications :— "Intensive Treatment of the Institutionalized Ambulatory Geriatric Patients," "Geriatrics," (U.S.A.) June 1968, "A Controlled Clinical Trial of Isoniazid in the Treatment of Depressive Syndrome" by Joshi V. G., Haridas R. M. Dubey E. V., and Nagesh R. P., Journal of the J. J. Group of Hospitals and Grant Medical College, October 1979.

NISSIM ELIJAH BENJAMIN (Gadkar)



Nissim is perhaps the only member of the Indian Jewish Community to have taken to "Finger Printing" as his vocation, whose roots can be taken back to Biblical times.

He was instrumental in the detection of a number of cases and is the recipient of many awards. At present he is the Co-ordinator to the Training and Research Cell of the Finger Print Bureau, Maharashtra, which is his brain child.

(Continued from page 153)

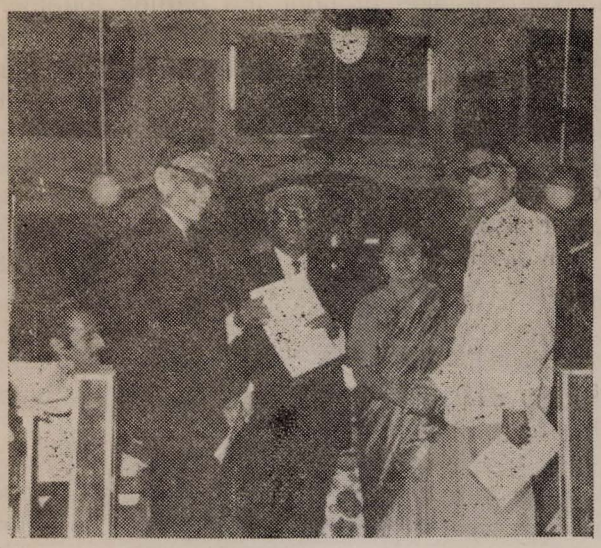
TERUAH : used to be the clarion call for battle. To-day, it is a message to battle with evil.
TERUAH GEDOLA : is the symbol of human liberation and peace.

According to Rabbi Saadyah the Gaon (882-942 C E) the blowing of the Shofar is connected with the following ten objects : (1) Creation of the world, (2) A warning to all to return from evil ways, (3) Receiving the Law at the foot of Mount Sinai, (4) The words and warnings of Prophets, (5) The destruction of the Temple, (6) Binding of Isaac, (7) Fear of the Lord, (8) The Day of Judgement, (9) The gathering of all Israel together; (10) The Resurection of the Dead.

The total number of notes bloom is 101 — 30 before Musaf, 30 during silent Amidah, 30 during repetion and 10 after Musaf and the last Terukh Gedola.

A habit cannot be tossed out of the widow; it must be coaxed down the stairs a step at a time — Mark Twain.

JOSEPH MOSES ROHEKAR & SOLOMON DAVID KORLEKAR



Joseph Moses Rohekar (right) and Solomon David Korlekar (left) are seen being honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of "GATE OF MERCY" Synagogue on 6-12-81 for their valuable co-operation in conducting prayers on High and other Holidays in the Synagogue for over three decades. Dr. (Mrs.) Ruby Solomon, is seen congratulating Rohekar.

Both Rohekar and Korlekar are very orthodox Jews. While Rohekar's doors were always open to young and old who wanted to study Hebrew and Jewish religion, Korlekar has been doing his best to see that the poor also enjoy all the festivals in their own homes. Rohekar emigrated to Israel in May 1984 along with his family.

SHALOM ABRAHAM CHEULKAR



S.A. Cheulkar is seen greeting the late Dr. Zakir Hussein, President of India in 1968

He was one of the founder members of the "Parel Bene-Israel Prayer Hall" and conducted the prayers till he left for Israel in 1978. The Prayer Hall had no membership but

---

When a man points a finger at someone else, he doesn't realise that three of his fingers are pointing at himself.

donors who used to donate for the maintenance of the said Prayer Hall. Before leaving for Israel he donated substantial amount to some of the Institutions including the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund.

He was a teacher in Sir Jacob Sasson High School just like his predecessors Yoseph Master and Shetu Master. Shalom Abraham Cheulkar, rose to the highest post of Principalship before retirement from service.

He represented the Parel Bene-Israel Prayer Hall on the Central Jewish Board of India and was its Secretary for a few years. As a senior member of the Board he had an interview with the Pope when the latter visited India in 1963.

In 1968 Cheulkar was appointed "Court Receiver" by the Bombay City Civil Court as a result of the suit filed by the Provisional Managing Committee against the Trustees of the "Shaare Rason" Synagogue. Not only Cheulkar succeeded in securing the resignation of the four trustees appointed by Moses Abraham Doodkar but also brought the parties together. He suceeded in gaining the confidence of the two parties to such an extent that he was authorised to nominate five new trustees which he did and the Jamat at its meeting held on 31st March, 1968 unanimously approved the nomination. In appreciation of his services the Jamat of the Synagogue unanimously decided to give Mishberakha to him for life on Ereb Kippur.

Cheulkar was one of the delegates who participated in the Mahatma Gandhi's Centenary Celebrations held in 1968.

Cheulkar was a staunch Nationalist and was opposed to Bene-Israels emigrating to Israel for a number of years. Strangely enough Chedulkar had himself to emigrate to Israel, perhaps much against his wish.

EPHRAIM GERSHON MOSES MALEKAR

B.A.,LL.B., Advocate

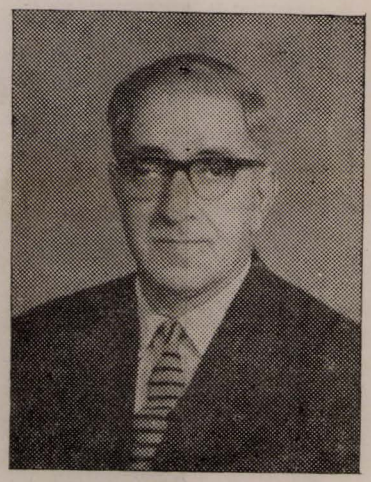
(By: Ezekiel Moses Jacob Gadkar)

I am indeed thankful to E. G. Moses for writing the "FORE-WORD," "PROLOGUE" and the "EPILOGUE".

These three important write-ups were received in early 1982 without my approaching him.

When I asked him how he could write the "FORE-WORD" without knowing the contents of the Book (originally it was to be in the form of a Souvenir, leave alone perusing the articles, his reply was that he had seen a copy of the Appeal for donations in which mention was made about the contents of the book and therefore he could guess that it would be an important document.

I hope the Book will live upto his and others expectations.



I know Ephraim for over fifty years. When I was Chairman of the Israelite School Maccabeans, he was the Editor of its publication, "THE MESSENGER." At that time also, I still remember he volunteered to be the Editor, and wrote very fine articles, specially on Chanukah Festivals, which celebrations used to be organised on a large scale from 1928 to 1941.

There is nothing better than a good tongue; nothing worse than an evil tongue.

— Vayikra Tabha, 33

Ephraim is the son of the late Gershon Moses Malekar and grandson of the late Subhedar Major Sardar Bahadur Moshe Bapuji Malekar, who meticulously maintained the accounts of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue from 1888 to 1892 while he was its Hon. Treasurer. The late Gershon Moses followed in the foot-steps of his father in the proper maintenance of the accounts and subsequently was elected as a Trustee of the Synagogue Estate Trust.

R. B. RAYMOND GADKAR

R. B. Raymond Gadkar will be remembered for three important contributions to the Sir Elly Kadoorie School..... his Alma Mater:-

i. For the construction of additional six class rooms when he was the Managing Trustee of the School trust ;

ii. For equipping the Children's Library organised by the Israelite School Maccabeans, an Ex-Students' Association of the School; and

iii. For furnishing the School Hall with furniture purchased out of the donations received during Chanukah week, which week the Israelite School Maccabeans used to celebrate for eight days in the school premises.



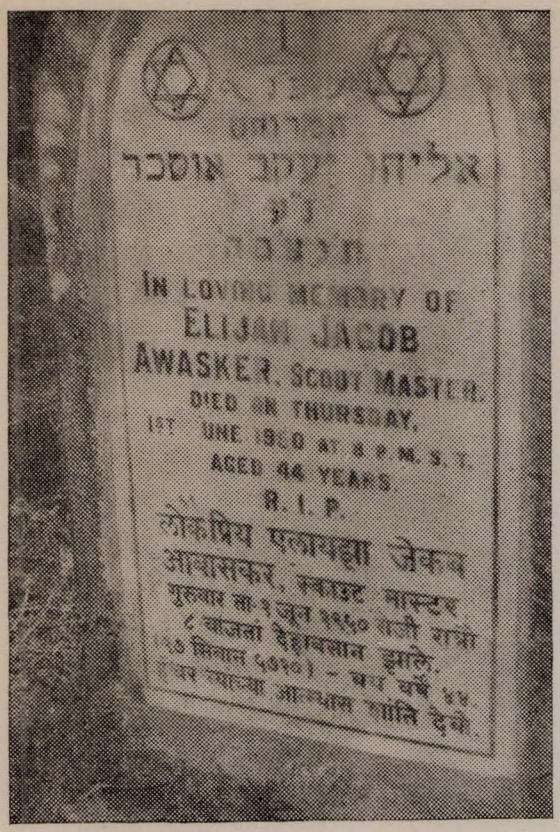
As a scout master he not only worked for the Jewish Students but for others too.

He retired as a Sub-Inspector of police from the Police Commissioner's Department Bombay.

DON'T QUIT

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit,
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow —
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out —
The Silver tint of the clouds of doubt;
And you never can tell just how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far,
So stick to the fight when you are hardest hit —
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

ELIJAH JACOB AWASKAR



Eljah Jacob Awaskar, popularly known as 'ELI MASTER', who was serving as a teacher and scout master in Sir Elly Kadoorie School — his Alma Mater — for nearly twenty years was destined to be buried in the First Cemetery of the Bene-Israels at Nowgav.

During the summer vacation he had gone for a change of climate to his native place THAL.

Reminisceing his good old days he climbed up a tree which he had climbed hundreds of times earlier. But this proved to be his last climb. He fell down and died on June 1, 1950 at an early age of 44. He was buried in the Nowgav Cemetery.

SAUL SAMUEL PENKAR



Like his father, the late Mr. Samuel Penkar, Saul devoted a considerable part of his life for the welfare of the "Magen Hassidim" Synagogue, of which he was the Secretary and later President for quite a few years. In his youth Saul used to assist the Management of the Synagogue in sending appeals for donations, circulars, etc. to members and donors. He also conducted Hebrew reading classes in the Synagogue premises for a couple of years.

He was a member of the Bombay Zionist Association for a number of years and worked for it either as Secretary or Treasurer from 1973. He was Hon. Treasurer of the Association when he passed away on December 23, 1981. He was also a member of the Central Jewish Board of India and represented the "Magen Hassidim" Synagogue, on the Management of Sir Elly Kadoorie School in sixties.

Since he did not believe in administering sugar-coated pill, the bitter pills left a bitter taste in the mouths of those to whom it was administered.

However, even his critics will agree that he loved "Magen Hassidim" from the bottom of his heart.

Goodness is the only investment that never fails. — Thoreau

REUBEN BENJAMIN SHIRKOLKAR, B.A.

The man who looks after the maintenance of the Health Home at Matheran.

R. B. Shirkolkar, known among his friends as Reuben is the only person who is looking after the maintenance of "BETH-HAVRA" Health Home at Matheran (a Hill Station about 80 miles from Bombay), built by the Israelite School Maccabeans, an ex-students' Association of the Israelite High School, now known as Sir Elly Kadoorie School.

Almost everyone knows the good work being done by Reuben for the "Tiphereth Israel" Synagogue of which he was President from 1980 to 1982, The Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund, of which he is the Secretary & Treasurer from 1980 and the Bombay Zionist Association, of which he is the Vice President from 1982. But very few know the good work done by him for our only School while he was a student of the same school and later as secretary of the Israelite School Maccabeans. Maccabeans in those good old days used to organize Chanukah Festival for complete eight days. On each day there used to be different programmes — sports, elocution, singing and drawing competitions, variety entertainment programmes etc. On Fridays, Sabbath was welcomed. Every child was given a gift. After the Chanukah lamp was lighted; the message of the festival was read out by a student of the school. The messages which were different for each day were composed by the late Miss R. Reuben. The donations received out of the biddings for lighting the Chanukah Lamps, were utilised for equipping the school hall with chairs, tables, stage and ceiling fans.

Reuben is well-known outside the community also. Most of them call him 'Mama' (maternal uncle). He was also popular with his staff members while he was Ward Officer, Bombay Municipal Corporation. At the 'Send off' party arranged in his honour on the eve of his retirement, a very large number of officers and men working under him were present; it was an eloquent tribute to his popularity.

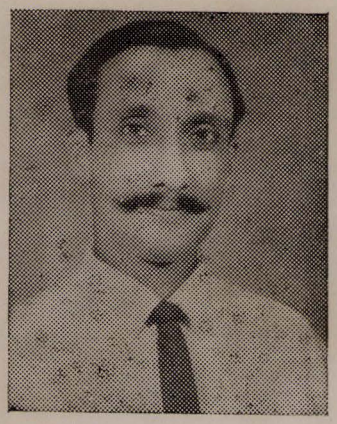


Reuben is an able person. He rose to the post of Ward Officer by sheet dint of hard work. If he had retired one year later perhaps he would have been promoted to the post of Deputy Municipal Commissioner of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and would have had the distinction of being the First Bene-Israel to occupy this responsible office.

He is genial by nature, does not get excited and ponders and deliberates while solving a problem. It is for this reason that many persons even elders go to him to seek his advise to solve knotty problems, because they know that he possesses an unbiased mind.

Man enters the world with closed hands, as if to say : "The world is mine." He leaves it with open hands, as if to say : Behold, I take nothing with me. — Kohelet Rabbah, 5 : 24.

DANIEL ELIJAH BENJAMIN (GADKAR)



Daniel Elijah Benjamin (Gadkar) from Pune is an active communal and social worker and founder member of the Pune unit of the Indian Zionist Organisation of Bombay. He is also active as a journalist and contributes to several publications. He has been associated for a long time with the Succath Shelomo Synagogue, Pune and was a Secretary and Treasurer of the Synagogue. He is at present a member of the Managing Committee and takes keen interest in its affairs.

Daniel is one of the twin sons of ELijah Benjamin Gadkar of Pune (the venerable figure of Poona Jewry, who has himself served as President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Succath Shelmo Synagogue, Daniel is employed in the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune.

Daniel Elijah Gadkar is one among the very few persons in the community who has a hobby of collecting rare photographs of ancient Indian Jews, Indian Jewish Synagogues, Prayer Halls, Cemeteries, Libraries, important Institutions etc. To-date he has acquired over one thousand such types of rare photographs.

Daniel was a source of encouragement and assistance to the compiler of this Book. He loaned photographs of the Synagogues — six of the Synagogue in Karachi, two of Pune and one of Ahmedabad. While the photos of the Synagogues in Ahmedabad and Pune would have been possible to procure, it was next to impossible to get the photographs of "Magen Shalom" Synagogue, Karachi.

He also loaned the photograph of Subhedar Bahadur Solomon E. Penkar.

AARON ASHER KURULKAR

Aaron Asher Kurulkar (with a book in his hand) was associated with the management of the 'Gate of Mercy' Synagogue for nearly four decades. He was on the management of the Synagogue from 1947 to 1982. He is also a Trustee and Hon. Treasurer of the Synagogue Estate Trust since 1947.

Besides he is also a Trustee and Hon. Treasurer of the Bene-Israel Home for Destitutes and Orphans from 1967, Managing Committee Member of the Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund and quite a few other Associations in the community. He has rendered very valuable service for the welfare of the Synagogue, particularly for making arrangement during High Holidays.



Aaron Asher Kurulkar is seen receiving a certificate from the Chief Guest, Barukh Benjamin Gadkar on 13-12-1981.

Success is how collect your minutes — Norman Lear.

सॉलोमन सॅमसन पेणकर

(३-३-१८६८) - (३-३-१९४८)

श्रीमती रेचलबाई डॅनिएल

पुण्यातील "सुक्काथ शेलोमो" प्रार्थनालयाच्या उन्नतिकरितां ज्या कांहीं समाजसेवकांनीं आपले सर्वस्व पणाला लावले त्या मालिकेत सॉलोमन सॅमसन पेणकर (हाईम शेमोएल केहिमकरांचे जावई) यांची प्रामुख्याने गणना होते. ते प्रार्थनालयाचे विश्वस्त होते. व त्यांनी १९२४-१९२९ पर्यंत प्रार्थनालयाचे अध्यक्षपद भूषविले. त्यांनी त्यांच्या कारकिर्दीत अनेक सुधारणा घडवून आणल्या व सध्या अस्तित्वात असलेली 'नियमावली' तयार करून प्रार्थनालयाच्या उत्पन्नात भर टाकली.

हिब्रू भाषा व धर्मशिक्षणासाठी शाळा काढून त्याकरितां पुणे नगरपालिकेकडून अनुदान (Grant) मिळवून दिले.

ते स्वत: उत्कृष्ट वक्ते व ज्ञानाचे भोक्ते असल्यामुळें प्रार्थनालयातर्फे नामांकित व्यक्त्यांची व्याख्याने आयोजित करत असत. प्रार्थनालयात देरुश (धर्मोपदेश) देण्याची प्रथा त्यांनीच पाडली होती.

१९२४ ते १९४७ पर्यंत ते पुण्यांतील अत्यंत जुनी लायब्ररी "धी ज्युईश रिडींग रूम व लायब्ररी" चे कार्यक्षम चिटणीस होते; या दीर्घ काळात त्यांनी त्या काळी प्रकाशित झालेली इंग्लिश व मराठी लेखकांच्या पुस्तकांची भर घातली. तसेच मासिके व दैनिक पत्रांचा पुरवठाही करत असत. त्यामुळे समाजात वाचनाची आवड निर्माण झाली त्यांनी ग्रंथालयासाठी पुणे नगरपालिकेकडून अनुदान मिळवून दिले.

त्यांचे शिक्षण जरी मॅट्रिक पर्यंत झाले होते, तरी त्यांनी दांडग्या वाचनाने आपल्या ज्ञानात भर घातली. पुण्यातील प्रसिद्ध डेक्कन व फर्ग्युसन कॉलेज मधील 'इतिहास', विषय घेतलेल्या विद्यार्थ्यांना 'इस्राएली शाहिर व त्यांच्या लावण्या' या विषयावर व्याख्याने दिली व त्यावर लेखन सुद्धा केले होते. पण कांहीं कारणास्तव ते छापले गेले नाहीं.

मुंबईत त्यावेळी दरवर्षी होणाऱ्या 'बेने इसराएल (एज्युकेशन) कॉन्फरन्स' १९२५ साली अलिबाग येथें भरणार होती. त्या कॉन्फरन्सचे अध्यक्षपद पेणकरांनी स्विकारले होते. ते उत्तम वक्ते होते व त्यांची भाषणे उस्फूर्त व समयोचित असत.

त्यांना गोष्टी सांगण्याची कला अवगत होती. ज्ञातितील कोठल्याही सुख दु:खी प्रसंगी स्त्रिया व पुरुष त्यांच्या गोष्टी ऐकण्यात रमून जात असत. लोक आपलें दु:ख विसरत असत. त्यांच्या मोकळ्या व खेळीमेळीच्या वागण्यामुळें लहान थोरांच्या मनांत त्यांच्या विषयी जिव्हाळा व आदर उत्पन्न होत असे. त्यांचा दैनंदिन कार्यक्रम अगदी घड्याळाप्रमाणे अचूक असे. रात्री बरोबर आठ वाजता घराचा दरवाजा बंद करण्यात येई. तेव्हां पुण्यातील प्रसिद्ध इस्राएल आळीतील लोक म्हणत, "आतां नक्की आठ वाजले".

प्रथम त्यांचे अर्धे आयुष्य "मिलिटरी अकौंट" मध्यें काम करण्यात गेले; व 'कंट्रोलर' च्या हुद्यावर पोंहोचून मोठा पगार घेऊन रिटायर झाले. तो काळ पहिली मोठी लढाई (The first Great War) चा असल्यामुळें त्यांना इराण, शिराज, बसरा वगैरे देशांत खूप प्रवास करावा लागला. त्यामुळें त्यांना उर्दू, पर्शियन भाषा अवगत होत्या. तसेच त्यांना हिब्रू भाषेतही बोलता येत होते. ते जरी 'ऑरथॉडॉक्स' होते, तरी त्या काळातही त्यांचे कांहीं विचार पुढारलेले व सुधारलेले होते.

प्रश्न - उत्तरे

प्र : मंदिरात प्रार्थना चालू असतां भाषण करणें योग्य आहे काय ?

उ : **नाहीं.** हबक्कून भविष्यवादी म्हणतो, "परमेश्वर आपल्या पवित्र मंदिरात आहे. सर्व पृथ्वी स्तब्ध राहो."

प्र : शब्बाय दिवशी किती दिवे लावावेत ?

उ : **दोन.** एक शब्बाय दिवसाची आठवण म्हणून, दुसरा शब्बायाच्या पाळणुकीकरता. कांहींजण सात दिवे सात दिवसाचे दर्शक म्हणून लावतात; तर तेरा दिवे हे राब्बी मैमोन यांनी सांगितलेल्या इसराएली धर्माची तेरा मूळ-तत्वे यांची निदर्शक होत.

प्र : मेजुजा दारावर कलती कां लावतात ?

उ : राब्बी शेलोमो इसहाक (राशी) व त्यांचे नातू रब्बेनू ताम यांच्यात मतभेद होवून एका गटाचे मत ती उभी लावावी तर दुसऱ्याचे मत ती आडवी लावावी तेव्हां तडजोड म्हणून ती कलती लावावी असे ठरले.

प्र : भाकऱ्या भाजण्यापूर्वी किंवा पुऱ्या तळण्यापूर्वी उंडेदान कां करतात ?

उ : पवित्र मंदिराच्यावेळी आपल्या प्राप्तिचा कांहीं हिस्सा अर्पण म्हणून द्यावा लागे. ही अर्पणे इश्वराग्निने जळून जात. त्यानंतर उरलेल्या भागाचा वापर करित. त्या विधीची आठवण म्हणून अग्निदान करूनच भाकऱ्या किंवा पुऱ्या बनवितात.

प्र : मलिद्याँचे तबक काय दर्शवितात ?

उ : ही रूढी पवित्र मंदिराच्या वेळची अर्पण निदर्शय आहे. आपले पूर्वज दहिल्या पवित्र मंदिराच्या नाशानंतर भारतात आले असावेत. व ती प्रथा त्यांनी अशा प्रकारे चालू ठेवली असावी.

प्र : इस्त्राएली स्त्रियांनी कपाळावर कुंकू किंवा तिलक लावणे योग्य आहे काय ?

उ : **नाहीं.** कुंकू किंवा तिलक लावणे हा हिंदू देवळातील एक धार्मिक विधी आहे. त्यामुळे त्याला मुर्ति पुजकाचे स्वरुप येते. व इश्वराज्ञेचा भंग होतो.

प्र : कोळंबी खाणे योग्य आंहे काय ?

उ : **नाहीं.** मोशे रब्बेनूच्या आहारविषयक नियमानुसार ते वर्ज्य आहे.

प्र : चामड्यापासून बनविलेल्या कुठल्याहीं वस्तूंवर आपण शेहेहे-य्यानू करित नाहीं.

उ : चामडे मेलेल्या किंवा मारलेल्या जनावरापासून बनते. मारलेल्याची हत्त्या व मेलेले जनावर निषिद्ध असल्यामुळे हा धन्यवाद करित नाहीं, म्हणूनच तेफिल्लीनवरही हा धन्यवाद करित नाहीं.

प्र : भविष्य काढणे किंवा कुंडली पाहाणे, इस्त्राएली धर्मात संमत आहे काय ?

उ : **नाहीं.** दैवेज्ञ, शकून पाहणारा जादुगार, चेटकी, मांत्रिक, देव-ऋषि, पंचाक्षरी अथवा इलमी असा तुमच्यापैकी कोणी नसावा. जो असली कृत्यें करतो त्याचा परमेश्वराला वीट आहे."

प्र : इस्त्राएली धर्मानुसार प्रेत-दहन करणें संमत आहे काय ?

उ : **नाहीं.** इंग्लंडचे माजी चीफ राब्बी डॉ. हर्ट्झ्च्या मते दहन विधी इस्त्राएली कायद्या व रूढीच्या अगदी विरूद्ध असून तो फार किळसवाणा वाटते. ईश्वराने आदामास म्हटले, "माती असशी, मातीस मिळशी". यावरून सिद्ध होते कीं, दहन विधी आपल्या धर्मास मान्य नाहीं.

मे. आब्राहाम सामसन शाहापुरकर, "शाआर हाराहामीम" प्रार्थना मंदिराचे दुय्यम चिटणीस, यांनी सदर मंदिरांत पेसाह सणाच्या सातव्या दिवशी, सोमवार, ता. ५ एप्रिल १९२६ रोजी केलेला धर्मोपदेश.

हे इसराएला, परमेश्वरावर भाव ठेव, तोच त्यांचें साहाय्य व त्यांची ढाल आहे. गीत ११५, ओ. ९.

पेसाह म्हणजे वल्हांडण सण. ह्या सणाच्या स्थापनेसंबंधींचा सर्व इतिहास पवित्रशास्त्रांत आहे. त्यावरून, इसराएलांची कांहीं एक चूक नसतां, त्यांस मिसरी लोकांनीं कसकसें छळिलें तें कळून येतें. वास्तविकरीत्या **योसेफ हसद्दीक (नीतिमान योसेफ)** यांचे मिसर देश व त्या सभोंवतालचे प्रांत ह्यांवर मोठे उपकार झाले होते. सात वर्षोंच्या दुष्काळांत मोठ्या युक्तीनें **योसेफ हसद्दीक** यांनीं कोटयावधी मिसरी व इतर लोकांचे प्राण वांचविले होते. ते त्यांचे उपकार आठवून तरी मिसरी लोकांनीं इसराएलांस दयेनें व न्यायानें वागवावयाचें होतें. परंतु म्हणतात ना कीं, "गरज सरो व वैद्य मरो," याप्रमाणें योसेफ व त्यांच्या वेळचे फारो राजे हे जेव्हां स्वर्गवासी झाले तेव्हां योसेफाची कामगिरी जणूं काय नष्ट होऊन मिसरी लोक इसराएलांसंबंधी आपल्या मनांत भलभलत्याच कल्पना आणूं लागले. इसराएलांची संख्या फारच वाढली आहे, ते प्रबळ होऊन आपणांविरुद्ध बंड करतील, किंवा आपल्या शत्रूंस सामील होऊन आपणांवर मोठें संकट आणतील म्हणून त्यांची वाढ खुंटविली पाहिजे असा निश्चय करून फारो राजे व मिसरी लोक यांनीं इसराएलांस सक्त मजुरीच्या कामास लाविलें! हुकूम ऐकिला तर बरें, नाहीं तर इसराएलांस चाबुकानें ते बडवूं लागले ! ! पण "परमेश्वर तारी त्यास कोण मारी ? " इतकें करूनहि इसराएलांची वाढ खुंटेना, तेव्हां वाढ खुंटविण्याकरितां मिसऱ्यांनीं एक अजब युक्ति लढविली, ती अशी कीं, इसराएलांना मुली झाल्यास त्यांस वांचवावें, व मुलगे झाल्यास त्यांस **नाईल** नदींत फेंकून द्यावें !!! आणि असा क्रूर व अमानुषपणाचा हुकूम अमलांत असतां **मोशाचा** जन्म झाला ! व तो नाईल नदींत फेंकला गेला नाहीं, ! ! इतकेंच केवळ नव्हे, तर त्या काळचा इसराएलांचा हाडवैरी जो फारो राजा त्याच्या राजवाड्यांतच सुग्रास भक्षण करून तो लहानाचा थोर झाला ! ! केवढा चमत्कार हा ! ! ! पुढें त्याच मोशाच्या हस्तें आपणां इसराएलांस देवानें मिसऱ्यांच्या गुलामगिरींतून सोडवून स्वतंत्र कसें केलें, अधमौतून काढून त्यानें आपणांस धर्म कसा लावून दिला, अंधेरातून काढून त्यानें आपणांस उजेडांत कसें आणिलें, हा सर्व इतिहास आपणां सर्वांस अवगतच आहे. त्यावरून इसराएलांचा देव हाच खरा, व सर्वशक्तिमान देव असून तो सर्व जगाचा चालक होय असे मनास पटतें. म्हणून स्तोत्रकर्ते गीत ११५ ओ. ९ येथें आग्रहपूर्वक आपणांस उपदेशितात कीं, "हे इसराएला परमेश्वरावर भाव ठेव, तोच त्यांचें साहाय्य व त्यांची ढाल आहे."

परमेश्वरानें आपणां इसराएलांची मिसर देशांतून सुटका केली हे त्याचे खचितच आपणांवर मोठे उपकार होत. त्याबद्दल प्रतिवर्षी आपण हा सण पाळून देवास अनेक धन्यवाद देतों व तत्संबंधीं सर्व इतिहास आपल्या मुलाबाळांस समजावून सांगत असतों. हें जें आपण करितों तें यथायोग्य होय–पण आत्मोन्नतीकरितां ह्या सणा-

पासून जो आत्मबोध घ्यावयाचा तो आपण घेत असतों कीं काय? हा प्रश्न आहे. उदाहरणार्थ, हचा सणाकरितां आपण आपलीं घरेंदारें साफ व स्वच्छ करून त्याला सफेती लावतों व भांड्यांस कल्हई लावून त्याला **आगालाहि** देतों, त्याप्रमाणें आपण आपल्या मनांतून दुष्टवासनारूप मळ काढून टाकितों कीं काय ? आणखी हचासणाकरितां आपण घरांतून **हामेस** म्हणजे फुगवण नाहींसें करितों पण त्याबरोबरच आपण आपल्या मनांतून गर्व, ताठा व अहंकाररूपी फुगवण यांसहि नाहींसें करितों कीं काय ? हे प्रश्न आहेत. त्यांवरून स्पष्ट सांगांवयाचें हें कीं, जर आपण नुसते विधि आचरिले व कामक्रोधादि षड्रिपूंचें बंड अंतःकरणांत कायम ठेवून कुटिलता व स्वार्थबुद्धि हचांस फांटा दिला नाहीं तर हचा सणासंबंधींचा सर्व उद्देश आपण तडीस नेला असें समजणें चुकीचें होय.

इसराएल हे परमेश्वराचे निवडलेले लोक होत. देवानें त्यांस वडील पुत्राचा मान दिला आहे व त्यांस कामगिरीहि लावून दिली आहे. ती ही कीं, स्वतः नीतीनें वागून त्यांनी जगांतील इतर लोकांस आपल्या आचरणानें चांगला कित्ता घालावा व सर्व जगास सदाचरणी व एकेश्वरी करून टाकावें. म्हणून इसराएलांकडून नेहेमींचें धार्मिक आचरण झालें पाहिजे. असें त्यांजकडून होत गेल्यास जगाची सुधारणा होऊन पवित्रशास्त्रांत सांगितलेली त्यांच्या सुटकेची व जगाच्या कल्याणाची वेळ लवकरच येऊन ठेपेल. हचाविषयीं इसराएलांस अनुलक्षून तलमुदीत असें म्हटलें आहे कीं, "If they are righteous I will hasten the moment of their redemption; if they are not righteous it shall take place in its own time". भावार्थः–"जर इसराएल लोक धार्मिकपणानें वागत गेले तर त्यांच्या सुटकेची वेळ देव लवकरच आणील, पण जर ते धार्मिकपणें न वागलें तर त्यांची सुटका जेव्हां होईल." अर्थात् मशियाहची वेळ–सुवर्णयुग–लवकर येणें न येणें हें इसराएलांच्या आचरणावर अवलंबून आहे. म्हणून इसराएलांकडून जें आचरण व्हावयाचें तें नेहेमीं नैतिक व धार्मिक असेंच असलें पाहिजे.

सारांश पेसाह सणापासून जो बोध घ्यावयाचा तो घेऊन आपण सर्वांनीं लीनता व नम्रता धारण केली पाहिजे व सर्व गोष्टींत आपला सर्व विश्वास आपण देवावरच ठेविला पाहिजे. व अशा रीतीनें जे इसराएल वागले आहेत त्यांस देवानें कधींहि सोडिलें नाहीं, इतकेंच केवळ नव्हें, तर देव नेहमींच त्यांचा साहाय्यकारी व त्यांस ढालरूप असा होऊन राहिला. ह्या विषयी मला पवित्रशास्त्रातून, तलमुद ग्रंथांतून, इसराएलांच्या व जगाच्या इतिहासांतून अनेक उदाहरणें आपणांस सांगतां येतील.तरी पण पेसाहसणाशीं ज्या एका ऐतिहासिक गोष्टींचा निकट संबंध आहे तीच मी आज सारांशरूपानें निवेदन करितों :—

सुमारें दोनशें वर्षांमागें ॲस्ट्रिया हंगेरियाच्या बोहेमिया प्रांतांतील **प्रेग** शहरीं राब्बी **पिनहास** हचा नांवाचे एक इसराएल गृहस्थ राहात असत. त्यांचा धंदा म्हटला म्हणजे जुनेंपुराणें सामान विकत घेऊन तें पुनः विकावयाचें, हा होता. हे गृहस्थ मोठे प्रामाणिक व सचोटीनें वागणारे असून त्यांचा देवावर अढळ विश्वास होता. त्याचप्रमाणें पवित्रशास्त्र, तलमुद व इतर ग्रंथ यांचाहि ते प्रत्येक रात्रीं जपून अभ्यास करीत असत. पण दिलगिरीची गोष्ट ही कीं, जरी ते फारच मेहनतीनें आपला धंदा करीत तरी अनेक वेळां त्यांच्या कुटुंबांतील माणसांच्या निर्वाहापुरतेंहि पैसे त्यांस मिळत नसत. त्यामुळें कित्येक शब्बाथ व सणावारांचे दिवस साजरें करून घेण्यास त्यांस मोठी पंचाईत पडे, परंतु देवदयेनें **प्रेग** शहरचे एक सरदार (Count), जे स्त्रिस्तीधर्मानुयायी होते, त्यांची यांच्यावर बहाल मर्जी असल्याकारणानें त्यांची शब्बाथ व सणावारशबद्दलची पैशासंबंधींची अडचण सदर सरदाराकडून दूर होत असे, पण पैसे हातीं पडून अडचण दूर झाल्यासारखी वाटतांच जरी राब्बी **पिनहास** हे त्या सरदाराचे मनांतल्या मनांत फार फार आभार मानीत तरी तत्संबंधीं त्यांजकडून जे मुखोद्गार निघत ते हे कीं, "हे परमेश्वरा, तूं आजहि माझी गरज भागविलीस हे तुझे माझ्यावर मोठे उपकार होत; तूं आपल्या लेंकरांना सोडीत नाहींस हचाबद्दल तुला अनेक धन्यवाद दिले पाहिजेत." अशा आशयाचे राब्बी **पिनहास** यांच्या मुखांतून वारंवार निघालेले शब्द ऐकून त्या सरदाराचा असा ग्रह झाला कीं, "हा इसराएल कृतघ्न आहे. हचाच्या अनेकदां गरजा भागविणारा मी ! व हा उपकार मानतो आपल्या देवाचे ! ! बरें, तर आतां पेहास सण लवकरच येणार आहे, त्यावेळेस जर हा माझ्यापाशीं आलाच तर मी हचाला एका कवडीचीहि मदत करणार नाहीं." थोडक्याच दिवसांनीं पेसाह सण येऊन ठेपला व नेहमींप्रमाणें **पिनहास** हे त्या सरदारापाशीं गेले व म्हणले "सरदार साहेब, पेसाह सण उद्यां रात्रीवर येऊन ठेपला आहे. गेल्या आठवड्यापासून तर माझा धंदा अगदींच बसल्यासारखा झाला आहे. हातांत पैसे मुळींच राहिले नाहींत." सरदार म्हणाले, "मलाहि सध्यां पैशाची अडचण आहे व तुला हचा खेपेस मी साहाय्य करूं शकत नाहीं म्हणून वाईट वाटतें ! **मस्सा** वगैरे जिनसा मिळविण्याची तजवीज तूं दुसऱ्या कोणाकडून तरी करून घे. हचा कामीं तुझा देव तुला साहाय्य करीलच." हे शब्द ऐकून **पिनहास** यांना धडकी बसल्यासारखी झाली व ते दुःखानें म्हणाले, "मग काय करावें ? ईश्वर आहे, तो मदत करील." असें बोलून व सरदारास सलाम करून ते घरीं निघून आले. त्यांच्या पत्नीनें जेव्हां ऐकिलें की, सरदारानें हचा खेपेस कांहींच मदत केली नाहीं तेव्हां तिलाहि फार वाईट वाटलें, पण कुरकुरीचा एक शब्दहि तिनें मुखावाटे काढिला नाहीं. संध्या-

काळची प्राथना होऊन भोजन आटोपल्यावर राब्बी **पिनहास** हे शास्त्राभ्यास करावयास बसले व त्यांची पत्नी व मुलेंबाळें हीं झोंपीं गेलीं. मध्यरात्रीच्या सुमारास एकाएकीं त्यांच्या खोलीच्या खिडकी-वाटें धाडकन् एक मेलेलें माकड फेंकण्यांत येऊन, फेंकणारे बोंबा ठोकीत व खिदळत पळून गेले ! त्या आवाजासरसें त्यांची पत्नीहि झोंपेंतून जागी झाली. पेसाह अगदीं जवळ येऊन ठेपलेला ! अशा समयीं आपणावर एखादा घाणेरडा आरोप आणण्याच्या उद्देशानें तर हा प्राणी कोणीं आपल्या घरांत टाकला नसेल ना ? ह्या विचारानें **पिनहास** हे घाबरून थरथरां कापूं लागले ! पुढें पत्नीच्या सल्लयानें त्या मृत मर्कटास जाळून भस्म करण्याचें त्यानें ठरवून तत्प्रीत्यर्थ आग तयार करण्यांत आली व त्या आगीवर ठेवण्याकरितां त्या प्राण्यास उचलतांना त्याच्या जबड्यांतून प्रत्येकीं पंधरा ते वीस रुपये किंमतीचे सोन्याच **डबल-डयुक्याटस्** जमिनीवर पडू लागले ! ! सुरी आणून त्या प्राण्याचें शव चिरल्यावर त्याचें पोट सबंध डबल-डयुक्याट्स नांवाच्या सोन्याच्या माण्यांनीं भरलेलें आहे असें आढळून आलें ! ! ! सर्व गोळा केलेल्या डबल-डयुक्याटस्नें एक भली थोरली पिशवी भरून गेली ! हें पाहून **पिनहास** व त्याच्या पत्नीच्या आनंदास काय पारावर! ! त्यांस आणखी काय हवें होतें ! ! ! अगोदरच **पिनहास** हे बोलून चालून मोठे धार्मिक, त्यांत त्यांना पुरून पुष्कळच उरेल एवढा पैका आज मिळालेला ! दुधांत साखर पडल्यासारखी होऊन आकाशाकडे हात करून ते ओरडून म्हणाले, "हे परमेश्वरा, तुझी दया किती तरी अपार आहे ! आज माझ्यावर तुझे केवढे तरी उपकार झाले आहेत ! ! धन्य, धन्य, तुझे नाम, व सर्व लोक करीत तुला प्रणाम ! ! ! अशा रीतीनें देवास अनेक धन्यवाद दिल्यावर लेंकरांस झोंपेंतून जागें करून तो ईश्वरी चमत्कार त्यांस दाखविला व तदनंतर त्या मर्कटाचें शव जाळून टाकण्यांत आलें.

हातीं भरपूर पैका असल्यावर मग काय बरें करतां येणार नाहीं ? सकाळीं उठल्यावर घरांतील जुनें सामान काढून त्या ऐवजीं नवीन सामान ठेवण्यांत आलें; स्वतःकरितां नवीन सूट, पत्नीकरितां नवीन गौन, लेंकरांकरितां सुशोभित नवीन कपडे, नवीन बत्त्या, नवीन बिछाईत, मस्सा, काशेर बैन, मटन, फळें, फुलें वगैरेची हां हां म्हणतां रेलचेल होऊन गेली व संध्याकाळचीं प्रार्थना आटोपल्यावर पिनहास हे **हग्गादा** वाचावयास बसणार, तोंच त्यांचा दरवाजा कोणी ठोकीत आहे असें त्यांनीं ऐंकिलें. जाऊन पहातात तर तेच **प्रेग** शहरचें सरदार (Count) दारापाशी उभे आहेत असें समजतांच पिनहासने मोठ्या सत्कारानें त्यांस आंत बोलविलें. आंत आल्यावर सरदार म्हणाले "तुझ्याबरोबर पेसाह करावा म्हणून मी हजर झालो आहे, पण हें काय ? तुझ्या घरांत तर सर्वत्र लखलखाट, चकचकाट व श्रीमंती थाट आहे ! तूं एकाएकीं श्रीमंत झाला आहेस काय ?" पिनहास म्हणाले "होय, सरदार साहेब, ईश्वरानें मला साहाय्य केलें आहे. काल मी भिकार दशेंत होतों व आज मी श्रीमंत झालों आहें." असें सांगून त्यानें माकडासंबंधींची सर्व हकीकत त्यास निवेदन केली. ती ऐकून घेऊन सरदार म्हणाले "तो माकडहि माझा व तीं सोन्याचीं नाणींहि माझींच. काल तूं माझ्या घराहून गेल्यानंतर मी सोन्याच्या डबल डयुक्याटस्ची थैली घेऊन सदर नाणीं मी मोजूं लागलों त्यांतून कांहीं नाणीं पुडयांत होतीं. त्या पुड्या सोडण्या-करितां मी मधून मधून आपलीं बोटें तोंडांत घालून ओलीं करूं लागलों. जवळच माझा माकड बसला होता. तो समजला कीं मी नाणीं खात आहे. नाणीं मोजून झाल्यावर मी कांहीं कामाकरितां बाहेर गेलों. माकडाने माझ्या गैरहजेरींत खुशाल सदर नाण्यांची थैली घेऊन तीं सर्व गट्ट व चट्ट करून टाकिलीं ! त्यामुळें त्याच्या पोटास इजा होऊन तो ताबडतोब मरण पावला ! घरीं परत आल्यावर माकड मेला आहे असें पाहून त्याचें शव तेव्हांच घरांतून काढण्याविषयीं मी हुकूम फर्माविला, व माझ्या नोकरांनीं तुझी चेष्टा करावी म्हणून मजे-दाखल सदर शव तुझ्या घरांत फेंकून दिलें असावें दुसऱ्या दिवशीं डयु-क्याटस्च्या नाण्यांची थैली मला सांपडेना, त्यावरून माझ्या नोकरानें ती चोरली असावी असा मला संशय येऊन त्यास मी पोलीसच्या स्वाधीन केलें आहे, पण तो निरापराधी आहे असें आतां मला समजलें, म्हणून मला आनंद वाटतो !" हें त्या सरदाराचें भाषण ऐकून घेऊन पिनहासनें आपली पेटी उघडली व गेल्या रात्रीं सोन्याच्या नाण्यांनीं भरून ठेविलेली पिशवी त्या सरदाराकडे आणून त्यांस म्हटलें. सरदार साहेब, हीं तुमचीं माझ्या हातीं आलेलीं डबल डयुक्याटस्ची सोन्याचीं नाणीं मी पिशवींत भरून ठेविलीं आहेत. त्यांतून कांहीं नाणीं माझी आजच्या सणाची गरज भागविण्यास्तव ईश्वरीनामा-च्या गौरवार्थ मीं खर्च केलीं आहेत. बाकी जीं राहिलीं ती तुमचीं आहेत. तीं घेण्याची कृपा करावी." परंतु सरदारानें मान हालवून म्हटलें, परमेश्वराकडून हीं नाणीं तुझ्या हातीं पडलीं आहेत, तीं मी कशीं घेऊं ? तुझा देवावरील अढळ विश्वास व प्रामाणिकपणा ह्यांचा मोबदला म्हणून तूं तीं आपल्या उपयोगाकरितां ठेवून घे, व थोडा उशीर थांब. माझी पत्नी (The Countess) हिला मी आतां येथें गाडींतून घेऊन येतों. ती आल्यावर **हग्गादा** वाचावयास आरंभ कर." त्याप्रमाणें ते सरदार व त्यांची पत्नी ही उभयतां लवकरच पिनहासच्या घरीं येऊन हजर झालीं व **हग्गादाचें** वाचन व त्याचें स्पष्टीकरण ऐकून ह्या ख्रिस्ती जोडप्यास मोठा आनंद झाला व देवाचे आभार मानून हें जोडपें घरीं गेलें.

ह्यापुढें राब्बी पिनहास हे कधींहि अशा प्रकारच्या अडचणींत सांपडले नाहींत. उलट त्यांच्या धंद्यारोजगारांत देवानें बरकत देऊन त्यांस मीठे धनाढ्य केलें व नांवारूपास चढविलें. परंतु त्यांनीं आपल्या धनाचा फारच चांगला उपयोग केला. धर्म करतांना अमुक इसम इसराएल आहे किंवा परधर्माचा आहे ह्याचा विचार न करतां स्वकीय व परकीय ह्यांस सारखें लेखून ते दानधर्म करूं लागले व **प्रेग** शहरांत गरिबांकरितां एका मोहल्लयांत जागा घेऊन तेथें त्यांनीं गरिबांस राहण्याकरितां चाळी बांधल्या. त्या मोहल्लयाचें नांव "**पिनहास गस्से**" असें पडून तो मोहोल्ला व तें नांव हीं अद्यापि कायम आहेत.

हे परमेश्वरा, पेसाह सणाचा बोध आमच्या मनीं चांगला ठसो व **पिनहासा** सारखे धनाढ्य, प्रामाणिक व परोपकारी गृहस्थ आम्हां बेनेइसराएलांत व इतर ठिकाणच्या इसराएलांत निर्माण होवोत अशी प्रार्थना करून भाषण संपवितों. ●●



From (L. to R.) Shellim Samuel Talkar, Jimy M. Jacob Killekar and Samuel Simon Penkar.

These three musketeers are often found together. They were elected on the management of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue in January 1983 and were also elected trustees of the Synagogue Estate Trust in the same year. They are mainly responsible for taking the initiative in carrying out major repairs to the Synagoue building during 1984. They are also responsible for arranging 'minian' for the "Shaharit" prayers on Mondays and Thursdays, which the Synagogue did not enjoy for quite a few years previously. Till the appointment of 'Asaras' from December 1983, they, alongwith some Committee members used to attend prayers in order to form a 'minian'.

SAMSON J. SAMSON (KILLEKAR)

Samson J. Samson popularly known in Israel as "SHIMSHON SHIMSHON" is the backbone of the Federation of Indian Jews (in Israel). He has worked as its Hon. Secretary from its inception for a number of years. He was one of those who played an important role in removing the stigma on the Bene-Israel youths who wished to marry other Jews. In the letter dated February 23, 1982 addressed to Shimshon, Rabbi Moshe Solomon, Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, writes "There is no need for additional investigation and clarification beyond those already applied in cases of others".

Shimshon with his wife immigrated to Israel in fifties. He is held in high esteem by all in and outside Israel and even in Government circles (in Israel).

He would have been a member of the Knesset long ago had he agreed to contest elections.

He visited India on at least three occasions. While on his second visit in 1975, he looked after the work of Jewish Agency (Bombay) for a few days. His last visit to India alongwith Morris Joseph (Bhonkar), in 1978, was in connection with the investigation of the Jews of Manipur. Unfortunately, these two gentlemen were not permitted to proceed to Manipur by the Government.

Shimshon has been given a responsible assignment in the Jewish National & University Library, Israel's largest Library, both in size and the scope of its activities. (There are over 2000 libraries in Israel, containing nearly 20 million books. About 12 million books are published, representing over 3000 titles every year Israel ranks second in the world for the number of titles published in proportion to the population.)

He who steals men's confidence is chief among thieves.

SAMSON SAMUEL ABRAHAM (WASKAR), B.Com., S.E.M.



The Government of Maharashtra recognised the services rendered by Sam S. Abraham by appointing him as a "Special Executive Magistrate" in 1980. Ever since then he has been taking active part in the affairs of the Bombay Association of Special Executive Magistrate, of which he is one of the Executive Members. One of the main problem facing India is the "population explosion". The Executive Commitee made a right choice when it assigned the important work of organising seminars on Health and Family Planning to Sam. He has already organised three seminars so far which were well attended

He has represented the Indian Jewry at Seminars/Meetings held in Israel and Hongkong. He is a Trustee of the Jewish Religious Union Building Trust, Jewish Cemeteries Trust, Secretary/Treasurer of the Karen Hayesod — United Jewish Appeal, India and a member of the Special Committee for Divorces & Conversions of the "Magen Hassidim" Synagogue.

At present Sam is serving in M/s. Hindustan Lever Limited as 'Branch Transport Manager'.

SAMSON (SUNNY) MENAHIM SHAPURKAR

Sunny is a social worker, Civil Defence Officer, Divisional Superintendent of St. John's Ambulance Brigade, New Cosmopolitan Division No.2, and a Trustee of "Shaare Rason" Synagogue. For his services to the Citizen of Greater Bombay he was appointed as a Special Executive Magistrate in 1980 for two years.



ARCHANGELS GABRIEL, MICHAEL, URIEL AND RAPHAEL.

EACH NAME HAS A MEANING WHICH DESCRIBES HIS TITLE : FOR EXAMPLE MICHAEL 'WHO IS LIKE GOD' the TITULAR PRINCE OF ISRAEL GABRIEL lit. 'MAN OF GOD' — URIEL 'FIRE OF GOD' and RAPHAEL 'ANGEL OF HEALING' FROM THE HEBREW ROOT.

Money is honey, my dear sonny, and rich man's joke is always funny.

SPORTS

Capt. SOLOMON J. EZEKIEL (Pezarkar)



It is indeed creditable that Solomon should have been selected to officiate as Chief Range Officer at the IX Asian Games. This is because of his brilliant career. He is the National Shooting Coach of India and possesses 'International Shooting Judges License' granted by the International Shooting Union, Weisbaden, Germany.

He represented India at the Second Asian Shooting Championship held at Seoul, has undergone three International Coaching Camps i.e. Canada, USA and Israel, was an observer at the XXI Olympics at Montreal and at the Xth Maccabiah in 1977 held in Israel, was appointed by the Nepal Council of Sports to train their shooters at Kathmandu.

After retirement from the Army he was appointed as Chief Shooting Coach of Maharashtra State.

Solomon holds the record for All India Home Guards Big Bore Shooting Championship (.301).

MEYER M. SAMUEL (Dighodkar)

Meyer has achieved distinction in sports activities which few in our communities have done so far — cricket, badminton and table tennis. In all these sports activities, in which he participated for over forty years, he received many awards. However, his most outstanding performance was in table tennis, in which he has won the All Gujarat, The Indian Gymkhana, other States and National Open Table Tennis Championships.

He was honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue on 6th December, 1981.

SAMUEL AARON KOLATKAR

During his sports activities of nearly forty years, Samuel is recipient of half-a-dozen Shields and Medals for his outstanding performance in Cricket and Table Tennis.

He was honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held on 6th December, 1981.

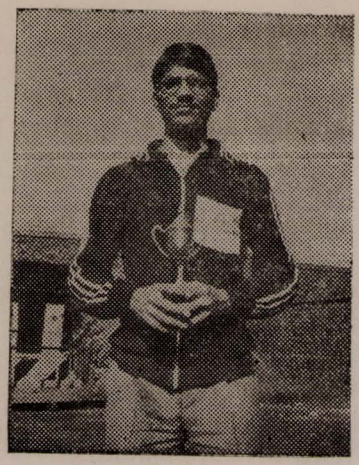
WHY IS ISRAEL COMPARED TO A DOVE?

All other birds, when tired rest upon a rock or upon a branch of a tree. Not so the dove. When the dove tires, it does not cease flying; it rests one wing and flies with the other.

Bereshit Rabbah, 39 : 10

Success covers a multitude of blunders — George Bernard Shaw.

RALPHY EZEKIEL JHIRAD



Ralphy stood First class First with 74% marks in the Production Engineering Examination and completed the Section 'A' Exam of AMIE (India) standing First.

He is keenly interested in sports. He stood (i) 3rd with a score of 93% in the IV Maharashtra State Junior Shooting Championship held at Kolhapur in August 1980 and (ii) 4th and 10th in the State and the XXIV National Shooting Championships respectively, held at Kolhapur and participated in the XXV National Shooting Championship held at Ahmedabad from 1st January, 1982 to 13th January, 1982.

At present he is working with Mahindra & Mahindra Limited, International Tractor Division.

BENJAMIN SAMUEL REUBEN KEHIMKAR B.E. (Electrical)

Benjamin S. Reuben was born in Surat, Gujarat State and graduated from the Gujarat University in 1960.

He is working in Ahmedabad Electrical Company Ltd., for the last over twenty-four years and at present holds the post of Deputy Superintendent (Contracts).

A keen sportsman, he is a member of Gujarat Lawn Tennis Association and Ahmedabad Rifle Association. He was Captain of the Engineering College Cricket Team, participated in Tennis in the 10th Maccabiah Sports Meet and played for Petah Tiqvah Cricket Club in the Israel Cricket League in July 1977.



He is a member of the Institute of Engineers (India), Ahmedabad Management Association and was Institutional Member of the Indian Standard Institute (ISI) from 1977 to 1981).

"The only way Jews would be able to escape from the dangers posed py modenr anti-Semitism is to create our own Sate." Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian born assimiliated Jewish journalist, in his famous book, "THE JEWISH STATE."

We always like those who admire us but we do not always like those we admire.

Dr. HANANIEL G. SOLOMON (CHINCHOLKAR), M. B. B. S.



Hananiel was the president of the J. R. U. Youth Group for the year 1983. He passed the M. B. B. S. examination from G. S. Medical College Parel.

Hananiel did most of his schooling at the Dadar Parsee Youths Assembly High School and was known in the school as the sports-man and actor. He represented his school in swimming and boxing at inter-school levels. He also represented Bombay at the Colombo - vs - Bombay Schools Boxing and Maharashtra at the junior and school-boys National Boxing Championship in 1973.

After passing S. S. C. in 1975 he joined the St. Xaviers College and achieved his dream of becoming a Doctor when he obtained admission to Seth G. S. Medical College in 1977.

Bene - Israel Women

By: E. M. Jacob

As stated elsewhere in this publication, women were responsible for keeping the torch of Judaism burning. They committed to memory all the dates of important feasts and fasts and scrupulously observed religious rites. The renaissance in the community also affected the Bene-Israel women. Along with boys, the girls also attended schools conducted by the American Christian Missionaries not only in the Bombay City but also in the villages. They also served as teachers in schools in which they had received their education.

When Huzur Paga, the most prestigious school for girls was established in Pune, Bene-Israel girls were among the first to receive their education in that school. In 1870, when a Training College was inaugurated in that school, Bene-Israel girls took full advantage of this college. Subsequently in 1884 when Huzur Paga was converted into a high school, thirty per cent of the fifty girls studying in this high school were Bene-Israel girls some of whom were recipients of scholarships and prizes. It may be stated with pride here that from the year 1880 a number of Bene-Israel women served as teachers in Municipal Schools in Bombay. In fact there was a time during the early period of the establishment of municipal schools when the number of Bene-Israel women-teachers was predominant. They particularly specialised in drill and music. Mr. Parulekar who was the secretary of the school committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation was of the opinion that the Bene-Israel women who were drill and music teachers, being very successful, were in great demand. This number of Bene-Israel teachers continued till 1960.

After the establishment of well-known schools in Bombay and Pune, quite a few Bene-Israel women were School Principals, i.e. "Huzur Paga" in Pune, "Anjuman-e-Islam" Girls School, "Alexandra" Girls' School etc. in Bombay. Even today a number of private schools are run by Bene-Israel women in places like Bombay and Ahmedabad.

Speaking on the status of women, the late Mrs. Abigael E. Moses, a well known Educa-

tionist and women's libber had this to say in her Presidential address at the Eighth Bene-Israel Conference, held in Bombay in December 1924 — "When so much has been said about the sacred duty imposed upon Jewish women, the question naturally arises, 'what is the position of women among the Jews?'. Her position traced from the Biblical times down to the destruction of the Jewish nationality by the Romans and in the middle ages, has been held high in the Jewish Home. The duties of the father and the mother alike. The women were not excluded from the society of men nor kept in utter ignorance of everything except their household duties. They freely took part in all that concerned their fathers and husbands and were benefitted equally by education. History abounds with evidence of their participation in religious as well as public affairs; they were not excluded from the highest positions. They were even Judges and Prophetesses. The opinion 'A woman's scholarship should be confined to the spinning wheel' was not endorsed by many prominent Rabbis. There are instances in the Talmud of conversation on religious topics with women and also of women occupying high positions in the congregations. The exceptional position of women among the Israelites stands out in high relief, compared with her status amongst the most advanced nations of antiquity, the Greeks and the Romans. It was during the Talmudic times when every department was under oriental influences that the position of women was altered; they were excluded from participating in all the ceremonies which to the popular mind were principal expression of religion. When she was thus excluded from most of the ceremonial part of religion, she concentrated her efforts upon the essential part of the religion, the true end and aim of all religious creed.. She was the priestess at the sacred hearth of home, gave the family a religious atmosphere and influenced it with affection, sincerity and holiness and made Judaism a religion of life.

"While the whole world is clamouring for women's right the Jewish woman reigns supreme in her home and the Jews appreciate the high significance of women's work for the gain of true liberty and the conservation of the Jewish religion".

MEENA MAHADEVAN

(Nee Miriam Aaron Jacob of Karachi)

Here is another fascinating and enchanting story of a social worker like Rebaccabai Simon Vakrulkar of the 19th century, who brought cheers to the children of the labourers at the construction sites. These unwashed children scrambled about in the heat and the dust while their parents were busy constructing buildings.

Till 1967, Miriam spent her time in writing novels in Hindi and bringing up her son.. One of the novels published by her "Apna Ghar" portrays a Jewish family torn between its loyalties to India and Israel. An opportunity for doing important social work came by accident. As a member of the Mahatma Gandhi Centenary Celebration Committee formed in 1968, Miriam had to go daily to the project undertaken by the Committee for building an Exhibition. While proceeding to the site, Miriam saw naked, unwashed children of the labourers scrambling about in the heat, sickly infants covered with flies and the very young tied to poles. Seeing this pitiable sight every day made her think about the solution of the problem. "Why not put up creches?" she thought. And she put her thoughts into action. It was the first time that such an attempt was made to solve a problem facing nearly two million construction labourers.

The original intention of Miriam was to look after the babies only. When she found that older children were not attending any schools but loitering around the centre, she opened more formal classes for them and evening classes for their parents at the Construction Sites.

Miriam could inspire her workers to do the work although it was distasteful to them. This

---

she could do, because she herself swept the floors and attended to babies when the need arose. It is interesting to state here that when a Government Officer came to find out how the Government grant was being used, he left without verifying the books when he saw that Miriam was mending blankets in the Verandah.

Within a period of eighteen months, mobile creches were established in Delhi, Bombay and other cities. Miriam's fame spread far and wide and within a short time Y. M. C. A. and U. N.-I. C. E. F. started sending their social workers from their countries to study the project.

Though Miriam married M,. T. K. Mahadevan, a journalist from Bombay, she did not give up her religion, Judaism. Miriam was ailing for a long time and just before she died on July 22, 1977, at the young age of 48, she used to often call J. M. Benjamin of Delhi to read the Hebrew Prayers and Psalms to her. As per her wishes and also that of her husband she was buried in the Jewish Burial Ground in New Delhi.

ESTHER DAVID (Dandekar)



Esther David is the daughter of the famous Zoologist Reuben David of Ahmedabad. She is a sculptress by profession. Most of her exhibitions held in Gujarat, have been appreciated. She prefers to work in under-developed urban areas of Ahmedabad. A training programme with the aid of Polyvalent Centre was conducted by her and Virbhala Rishi to trigger and develop the inherent creativity in the artists.

Some of these artists have attained the creative heights due to the guidance and motivations of Esther David.

RECIPIENTS OF AWARDS AND CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

SAMSON J. (Talkar)
Sr. Inspector of Police

It is a great treat to hear Samson blowing Shofar and many make it a point to hear him by attending the particular Synagogue, in which he is scheduled to perform this important role.

He has a brilliant record in the Police Department. He is the recipient of the highest award viz. the President's Police & Fire Services Gold Medal, for an act of bravery and courage displayed by him during the Godrej & Boyce Company's riots. He is responsible for successfully investigating many important criminal cases including that of Billa and Ranga and Shamsingh Bakshisingh, an associate of Billa, who murdered two Arab nationals.

It is interesting to state here that a doubt had arisen in the minds of some people, whether Samson, a Jew, would be able to do justice to the case involving two Arabs. For his thorough investigation in this case, he received praises from many.

He was honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held on 6-12-81.

Opportunity knocks only once, but temptation bangs on the door for years.

ISAAC MENASHE SOLOMON (Charikar)

Assistant Collector Rummaging & Intelligence, Bombay Customs (Retd)



Mr. Isaac Menashe Solomon is the recipient of the India's President Award for extreme devotion to duty and dynamic leadership for detecting several smuggling cases. His contribution in seizing the contraband amounts to over Rs. 3.5 crores.

During the major period of his service of 33 years he worked in the Rummaging, Opium and Intelligence Departmnet of the Customs. Most of the seizures of contraband were from Fishing Crafts and Arab Dhows at high seas where he had to encounter with desparate and dangerous smugglers at the risk of his life. On the very day of the inauguration of the speed boats 'KALI AND DURGA', he made a spectacular seizure of contraband goods worth about Rs. 45 lakhs from Arab Dhows "CHISTIA" and "AL-SABRI". He made many seizures on ships and in the city of textile goods, liquors, opium, charas, silver and gold. It is noteworthy that when the Custom Officers could not locate the contraband for 3 days in Kandla Solomon's services were requistioned and he suc ceeded in locating the contraband which was concealed in the out-house containing grains. After clearing the grains it was noticed that the flooring at the sides of the entrance door was recently made. After breaking up the flooring silver ingots, each 35 kilos and gold coins of ancient Kutchy Rajas were seized .The silver ingots were valued at Rs. 6 lakhs.

All this was possible for Mr. Solomon because he possesses special knowledge for deciphering codes of the smugglers.

DAVID SOLOMON JOSEPH (Borgaonkar)

Senior Superintendent of Customs Preventive Department, Bombay. (Retd)

David S. Joseph received Rewards and Commendable entries in his personal records on several occasions for carrying out spectacular seizures of contraband goods.



David joined Karachi Custom House as an ordinary Clerk in 1946 and Bombay Customs also as a Clerk when he along with his parents and other family members were compelled to emigrate to India in 1948 as a result of the partition of India in 1947.

By dint of sheer hard work, honesty, sincerity and integrity he was first appointed as Preventive Officer and finally as Senior Superintendent of Customs, Preventive Department. But mere hard work, integrity and honesty do not serve as a passport for promotion, nor entitles a person for high rewards. The attributes

---

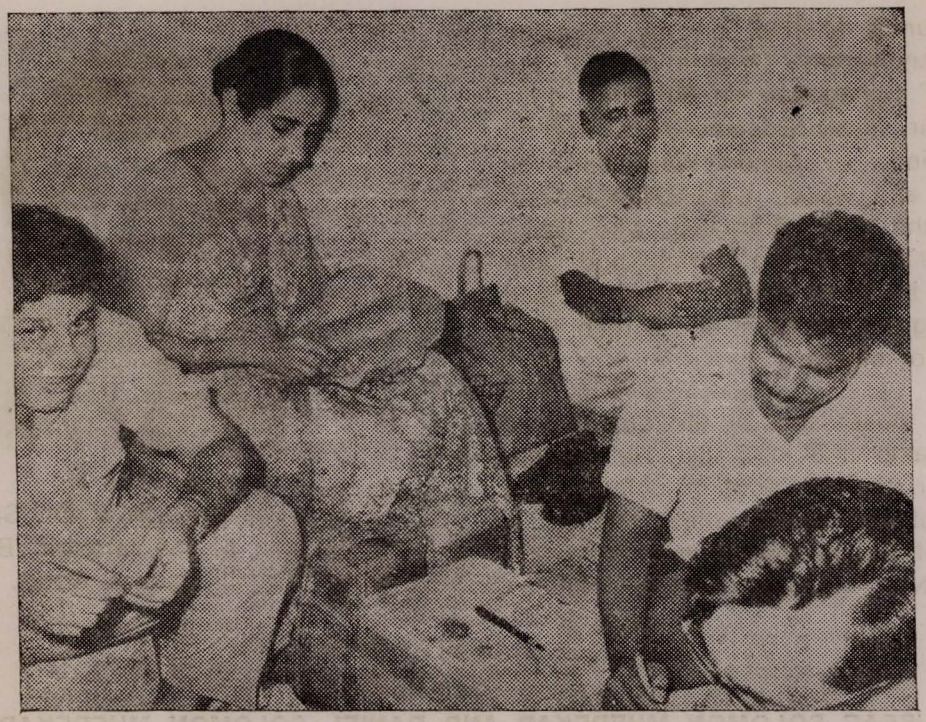
If your work speaks for itself, don't interrupt it — Henry J. Kaiser.

that were responsible for the success of David in the detection of smuggling were i) Ingenuity, ii) Strategy and ii) Execution. David took meticulous care of his plan of action before a raid was carried out.

David has detected a number of smuggling cases covering gold, cosmetics, foreign liquor etc. Some of the important of these cases and for which he was rewarded are Detection of i) Gold Bars and Gold Chips hidden inside a bundle of black dates which were reduced to pulp. ii) Gold biscuits which were made to appear as charcoal, iii) thin sheets of Gold hidden in between two layers of cardboard in a carton. This was the first detection of its kind. 12 similar cases were detected immediately there-after.

Besides, David was responsible for detaining as many as eight persons all under COFEPOSA. David's father, the late Mr. Solomon Joseph was the brother of the late Khan Saheb Mordecai Joseph of Pune. From quite an early age David had an urge for an adventurous life. When the Second World War broke out he, along with his dear friend the late Benjamin Joseph Bhastekar (who rose to the high office of Commercial Manager of Mazgaon Dock, Bombay) joined the Royal Engineering Corps. Both were decorated with the Indian Service and War Service Medals.

Mrs. E. S. EZEKIEL (Mendrekar)
Lady Preventive Officer of Bombay Customs



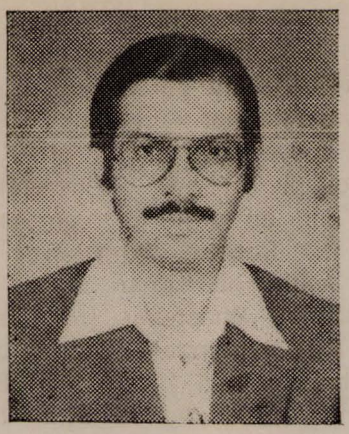
Mrs. Ezekiel was one of the Customs Officers who was responsible for the seizure of the smuggled watches valued at about Rs.4 lakhs.

In the above picture Mrs. Ezekiel is seen counting and noting down the number of smuggled watches that were found in the car as well as at the residence of the smuggler.

For this detection Mrs. Ezekiel received a cash award and also a certificate of appreciation from the Government of India.

A woman can say more in a sigh than a man can say in a sermon — Arnold Haultin.

SAMUEL BENJAMIN MALEKAR, B.E., M.I.E.



Samuel Benjamin Malekar passed the B.E. Examination (Civil) standing First Class First and was the recipient of two Gold Medals.

He began his career as "Design Engineer" and at present he is "Technical Director". Some of the prestigious projects undertaken by him are :—

i. 5 million tonne steel plant — the first structural Engineer representing Indian know-how in Venezuela, South America;

ii. Madras & Narora (U.P) Atomic Power Projects; and

iii.) R. C. F. Plant.

He was honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebrations of "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue held on 6-12-81.

MICHAEL S. DAVID (Shapurkar)

While honouring Michael on the occasion of the 185th Anniversay Celebrations of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue on 6th Dec., 1981 memories of our illustrious ancestors flashed back in our minds —- Simon Wakrulkar, the powerful orator and writer, Kammodan Haeem David Divekar, the great dramatist, who translated Shakespear's plays into Marathi and Urdu and also acted in those plays, Joseph David Penkar, another great dramatist and screen playwriter and host of others.

For Michael possesses all the qualities of a dramatist, speaker and journalist. He has secured several prizes in elocution competitions during his school and college days. He is a regular invitee of Rotary International for participating in MUNA — Model United Nations Assembly.



Michael is the son of Dr. Samuel B. David and grandson of the late Mr. Benjamin David, Ex-Judge, Small Causes Court, Pune.

ISSAC SOLOMON MHEDEKAR AND DANIEL SOLOMON MHEDEKAR

By: Samson Isaac Mhedekar, son of Isaac Mhedekar & father of Abraham Samson Mhedekar

Introduction :

Samson aged 92, (1984) is a Citizen of the State of Israel. This is a noval story of two brothers from Karachi who by sheer dint of hard work, perseverance, grit and honesty not only rose to the Office of Jailers, but also won the hearts of the convicts.

(Comipler)

Well done is better than well said — Benjamin Franklin

I was the youngest son of my parents and since my father retired from service when I was about nine or ten years old, I do not know much about their early career. I, however, remember that both the brothers were transferred to various places in Bombay Presidency (Gujarat was then included in this Presidency) and Sind Province. My father, Isaac Solomon Mhedekar retired from Hyderabad (Sind) Central Prison as a Jailer and my uncle, Daniel Solomon Mhedekar from Karachi Central Prison also as a jailer. After retirement, Daniel was appointed an Honorary Magistrate and a Justice of the Peace by the then Commissioner of Sind Province and was often called upon to conduct cases in Courts.

My grand parents had settled down in Pune. My uncle and my father were appointed by the Inspector General Prisons, Yeravada Jail and subsequently were transferred to various places as stated earlier. I was born in Dhulia (Khandesh). My father was transferred to Shikarpur from Dhulia and later to Hyderabad and retired from service while he was in Hyderabad. My mother used to say that my father was tender hearted and that the convicts and even murderers and dacoits, undergoing life sentences praised my father for his genial nature and even wished him and his family good health, happines and long life. My father was so popular with the prisoners that whenever orders for the transfer of my father were issued, they appealed to the authorities not to transfer my father.

Life sketches of the two brothers had appeared in one of the issues of "THE ISRAELITE" Magazine after June 1920; probably the information was provided by my maternal uncle, the late J. B. Samson, Superintendent of Police and Commissioner of Police, Kutch, Bhuj :—

> It is interesting to state here that during the period Samson was the Fouzder of Police, Karachi, Prince George (late King George V) was given a reception at the Burns Garden, where British Army Officers, High Government Officials and leading citizens of Karachi were present. At this reception, Samson's yeoman services to the Government were recognised and the Prince of Wales himself presented to Samson, King's Medal King's Watch and the Sword.

Mrs. REZINA (Ruby) JACOB DANIELS (Walwatkar)

Rezina was adjudged the "BEST" Nurse for the Western and Central Zones of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and received the "BEST NURSE AWARD" 1981.

She was honoured at the 185th Anniversary Celebration of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue on 13th December 1981.

HOW SOME OF THE GREAT WRITERS WROTE THEIR IMMORTAL MASTERPIECES

1. The French poet and playwright Edmund Rostand, would often sit in his bath tub for the whole day. 2. Victor Hugo would request his valet to strip him naked—Stark naked, he would continue to write. 3. Dr. Samuel Johnson used to have his favourite cat perched on his desk purring into his ears while he was writing. 4. P.G. Wodehouse wrote in a corner of a crowded room. 5. Anton Chekov, the Russian story writer, wrote in the midst of his children singing and playing on his piano. 6. Anthony Trollops could write anywhere and under any circumstances whether at a railway platform or coach, provided his portable writing desk was available to him, which he generally carried with him wherever he went. 7. G. K.

(Continued on page 172)

What we need are more people who specialized in the impossible. — Theodore Rooethke.

JUDAH SOLOMON MENDREKAR

"WHEN YOU GO HOME, TELL THEM OF US
WE GAVE OUR TO-DAY FOR THEIR TOMORROW"



This is an epitaph in a cemetery in Kohima (in Nagaland) inscribed in memory of Armed Forces during the World-War-II.

These words could also equally be said of Solomon Judah Mendrekar, Engineer and other sixty-five Officers and men of the Bombay Fire Brigade, who laid down their lives while battling with the conflagration on a ship "Fort Stikine" on April 14, 1944. This ship was carrying the "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" — glamorous cargo in the form of gold and deadly weapons consisting of ammunition, besides raw cotton, oil drums, timber, sulphur, etc.

Being an Engineer, Solomon's job was tc attend to fire engines in case they stopped working during putting out the fires. He was not a regular fireman. He could have perhaps saved his life had he escaped from the scene of fire just before the explosions occured, just as a few others did (dock workers). He did not wish to leave his colleagues who continued to fight the fire inspite of the impending disaster.

After the explosion, Solomon's body could not be traced. So also the bodies of sixty-three firemen and hundreds of other.

The impact of the explosion was such that the Seismograph needle in the Metereological Station of Simla, a place about a thousand miles away from Bombay quivered when the record of the shock-wave transmitted through the crust of the earth.

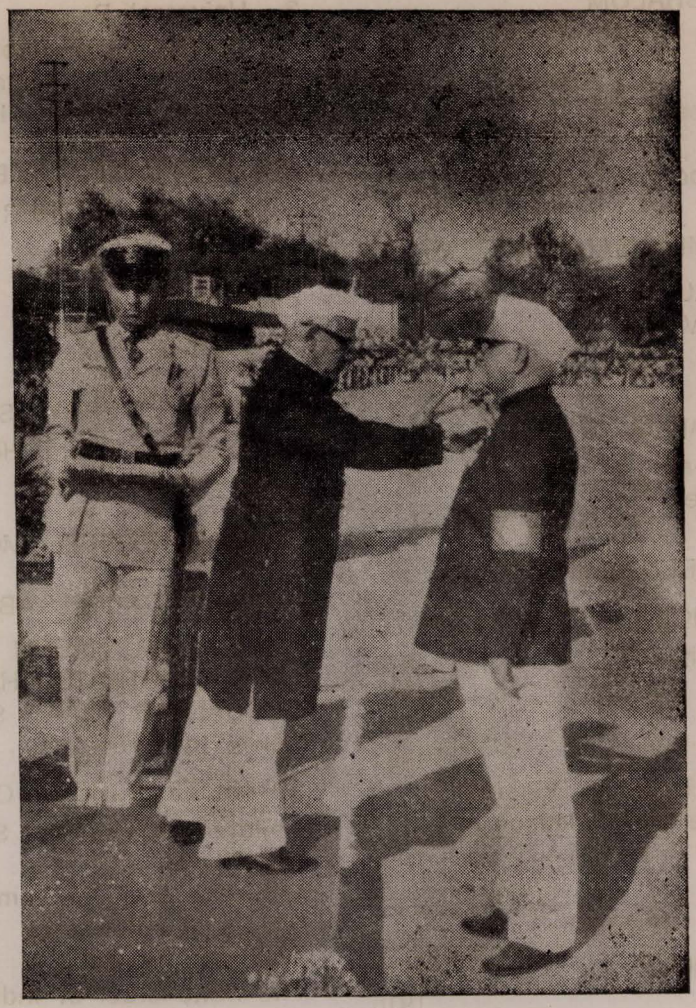
Every year on April 14, Officers and men of the Bombay Fire Brigade pay homage to the men who laid down their lives so that Bombay may live. Solomon is the only individual to whom homage is also paid separately. Such was the popularity of Solomon both with the Officers and men.

(Continued from page 171)

Chesterton could only write sitting in Dicken's Chair which he had bought. 8. Jane Austin always wrote on bits of paper. 9. Alexander Dumas wrote his poems on yellow paper, articles on pink paper, and novels on blue and always with green ink, but with different pens. 10. Bernard Shaw preferred writing in short hand. His favourite spot was a tiny wooden hut at Ayot St. Lawrence. 11. Somerset Maugham wrote exactly 250 words on each page in his illegible long hand, and 12. Leo Tolstoy used a typewriter to write novels. His aim was 'perfection.' It is said that he corrected "War and Peace" seven times, the burden of which fell on his wife's shoulder.

Men may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do.

E. M. JACOB (Gadkar)



E. M. Jacob (Gadkar) is seen receiving the "PRESIDENT'S HOME GUARDS & CIVIL DEFENCE MEDAL" for Meritorious Services on the 30th Anniversary of the Inauguration of THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA, January 27, 1980 from the Governor of Maharashtra, Shri Sadiq Ali.

Retired as Dy. Chief Fire Officer, Bombay Fire Brigade after serving in the Department for nearly thirty years.

Dy. Chief Warden, Civil Defence Corps. Gr. Bombay from 1965 to 1981. At present a volunteer in the C. D. Corps. The President's Medal was received for the Meritorious Services rendered to the Civil Defence Corps. particularly during the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistan Wars.

Present Occupation: Fire Consultant and Fire Adviser.

Publications: (i) Focus on Home Fire Accidents; (ii) Rotary Foundation;

Editor & Publisher of (a) APSARA & SAMARITAN — Bulletins of the Rotary Club of Chembur (Bombay) and (b) INDO-ISRAEL REVIEW of the Bombay Zionist Association.

Was Chairman & Trustee of "Gate of Mercy' Synagogue Estate Trust, Secretary of Gate of Mercy" Synagogue since 17-6-84, President of The Bene-Israel Conference Education Fund, Treasurer of the Bombay Zionist Association, Rotarian since 1967 and Past President of "Rotary Club of Chembur" (Bombay) during 1970-71.

The ultimate aim of knowledge is to use it for the benefit of mankind — Francis Bacoh

LIST OF BENE ISRAEL AUTHORS & PUBLICATIONS (ALPHABETICALLY)

APTEKAR, SOLOMON SHALOM

1. Daniel in Verse 1899
2. Joseph in Verse 1906
3. Life sketch of Queen Esther
4. Courage of Daniel
5. "Merapee"- The Moon of Israel

ASHTAMKAR, BENJAMIN SAMSON*

AWASKAR, ISAAC SHALOM

1. Story of Joseph in Verse 1896
2. Story of Joseph 1905

AWASKAR, JOSEPH HAEEM

1. Haftara of Tish-abe-ab 1912
2. Life sketch of Moses

BAMNOLKAR, JOSEPH BENJAMIN*

BENJAMIN, SIMON VAKRULKAR (WALKER)

1. How to bring up children 1872
2. The Bene-Israel of Bombay Presidency 1873
3. View on work 1881
4. Discussion on the Intuitive Principle of Conscience or the Divine Reason in Man.

BHINJEKAR, ABRAHAM REUBEN

1. Hundred Year Calendar 1911
2. Passover 1915
3. Shabuoth 1915
4. All collections

BHONKAR, SAMUEL MOSES

Translation of the Ethics of the Fathers 1851-1857

THE BENE ISRAEL BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

1. Hebrew Calendar for 400 years 1854
2. Suggestions for Charity to the poor 1856

DANIELS S. and SAMUEL R.

Travels of Rabbi Petachia 1877

DIVEKAR, AARON JACOB

1. Translation of Rabbi Weiss. More Light 1895
2. English Essay by Rabbi L. Weiss with Marathi translation 1898
3. Universal Peace 1898
4. Translation of Rabbi Strains, Religion and Morals 1898
5. Originality of the Institution of Moses 1898

DIVEKAR, DAVID HAEEM*

DUBEY, Mrs. ESTHER V. K.*

ELIAS, A. H.*

EZEKIEL B. S.

1. Hebrew Primer

"GATE OF MERCY" SYNAGOGUE

Religious & Cultural Heritage of the Bene Israels of India 1984

GADKAR, EZEKIEL MOSES JACOB*

GADKAR, RACHEL ABRAHAM*

GARSULKAR, HAEEM ISAAC

"THE ILLUSTRATED HAGGADA" 1846

GHOSALKAR, ISAAC SOLOMON

Travel to Jerusalem 1878

ISRAELITE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Children's Devotional Services

ISRAEL, B. J.

Religious Evolution among the Bene-Israels of India since 1750

The Jews of India 1982

The Bene-Israel of India Some Studies 1984

JACOB, MISS REBECCA

Sadbodh Bhandar

KANDLEKAR, SAMUEL MOSES

Life Sketch of Queen Esther 1900

KASOOKAR, JUDAH SHALOM

1. Our Holy City Jerusalem 1906
2. Guide — The Secret Doctrine of the Soul and Body 1916

KASOOKAR, Dr. (Miss) ESTHER ABRAHAM SOLOMON*

KEHIMKAR, HAEEM SAMUEL*

KEHIMKAR, SHALOM SAMUEL

1. Method of Reading Pentatuech 1875
2. Death of Prophet Moses
3. An account of Queen Esther 1872

There are three classes of friends : Some are like food with which thou canst not dispense, others like medicine which is needful occasionally and others like illness which thou dost never want.

KEHIMKAR, SAMUEL HAEEM
Parental Duty (adapted from L.L. Mocatta's Moral) 1878

KHARILKAR, DANIEL SHALOM
1. Book on the Psalms of King David
2. Selihoth in Marathi
3. Pesah in Marathi
4. Haggdah in Marathi
5. Vidhi (Rites) in Marathi
6. Book of Songs in Marathi
7. Book of Simhath Torah songs in Marathi
8. Songs sung by the Ladies during marriages

KOLABKAR, PINHAS EMANUEL E. JOSEPH
Indian Jewish Year Book 1967

KORLEKAR, DAVID REUBEN
Satya Prakash (Journal) 1881-1885
1. Rites of Jewish Circumcision and Laws (translated from English) 1893
2. Book of the Precepts (translated from Moses Maimonides) 1896
3. Reforms in the Bene Israel People 1909

MOSES Dr. ELIJAH (RAJPURKAR), M.D., J.P.*
NAGAVKAR BUNNY REUBEN*
NAGAVKAR, Mrs. ESTHER V. DUBEY*

NAWGAVKAR, DANIEL SOLOMON
The Wars of the Israelites (translation) 1872

PENKAR, JOSEPH DAVID*
PENKAR, SOLOMON RAHAMIN (PUNE)
Succoth 1916

PEZARKAR, DAVID SOLOMON
1. Essay on Prayer Part I
2. Essay on Prayer Part II

PEZARKAR, ABRAHAM SOLOMON
Bene Israel (Journal) 1893-1896

PEZARKAR, E. SOLOMON (B.A.)
Jews in China and India 1900

PEZARKAR, SAMUEL HAEEM
Why I should remain a Jew 1895

PINGLE, SHELLIM SAMUEL*
RAJPURKAR, JOSEPH EZEKIEL*
RAMRAJKAR, SOLOMON JACOB
Laws on Jewish Religion (Translated from English) 1913

REUBEN, Miss REBECCA*
Bene Israels of Bombay 1913

ROHEKAR, EDWIN R*
ROHEKAR DAVID MOSES BENJAMIN*
SANKAR MOSES EZEKIEL
The Fast for Destruction of the Temple (Extracted from the old Paths) 1887

SHAPURKAR ABRAHAM SAMSON*
SION, GEORGE ABRAHAM*
SOLOMON JOSEPH E.
Catechism of Religions and Moral Instructions 1910

TALEGAONKAR ISSAC ABRAHAM
1. Life sketch of Prophet Moses (The deliverance of the Israels from Egypt) 1913
2. Shabuoth 1915

TALKAR HAEEM EZEKIEL
History of the Bene Israel 1874

TALKAR, HANNAN EZEKIEL*
TALKAR Prof. MOSES EZEKIEL*
TALKAR, I.A. EZEKIEL*
TALKAR, NISSIM EZEKIEL*

TALKAR MOSES DANIEL
1. Songs of Solomon 1869
2. Bago Bahar (Spring Garden) 1869
3. Lovely Sushila Novel 1872
4. Chhel Battao 1872

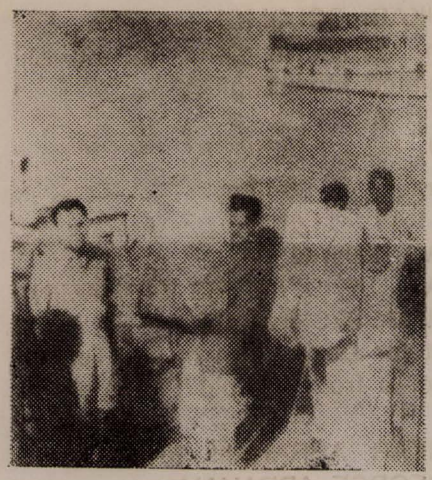
VAKRULKAR SIMON BENJAMIN*
VAKRULKAR REBECCA SIMON BENJAMIN*
VAKRULKAR SOLOMON MOSES*

WALVATKAR ELIJAH SOLOMON
1. Prayers for the Forgiveness 1872
2. Institution of Passover (Translation from Hebrew) 1891

* The publications of these authors have appeared in their respective resume's.
SOURCE : Most from "The Bene Israel Annual and Year Book", By late Miss Rebecca Reuben.

With malice towards none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God has given us to see the right, let us stride on to finish the work we are in. — Abraham Lincoln.

CHIEF RABBI ISAAC HERZOG'S (JERUSALEM) GIFT TO BENE-ISRAELS IN 1949



Bene-Israel Congregation seen receiving the two scrolls in rewas, in Konkan region..



Sefer Torah seen being taken to "Magen Aboth" Synagogue Alibag.
About 300 Bene-Israels participatedl in this Colourful Ceremony.

The two scrolls were part of the Sifrei Torah saved from the Nazi holocaust. The wooden cases were prepared by the Bombay Bene-Israel Carpenters and the silver Rimonim (hollow silver ornaments covering the tops of the two wooden staffs to which the parchment of the Sefer Torah is affixed. Rimonim is plural of the word Rimon) were donated by he congregations of Alibag and Nadgao to whom the Scrolls were presented.

The letter Chief Rabbi sent through Dr. Emmanuel Olsavanger:

"My dear Brethren in India :

My esteemed friend Dr. Olswanger will bring you a present from myself two Sifrei Torah."

"Please accept my heartfelt blessing, the blessing of he Torah and Zion. May you speedily come to settle in Israel and thus to help to hasten the Geulah Sheleimah and the coming of Mashiah ben David, Amen !"



Dr. Olsvanger who paid a visit to India in 1949 cn behalf of the World Zionist Organisation. He spoke at several places in and outside Bombay. This was Dr. Olsvanger's fourth visit to India but the first after India and Israel had attained their independence from the British.

EPILOGUE

And now, the task is over.
The pen is at rest.
The offering at the alter of Love,
Of Hope, of dedication is made.
Its acceptance lies unknown, unseen,
In the womb of future.
Let the offering be the twin-beams
Of Light and Guidance.
It is now twilight,
The darkness gathers
Into the slumbering Cadence
Of the on - coming night.

E. G. MOSES.

If you have enjoyed reading these Books, you are indebted to the community.

THANKS

My sincere thanks to :

1. The Management and Members of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue for favourably considering my requests (i) to hold the 185th Anniversary Celebrations, (ii) for publishing "THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE BENE-ISRAELS OF INDIA" and (iii) for monetary assistance.

2. World Sephardi Federation for its generous donation of $ 2000.

3. Mr. B. B. Benjamin Gadkar for loaning copies of the Record maintained by the late Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, copies of the Bulletin "VELIMADETHEM OTHAM" (articles on page 30 — another version of the escape of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar) and articles on pages 80-83) also the photograph of Mezuza presented to the Synagogue in 1880 by his brother-in-law and sister.

4. Mrs. Mozel Moses Sassoon (Kandlekar), daughter of Shelomo Shalom Divekar, a descendant of Hasajee Bawajee Divekar, father of Samaji Hasaji Divekar, for providing the "FAMILY TREE" of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar.

5. Mr. Aaron R. Ben Samuel Gadkar of Sheba Art for the design of the family tree of Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, founder of the "Gate of Mercy" Synagogue.

6. Mr. Elijah Benjamin Gadkar of Pune for sending a copy of the Special Prayers, composed by the late Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar and for his valuable advice from time to time.

7. Mr. S. R. Bandarkar for loaning blocks of the photos of Dr. (Mrs.) J. J. Jhirad, Miss R. Reuben and others.

8. Messrs M. J. Talegaonkar, J. D. Benjamin, R. B. Shirkolkar, Albert I. Talegawkar, Ezekiel Jacob Jhirad and his sons Jonathan & Rephael, Miss Rahel S. Benjamin and Mrs. R. C. for their maximum co-operation.

9. Committee Members of the Celebrations Committee for their esteemed co-operation.

10. Lieut. Col. M. A. Isaac for providing names of Bene-Israels in the Armed Forces of India.

11. Mr. Shellim Samuel (Pingle) for loaning a copy of the photograph of the Memorial of Navgao Cemetery.

12. Mr. Elijah Samuel Pingle for loaning the photograph of his grand mother, which has appeared in Book No. 1 on page 44.

13. Donors and Well-wishers and others whose names I might have missed inadvertantly for their esteemed co-operation.

E. M. JACOB



Congregation participating in the 185th Anniversary Celebration 1981.

BENE ISRAEL SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY



DURING NINETEENTH CENTURY



TWENTIETH CENTURY