CAPE TOWN HEBREW CONGREGATION

A CENTENARY HISTORY

1841-1941



ק"ק תקות ישראל

THE CAPE TOWN HEBREW CONGREGATION

1841—1941

●

A

CENTENARY HISTORY

By

DR LOUIS HERRMAN, M.A.

●

With an Introduction by
C. GRAHAM BOTHA
Chief Archivist of the Union of South Africa.

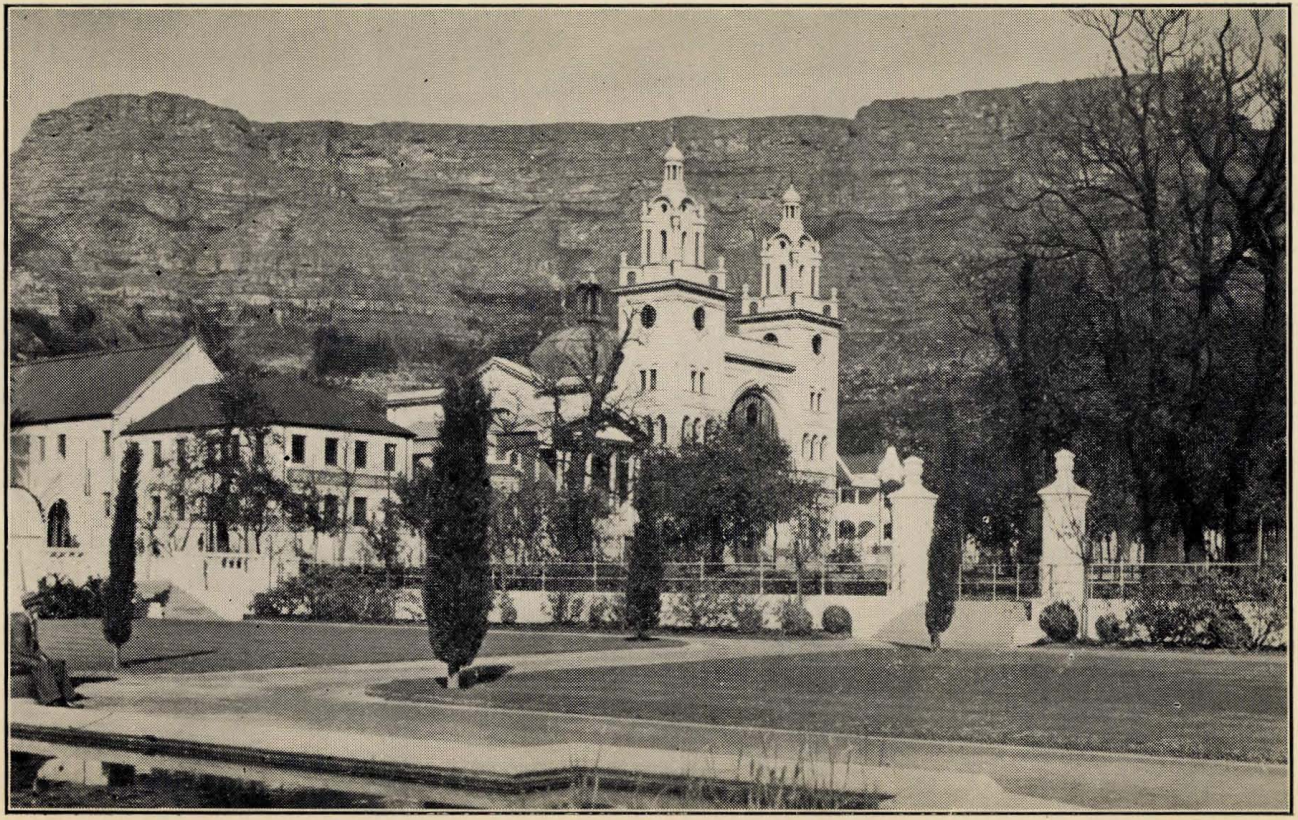
Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2022

HISTORY OF THE CAPE TOWN HEBREW CONGREGATION.

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2022



Printed by
THE MERCANTILE-ATLAS PRINTING CO. (PTY.) LTD.
81-87 Sir Lowry Road, Cape Town.



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE FROM THE GARDENS.

(Courtesy of the South African Railways.)

To
The Very Reverend the Chief Rabbi
Dr. J. H. Hertz, M.A., Ph.D.
The Pioneer Historian of
South African Jewry.

For helpful suggestions by the several members of the Centenary Sub-Committee, at whose request this little work was composed, and in particular for those of Mr. I. M. Goodman ; and for the courteous assistance of Mr. S. H. Rechtman, Secretary of the Great Synagogue, in the task of assembling data, the Author takes pleasure in expressing thanks.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER ONE.
The First Congregation : The "Hope of Israel" Society, 1841–1849. 5

CHAPTER TWO.
The Rev. Mr. Pulver's Ministry : The Earliest Synagogue, 1849–1859 19

CHAPTER THREE.
The Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz's Ministry : The St. John's Street Synagogue, 1863 35

CHAPTER FOUR.
The Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz's Ministry : "The Greatest Beggar," 1859–1882. 44

CHAPTER FIVE.
The Rev. Mr. Ornstein's Ministry, 1882–1895 55

CHAPTER SIX.
The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry : Transition, 1895–1905 69

CHAPTER SEVEN.
The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry : The Great Synagogue, 1905–1917 82

CHAPTER EIGHT.
The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry : Post War, 1918–1927 100

CHAPTER NINE.
The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry : Closing Years, 1927–1937 117

CHAPTER TEN.
The Ministry of Rabbi Israel Abrahams, 1937–1941 135

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	Facing Page
The Great Synagogue from the Gardens ...	iii
Record of the First Prayer Meeting	5
Helmsley Place	7
The First Jewish Burial Place	11
The Rev. Isaac Pulver	21
Benjamin Norden	28
Aaron de Pass	30
Samuel Rodolf	36
Tablet Recording Consecration of the "Old" Synagogue	37
The "Old" or St. John's Street Synagogue ...	39
The Rev. Joel Rabinowitz...	44
The Rev. A. F. Ornstein	55
Window erected for 100th Birthday of Sir Moses Montefiore	64
The Rev. Alfred Philipp Bender	70
Tablet Recording Foundation of Congregation's School	72
Hyman Liberman	80
The Great Synagogue	83
Cover Design of Bazaar Programme	86
Great War (1914—1918) Memorial Tablet ...	101
The Great Synagogue, Interior	108
Louis Gradner	118
Rabbi Israel Abrahams	135
The United Hebrew Schools	136
The Great Synagogue from Hatfield Street ...	139
Committee of the Great Synagogue, 1941 ...	145

PREFACE.

The Centenary of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation marks an important milestone in the history of Jewry in South Africa. The establishment of the congregation in 1841 is, in fact, the commencement of that history. The number of Jews before then was very insignificant, and played an unimportant part in the communal life of Cape Town. But the handful of the faithful, who perceived the necessity of religious co-ordination, must have despaired at times after they had embarked on their venture of establishing the congregation. The story is not one of smooth sailing during the following generations, for there were times of despondence, but with courage and fortitude the leaders never wavered in their resolve to keep the congregation going.

The writing of the story of these hundred years has been placed in able hands, and Dr. Louis Herrman tells it without evasion or equivocation. He writes of the petty squabbles and the small things concerning the early days of the congregation, as well as of the big and important facts which give the reader an insight into the communal life of the Jews of Cape Town.

The suggestion that the history of the congregation should be written was made nearly twenty years ago. In the meantime a larger and more ambitious scheme was undertaken by the publication of "The History of the Jews in South Africa," by Dr. Herrman. Those who have read it will find the same high standard in the following pages.

GRAHAM BOTHA.

Cape Town,
October, 1941.

Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope
South Africa. A.M. 5602
September 25th 1841.

Several unofficial attempts having been made at different times, to collect a sufficient number of Israelites for the purpose of Divine Worship according to the Mosaic Law, wherein it is commanded that no less than 10 Males of 13 years of age can constitute a Congregation for general public prayers of Israelites. —

The written names Israelites now residing at Cape Town, have at last succeeded and met for the first time in this Colony at the house of Mr Benjamin Norden at Helmsley Place on Friday evening the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Tishri A.M. 5602, it bearing the eve of the day of Atonement and public fast between the following 10th day of Tishri from Sunrise till the evening Stars appeared when the usual Festival prayers were read in the presence of the following persons. —

S. Marcus.	B. Norden	Birkbeck
M. Sloman.	M. Baenkel.	L. Marcus
A. Horn.	H. Lazarus	S. Mosenthal
N. Mayo,	M. Hart,	J. Hess,
A. Gordon	Rudolph	S. & L. Marcus Jr.
		Edrom

CHAPTER ONE.

The First Congregation : The " Hope of Israel " Society. 1841-1849.

A HUNDRED years ago, when Sir Charles Napier was Governor of the Cape Colony, and Cape Town, still largely surrounded by gardens, was a smaller and more leisurely centre of civilisation than it is to-day ; when consignments of merchandise arrived from Early Victorian England by slow and uncertain sailing ship, and the good merchants were accustomed to close their doors above the high stoeps of their business houses in St. George's Street, for rest and refreshment in the middle of the day ; when ox-wagon teams outspanned in Greenmarket Square, and the Heerengracht had not yet become Adderley Street ; when the older inhabitants could still recall the rule of the Netherlands East India Company ; when the entire European population of the town numbered nine thousand, three hundred and fifty-nine, and the somewhat more numerous coloured population had as yet tasted but a few years of freedom from slavery ; in the same year that the Groote Kerk in the Heerengracht, restored and enlarged after having been closed for some years, was re-opened with fitting ceremony, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Mary's was being built at the top end of Plein Street, and the first churches, in more distant parts of the Colony, English, Dutch Reformed, Baptist and Wesleyan were being

erected; a Hebrew congregation, the first that ever assembled in South Africa, met for Divine Service in Cape Town.

They were mostly settlers of many year's standing, the men who comprised this first religious gathering of Jews at the Cape. Attempts hitherto made by individuals to assemble a sufficient number of Jews to form the necessary *Minyan*, the ritual quorum for the holding of Divine Service according to Jewish custom, had been unsuccessful. It was not that the actual number of Jews in the Colony was too small. It was indeed not very considerable even in proportion to the small European population of those days; but the Cape Town Jews were frequently absent from town, their occupations, mainly commercial, often taking them into more remote parts of the Colony, whilst long separation from contact with a Jewish community had wholly or partly assimilated many of them, even in religious affairs, with their Christian neighbours, so that the desire to assist in forming a *Minyan* was not strong.

But the initiative of Benjamin Norden, an active, determined and enterprising man, as we know from his part in public affairs, overcame what reluctance there may have been, to the extent that a congregation of seventeen males met at his house to celebrate *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. Norden was one of the British Settlers of 1820. He had left his farm in the Albany district after a few years and engaged in the ivory trade with the then almost unknown country of Natal. He had entered into direct negotiations with the savage Chief Dingaan, on one occasion being the bearer of a despatch to him from the Governor



HELMSLEY PLACE.

(Courtesy of F. Ayris, Esq.)

of the Cape, Sir Benjamin D'Urban. Much of the early commerce of Natal was organised by Benjamin Norden, and he was associated with the founders of the city of Durban and the building of its first church. Prior to his settlement in Cape Town he was a prominent citizen of Grahamstown, and his name occurs frequently amongst the promoters of public works before 1840 in the Eastern district. In Cape Town he became an active Commissioner for the Municipality before City Councils were instituted, and side by side with his activity in public affairs he continued his exertions on behalf of the Jewish community, in which he played a leading part, with brief intervals, throughout the next seventeen years.

On Friday, 26th September, 1841, it being the 9th day of the month Tishri of the year A.M. 5602, the little group of Cape Colonists, Jews of English, German and Dutch origin, congregated at "Helmsley Place," Mr. Norden's house in the Gardens, to solemnize *Kol Nidrei*. There was no minister. It was not until eight years later that a much augmented flock acquired a pastor. But from the records of subsequent meetings it is clear that there were amongst the worshippers capable lay readers. The principal reader on this occasion was Samuel Rodolf, a merchant from America, who had come to settle at the Cape only the year before, but who remained for many years a stalwart pillar of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. He rendered *Kol Nidrei* and, on the following day, the *Musaph* service. *Shachrith* fell to the lot of David Canstatt, the first Honorary Secretary of the Congregation; *Minchah* was read by Simeon Marcus, and *Neilah* by Dr. Siegfried Frankel. Dr. Frankel was an

old Colonist, having at that time practised as a medical man in Cape Town for well over thirty years. He was one of those citizens connected with the foundation, in 1829, of the South African College, the University of Cape Town of to-day, and his two sons, D. and S. Frankel, were amongst the original students. They had the honour of membership, with four other students, of what may be described as the first Students' Representative Council. Dr. Frankel's family apparently did not join the Congregation, though he himself assiduously attended the services and continued until his death, in 1846, to officiate at the *Neilah* service each year. Simeon Marcus, on the other hand, brought with him to the original prayer meeting his two sons, Fred and John, whilst other members of his family played a part in the affairs of those early days of the Community. He was a Dutch Jew from Amsterdam who had settled in the Colony some ten years before, and was at this time a substantial merchant.

If Benjamin Norden has the distinction of having initiated Divine Service amongst the Cape Town Jews, it is to Simeon Marcus that we owe the foundation of a permanent religious organisation. On the second Sunday following the celebration of *Yom Kippur* at "Helmsley Place," Marcus convened a meeting at his own house in Loop Street at the corner of Longmarket Street, where a society was established, the infant body that grew into the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. The ten men who constituted the meeting formed themselves into "The Society of the Jewish Community of Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope," with the Hebrew title *Tikvath Israel*, "Hope

of Israel." A subscription list was opened and over £100 subscribed. Application was made to the Governor of the Colony, for a piece of ground adjacent to the town to be used as a burial ground exclusively for Jews. Simeon Marcus was elected Treasurer and David Canstatt Secretary, and Elders were appointed "to act for the whole body of Jews in all matters having in view the establishment of the Jewish religion in this Colony." Provision was made for regular monthly meetings, at the house of Simeon Marcus, to transact business connected with the Society and with the Jews of the Colony. The ten original members of the Society *Tikvath Israel* were : Simeon Marcus, Benjamin Norden, Morris Sloman, Abraham Horn, Nathan Moss, Adolph Gordon, Samuel Rodolf, David Hyman Canstatt, Morris Hart, and Lewis Marcus.

Sloman, Norden, Horn and Canstatt constituted the panel of Elders. Morris Sloman, like Norden, was one of the 1820 Settlers. With his wife and three small children he had settled down as a farmer and contended for five years against drought, flood and savages. The Kaffirs killed his eldest son and stole his cattle, and he gave up farming to become a shopkeeper in Cape Town. Nathan Birkenruth and Joseph Mosenthal and the others who had been present at the first service subscribed to and joined the Society almost immediately, as well as a few who had not come to the original prayer meeting; so that in the first few weeks there were more than twenty members. There were also casual donors from amongst the Jews who did not care to join the organisation, but desired to express their sympathy with the movement, amongst them the eccentric town character, "Old Moses the

Money-Changer." Birkenruth was a merchant of Grahamstown who subsequently initiated a Jewish Community in that town. Joseph Mosenthal was the first of that enterprising family of commercial and industrial pioneers whose organisation contributed so much to the economic development of South Africa from the eighteen-fifties onwards. He left Cape Town for Graaff Reinet a few years later, but maintained his membership of the Cape Town Congregation until his death in 1871. His brothers, Julius and Adolph were also early members of the Congregation.

Amongst the first subscribers was Gabriel Kilian, a partner in a Cape Town firm of merchants, Kilian & Stein, trading with Frankfort in Germany. To Messrs. Kilian & Stein was entrusted the order to obtain a Scroll of the Law with the usual ritual ornaments. The order was never executed. Unforeseen difficulties intervened, and it was not until six years later that the first *Sepher Torah* was seen in Cape Town. Kilian received word from his agents in Germany that no Scroll of the Law could be exported to the Colony until permission had been granted by the Chief Rabbi in London. This was in July 1842. Before the necessary permission could be obtained, the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Solomon Herschell, died, and the business was deferred indefinitely. Aaron de Pass, returning to the Cape after a visit to London in 1848, brought with him the first *Sepher Torah*, a gift to the congregation from Mr. P. Salaman.

Meanwhile the Society continued to meet for prayers on Sabbaths and Holy Days at the houses in turn of the Elders and Officers. The application for a burial ground had been referred to the Municipality, and



THE FIRST JEWISH BURIAL PLACE.

the Society was informed that no free grant for the purpose was available. So Norden presented a plot to the Community at Zonnebloem, which, however, proved to be unsuitable. Then John Norton, a resident of Grahamstown visiting Cape Town, attended the meetings or the Society and subscribed to its funds and offered to the Community his interest in a piece of ground "situated near Mr. Blore's." This also proved on investigation to be unsuitable. Nevertheless John Norton transferred his interest in the property to the Community, which benefitted by the sale and subsequently purchased for itself a plot at Papendorp on the lower side of what is to-day Albert Road, Woodstock. Norden, Hart, and Horn, as Trustees, had it enclosed with a stone wall and had the necessary buildings erected on it at a cost of £100, the funds being furnished by Benjamin Norden "until the Congregation shall be in a situation to return them." Norden also presented the Community with an adjoining piece of ground on which a mortuary was built, and the necessary appurtenances for the proper ceremonial connected with the interment of the dead were obtained by donation. This burial ground remained the "House of Life" for the Cape Town Jews until 1887, when it was closed. The earliest interment was that of Abraham Horn, one of the Trustees, who died in December, 1844.

The High Festivals came round again. The Community had weathered a year's vicissitudes and a second time Atonement services were read at Helmsley Place "to an attentive, zealous, and well-conducted congregation." Meanwhile the Society continued to receive new accessions from amongst the more recent

arrivals in the Colony and from older Colonists, many of whom had settled in country places. Amongst the older Colonists who subscribed to the Society and attended the services after the second year was Isaac Manuel, a prominent Cape Town merchant and commercial pioneer, whose eldest son, Charles Manuel, was later a member of the Cape Parliament, representing the Cape Division for 29 years.

There were also enrolments from Grahamstown. The Grahamstown Jews do not appear to have established a permanent organisation in their own town at this period, but they frequently collaborated with the *Tikvath Israel*. Several of them attended the services on their visits to Cape Town, and some became regular subscribers. Amongst the latter were N. Birkenruth, mentioned above, John Norton and his son Lewis, both 1820 Settlers. The latter, emigrating to San Francisco with the "forty-niners," developed into that quaint eccentric, the "Emperor Norton," noticed by Robert Louis Stevenson in "The Wrecker." Jonas Bergtheil, another Grahamstown Jew, who was a staunch supporter from 1843 onwards of the Cape Town Society, was an enterprising man, active in public affairs. He experimented in cotton cultivation in Natal, importing thirty or forty peasant families from North Germany and settling them on the soil, where they eventually became market gardeners. He was later a member of the Natal Parliament for eleven years, and an elected member of a legislature before the first Jew had been admitted to the British Parliament. Amongst the Grahamstown members was also Norden's brother, Joshua Davis Norden, who was enrolled in 1844. His membership was of

short duration, for he was killed in action against the Kaffirs in 1846. He commanded a burgher force, the Grahamstown Yeomanry, "a crack corps, with a smart blue uniform and pretensions to superiority." The Kaffirs threatened an assault on Grahamstown, and Norden's Yeomanry set out to attack them in the hills ten miles from the town. Riding at the head of his men Captain Norden received a fatal bullet wound. The natives captured and mutilated the body, but a new force under the Commandant next day recovered it and buried it with military honours. Joshua Davis Norden had been present at a meeting of the *Tikvath Israel* in 1843, where it was agreed that the Society should keep in touch by correspondence with the Chief Rabbi in London, and on a proposal being made that a prayer-offering be sent to London in memory of the lately deceased Chief Rabbi, Dr. Solomon Herschell, J. D. Norden had undertaken to enlist the co-operation of the Grahamstown Jews, which he accordingly did. In 1845, also, the two communities co-operated in an effort to obtain from Europe a *Mohel* (circumcision officer) and each community agreed to provide the sum of £25 towards the travelling expenses of the officer who should be engaged. The following year Grahamstown asked for assistance in forming a congregation, and several of the Cape Town members agreed to become annual subscribers to the Grahamstown Congregation. There are, however, no records extant of an organised congregation having existed in Grahamstown in those days.

In 1843, having provided for the proper interment of the dead, the Society, looking to its future strength, instituted a register of Jewish births. The first record

is that of Charles Horn son of Abraham Horn, born posthumously in 1845. In 1844 the first marriage was celebrated according to Jewish rites. By the law then in force in the Colony, marriages could be performed only by the clergy of the various denominations, and since the Congregation was without a minister it was necessary to have recourse to a Christian clergyman. Nevertheless, Simeon Marcus announced that his daughter's wedding was the first to be celebrated in the Colony according to the Jewish faith, and claimed that it should be recorded in the minutes of the Society. On 19th June, 1844, all the members of the Community and their families were invited "to celebrate the Nuptials" of Michael Benjamin of Grahamstown with Amelia, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus. The Rev. George Hough, Senior Colonial Chaplain of the English Church, performed the ceremony. He officiated, the record relates, "liberally and handsomely according to the English law, leaving out every part objectionable to our religious feelings." Then the afternoon prayer (*Minchah*) was read and the marriage ceremony was again performed "according to our ancient law of Moses and Israel." The entire Congregation was entertained to dinner, and after appropriate prayers "mutual happiness and rejoicings concluded the first Jewish wedding at the Cape."

In 1846 R. J. Joseph arrived from England. He immediately joined the Society and undertook the duties of honorary secretary, the office then being vacant. He was a valuable acquisition, for he had, before leaving England, qualified himself as a *Mohel* and had been duly authorised to perform the rite of circumcision. It was not long before his offices were

required. In October, 1847, Joseph performed the ceremony of the Covenant on his own infant son, the entire Congregation having been invited for the occasion. The ritual being concluded, "all the members of the community, according to custom, sat down to breakfast, evidently much rejoiced at being present at the first circumcision that had ever taken place in this Colony according to the Jewish rites." When the infant had attained the age of thirty days, being the first-born of the Joseph family he was the object of the ceremony of Redemption, also carried out for the first time. The urgent necessity for the engagement of a religious leader became apparent. Not only because the Congregation was obliged to employ a Christian priest to perform its marriages. There were other reasons : the members of the community had all spent the greater part of their lives far removed from Jewish religious activity, and they were uninstructed in the elaborate ritual of Judaism; they had no Rabbi within thousands of miles of them, and they had to wait half a year for a reply to their queries when any of those occasions arose when it was difficult for a layman to interpret the religious law in an orthodox manner; they had no facilities for the proper observance of the dietary laws, nor for the instruction of their children. Even the task of reading the services on the High Festivals, which had for some years been shared by Marcus, Canstatt and Dr. Frankel, now devolved entirely on Simeon Marcus, for Canstatt left early in 1846 on a visit to Europe, and on his return took up residence at Algoa Bay, and Dr. Frankel died during the same year. In 1843 Norden and Birkenruth had urged that the officials of the synagogues in

England and Germany should be requested to procure for the Colony a fit person to act as Rabbi and teacher; but the proposal met with faint support and was dropped. On his arrival at the Cape, R. J. Joseph had brought with him despatches from the Chief Rabbi of the British Jews, Dr. N. M. Adler. The exact contents of these documents is not now known, but there is some indication that the Chief Rabbi exhorted the Cape Jews to engage the services of a minister without delay and to lose no time before taking steps towards the erection of a synagogue.

The proposal, however, to erect a House of Prayer raised up the first discord in the Congregation. The two leading members, Norden and Marcus, took opposite sides of the question. Norden was enthusiastically for development, trusting that the membership would grow and the funds increase in proportion to the increased expenditure. Marcus held strongly that the Society could not undertake new liabilities. In November, 1847, he resigned the Treasurership which he had held from the beginning, and Norden was elected in his place. It was immediately proposed to open a general subscription list for the purpose of erecting a synagogue in compliance with the expressed desire of the Chief Rabbi. Simeon Marcus opposed the project and succeeded so far as to postpone the discussion. A month later the Society met for a final decision. Marcus announced that he desired to resign his office as Elder and that his son-in-law Nathan Moss, who had been elected an Elder in place of Canstatt, who had removed to Port Elizabeth, would follow his father-in-law's example. In vain Norden pleaded for the withdrawal of Marcus' resignation,

urging the smallness of the Congregation and the serious depletion of their ranks that would ensue from the secession of the Marcus family. The Society had indeed benefitted during the past few years by new arrivals in the Colony, but it had lost members by death and by departure, and moreover the remainder had spread, many of them, to other parts of the Colony, so that the defection of the Marcus family, who were constant attendants at the services, would appreciably diminish the Congregation. Marcus on the other hand had some reason for expecting serious consideration from the Community for his views; for not only had he called the first meeting in his own house to form the Society and acted as Honorary Treasurer for years, but he had personally conducted the services and taken the lead in religious matters for a considerable time. He declined to take any part in the further proceedings of the meeting and, there and then, withdrew with his two sons and his son-in-law, Nathan Moss. The immediate effect of which was that the customary prayers had to be omitted owing to the insufficiency of men to form a *Minyan*. The following month he attended again to protest against the projected synagogue, proposing that it should be delayed for a twelvemonth, or until such time as there should be a sufficient number of families desiring to attend a synagogue. His proposal, however, met with no support except from Nathan Moss. The matter therefore was decided. There was to be a synagogue in South Africa.

The names of Simeon Marcus and Nathan Moss no longer appear in the lists of members present at the periodical meetings. Marcus' absence from the meet-

ings prior to his formal resignation from the Society rendered him liable to be fined, and Norden reported, in 1848, that he had recovered a fine of three guineas from Mr. S. Marcus. With a pretty touch of irony we are informed that "the Honorary Treasurer presents the same as an additional donation towards the erection of a Place of Worship." The collection of funds for building a synagogue had begun, and in July a letter was written to the Chief Rabbi requesting him to procure a person competent to act as Reader, Teacher and *Shochet*.

Meanwhile the festival services for 1848 had to be provided for, and Norden as usual offered the use of his house, now Cannon Terrace, Sir Lowry Road, to the Community. There was a desire, however, on the part of some members to hire a house for the festival season, on the grounds that more Jews would be likely to attend a public place of worship than the private house of a member, which may have had reference to Marcus and those who sympathised with his action. Norden solemnly addressed the members at great length, begging them to spare the funds of the Society, which had been accumulated by perseverance and economy. "If there be amongst our brethren," he said, "individuals of such extreme delicacy and refined sensibility that they will not attend my house on these occasions, let the Community meet at theirs; I will attend wherever it may be." Finally a compromise was reached. Norden's house was to be used, but it was to be hired, not lent. The Community would hire it at the rate of a shilling a day. It was the last occasion on which the Congregation conducted its Holyday services in a private residence.

CHAPTER TWO.

The Rev. Mr. Pulver's Ministry : The Earliest Synagogue. 1849-1859.

MEANWHILE the collection of funds for the building of a place of worship had proceeded apace in response to a circular letter sent by the Honorary Secretary, Benjamin Alexander, "to all parts of the world." Grahamstown responded immediately and handsomely, isolated Jews in country places sent subscriptions, Jews who had never attended the services showed their sympathy and sent donations, amongst them Saul Solomon, the most brilliant, and probably the most respected man who ever sat in the Cape Parliament, his uncle Benjamin Solomon, and two of his brothers Henry and Richard, Charles Manuel, and J. Suasso de Lima. Contributions also came from prominent Christian citizens: the Attorney-General the Hon. Mr. William Porter, the Treasurer-General the Hon. Mr. H. Rivers, John Fairbairn, Thomas Sutherland and Captain van Reenen amongst them. On 6th April, 1849, the trustees reported having purchased premises situated in Bouquet Street and St. John's Street, part of the former property of the old Lodge de Goede Hoop. The site is to-day occupied by a hotel. The purchase price was £800 and the Governor granted remission of transfer dues. The property consisted of two houses and a store. Means would not permit the erection of a new building, and

the Community had to content itself with converting the larger of the two houses for use as a synagogue, whilst the smaller one and the store were let to one of the members.

There was a considerable accession of new members during 1848 and the following year, chiefly from amongst the newer settlers at the Cape, and now committees were formed for the purpose of preparing the new Synagogue and welcoming the Minister who had been engaged by the Chief Rabbi and was due to arrive shortly. The Congregation was already in possession of a *Sepher Torah* brought from London by Aaron de Pass. A well-wisher in London, Mr. L. Foligno, had presented a set of silver bells to adorn the Scroll, an Ark had been given by one of the new members, and the ladies of the Congregation, in particular the eight daughters of Morris Sloman, made themselves responsible for providing the vestments and curtains, duly embroidered. On the second Sabbath in 1849 the first public Reading of the Law, with full ceremonial, took place. Members were "called up" and offerings made. Amongst those called to the reading was "Master" M. Sloman. He was a lad of thirteen years of age, born in the Colony. It was probably the first Barmitzvah.

The first regular vestry meeting was held on a Sunday in July, Norden providing the furniture for the new vestry room in response to the public thanks he received for his strenuous exertions in obtaining a place of worship for the Congregation, and for his solicitude for the welfare of the community in general. The new minister was due to arrive in August. The Chief Rabbi had selected the Rev. Isaac Pulver of



THE REV. ISAAC PULVER.

London, who had been Minister to the Jewish congregation at Cheltenham. His appointment as minister was duly made by the Cape Town Congregation, and at a special meeting the Congregation decided to defray the cost of the ocean passage to the Colony of Mr. Pulver, his wife and his children, and to release him from the obligation of repaying any portion of it. They voted a sum of money for furnishing, for his use, a house which was lent for three months by Mr. Norden against the time when the Minister's house should be ready.

The Rev. Mr. Pulver arrived about 6th August, and on the first Sunday after his arrival the Congregation met in full strength at Norden's house to give their minister a formal welcome. A letter was read from the Chief Rabbi enjoining the Jewish Community of the Cape to give heed to the Minister's government, and Mr. Pulver delivered a short address urging the members of his flock to assist him "in carrying out the laws for establishing the true religion of the God of Israel."

The Synagogue was to be consecrated in September. Meanwhile Aaron de Pass was elected to be the first President, and Samuel Rodolf the first Treasurer. S. L. Bensusan accepted the post of honorary secretary, and there was a committee consisting of R. J. Joseph, A. Wolff and B. Norden. A list was drawn up of those who enjoyed full membership of "this Community called the Hope of Israel, by whose joint exertions this Community has been established, and are therefore to be considered the Founders of the same." There were twenty-eight Founders. Five of them had worked for, and prayed with, the Society of the Hope

of Israel from its initiation eight years before. They were: Benjamin Norden, Samuel Rodolf, Joseph Charles Hess, Joseph Mosenthal, and Nathan Birkenruth. Of the remaining original worshippers, A. Horn, Dr. Frankel, and Morris Sloman had died, whilst Canstatt and Hart, who were absent, sent subscriptions, and the Marcus family and Nathan Moss healed their breach with the congregation and came in again before the consecration of the Synagogue.

Besides the twenty-eight full members, there were non-seatholders, including a number of Jews in the country places, and a gallery was constructed for the wives and daughters of members, special provision being made for Mrs. Sloman and her eight daughters. Attention was given, about this time, also to the various matters of ceremonial which had hitherto been neglected through force of circumstances. Arrangements were made for Mr. Pulver to exercise his office as *Shochet* in order to provide the community with *kosher* meat. Aaron de Pass provided for the importation in one of his ships, of a parcel of *matzos* for each family for Passover. A choir was formed for singing the Psalms at the opening ceremony.

On Friday, 15th September, 1849, the entire community assembled for the great occasion. A procession in the Synagogue was led by the Rev. Mr. Pulver bearing the *Sepher Torah*. There followed the wardens and the rest of the congregation "singing, with great solemnity, the usual prayers." A prayer for the Queen and the Royal Family and his Excellency the Governor of the Colony was followed by an address by the Minister. Offerings by the members for the benefit of the Synagogue, and the reading of the Sabbath

Evening Service concluded the consecration of the first synagogue to be established in South Africa.

The infant synagogue born of so much zeal and hope was not fated to flourish. The passage of a few years witnessed a dwindling community, growing dissension between Minister and congregants, and an insufficiency of funds to meet the modest commitments of the treasury. The situation was not assisted by the elaborate code of a hundred and eight laws which had been the first work of the new committee, and with which they had hoped to guide the destiny of the Synagogue. The laws imposed duties and obligations on the members far beyond anything that would be tolerated in our day. Some of them extended even to the control of the behaviour of the members in matters unconnected with the Synagogue. A system of fines sought to enforce the laws. Thus :

"The *Parnas* and *Gabbay* shall send notice to all persons talking in the Synagogue to desist; and should they continue the same after notice, they shall be fined two shillings and sixpence." There were fines for non-attendance at Synagogue if one had been notified that he was to be "called up" to the reading of the Law. There was an increasing scale of fines for refusing to take office. There were fines for refusing to attend meetings, *shivas*, *yahrzeits*, for refusing to accept the authority of the Minister in case of a dispute on a matter of religious law, and for neglecting after notification to attend at the house of a sick person to recite *Tehillim*. The wardens themselves were liable to a fine of two guineas for the infringement of any of the laws. On pain of a fine of five guineas members were forbidden to bring their disputes into the public

Courts of Law. A suit, whether religious or civil, was to be referred to the Committee of the Congregation in the first place.

But the circumstances were not propitious, and it is hardly surprising that the affairs of the Synagogue did not proceed as smoothly as had been expected. The congregation of thirty men with their wives and families that had welcomed Mr Pulver, rapidly decreased. It was a period of commercial depression. Some Cape Town Jews had gone into the country. Three or four had left the Colony, and some merely did not attend the Synagogue or pay their dues. The stringent code of laws had no doubt some part in decreasing the effective membership, for there were Jews in Cape Town who were not so zealous as to agree to render themselves liable to be fined every time they neglected to perform any of the numerous duties imposed on them by the Laws. Besides the Wardens, and Benjamin Norden who was indefatigable in his fostering care of the Synagogue, there were not more than a dozen who attended general meetings during 1850 and 1851, and in the following year the Community twice came near total dissolution. The revenue did not come up to expectations, and there was a constant call for more funds on those who remained attached to the Synagogue. Friction arose between the Congregation and its Minister. Faction appeared in the tiny community. In 1851 the Congregation was split into two sections each holding a *Rosh Hashanah* service in a different place. There was a synagogue service without a minister and a minister conducting a service without a synagogue. There was endless trouble about the supply of *kosher* meat. When it

was obtainable, only a few families troubled to buy it; when it was not to be had because the butcher who had contracted for its supply would not provide meat to remain unsold, there were bitter complaints to the effect that the Community were at the expense of maintaining a *shochet* and that nevertheless ritually clean meat could not be had. A series of unfortunate incidents settled the blame on Mr. Pulver. He further innocently incurred the dissatisfaction of some members of the Committee through the requests for his presence in country places in order that he might function as *Mohel*. Some members grudged his absence, perhaps because he had displaced Mr. Joseph in that office. There were other differences, and, in 1851, Mr. Pulver announced his intention of quitting the service of the Cape Town Congregation. He had occupied the position of Reader, *Shochet* and *Mohel* for two years. During that time he had held regular services on Friday evenings and Sabbaths and on the Holy Days in the Synagogue, and such other services as were required from time to time. He had performed the multifarious duties that are required, in a Jewish congregation, of a composite officer such as he was, and he had done what could be done to establish the orthodox ritual of Jewish life amongst his congregants. He stated very clearly in a letter to the Vestry his reasons for tendering his resignation. "My principal reasons for wanting to leave this congregation," he wrote, "are first, that I cannot get *kosher* meat; secondly, that I cannot as a Jewish parent bring up my children in a place where so little regard is paid to the principles of our Holy Religion; and thirdly, that, notwithstanding nearly two years' trial

to live as economically as possible, I could not make my income meet my expenses." The Congregation, feeling responsible to the Chief Rabbi, defended itself against Mr. Pulver's implied charges; but immediately it became known that he intended to leave, a donation from the Congregation's modest treasury as well as a liberal present privately subscribed was made to him to assist him in defraying his travelling expenses. An effort at fair and even generous treatment had been made. But Mr. Pulver's position was an uneasy one. His stipend was small and his duties numerous and varied. To a pious Jew accustomed to the communal amenities of a European Jewry with its precision of ritual and general conformity to a standard of ceremony, the Cape Town Congregation, earnestly as its members tried to carry out the accepted practices of the Jewish religion, could not but appear lax and heathenish. The very prospect of being compelled by circumstances to keep a table that was not strictly *kosher* was a source of the greatest pain to the good man, who was, above all, an orthodox Jew. On the other hand, the Colonists, from the circumstances of their lives, could not regard the rigid observance of Jewish ceremony with the same reverence, or attach quite the same importance to it, as he did. Relations between the parties deteriorated. Mr. Pulver did not leave Cape Town immediately, but gathered about him a number of sympathisers who formed a separate *Minyan* for the Holy Days of 1851, a situation not without parallel in the annals of Jewry. In the vanguard of the opposition were Simeon Marcus and Nathan Moss.

As if the internal stresses were insufficient to discomfit this unfortunate community, very unpleasant conditions arose in its relations with the outside world in the same year that the Synagogue was opened. Cape Town was seething with social unrest, it was at the height of the Anti-Convict Agitation. Popular passions had been roused to a high pitch and there were indications that they might be diverted towards the Jewish community for no greater reason than the many-headed multitude ever requires for malicious action. Measures had to be taken by the Congregation to prevent disturbance at the Synagogue during the Festival season. It was resolved to exclude all non-Jews from the Synagogue, and an application was made to the Inspector of Police for a constable to be stationed at the doors on Sabbaths and Holydays. It is doubtful whether these steps were really necessary; but they were wise precautions. They were reinforced by a public explanation, addressed to the more reasonable elements of the Cape Town public through the columns of the *Commercial Advertiser*, of the attitude of the Jewish community to the burning question of convict settlement, by means of a letter on behalf of the Community signed by Samuel Rodolf.

The attitude of the Jews was in fact that of the rest of the population. A majority of them agreed with the popular side and there was a small minority of dissentients. There was, however, one unfortunate circumstance which ill logic and malice directed against the Congregation. It was that the leader of the "Moderates," the unpopular party, was the most prominent member of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation.

Benjamin Norden, as a Commissioner of the Municipality, had been amongst the first to protest to the Governor against the decision of the British Government to make the Cape a penal settlement. When the convict ship, the *Neptune*, had arrived, Norden was an active member of the Anti-Convict Association; but when the Association proceeded to institute a boycott with effect to starve out the convicts, the sailors and officers and the entire Government establishment at Simonstown, he resisted in company with a number of other respectable citizens, and even went the length of providing at his own expense supplies to the Naval Department at Simonstown for thirty-two days, to the value of £400.

Fairbairn, the leader of the "Ultra" party, wielded enormous power through his newspaper the *Commercial Advertiser*, and was able to put in Coventry all who disobeyed the injunctions of his party. Twelve citizens were penalised in this way and Norden's name headed the list, which included his son-in-law, Benjamin Alexander, and a certain Mark Salom, who had been refused membership of the Congregation on account of his disreputable character. Norden was boycotted, jeered at by the mob, and stoned; but he was not to be diverted from his course of action. It is not altogether remarkable that some of the odium of the mob directed against him should have attached itself to the innocent Community. At a later date, when the heat of conflict had died down, Norden regained the esteem of his fellow citizens. "The history of Mr. Benjamin Norden is before you," said Mr. Charles Fairbridge, an eminent member of the Legislative Assembly of a later date, "and however much you may differ from



BENJAMIN NORDEN.

him in some points, none of you can deny his straightforward honesty." He never completely recovered, however, from a wound which he received from a stone flung by a convict-hating member of the mob.

During the boycott of the Government, business was largely at a standstill. Shops and offices were closed for a long time, and a commercial depression settled on the town and dragged on from month to month whilst the *Neptune* was still in port. Five months of severely reduced business activity, with its adverse effect on all who were directly or indirectly, engaged in commerce could not but affect the members of the Jewish Congregation. Towards the end of February, 1850, when the *Neptune* received sailing orders and business in town began to resume its more usual aspect, it was found that the contributions to the Synagogue arising from seat rent would not meet the ordinary expenditure, and a system of voluntary contributions in lieu of seat rent had to be introduced. Then, faced with some extraordinary liabilities, the Treasurer found that seat rent would have to be demanded in addition to the voluntary contributions. Norden, Rodolf and Aaron de Pass gave liberal assistance. The Community owed much to the enthusiasm and labour of Aaron de Pass who, though not one of the original members of the *Tikvath Israel* Society, had joined it immediately on his arrival in the Colony in 1846 and had continued to be one of the leaders in its affairs. He played a notable part also in the wider field of the affairs of Cape Town and the Colony. He was head of the shipping firm De Pass Brothers that was engaged in a very considerable coastal trade and that subsequently, with Captain Spence as a partner,

controlled almost all the coastal vessels in South African waters. De Pass early worked the guano islands for their valuable deposits, opened up commerce with Angra Pequena and Walfich, established the first trading post in Namaqualand at Hondeklip Bay, established the fishing industry at Sandwich Harbour and initiated sealing and whaling on a large scale. De Pass imported a patent slip for Simonstown to enable ships to be hauled up for repairs, and two years later a similar one for Table Bay, where his firm carried out shipping repairs before there were regular docking facilities for the purpose. He also initiated cold storage in South Africa by laying down the first ice-making plant, and was responsible for a considerable share of the commercial and industrial development of the Cape in his day. It was partly through the exertions of his younger brother Elias (who was for a time Honorary Secretary of the Congregation) that the Government was induced to provide docks in Table Bay. Elias had enlisted soon after his arrival in the Colony and fought against the Kaffirs, coming back in 1849 with a slight wound and the rank of Lieutenant, when he joined his brother's firm. Aaron was a Commissioner for the Municipality, a Justice of the Peace for Cape Town and Chief Commissariat Officer for Volunteers for the Cape Colony. The three brothers, Aaron, Elias and later John, as well as Aaron's son Daniel, who was a pioneer of the sugar industry in Natal, all helped to establish the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation by their support and assistance when it was small and weak. In recent times it is to Aaron de Pass's grandson, Mr. Alfred de Pass, that the City of Cape Town is indebted for some of



AARON DE PASS.

(Courtesy of Alfred de Pass, Esq.)

its most beautiful and valuable museum pieces and works of art.

But notwithstanding the generosity of De Pass, Norden and a few others, the Synagogue was in pecuniary difficulties. A sum of £200 had to be disbursed for repairs, and to raise the money it was necessary to give a mortgage on the Synagogue property. Suggestions for economy attacked the modest stipend of £20 per annum paid to a very efficient Secretary, A. H. Salom, whose duties included the collection of funds. He was permitted to live in the house next to the Synagogue rent free in lieu of salary. Then there was a claim on the Community for £100 for Mr. Pulver's passage to the Cape that had been disbursed in London on behalf of the Congregation two years before. The situation had seriously to be considered, and a general meeting was summoned, but no members attended except the President and Treasurer. A second summons a month later resulted in an attendance of three. Rodolf in disgust resigned his office of President and signified his intention of giving up his membership of the Synagogue, and Aaron de Pass resigned his office of Treasurer. Again a month elapsed and six members only appeared at the meeting to which the resignations were presented. Two of the six had already resigned; two more proceeded to do so. There was talk of declaring the Community dissolved. Only Maurice Hart, one of the original members, withdrawing from the meeting, begged that it might be noted that he had taken no part in the discussion. The next step was the winding up of the affairs of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation.

Then Benjamin Norden returned. He had been absent for several months. He began to take energetic measures to pull the Community together. He consented to accept the office of President for six months. He instituted regular weekly Vestry meetings for administering the affairs of the Synagogue. A Board of Taxation was formed to ascertain from every member the amount for which he would tax himself for the year. Letters were written to former members who had settled in other parts of the Colony or elsewhere, soliciting their help and their activity amongst brethren and friends on behalf of the Synagogue: Goldman at Burghersdorp, Kisch at Colesberg, Hess at Port Elizabeth, Adolph Mosenthal at Graaf Reinet, Bergtheil and Simmonds in England, George Britton at St. Helena and the members of the Grahamstown community. Reference to London revealed that a sum collected there on behalf of the Synagogue in Cape Town, at the time of Mr. Pulver's arrival, had not been paid over. This would meet part of the passage money. De Pass paid the outstanding £25 and in addition presented to the Synagogue five shares in the Walfich Bay Mining Company which was in especially good repute at the time.

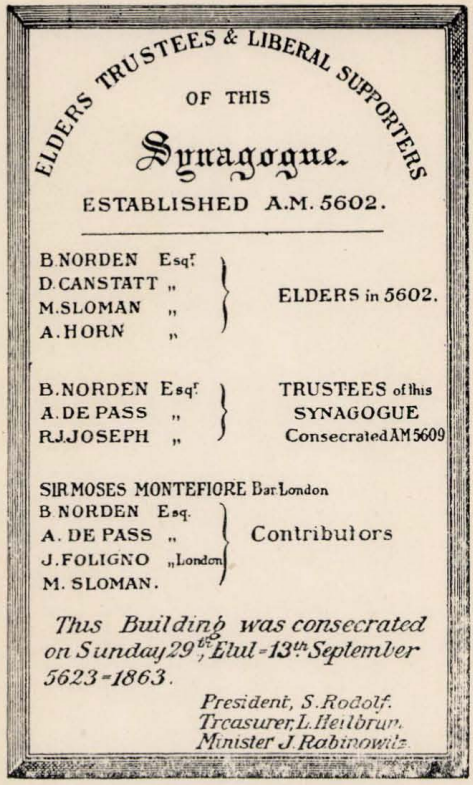
But there were few new members, and although the shortage of funds ceased to be so acute as it had been, interest in the Synagogue waned. In 1852 and 1853 it was at its lowest ebb. There was no minister, petty differences reduced the strength of the Congregation, and the Synagogue had to be closed for months at a time for want of a *Minyan*. Only extraordinary occasions brought the members together. One of these was the funeral of David Canstatt, one

of the original *Tikvath Israel* members. Prayers were read on the occasion by a Mr. J. S. Moore, a well-known St. George's Street merchant, who had not heretofore associated himself with the Community. Mr. Moore wrote to Benjamin Norden regretting that the Synagogue was closed and that services were not held on Sabbaths, and expressing a wish that differences between members would be reconciled and regular services resumed. He promised his own regular and punctual attendance and that of two of his relatives if the Synagogue were reopened. So Norden caused a circular to be sent to every person of Jewish faith in Cape Town that he could discover, inviting him to attend on the following Saturday morning for the Sabbath service. Moore replied by requesting to be made a member of the Congregation, attended the service, took a part as lay Reader, and became a Vestry officer. The services were once more regularly held.

But not for long. Again the attendance slumped and the Synagogue was once more faced with imminent dissolution. The actual proposal was made by Aaron de Pass, but only, as he explained afterwards, when he withdrew it, "for the purpose of ascertaining the real intention of the members and with no view whatever to breaking up the *Kehillah*." For some years these uncertain conditions continued. It seemed to be easier to collect funds than to assemble worshippers; for during this time the Community responded liberally to several appeals for assistance, notably one from Sir Moses Montefiore, who had assisted the Cape Town Synagogue at the time of its consecration and who personally corresponded with the Community on behalf of starving Jews in Palestine and Syria. The

Jews of South Africa contributed in 1854 a total sum of over a hundred pounds towards Sir Moses Montefiore's Palestine fund. It was South African Jewry's first contribution to the Holy Land.

In 1858, at a hint from the Chief Rabbi conveyed in a letter to the Congregation, it was resolved to make the necessary effort to obtain a Minister. The Committee drew up a list of members who would bind themselves to subscribe for at least three years to support a minister or reader should a person suitable to fill the office be found. Norden, about to leave for England, promised to give his attention to the selection of a competent candidate subject to the approval of the Chief Rabbi. In February, 1859, he wrote that a Minister had been selected and that he might be expected to arrive during the following month. Suitable preparations were made to receive him. On 1st August, 1859, the Synagogue was re-opened and Service was conducted there by the Rev. Mr. Joel Rabinowitz. A new era had begun for the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation.



TABLET RECORDING THE CONSECRATION OF THE "OLD" OR ST. JOHN'S ST. SYNAGOGUE.

CHAPTER THREE.

The Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz' Ministry : The St. John's Street Synagogue, 1863.

THE Rev. Mr. Joel Rabinowitz came from Birmingham, where he was second Minister to the principal Hebrew Congregation. He was born in Poland, at Lublin, and had been educated in the rabbinical schools. Migrating to England at the age of twenty-four, he was engaged for four years in research at the Bodleian Library, after which he entered the ministry. At the end of three years he accepted the post at Cape Town, recommended to the Congregation by the Chief Rabbi, and held it honourably for twenty-three years.

On his arrival he took stock of his little flock in Cape Town and of the Jews scattered throughout the Colony, of whom he found some sixty families of those sufficiently attached to Judaism to make it desirable for the Minister to get into touch with them. Some of these families already subscribed to the Cape Town Synagogue. The Cape Town Community had not greatly increased since the time, nearly twenty years earlier, when the first service had been held. There were rarely more than thirty persons present at the ordinary Sabbath services, and Rabinowitz himself has recorded that the number of conforming Jewish families attached to the Synagogue at that time was not more than fifteen. But a generation of South

African-born Jews was growing up not assimilated in religion to the gentile population as the descendants of all former Jewish settlers had been. Outside Cape Town there were three Jewish communities all closely associated with the Cape Town synagogue and, as it were, offshoots of it. They had each a communal burial ground and an organisation for holding services, though there was no synagogue or minister anywhere but in Cape Town. The communities were those of Grahamstown, Graaff Reinet and Port Elizabeth. Rabinowitz travelled to every part of the Colony and became acquainted with Jewish Colonists wherever he went, corresponded with them, kept in touch with them by occasional visits, and maintained their support for the Cape Town Synagogue. He became indeed the recognised head of South African Jewry, and his spiritual and philanthropic ministrations extended from Cape Town to every part of the Colony where Jews had settled, and even to remote places beyond its borders.

In the Cape Town Congregation the only surviving member of the original *Tikvath Israel* was Samuel Rodolf. He had acted as Reader and Marriage Officer for a number of years and was President of the Congregation many times. Benjamin Norden had retired and gone to live in England, where he died in 1875. He visited the Colony once after his retiral; his family remained in South Africa. Aaron de Pass was rarely in Cape Town, though he continued to subscribe to the Synagogue. His son Daniel arrived in 1859 and immediately joined the Congregation, which he continued to support long after he had ceased to live at the Cape. The President was Louis Heilbron, an



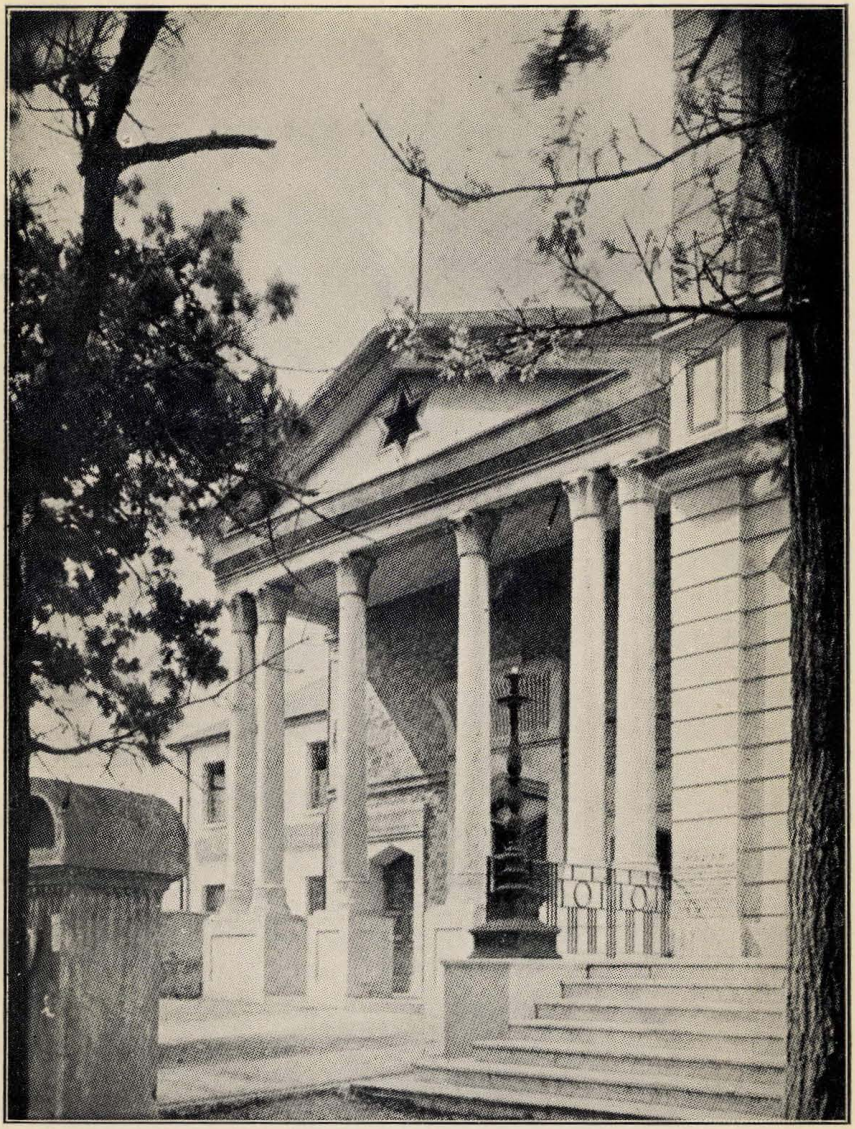
SAMUEL RODOLF.

enthusiastic seconder of Rabinowitz's philanthropic projects. He had settled at an early date as a trader in Calvinia and, after twenty years, had retired to live in Cape Town where he made communal work his hobby. The Minister's work also found strong su,pport from the Honorary Secretary, E. H. Solomon who subsequently settled at Algoa Bay, where he was amongst the founders of the first synagogue there. He it was, also, who founded the " Philanthropic Society of the Jewish Community of Cape Town" in 1859. As the Jewish Board of Guardians, that body is still alive and active.

Within a year of Rabinowitz's arrival the number of members had materially increased and the Jews of Cape Town and the Colony through the Minister's energy and enthusiasm had put the Synagogue on a firm financial basis, reduced the mortgage on the buildings, and were able to contribute considerable sums to the Cape Free Dispensary and other favourite philanthropic objects of the Minister's.

He realised soon after he arrived that a properly built synagogue was a first necessity for the Congregation. The building that had been adapted for use as a place of worship ten years before,-was in serious disrepair, and he set himself the task of raising funds for building a synagogue. He obtained willing support from the Jews in the country as well as those of his own congregation and, in 1861, a property in St. John's Street was purchased for £1,800. In consisted of a house and stables and a large garden extending back as far as the Government Avenue. In the garden amonst the trees a site was cleared and the foundation stone laid. The manner of its laying is interesting,

especially to those who set great store by initiatory ceremonial ; for the occasion was a solemn one, no less than that of the laying of the Cornerstone of the Synagogue in South Africa. It was generally agreed that Samuel Rodolf, who had witnessed and participated in every step in the formation of the Jewish Community of the Cape up to that time, should enjoy the honour of performing this ceremony. On Monday, 8th September, 1862, the entire Congregation assembled at the Synagogue Chambers in St. John Street at the time appointed, and walked in procession to the place where the stone was to be laid. Mr. E. Henry Solomon acted as Master of Ceremonies, and we must imagine an array of top-hatted gentlemen following in order due: P. Solomon bore a velvet cushion on which reposed a silver trowel; Louis Heilbron held a mortar-board on which he carried the mortar mixed and ready; Moses Abrahams had a cornucopia and stalks of corn; S. Lasker carried wine, and M. L. Bensusan oil; Daniel de Pass held a scroll containing the names of the Congregation; Adolph Gordon a box of the coins of Her Majesty's realm, and Moritz Lewis brought up the rear with a copy of the original document to be placed in the cavity of the foundation stone. Arrived at the spot, the Rev. Joel Rabinowitz recited the appropriate psalms. Then Michael Preuss addressed the President, Samuel Rodolf, and presented him, on behalf of the Congregation, with the silver trowel, requesting him to perform the most important ceremony of the day. Rudolf having suitably replied, Moritz Lewis read aloud a copy of the scroll containing the names of the Congregation. Daniel de Pass placed the scroll within the cavity, and Gordon the box of



THE "OLD" OR ST. JOHN'S ST. SYNAGOGUE.

coins. The President spread the mortar and placed the stone. Moses Abrahams scattered the corn, Bensusan poured out the oil, and Lasker the wine, upon the foundation stone. Having lavished these attentions upon the symbolic corner-stone of the Synagogue in South Africa, the members attended to an address by the Minister, who concluded by offering up a prayer in Hebrew and English.

The building of the Synagogue proceeded, but before long the Committee became embarrassed for lack of funds. To obtain sufficient to meet immediate demands it had been decided to dispose of the Bouquet Street property; but a purchaser had not been found. Every means of raising money had been exploited. Months went by and the old property had not been sold. Attempts to raise a loan by a mortgage on it were prevented by a technical hindrance, and it was resolved to spend a sum of money to put in it repair and then to let it. Immediately the repairs had been carried out Heilbron announced to the Committee that he had succeeded in disposing of it for £675.

At last the building was completed. The interior furnishings and ritual articles were provided by donation, and on Sunday, 13th September, 1863, it being *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, 5623 and the 14th anniversary of the opening of the Bouquet Street Synagogue, the new synagogue was consecrated with ceremony in the presence of the whole Congregation and many Christian friends and visitors.

The building still stands. To the present generation it is merely the "Old" Synagogue, as it was indeed to their fathers, a convenient hall for communal gatherings of one sort and another; but to nineteenth

century South African Jewry it was the Cape Town Synagogue. It was even more. In a sense it was the Synagogue of South Africa. No other Synagogue had yet been built; the subscribers and donors included the majority of Jews in South Africa at the time; at least, of those who had not entirely severed their connection with the Jewish religion. In the remote parts of the Colony, in the Free State, and in Natal, there were Jews who looked to the Cape Town Synagogue as their religious and ritual centre, and to Mr. Rabinowitz as their Pastor. There were frequent applications for his services in places to which long journeys by post-cart had to be made. Thus, in 1865, he visited Grahamstown where several families engaged his services as *Mohel* for their infant sons. The following year he journeyed to Dordrecht and to Aliwal North. He performed circumcisions at Port Elizabeth on more than one occasion before there was a qualified officer in that town. In the same way he visited the Jews in Queenstown, Fauresmith, and Smithfield as well as those in places nearer home. His long and frequent absences deprived Cape Town of his services, and the Congregation demanded in return, and obtained with cordiality, donations to their Synagogue. Wherever Rabinowitz went he made it his special business to visit all the Jewish families in the district and enrol them if possible as members of the Synagogue.

But in spite of all his exertions the Synagogue was not flourishing. In 1866, the Committee reported that the finances were at low ebb. Rabinowitz immediately solicited assistance from fifty-six Jews scattered about South Africa, and obtained a ready response in donations. But only his determined and persistent appeals

to the Jews in the country places kept the Cape Town Synagogue going in these years. For lean times had come. A general commercial depression was settling on the country, and it lay heavily on the Jews generally engaged in commercial pursuits. The membership fell. In spite of the increase during the first few years after Mr. Rabinowitz's arrival, the Congregation always tended to dwindle in number. Some of the older ones retired from business and went to live overseas, like Benjamin Norden. More often the departures from Cape Town were those of men whose commercial interests took them to other parts of South Africa, or of business men who went into districts where competition was less, to seek their fortunes. By 1864 the last of the original founders surviving, Samuel Rodolf, had left Cape Town. He departed on a visit to England, and on his return settled at Algoa Bay. His departure was made the occasion of a testimonial to his services and a copious flow of complimentary speeches intended to be accompanied by the presentation of a handsome silver *Kiddush* cup designed and wrought by a Cape Town artist. The artist delivered the cup, indeed, but too late for the ceremony, and only in the nick of time as the steamer was leaving. Other valuable members left, Louis Heilbron, Rodolf's fellow warden, the following year, B. Heilbron, W. Abrahams, W. Klisser, who had played considerable parts in the Community's affairs. Ordinary members came and went, but by 1869 the losses exceeded the gains and the decline had set in. A severe drought and the collapse of the wool market had depressed the country in general.

It was becoming difficult to meet current expenses. The Synagogue needed frequent and expensive repairs. In 1869 the entire ceiling had to be renewed and other urgent repairs effected. During the next two years the Congregation had reached that point once more when it was on the verge of dissolution, and it looked as if the Synagogue would have to be closed. In this situation came an offer to Mr. Rabinowitz to leave the Cape Town Congregation. At Algoa Bay the Jewish Community was on the up-grade. A synagogue had been acquired and Rodolf, now settled at Port Elizabeth, invited his old Minister on behalf of the Port Elizabeth Jews to go over to them. Rabinowitz was still the only Jewish minister in South Africa, and although attached to Cape Town, his parish was in effect wherever Jews were to be found in the sub-continent. He had every inducement to go to the new and rising congregation, but he resolved not to desert his expiring charge.

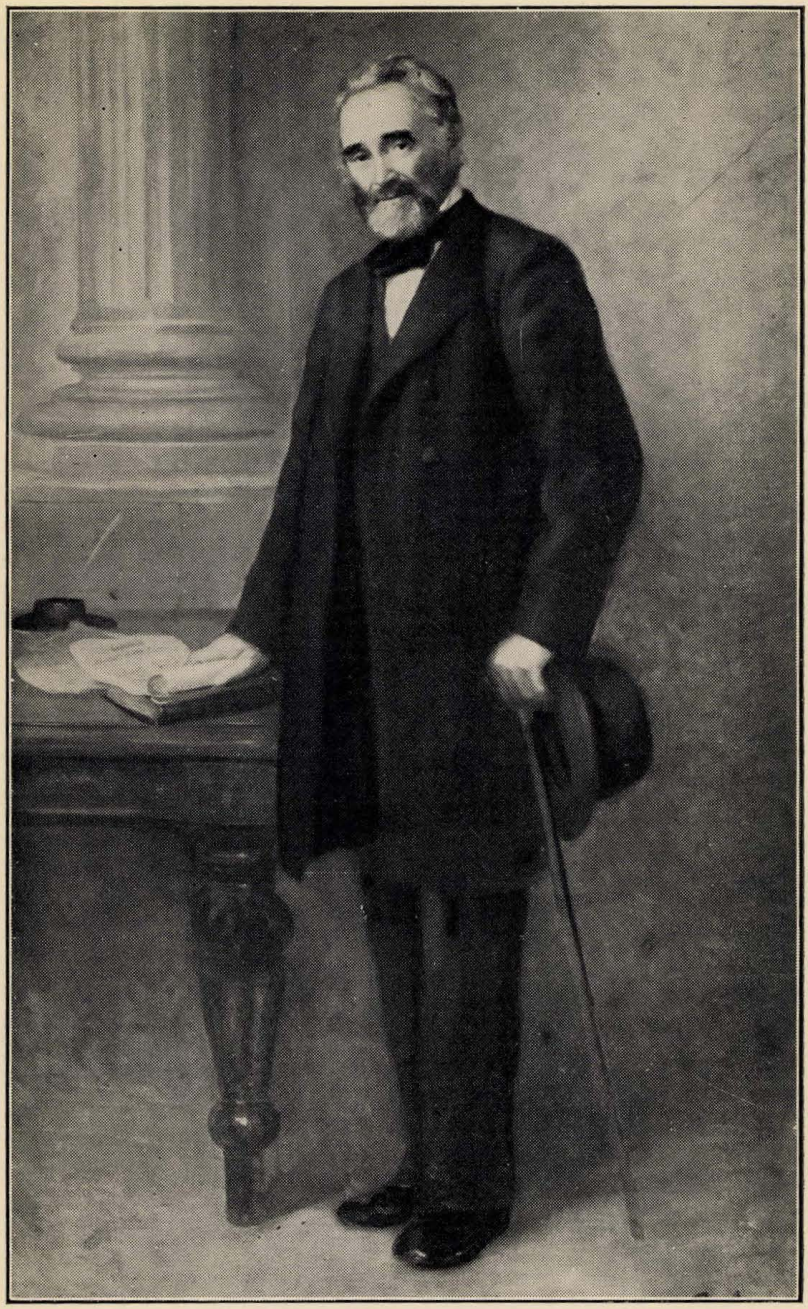
At the annual meeting of members, held in 1871, there was an attendance of no more than six, and the Minister, in acknowledging the thanks of the members for his services during the year, remarked that he regretted that the future prospect of the Congregation was gloomy, as nearly all the old members had left or were about to leave. He hoped that those who remained would make an earnest and united effort to relieve the community of the greatest portion of its liabilities. The Synagogue had cost £2,200 to erect. There was a heavy mortgage bond to be redeemed, and for a small congregation, the membership of which numbered rarely more than forty and was now barely thirty, the burden was a weighty one.

In better times the immediate necessities for cash had been furnished by willing members who had advanced money for short periods at low interest or no interest at all. This way out of immediate pecuniary difficulties was not now available. The situation was rendered more difficult by a totally unexpected factor. The country in general was emerging from the cloud of commercial depression that had obscured it for some years now, and was beginning to taste the brighter prospects radiating from the north where the diamond mines were enriching not a few, and stimulating commerce for all. Paradoxically, the discovery of riches in the north was but another blow to the hard hit Congregation of Cape Town, for the exodus of many to the diamond fields in quest of wealth served but to deplete the Congregation further and to increase the liability for the burden of debt on those that remained. But the time was not far distant when the wave of prosperity that was flooding the country would make itself felt in Cape Town, and the Hebrew Congregation would not be without some share in it.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz' Ministry: "The Greatest Beggar." 1859-1882.

MR. Rabinowitz was a man of great energy and considerable talents, foremost amongst which was his remarkable ability to induce every person with whom he came into contact to subscribe to the charitable and humane objects for which he was always collecting funds. He was known in the Jewish Community and far and wide outside it to two generations of South Africans as the "Greatest Beggar that ever came to South Africa," and he rejoiced in the title. His philanthropic labours never ceased even after he had retired from the service of the Congregation until his death in 1902. Unfortunate people, without distinction of sect, and in many parts of the world, starving Jews in Tangiers, distressed Jews in Jerusalem, oppressed Jews in Poland, Poor Whites in South Africa, hospitals and dispensaries in the Cape, the hungry poor in London, widows and orphans of the Franco-Prussian War, all came within the scope of his charitable endeavours. Nor did he spare his own purse in the causes that he championed. He was never without a subscription list; and he appears to have been a person of such agreeable manner that he was always welcomed. He came to be a familiar figure and greatly esteemed amongst all classes in Cape Town, and he numbered amongst his personal friends public men of



THE REV. JOEL RABINOWITZ.

From a painting by Tennyson Cole.)

his day including the Governor, Sir Bartle Frere, and the foremost parliamentarian, Mr. Saul Solomon.

Sir Bartle Frere showed his regard for Rabinowitz in 1877 by attending the wedding in the Synagogue, with Lady Frere and their daughters and staff, of Mr. Rabinowitz's daughter Rose to Mr. Leon Lewis. The Governor's party drove through the Avenue to the Synagogue and were received by the Minister and the President. After the ceremony His Excellency congratulated the bride and her parents and presented her with a finely-bound Bible and Lady Frere gave her an Indian fan of curious workmanship. It was probably the only occasion on which a Cape Governor was present at a Jewish wedding.

In 1871 Rabinowitz set to work with characteristic energy to extricate the Synagogue from the slough into which bad times had plunged it. His visits to the country again began to bring in a crop of donations and, from time to time, new members. He was determined to reduce the oppressive mortgage on the Synagogue buildings, turning to account his genius for collecting funds for charitable and religious purposes. He begged assiduously, and succeeded within the year in persuading his fellow Jews in various parts of the country to furnish as much as £750 towards the liquidation fund. Further, the ordinary revenue of the Synagogue had increased, and there was a respectable balance at the end of the year.

The recovery had been rapid. It was only one year since the prospects of the Congregation had been declared gloomy. At the general meeting of members in 1872 when the material position of the Congregation came to be considered, the President, Moritz Lewis,

congratulated the members on the flourishing financial state of their Synagogue. They were sharing in a general prosperity. The new stream of immigrants making for the diggings had brought business to the shopkeepers of Cape Town. Diggers coming back successful had brought wealth to the town and to the Congregation. Old members returning subscribed liberally out of their good fortune. Everywhere commerce was brisker and an air of hopeful expectancy replaced what had at best been a depressed resignation.

Nevertheless the Congregation did not ignore the fact that the improvement in the affairs of the Synagogue owed much to the zeal of their Minister. They acknowledged it by their grateful thanks, and seized the occasion of his silver wedding to present him with a congratulatory address and a generous cheque for a sum of money collected amongst his friends and admirers both Jewish and Christian. Amongst the latter was the widely respected, the Hon. Mr. William Porter, Attorney-General of the Colony, who accompanied a contribution of £50 by a kindly letter of appreciation.

Apart from its more stable finances, the Synagogue was receiving the benefit of an influx of new members. There were fresh enrolments at every meeting in these years. Amongst those who joined in 1872 was the Hon. Simeon Jacobs, C.M.G., Solicitor-General of the Cape, one of the ablest and most esteemed lawyers in the country. He had arrived in South Africa in 1860 with an introduction to Sir George Grey, the Governor, and was admitted as an advocate of the Supreme Court. The following year he was appointed Attorney General for British Kaffraria, an office which

he held for the next six years. He became member for Queenstown in the Cape House of Assembly and in 1874 acted as Attorney General of the Cape Colony. He was subsequently a judge of the Supreme Court and a member of the Executive Council. He introduced and carried two very important measures in the old Cape House, the Cape Colony Responsible Government Bill and the Voluntary Bill. The latter abolished State aid to the Church thereby putting all religious demoninations on an equal footing. Both these measures were principally associated with the parliamentary labours of Mr. Saul Solomon.

Amongst the new members also in 1874 were Samuel Marks, Isaac Lewis and Barnet Lewis, all subsequently to play a prominent role in the development of South African industry. They made a vast fortune by enterprise and perseverance at a time when those qualities were most richly rewarded. Their small capital acquired by petty trading in the Colony was invested in merchandise which they took to the Diamond Fields and disposed of to great advantage. They became claim holders, diggers and brokers. They followed the boom to Barberton when gold had been discovered and from Barberton to the Rand. "Sammy" Marks was able to be of service to Paul Kruger and established a friendly association with him that lasted many years. The Transvaal was now wealthy, but undeveloped commercially and industrially, and Lewis and Marks proceeded to pioneer industrial development, to their own good fortune and the public welfare. They worked coal and copper, gold and diamonds. They ran model farms and carried on scientific agriculture. They established factories for the manufacture of

spirits, glass and jam, and opened up fields for the making of bricks. At a later date Marks played a useful part in smoothing the way for peace negotiations leading to the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War.

The comparative prosperity of the Synagogue now made it possible for some portion of its funds to be expended on charitable objects. In 1875 it was agreed to set aside £100 annually for charity to be administered by the Wardens and the Secretary. From the first years the *Tikvath Israel* Society had undertaken the relief of distress. In the early days the cases were nearly all those of shipwrecked sailors or passengers. One of the former assisted by the Society as early as 1842 became a prosperous merchant, and President in 1860 of the Graaff Reinet Jewish community. It had been the custom from the beginning to keep a charity box for the collection of small donations at every meeting. This established a modest fund from which the private subscriptions that afforded immediate relief to cases of distress that arose might be supplemented. In 1849 the Congregation had found itself involved to the extent of £25 14s. 6½d. on behalf of one of its members who had died insolvent leaving a widow sick and in want. The Treasurer was instructed to pay this sum "when in possession of funds," and further, the Congregation bore the expense of her passage back to her friends in the United States, her native land. Twelve years later the relief of the poor in the Community was undertaken by E. Henry Solomon, the Honorary Secretary, who submitted to the Committee a constitution for a Philanthropic Society. The Philanthropic Society does not seem to have functioned long, perhaps because there were

no cases. Such cases as occurred were adequately conducted by Mr. Rabinowitz, and the Synagogue bore the expense. In 1876 the restriction to £100 a year was removed and the three executive officers were empowered to spend the funds of the Congregation on charitable objects at their discretion. The following year the Philanthropic Society was resuscitated and took over the work of charitable relief from the Synagogue Committee.

Rabinowitz meanwhile had always some public charity for the employment of his philanthropic activities. In 1870 the dependants of French and German soldiers fallen in the War occupied him, the Frontier Memorial Fund after the Galecka War in 1874; in 1875 it was the sufferers from a great fire at Wellington, in 1880 the British orphans of the first Boer War and the distressed Trek-Boers who left the Transvaal on its annexation by Britain. In 1881 widepsread distress amongst Jews in the Russian Empire in consequence of persecution by the Tsar gave him a grand opportunity to exercise his philanthropy. He enlisted the sympathy not only of h's own flock, but of every person he could approach including nearly all the members of both Houses of Parliament, numbers of whom were willing to sit on a relief committee, and raised a sum of £4,000 which was no mean achievement for those days.

Nor was Rabinowitz's activity on behalf of his people all philanthropy, for he was capable of hard hitting, and was indefatigable in their defence with tongue and pen. He conducted a famous controversy which aroused much public interest in 1876 with the Rev. Mr. Frans Lion Cachet (Levi Segal), a converted Dutch

Jew and a leading light of the Dutch Reformed Church, who proposed to bestow on Rabinowitz and his flock the undesired blessing of Christianity. The honours in the controversy were undecided, and there were no converts on either side.

During Rabinowitz's ministry the Congregation began to make provision for the regular instruction of the children in Hebrew and the Jewish religion. Classes had hitherto been held from time to time, but had failed to become established as a regular institution. In 1868 the Committee seeking the reason for this failure decided that it was the absence of any demand for payment on the part of the Congregation for the service of teaching the children. If the instruction had to be paid for, argued the Committee, it would be eagerly sought. Rabinowitz offered a special weekly discourse for children, and classes in Hebrew and religion, and the Committee decided to make a charge, to the parents of the children who attended, of two guineas a year, hoping that this would ensure regular and punctual attendance. The teacher, Mr. Rabinowitz, was empowered to use his discretion in admitting children free of charge. Daniel de Pass, Michael Benjamin and Mark Klisser undertook to form a committee to regulate the school. A special Saturday afternoon sermon was instituted, anticipating the Children's Services introduced at a later date by the Rev. Mr. Bender. On Sunday mornings and Wednesday afternoons classes were held. At the end of the first half-year the children were attending regularly and doing well. How long the school continued its satisfactory progress is not known. It is likely that it did not survive the lean times of the next two or three

years; for in 1878 the whole question of religious education came up again for discussion, and Mark Klisser still forward in the cause of education became chairman of a School Committee "to co-operate with Mr. Rabinowitz and draw up and act on a scheme for the proper education of the Jewish children of Cape Town." A regular "Sunday School" was established and continued to function satisfactorily for many years; at least as far as the religious education of the children went. It was not until after Rabinowitz's retirement that he interested himself in the secular education of Jewish children and was instrumental in establishing in connection with the Congregation a Jewish public school.

Not alone upon the rising generation was the influence of the Synagogue shed, but on the small Jewish communities remote from Cape Town. Until 1872 the Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz was the sole Jewish minister in South Africa. But he maintained contact with the smaller communities extending the influence of the Mother Synagogue to Grahamstown, Graaff Reinet, Algoa Bay and the Diamond Fields. The two former communities expired in the sixties. Algoa Bay had settlements of Jews at an early date, mostly members of the Cape Town Community; Joseph Hess in 1841 and Nathan Moss in 1848 were both original members of the *Tikvath Israel*. George Britton in 1845 was also a member of the Cape Town Community and Samuel Nathan, established in Port Elizabeth in 1850, was associated with the Mosenthals. They established a congregation as early as 1855, which met in a temporary place of worship. A permanent congregation was founded in 1857 and from that date until

1872 when the Rev. Mr. Rappoport, the first Jewish minister in Port Elizabeth, arrived, the Port Elizabeth Congregation looked to the Cape Town Minister as its religious leader. The first Synagogue was consecrated at Port Elizabeth in 1877 and the congratulatory message sent from the parent Synagogue is recorded in the books of the Congregation.

Another synagogue which arose under the fostering regard of the Cape Town minister was that of Kimberley. The "Griqualand West Jewish Association" formed in 1871 held the High Festivals in a corrugated iron structure. Lionel Phillips, Woolf Joel and Isaac Lewis were amongst the worhippers, but the initiative was taken by Joel Myers, an Eastern District Jew, a pioneer of ostrich farming who was one of the first traders at the Diggings. Myers acted under Mr. Rabinowitz' instructions in the conduct of the services, and the Minister sent from Cape Town several sets of festival prayer books and a *Shofar*, a gift from the parent congregation. He regretted that Cape Town could not spare a *Sepher Torah*. Within two years a properly built synagogue was erected. A wedding was solemnised in the new synagogue shortly after its consecration, the bridegroom being a young fortune-seeker from London. He is now the venerable Colonel Sir David Harris, K.C.M.G. The Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz officiated for a time as minister at Kimberley before a minister had been appointed, and after he had retired from his post at Cape Town.

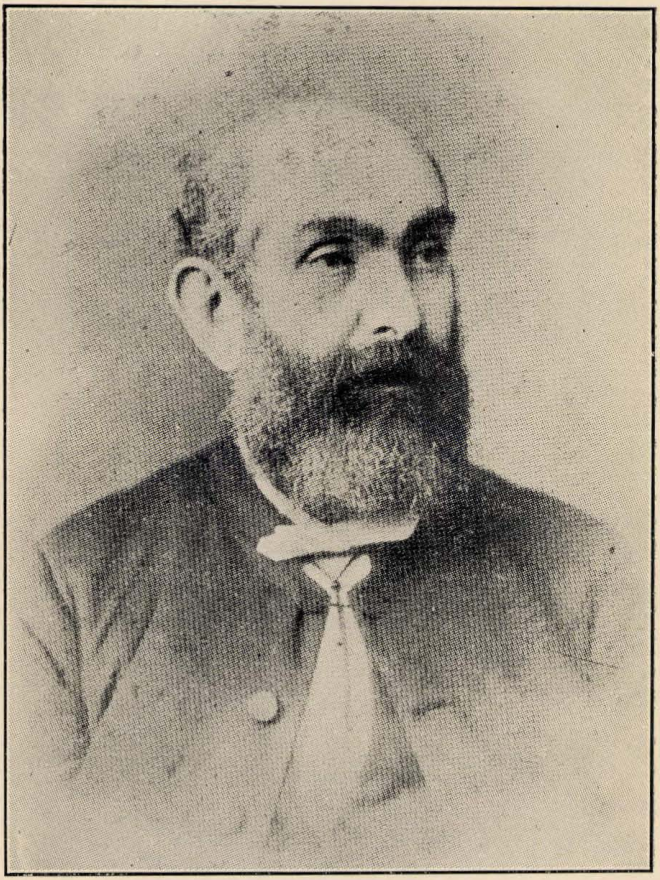
It was Joel Rabinowitz also who officiated at the earliest services in 1887 of the "Witwatersrand Goldfields Jewish Association" that subsequently became

the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation and that built the first synagogue in the Transvaal in 1888.

During Rabinowitz's ministry in the Congregation he had the warm support of the wardens and officers of the Synagogue, the principal of whom were: Michael Benjamin (1857-1861), Louis Heilbron (1859-1864), Samuel Rodolf (1862, 1863, 1881), Michael Henry Benjamin, Moses Levi Bensusan, Moritz Lewis (1872-1877), Lewis Alexander (1872-1885 with an interval of three years), Mark Klisser, S. Lasker, and David Isaacs. The last, besides his charitable works within and without the Jewish community, is noteworthy as a pioneer of industry in Cape Town. The furnishing business started in 1873 by David Isaacs developed into the first manufactory of furniture on a large scale. Half a century ago it employed over one hundred workmen, and it supplied for many years the only household and other furniture of quality and taste that was made in South Africa, apart from the work of individual craftsmen.

After twenty-three years' service with the Cape Town Congregation the Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz retired and went to live in England. His resignation produced widespread regret in Cape Town. Marks of esteem from Jews and Christians alike were showered on him. The Congregation prepared a testimonial to him in recognition of his long and worthy service and presented him with a suitable gift, a piece of plate. A public presentation from the citizens of Cape Town, including an address signed by almost every prominent citizen of the time was made at the office in St. George's Street of Mr. Saul Solomon, the site of the present offices of the *Cape Argus*, the newspaper owned and

edited for half a century by Saul Solomon. The Rev. Mr. Thompson, Minister of the Congregational Church in Cape Town and Archdeacon Lightfoot of the English Church acted as Honorary Secretaries for the address, which was to have been delivered to Mr. Rabinowitz by Samuel Rodolf, his old congregant, who had welcomed him on his arrival in 1859. But Rodolf died suddenly shortly before Rabinowitz's departure. Rabinowitz left the Cape in 1882; but his association with the Community did not cease. He lived in England but four years. Then he was back again. He said the climate did not agree with him. He had struck root too firmly in South Africa to be separated from its soil. The post of Minister was filled. He must do something to supplement his savings, the income from which had deteriorated. He resolved to go to the goldfields, not to dig, but to practise as an assayer, the necessary qualifications for which he had still to get. Nothing daunted, nearing sixty years of age, he enrolled as a student of the South African College, and studied metallurgy under the popular professor, Dr. Hahn. In 1887 he qualified, was duly gazetted assayer, and set out for the Rand where he practised with success for some years and accumulated a competence. Returning to Cape Town, he interested himself once more in Communal affairs and in the pursuit of charitable works.



THE REV. A. F. ORNSTEIN.

CHAPTER FIVE.

The Rev. Mr. Ornstein's Ministry: 1882-1895.

MR. Rabinowitz's successor took over the spiritual care of a Congregation increasing in strength and stability. But although he had not to face the tussle with adversity nor the threatened inanition that his predecessor had, there were new problems in the Cape Town Community arising out of circumstances that were affecting the lives of millions of Jews in Europe, and that were providing the propelling force for a new diaspora. Until this period the Jews who had settled in South Africa, of whom those of Cape Town afforded a reasonable sample, were predominantly of English or German origin, but were exclusively of the Western tradition. The stream of settlers that now began to arrive from Eastern Europe, at first in small numbers, but increasing yearly throughout Mr. Ornstein's ministry, presented situations that had not before arisen and that not a little perplexed and sometimes vexed the good minister, who was not accustomed to dealing with "foreigners," as they were then styled.

The Rev. Mr. A. F. Ornstein had been selected in London by the Committee's representatives and appointed by correspondence. He came with the highest recommendations from the Chief Rabbi and the London committee. In June, 1882, he was received formally by the Community at the Royal Hotel. A

Londoner by birth, he had been a teacher at the Jew's Free School and then minister to the Jewish congregation at Portsmouth. In 1860 he had been appointed Headmaster of the Birmingham Hebrew National Schools, and six years later had left England to take up the post of Minister to the Hebrew Congregation of Melbourne in Australia. There he was also editor of the Jewish newspaper *Australian Hebrew*, and a life-governor of the Hospital. In 1875 he returned to England to become Principal of the ancient foundation for the training of Jewish ministers at Portsmouth, Aria College. With an experience so exclusively English or Colonial it is hardly surprising that, already middle aged, he should find it difficult to adjust his views of communal propriety to those of the new element that was swelling the ranks of Jewry in Cape Town.

There were, for instance, interminable differences over the supply of *Kosher* meat, for the provision of which the Synagogue had always made itself responsible. The Congregation engaged a *shochet* (the offices of Minister and *Shochet* had long been separated) who killed for one or two butchers by contract. These butchers had the monopoly of supplying *kosher* meat to the members of the Congregation. If any Jew was orthodox and required his household to eat *kosher* meat, *ipso facto* he was a member of the Congregation and was entitled to buy his meat at the Congregation's butchers at the fixed price agreed upon. But since the meat was killed exclusively for the members, Jews who settled in the City and refrained from joining the Congregation might be prevented from buying *kosher*

meat at all. Hitherto it was inconceivable that one could desire ritually killed meat and yet remain outside the Congregation. But many of the "foreigners" would not join the Congregation, which pained Mr. Ornstein ; and yet they were sufficiently orthodox to refuse any but *kosher* meat ; which is not so paradoxical as it at first appears when it is realised that they regarded the Synagogue and the Minister as heterodox in the extreme by their standards of piety.

The Minister was more deeply pained when the "foreigners" began to form a separate Association, and all his efforts to persuade them to come into the Synagogue were unavailing. The Committee tried to conciliate them by voting £50 towards the salary of a *shochet* to kill for all, members and non-members alike ; but this would not satisfy the dissenters. To the scandal of Mr. Ornstein they engaged the services of a *shochet* who had not the sanction of the Chief Rabbi. Who was the Chief Rabbi to them ? Mr. Ornstein corresponded voluminously and indignantly with London, reporting their scandalously improper behaviour to an authority whom they did not acknowledge. It was all very unfortunate. Neither side would give up its prejudices. It was the conflict between brethren with slightly different views, always more intolerant to one another than are strangers. The "Russian" Jew looked upon the English Jew as heathenish and ignorant. The latter considered the former ignorant and superstitious. They disapproved of one another's pronunciation of Hebrew. The one used Yiddish and believed it to be a holy language, whilst the other despised it as a debased jargon. Both sides, indeed, omitted to practise that toleration within the Com-

munity which they so earnestly desired from outside it; so that, in time, disunion was bound to arise.

In 1885, indeed, an actual breach did occur in the Congregation, and though this difference underlay it, the immediate cause was another matter. A prominent and influential member, a Committee man, was alleged to be guilty of scandalous behaviour tending to bring the Community into disrepute. When brought to book by the Minister he did not deny, but refused either to justify or to amend, his conduct. The Minister demanded that the offender be forced to withdraw from the Committee. The point was contested. Mr. Ornstein insisted. A strong section supported the offender. There was bitter feeling on both sides. The offending member was compelled to resign from the Congregation; but he took with him a number of sympathisers who formed a separate congregation, furnishing a disused stable as a temporary synagogue and holding services for themselves. What was worse in the eyes of the Minister and in the eyes of many of the worthy members of the Synagogue, was the engagement by the dissenting group, of a *shochet*, of course an unapproved one. In vain did Mr. Ornstein appeal to the Chief Rabbi in England, the Very Reverend Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler. Dr. Adler deprecated the behaviour of Mr. Ornstein's straying flock, but was powerless to bring them into the fold. Only slowly was it realised that if there were Jews in a British Colony who refused to recognise the authority of the head of the British Jews, they could refuse with impunity; and they continued increasingly to do so. The situation arose again over the question of burials.

It had been agreed that cemeteries within the urban area were undesirable, and the civic authorities were closing the old burial places in the town and allotting ground for the burial of the dead at Maitland. The Congregation's burial ground at Papendorp, though not filled, was ordered to be closed in 1885. Mr. Ornstein and his Committee feared that the terms of the grant of ground at Maitland would not admit of sufficient control by the Synagogue to ensure burials being performed by persons properly accredited, that is, accredited by the Chief Rabbi, or the ceremonial being carried out according to Jewish law. The authorities were approached to permit the continued use of the old cemetery and an extension of two years was granted. But meanwhile, those who had seceded from the Congregation applied for, and were granted, a cemetery at Maitland; for they were prevented from interring their dead in the old burial ground except an approved minister officiated, to which they would not agree. Ornstein thus found himself checkmated. In 1887 when the old cemetery was officially closed the Congregation purchased a burial ground at Maitland (now Woltemade) so that they might have full control over it, and be able to insist that the burials be performed according to Jewish ceremonial law and by properly qualified persons. It was consecrated in 1888, by which date the breach in the Congregation had happily been healed and the offending member taken back into favour.

There were the same grounds for disagreement over the appointment of a Marriage Officer at Oudtshoorn. Here where Jews had settled and helped to develop a depot for the collection, exchange, and export

of the rich rural produce of the district, and in particular of ostrich feathers, they established a congregation in 1883, the new, East European element predominating. They chose a person to act as minister who did not meet with the approval of the Rev. Mr. Ornstein. There was the same appeal to the Chief Rabbi, without immediate result. In this case Ornstein appealed also to the civil authorities at the Cape, the offending minister having been legally appointed a Marriage Officer. But he was to get no support there; for even had the Cape Government agreed to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi, no clerical sanction was necessary as a qualification for the appointment of Marriage Officer. Happily for all parties, an acceptable minister was engaged by the Oudtshoorn Jews a few years later in the person of the Rev. M. Wolfsohn, and when, in 1890, a synagogue was about to be built, the Rev. Mr. Ornstein was invited to visit Oudtshoorn in order to lay the foundation stone. He also assisted the Paarl Jews to organise a congregation, which was later to acquire a synagogue. Congregations were airising in Stellenbosch, Worcester and Robertson, all more or less in touch with, and fostered by Cape Town. In 1884 applications came from Beaufort West and from Prince Albert for the loan of a *Shofar* for the Penitential season.

As for Cape Town, it was decidedly on the up-grade. The year of Mr. Ornstein's arrival the Congregation was larger than it had ever been, and at the general meeting of members in the following year the Treasurer, Mr. Lewis Alexander, announced that the income for the year was £1,049 12s., an amount "to which it has never before attained since the Congregation

was founded." There was talk of a new synagogue. For some years now overflow services had been held in the schoolroom during the Festivals because the synagogue would hold only a portion of the worshippers who flocked to attend the services. But the plan to erect a new building was rejected, and instead it was resolved to enlarge the synagogue then in use. During many months the members had to make shift with the schoolroom as a place of worship. But in 1885 the enlarged and reconstructed building was consecrated, and at least for a few years there was room for all comers.

When the reconstruction was under consideration there was a demand for the construction of a *Mikveh*, and the ritual bath was accordingly built, but at the expense of three parties who had made application for proselytism. The early congregations were very much concerned with the problem of proselytism from the nature of the circumstances affecting the lives of the members. It was inevitable in a country with a scattered Jewish population and little opportunity for communal social contact that marriages should not infrequently take place in which the bride was not of the Jewish faith. The children of such marriages were ritually " strangers " and might not, by Jewish law, marry Jews. A proposal in 1850 to ask the Chief Rabbi to send the Rev. Mr. Pulver authority to perform " every religious ceremony that he or the Congregation may consider necessary," including that of making proselytes, met with such determined opposition that the letter to the Chief Rabbi that had already been written was never sent. The intention was to give the young men of a generation

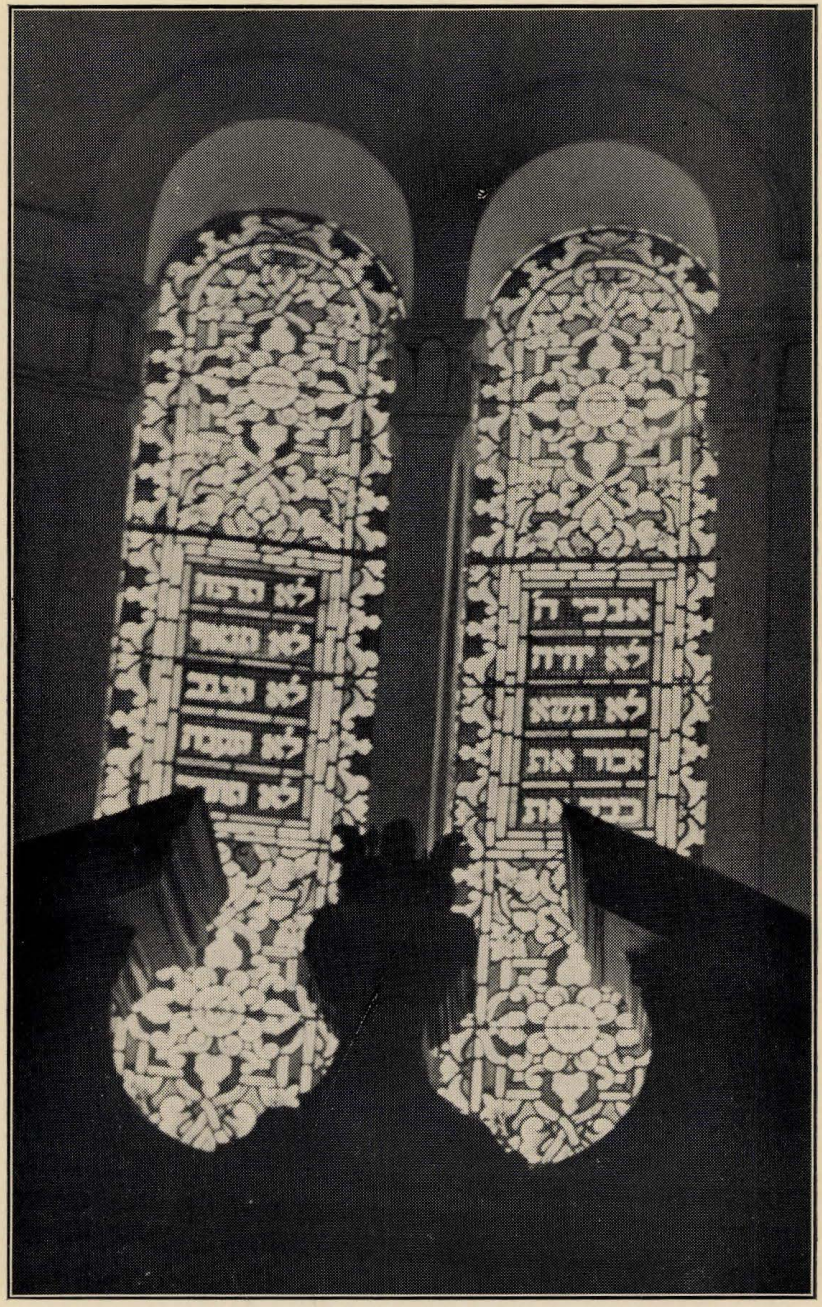
in which a Jewish community had been established, no encouragement to marry "out of the Faith." But the measure does not appear to have had the desired effect. Intermarriage with the Christian population continued, so that a generation later, in Mr. Ornstein's time, we find numerous requests from Jews married to gentile wives, or about to marry gentiles, that their wives or intended wives might be given the full status of Jews. There were also requests on behalf of children born of Christian mothers. The policy of the Congregation was to refuse such applications and to admit only those sanctioned by the Chief Rabbi. To complete the ceremony of conversion a *Mikveh* was necessary. When the Synagogue was about to be reconstructed there were at least three applications for proselytism before the Committee from people approved by the Chief Rabbi. The three parties anxious to complete the ceremony and acquire full status as Jews and Jewesses offered to defray between then according to their means, the cost of building the *Mikveh*, and the Congregation accepting their offer, the ritual bath was accordingly constructed.

The frequent call on the services of the Cape Town Minister by the country congregations had long rendered it desirable that a Second Minister should be engaged, and in 1889 the Synagogue increased its establishment by the appointment of the Rev. F. Lyons as Second Minister and *Shochet*. In his early years as Minister, Mr. Rabinowitz had been required to officiate also as *Shochet*, but an official had subsequently been appointed to combine the offices of *Shochet* and *Shammas*. Mr. Barnadsky, who held these offices, resigned in 1886.

It was not the first time he had tendered his resignation. He was accustomed to do so periodically. But before this date the Committee had never taken him at his word but had appeased his discontents with a slight increase to his stipend and overlooked his faults and pacified the members of the Congregation, who were always complaining that he had omitted to carry out properly one or other of his multifarious duties. He was the Synagogue's problem servant. He had to be reprimanded for taking snuff with the members of the Congregation during services. He had to be bidden attend the Synagogue in more respectable attire. His duties at the butchers were not satisfactorily carried out. Now he pleased the butchers and dissatisfied the customers. Then he infuriated the butchers and got the sympathy of the members of the Congregation. The Committee spent a great deal of its time discussing his demeanours and misdemeanours. A mighty effort was made to make him thoroughly respectable, at least outwardly, when the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, and all the principal dignitaries of Church and State were about to visit the Synagogue on the occasion of the consecration after the reconstruction. It was then " Resolved that, while in attendance at the Synagogue, Mr. Barnadsky, the Beadle, wear a silk hat, white tie, and Verger's cloak, and that these articles be bought for him." But under this glory lived the unregenerate Barnadsky who continued to afford modified satisfaction to his employers for another year and then made way for Mr. Mizrachi, the new Beadle and Ritual slaughterer. Despite the change, the conduct of the Beadle still occupied a goodly portion of the Committee's delibera-

tions. With the appointment of a Second Minister, in 1889, the two offices of *Shammas* and *Shochet* were separated.

Before the reconstruction of the buildings, in 1884, the Synagogue was *en fete* for the birthday of Sir Moses Montefiore. It was an era of Great Men, and Sir Moses was the Grand Old Man of British Jewry. He was the most eminent Jew in the world, and had worked for the alleviation of the lot of unfortunate and oppressed Jews in Europe, Asia and Africa, for a longer time than any living person could remember. He enjoyed the esteem and consideration of Queen Victoria, and of kings and princes in two continents. Forty years before, when he was a young man of sixty, Sir Moses had supported and encouraged the infant congregation of Cape Town, and he had been a donor, in 1849, to the earliest synagogue. Now, Cape Town Jews, in common with Jews in many parts of the world, felt that it would be fitting to mark the occasion of his hundredth birthday. A subscription list was opened with the object of raising a fund to be expended in some suitable form of centenary memorial, and it was resolved to set up in the Synagogue the three fine stained glass windows, that are still to be seen, with a brass plate suitably adorned with a tributory inscription suited to the occasion. On the day, there was a special service in the Synagogue at which was read a form of prayer, prepared by the Chief Rabbi for the Centenary of the venerable philanthropist and used in every part of the British Empire. The Jews of South Africa combined to send a congratulatory address to Sir Moses, and the Congregation impressed



PORTION OF WINDOW ERECTED FOR THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE.

the event on the minds of the young by providing a memorable children's treat.

The needs of the children of the Community received the attention of Mr. Ornstein from the beginning. Soon after his arrival he presented a proposal to the Committee for the establishment of a Jewish school. He was an experienced and well qualified schoolmaster at a time when properly qualified teachers were rare in the Colony. He was accustomed to public schools in London and Birmingham, where Jewish children got their religious, as well as their secular education in the same institution and under the same authority. In Cape Town, schools were growing up under the aegis of the various religious demoninations, but subsidised by the Government. He did not see why the Cape Town Jewish community should not support such a school, and educate its own chlldren, most of whom were attending private schools or Roman Catholic convent schools. He got the ear of Dr. Muir (later Sir Thomas Muir), the Superintendent-General of Education, who gave him every encouragement and the promise of a Government grant and inspection. The Committee took up the project enthusiastically. A special education committee was elected and a sum of £300 was voted for a beginning from the Congregation's funds, and an additional sum of £241 was subscribed on the spot by enthusiastic private donors. It was calculated that fifty boys could immediately become pupils of the new Congregational school. Provision could be made for two full-time masters and an additional visiting staff. But it turned out that everybody was expecting everybody else to send his sons to the new school; for when a canvass of parents

was made with a view of finding what pupils would be enrolled, it appeared that most of the parents were very well content with the school (Mr. Thorner's private school) that their children were attending, and did not wish to make a change. The undertaking was dropped, at least for several years, and when it was actually carried into effect, the Rev. Mr. Ornstein was no longer interested, for he had started a private school of his own.

Towards the end of the period of Mr. Ornstein's ministry an increasing number of Jews settled in South Africa from the countries of the Russian Empire bordering on Germany and the Baltic. Since 1882 they had been living under conditions increasingly depressed by political and economic disabilities and a Government apparently bent on destroying them. The spirit of enterprise and adventure, hitherto the foremost motives behind immigration, was displaced by the desire of the refugee for a land where he could earn a living, however modestly, free from persecution. In place of single men seeking their fortunes in an undeveloped country, large numbers of families began to arrive at Cape Town, the port of entry, and the Jewish Community found a fruitful field for philanthropy assisting many an unfortunate amongst them. The Philanthropic Society which we saw revived in 1877 was re-established in 1891, and began to function vigorously. In the following year there occurred particularly violent outbreaks in Russia against the Jews, with consequent widespread distress. The Jews of Cape Town met to express their indignation at the outrages, and were united in their sympathy with the victims. A committee was formed for the

collection of funds in order to afford what relief was possible. The Rev. Mr. Ornstein preached a special sermon on the occasion, to which there was wide and sympathetic response, and a large sum of money was sent to the Central Appeal Committee in Europe for distribution amongst the sufferers.

During Mr. Ornstein's term of office as Minister, the principal Wardens of the Congregation were: Lewis Alexander, P. Levenberg, B. Elsner (1885-90), A. J. Platnauer (1889-90 and 1892), David Isaacs (1890 and 1891), Maurice Eilenberg (1892), M. Robel and L. Sytner (1893-95). A distinguished visitor to the Synagogue in Mr. Ornstein's last year was Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, who attended the Sabbath service and contributed liberally to the Congregation's charities.

In 1891 Mr. Ornstein, being in ill health, was granted leave of absence and went to England for medical treatment. On his return the same year, his engagement being renewable triennially, he was re-elected, but not without some opposition, for his outspoken objection in the case of the undesirable committee man six years before had engendered some ill feeling which expressed itself not openly, but as an objection to his school. He had established a " collegiate " school for Jewish boys, with a properly qualified staff for secular and religious teaching, the first of its kind in South Africa, and it was claimed, rightly or wrongly, that his duties as minister suffered by his dual attachment, to the Congregation and the School at the same time. When his period of office expired again in 1894 he was not re-appointed. His health was failing. He had witnessed the triumph of the unrighteous.

He had deserved better of the Congregation. But he was made an honorary member of the Synagogue, and he continued to conduct his school until the end of the year. He died in December, 1895.

CHAPTER SIX.

The Rev. Mr. A. P. Bender's Ministry: Transition. 1895-1905.

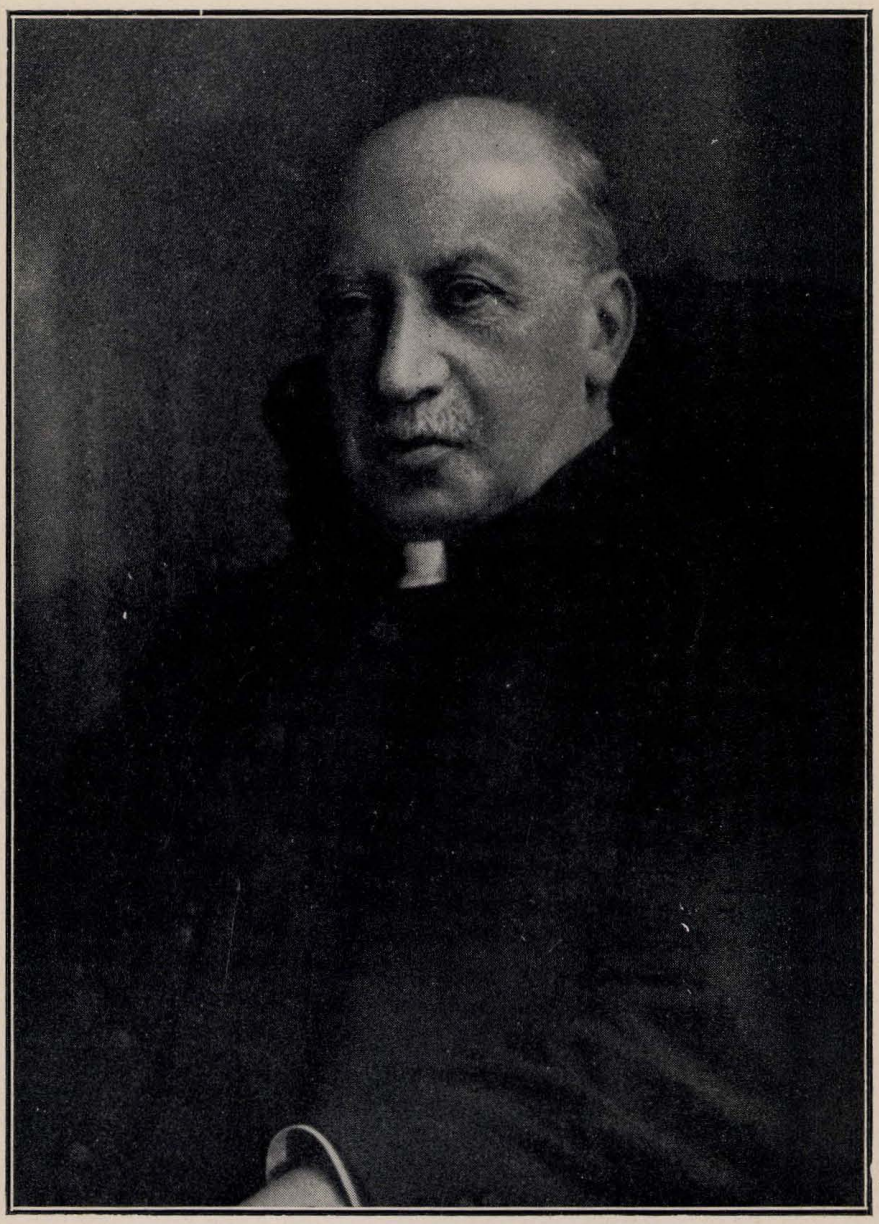
WHILE the 19th century was drawing to a close, and throughout the early years of the present century, the Jewish community in Cape Town was entering on a new stage in its history. In 1895 a new Minister arrived. In 1905 a new Synagogue was consecrated. Between these two dates, that process of specialisation that is characteristic of every developing organism was beginning in Cape Town Jewry. Until the end of Mr. Ornstein's ministry the congregation had, for all practical purposes, embraced the whole Jewish community of Cape Town. Now, new institutions, independent of the Synagogue, began to arise to fulfil the needs of a rapidly increasing and more diversified Jewish community.

In 1895 there was still a single congregation. Organisations with special communal objects; philanthropy, religious education, the supply of ritually acceptable meat, the interment of the dead, and so on, still functioned under its wing. The appointment of a young, zealous and liberally-educated Minister from one of the older Universities in England, contributed to maintain the position of the Congregation as the representative body of Cape Town Jewry and to continue in it the Western tradition of Jewish orthodoxy. At the same time it could not but reinforce

the trend in some groups to organise in accordance with principles not sufficiently provided for by the established Congregation.

The new Minister, the Rev. Alfred Philipp Bender, born in Ireland, the son of a minister, was selected by a committee of Jewish ministers in London headed by the Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler, appointed Minister by the Cape Town Congregation, and arrived in Cape Town early in the year. He was a graduate of Cambridge University, an exceptionally eloquent preacher and speaker, and an able scholar. He had contributed original work to a learned Jewish publication, and was a competent teacher of Hebrew. He was keenly interested in education, and believed that its importance was such that he devoted a good deal of his life to furthering its cause. In these early years of his ministry he was strongly supported by Mr. Rabinowitz who, in his retirement, took an active part in Communal affairs, so that in the very first year of Bender's ministry at least two major achievements in public education, associated with the Synagogue, are attributable, in great measure, to the energy of Rabinowitz and the enthusiasm of his advocacy and aid. They were the founding of a Chair of Hebrew at the South African College, the present University of Cape Town, and the establishment, in connection with the Congregation, of a public school for Jewish pupils in Cape Town.

The Senate of the South African College, noting the arrival of a University man with high qualifications for the teaching of Hebrew, advised the College Council to secure his services. There had been no Hebrew teaching at the College since, twenty years

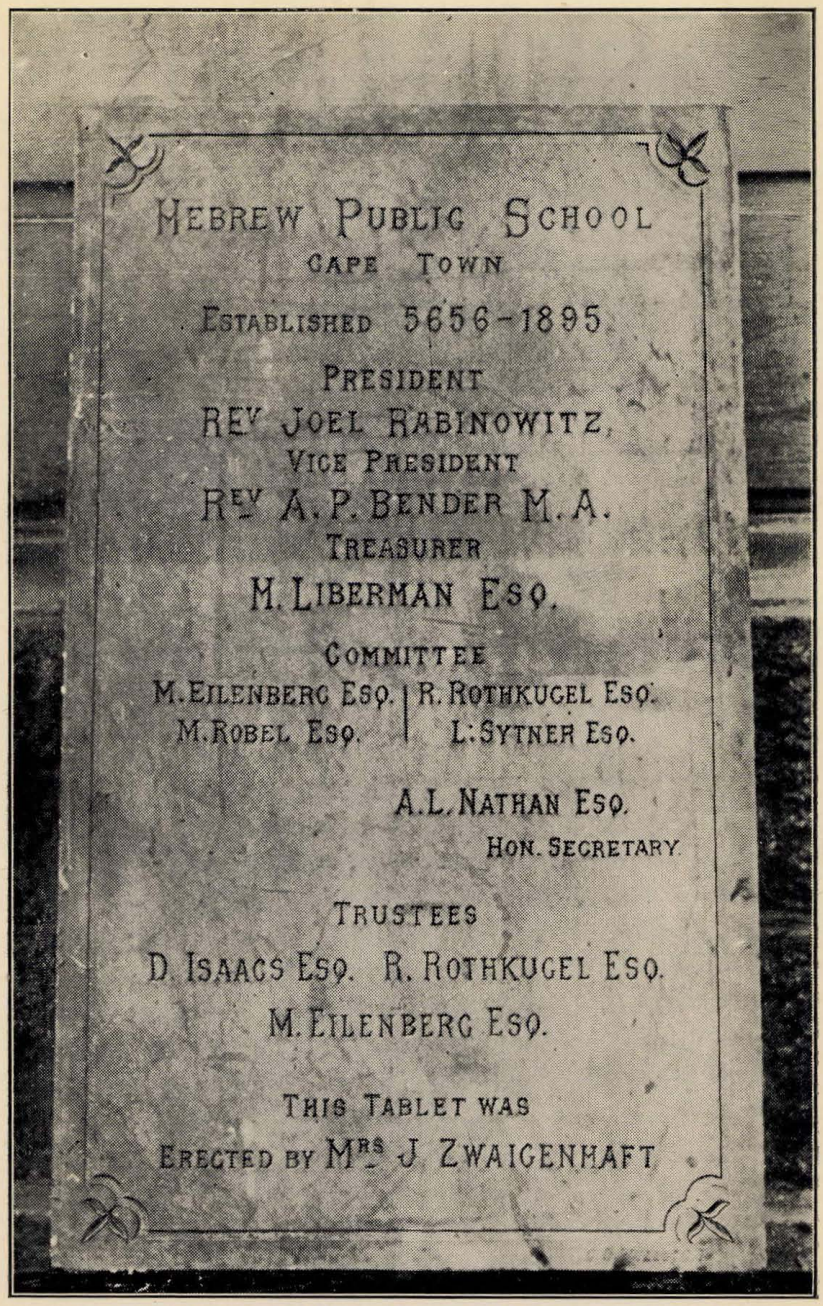


THE REV. ALFRED PHILIPP BENDER.

earlier, the subject had been discontinued on the death of Professor Heyns. It had been a subject of instruction in 1829, when the College was founded, and had been continued, but with long intervals during which no teacher had been available. Rabinowitz determined that means would be found for the endowment of a Chair of Hebrew at the College, and he succeeded in obtaining guarantees for the payment of an annual sum of money to maintain the taching of Hebrew. Then he persuaded his wealthy and liberal friends, Messrs. Lewis and Marks, and Mr. David Isaacs, to donate substantial sums, sufficient to provide a fund for the endowment of a Chair. The College Council was agreeable to the foundation of the Chair, and appointed the Rev. Mr. Bender, the first Professor of Hebrew, a post which he held to the end of his life and in which he was succeeded by Rabbi Israel Abrahams, who followed him as Minister of the Congregation in 1937.

The plan for a school in connection with the Congregation was in a way a resumption of that so earnestly advocated by Mr. Ornstein more than ten years earlier. Rabinowitz took the initiative, called a meeting of members of the Community and succeeded in getting the necessary support. Dr. Muir, the Superintendent-General of Education, was again approached, gave wholehearted encouragement to the plan, and promised the support of his Department. Money was readily subscribed, and suitable premises were purchased, the property known as Hope Mill, in the Government Avenue, and they were furnished by public-spirited supporters from the Community in Cape Town and elsewhere. Amongst the principal donors were

Mr. "Sammy" Marks, Mr. R. Rothkugel and Mrs. H. Liberman. Mr. M. Eilenberg erected a woodwork room and furnished it, one of the first to be attached to any school in the City. A fully qualified teacher, capable also of teaching Hebrew, besides the ordinary public school curriculum, was appointed from London, and the Cape Town Hebrew Congregational School, as it was at first called, was opened with Mr. Rabinowitz as President and Mr. Bender as Vice-President. Mr. Mark Cohen, the Principal, was joined shortly afterwards by Mr. E. H. Kloot, also a qualified London teacher, who had been employed at Mr. Ornstein's School, now closed, and a staff of teachers engaged locally was gradually acquired as the size of the school increased. The formal opening took place in 1897. Voluntary contributions flowed in from all parts of the country. The School was fully subsidised by the Education Department of the Cape Colony, and received an annual grant from the Synagogue funds. Rabinowitz spared neither effort nor money in furthering the interests of the School and, at his death, in 1902, bequeathed to it £1,000 and a valuable property. The School grew and became the most flourishing of the Congregation's institutions. Year after year the President, speaking at the annual meeting of members, referred to the good results that the school was showing and to the praise that the Education Department had bestowed on it. It was the Congregation's child, he said in 1899, and the members had cause to be proud of it. The enrolment of fifty-two pupils was doubled in the second year and rose steeply with each succeeding year until it was over 500. At Dr. Muir's suggestion the word "Congregational" was



TABLET RECORDING THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONGREGATION'S SCHOOL.

dropped and the style of the School became the "Hope Mill (Hebrew) Public School." In 1907 the newly established Cape School Board took over sole financial responsibility for the School, but it continued by official permission to retain the name "Hebrew," and its pupils, all but an insignificant minority, were the children of Jewish parents. Hebrew and the Jewish religion were still amongst the subjects of instruction, special teachers being paid for this service from the funds still in the hands of the Congregations' Trustees. Only after many years was the Hebrew teaching discontinued. But the Rev. Mr. Bender continued to take a fostering interest in the School and its offshoot, the Constitution Street (Hebrew) Public School, early established to take the younger pupils under the headmastership of Mr. E. H. Kloot. During the entire twenty-five years of the existence of the Hope Mill School Mr. Bender was its chairman. It finally succumbed in 1920 to a reorganisation of schools by the Cape School Board, when it was dissolved and its pupils re-distributed.

It was not, indeed, only with Jewish schools that the Rev. Mr. Bender concerned himself. He became, from an early date in his ministry, one of the foremost educational workers in Cape Town. He was elected in 1907, heading the poll, a member of the first School Board for the Cape Division, and he continued to serve the interests of education in the Cape as an active member of the School Board until his death. Though he concerned himself deeply with the educational welfare of boys and girls of all sects, his special efforts were directed to those schools in the City where there were concentrations of Jewish pupils.

The very first Sabbath after his arrival he held Divine Service in the afternoon in the Synagogue especially for boys and girls. The service was carefully selected, and included an address suited to the understanding and the interests of young people. His eloquence and liveliness of illustration readily engaged the attention of his young congregants, and the Sabbath Afternoon Service for Boys and Girls became an institution that did not fail during all the years that Bender held the office of Minister to the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, and was continued after his death. He instituted also Bible classes in the Synagogue for the teaching of Scripture, of Hebrew, and of the Jewish religion, on the Sunday School plan. The pupils were taught by the ladies of the Congregation under the supervision of the Minister.

A *Talmud Torah*, a school, outside the influence of the Congregation, for the teaching of Hebrew and religion in the "orthodox" mode, was opened in 1899. It was the beginning of the setting up in the Community of independent organisations. Fractionation was due to occur in the body of Cape Town Jewry, and it was now given an impetus by momentous events in the history of South Africa. The Anglo-Boer War had broken out, and the "Uitlanders" from the Transvaal were seeking refuge in Cape Town and other parts of the Cape. The number of Jewish children in Cape Town enormously increased. Of the hundred or so enrolled in the new *Talmud Torah*, a considerable proportion were temporary residents from the Transvaal.

In the same year other institutions arose outside the Congregation; many were temporary, but not

a few remained. Zionism was beginning to fire the imagination of the Jewish masses, and the Dorshei Zion organised themselves, to be followed in a very short time by the women Zionists, who formed the B'noth Zion. The Zionists immediately acquired their own premises, at first a hired room in Buitenkant Street, and soon they were able to purchase the Forester's Hall in Hope Street, which was formally opened as the Zionist Hall by the Rev. A. P. Bender in September, 1901. At Festival times this hall became a temporary synagogue.

Even more significant was the demand that had been felt in certain Jewish orthodox quarters for some time, and that was now making itself vocal, for a synagogue conducted more in accordance with the traditions of East European Jewry than that of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. A meeting was convened in 1900, and the new Hebrew Congregation was founded, and a synagogue built within two years. It was consecrated by Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz, of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation, now Chief Rabbi of the British Jews, but at that time a temporary resident at the Cape compelled to leave the Transvaal for his too outspoken pro-British sentiments.

There could now be no longer any claim on the part of the Congregation to include the whole of Cape Town Jewry. Which was just as well, for its Synagogue was overcrowded whenever there were festival services, and the influx of temporary residents from the Transvaal was creating problems in all its institutions. The Congregation held overflow services in halls hired for every occasion that demanded it. The children attended Divine Service in the School, the services

being conducted by the teachers. The enrolment of pupils swelled to unheard-of dimensions. The philanthropic societies were overburdened with business, for with the influx of refugees the poor had increased out of all proportion. There was, on the other hand, money flowing into the treasury; subscribers increased, and donations and offerings were liberally forthcoming from both Cape and Transvaal sympathisers with the work of the Congregation. There was co-operation between the Cape Town Synagogue and the two Johannesburg synagogues for the provision of special Festival services for the refugees, and Rabbi J. H. Hertz preached to congregations of a size such as had never been seen before in Cape Town. At a specially arranged final service to mark the end of the period of exile from the Transvaal, the worshippers numbered no less than twelve hundred.

The founding of the New Hebrew Congregation's Synagogue was but the beginning of a number of new congregations, all of varying degrees of orthodoxy, that came into existence about this period : the *Beth Hamidrash* in Constitution Street, the *Beth Hamidrash* of the Chasidim in Buitenkant Street, and that of the men of Ponevetz, were chief amongst them, whilst numerous *Chevras* met in rooms hired for festival occasions.

It was not long before congregations began to be formed and synagogues built in many parts of the Cape, most of them associated in a greater or lesser degree with the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation and especially with its minister, the Rev. Mr. Bender. He had barely been in the country a year when he was called to Robertson to inaugurate the congregation

by the consecration of the Burial Ground. He was invited in 1902, with Mr. Hyman Liberman, to a meeting of Paarl Jews, where a resolution to erect a synagogue was adopted. In 1903 Bender opened the synagogue at Laingsburg, and he laid the foundation stone in the following year of the synagogue at Paarl. In 1904, also, Hyman Liberman opened the synagogue at Worcester, which was consecrated by Bender, and Wynberg synagogue was opened by Liberman in 1905. A synagogue at Woodstock was consecrated by Bender in 1913, and in the same year he travelled to Grahamstown, to lay the foundation stone of Grahamstown's first synagogue, just fifty years after the first congregation was formed there.

In Cape Town, the St. John's Street Synagogue, the "Old Synagogue" of our day, had become, soon after Bender's arrival, too small to satisfy even the normal demand for accommodation, and the serious consideration of a larger synagogue became increasingly urgent; but there was little hope of raising funds for building in the years immediately preceeding the Anglo-Boer War, and in war-time the thing became even less possible. In 1900, however, a bequest of £1,000 by the will of Moritz Pickler provided a nucleus for a building fund. Pickler had been a member of the Congregation in Rabinowitz's time, a shopkeeper who won a fortune in 1872 by diamond speculation and promptly lost it again by the same means. Then, demanding less, he went to the diamond diggings with the object of gaining a competence only, and having succeeded in time in his more modest designs, he eschewed speculation, retired, and returned to Cape Town. On his death he left his fortune to charitable

objects in Kimberley and Cape Town, £2,000 in the latter city to Christian charitable institutions other than churches, and £1,000 to each of the three organisations of the Congregation, the Philanthropic Society, the School, and the Synagogue, the bequest to the last being specified as a contribution towards a fund for building a new synagogue.

To the relief of the strife-torn South African people, peace was happily restored in 1902, and the Transvaal refugees returned to their homes. The Congregation was, notwithstanding, more numerous than it had been before the influx of temporary members. The time seemed propitious for the necessary steps to be taken towards the erection of a new place of worship. It was thought to be the year of the Congregation's Diamond Jubilee, and the event would be celebrated by the first steps towards the erection of a new Synagogue. Actually the calculation of sixty years since the first prayer-meeting of the *Tikvath Israel* was based on an error made at some early date and printed so in the Congregation's literature. Notwithstanding the printed error, the Sixtieth Anniversary was celebrated as the Diamond Jubilee of the Congregation in 1901, as it should have been. A sum of £50 was voted from the Synagogue fund for a treat for the School children, and there was a Conversazione and Ball for the adult members and their families to celebrate the event. But error or no error, the year 1902 was considered ripe for the decision to build a new House of Prayer and the decision was made. A building committee was elected and designs by Messrs. Parker and Forsyth were accepted. In 1904 the actual building was begun, and the foundation stone was laid the same

year by the Governor of the Colony, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, G.C.M.G. At the ceremony, the Governor took occasion to express his appreciation of the valuable work that had been accomplished for the City of Cape Town by the Minister, the Rev. Mr. Bender. "Whenever I want to see Mr. Bender," he said, "I go to a charitable meeting."

Whilst the new synagogue was under construction, it became necessary to demolish part of the old one to allow more room for the new building, and during the festival season the large hall in the Cadarga (later the Hotel Edward) was hired and fitted up as a Synagogue for the temporary use of the Congregation, whilst the Good Hope Hall was also hired as additional accommodation for Holyday services. The Cadarga temporary Synagogue was the place of worship for "Corporation Sunday" in September, 1904, when the newly elected Mayor, Hyman Liberman, and the Corporation attended Divine Service in their robes of office. They listened to a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Bender, which evoked a generous collection for the City hospitals. Before the end of the following year the reconstruction of the Old Synagogue was complete, and it was henceforth available for worship until the new Synagogue should be finished, and after that for gatherings of one description or another connected with the activities of the Congregation.

The leading members of the Congregation in these years were : David Isaacs, a Warden from 1895 to 1900, Hyman Liberman from 1896 to 1903 and again in 1905, M. Robel 1900 to 1903, and Philip Myers in 1904 and 1905, when the new Synagogue was opened.

The new building was completed in 1905, and its interior was fittingly furnished and adorned with gifts from individuals and from organisations within the Congregation. Notable were the handsome brass pulpit donated by the Boys and Girls of the Guild, an institution that Bender had inspired soon after his arrival, and the embroidered curtain before the Ark, purchased from funds earned by the children of the School by means of public performances of an operetta. Amongst the several contributions by members of the Synagogue was the fine Perpetual Lamp, kindled at the consecration by Maurice Eilenberg, his gift to the new Synagogue.

The Synagogue already owed much to the unselfish labours of Mr. Liberman, but a long period was ahead during which his unceasing efforts and generous aid were to be liberally bestowed on the Synagogue and the Congregation in its times of trial and difficulty. Elected Treasurer of the Congregation in 1897, he continued as a Warden, in the office of President or Treasurer with but a short interval for twenty years. He was a prominent merchant in the City, and his public work as a citizen was no less remarkable than his record of labour for the Synagogue. His public benefactions were numerous and varied during his lifetime and on his death in 1923, besides generous bequests to many Jewish institutions, to the University of Cape Town, to the hospitals and other undenominational organisations of public value, he left a sum exceeding £6,000 to the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation and a generous provision towards the cost of a Hebrew School. He was Mayor of Cape Town for three years, and had the honour during his mayoralty



HYMAN LIBERMAN.

of opening the newly-built City Hall that was completed in 1904. The Rev. A. P. Bender officiated as chaplain on that memorable civic occasion.

The ceremonial opening of the Great Synagogue was performed by the Mayor of Cape Town, Hyman Liberman, the President of the Congregation, on the most historically appropriate of days (there was no error here), September 13th, the anniversary of the consecration of both the Bouquet Street Synagogue in 1849, and the St. John's Street Synagogue in 1863. The opening was a notable function in the City and was the occasion of a gathering of representative men from every section of the people of the Cape Colony. The eloquent sermon which the Minister preached on the occasion was peculiarly apposite in its reference to the recently imposed restrictions on the entry of refugee Jews from Eastern Europe to this land. " Even as the Kingdom of God," said the preacher, " has no geographical limitations and closes its gates upon none of the children of men as alien immigrants, so ' Mine house ' saith the Lord, ' shall be called a House of Prayer for all peoples '."

Divine Service was henceforth held in the Great Synagogue.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry: The Great Synagogue. 1905-1917.

THE very first use to which the new Synagogue was put was the observance of Mayoral Sunday. Four days after he had performed the opening ceremony, on Sunday, 17th September, 1905, Hyman Liberman, as newly re-elected Mayor of Cape Town, attended Divine Service in the Great Synagogue. "His Worship the Mayor," says a contemporary newspaper, "accompanied by his brother Councillors and the Town Clerk, whilst the Mace of the City was borne before him by his macebearer, proceeded to the new Synagogue in the Gardens. A detachment of mounted and foot police, a detachment of the City fire brigade in full uniform, and the brass and fife bands of the Cape Town Highlanders escorted the procession." The Synagogue was filled. There was a short but impressive service, a fitting sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Bender, and a substantial collection for the benefit of City charities.

It was many years since the Synagogue had been able to accommodate all the worshippers who were attracted to it; but now the new building, the Great Synagogue, was sufficiently commodious for all occasions. For spaciousness and beauty, it compared favourably with almost any place of worship in Cape Town. It was indeed a handsome building, in beautiful



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE.

surroundings, and the Congregation regarded it with no little pride. But their pride was mitigated by the realisation of the unforeseen financial obligations into which the undertaking to build a costly synagogue had drawn them. Bad times had come rapidly and unexpectedly as an aftermath of war. Commerce was depressed, and every section of the South African public was depressed in consequence, the members of the Congregation no less than others. The ordinary revenue of the Synagogue had begun to decline before the building was completed, but the huge expenditure could not be stopped; the Congregation was committed to it. The Building Fund was not growing as had been hoped. Even the general Synagogue funds were far from encouraging.

A sum of £25,000 had been raised by a mortgage on the building. More money was needed to complete it, and it became necessary to borrow another £6,000 on a second mortgage. By the terms of the second mortgage, twenty annual instalments of £300 had to be made in repayment of the £6,000, on the personal guarantees of the members. Six leading members of the Congregation agreed to become surety for £1,000 each. Their liability was shared by forty sub-guarantors for £150 each. When the building was completed the commercial depression had become severe. As it grew heavier many who had been affluent were ruined. For years the Synagogue struggled under a crippling debt. Strangers admired the fine, dignified place of worship, but they did not see the load of anxiety, heavy as the building itself, that weighed on the Wardens and the Committee responsible for periodical payments to the bondholders.

The continual necessity to raise funds in order to discharge the interest and repay the debts of the Synagogue, knee-haltered its activities for many a year. Nevertheless, its normal tasks were fulfilled; prayer, charity, and good works proceeded. A ruling interest of the Minister, besides that of Education, was the care of the sick and the administration of hospitals. He became a leading member of the Cape Hospital Board from the first, and continued this work throughout his lifetime, and the Jewish sick had always a friend and comforter in the Synagogue. He enlisted the assistance of the Congregation in the task of caring for the sick, and his annual Hospital sermon was always especially sure of a generous response from the members. A *Bikkur Cholim* Society was established in 1902. It still continues its good work, giving assistance and medical attention to the sick poor, giving them nourishment and medicines and, where necessary, surgical appliances. Subsequently this merciful body added to its objects the upkeep of a *kosher* kitchen in connection with the public hospitals. In the same year there was established another valuable institution, not directly under the influence of the Congregation, but collaborating with the Philanthropic Society, the Cape of Good Hope Benevolent and Helping Hand Society for assisting the needy with small loans free of interest. Under Bender's inspiration, the Jewish Ladies' Association was formed shortly after his installation as Minister. It worked in collaboration with the older Philanthropic Society to relieve distress, more particularly amongst women and children. The Ladies' made themselves responsible also for the good order of the vestments of the *Torah* scrolls and

other Synagogue appurtenances, and for the adornment of the Synagogue, especially on festive occasions or the holding of particular services. The Association did good work for many years and was subsequently merged with the Philanthropic Society to form the body that is to-day responsible for the relief of poverty amongst Cape Town Jews, the Jewish Board of Guardians.

But side by side with its ministrations in the cause of mercy and piety, year after year, the Synagogue had to face the continual struggle to raise funds to discharge its obligations to its creditors. The history of the Great Synagogue for the next twelve years is the history of the great debt and the unceasing efforts of the Congregation to liquidate it. At the end of the first year after the opening of the Synagogue, that is, when the members met before the New Year in September, 1906, it was found that the revenue had indeed increased, but that the increase was not due so much to the augmentation of the Congregation by the addition of new members as to the raising of the seat rents. There was actually a decline in the value of offerings. The Treasurer, Maurice Eilenberg, was gravely concerned. Money had to be raised to pay the interest on the first bond of £25,000 and the interest on the second bond of £6,000, as well as a sum of £300 in redemption of the second bond. Willing workers rallied to Mr. Eilenberg's assistance with schemes to raise funds. A Grand Bazaar was organised to be held in the City Hall in December. Every man, woman or child who could be induced to give assistance inside and out of the Congregation was pressed into the service of the Bazaar. In December the Bazaar was

opened. It made a much greater stir in the City than any purely denominational function could arouse in our days. It resulted in a net profit to the Synagogue of £1,284, and the "Ladies and gentlemen who so zealously laboured" for its successful issue were complimented by the Committee in a special Resolution recorded in the Annual Report of the Synagogue affairs.

But it was necessary to have some more permanent source of income for the discharge of the obligation on the part of the Synagogue to pay off the second mortgage bond the annual instalment of £300. So another group of ardent workers, albeit containing the same individuals who had laboured for the bazaar, engaged themselves to conduct a "Shilling Collection." It was no small task to undertake to collect each year 6,000 shillings. But they coaxed and wheedled and begged and bullied and did not spare themselves, and year after year produced £300 for the redemption of the second bond. By 1907 a severe depression had set in. The Treasurer, now Mr. Woolf Harris, reported to a general meeting of members that the funds were inadequate for discharging the Congregations' liabilities. Members were leaving and but few enrolling. There was, in fact, an actual decrease in membership since the previous year. There were, moreover, a large number of members' accounts unpaid. A few energetic members formed a sub-committee and made it their business to collect the overdue accounts. But the situation did not improve. The following year it was worse. There was a considerable falling off of all sources of revenue. Unable to weather the general depression, members were leaving the Colony with



COVER DESIGN FOR BAZAAR PROGRAMME.

By J. M. Solomon.

their families. The Treasurer reduced expenditure to a minimum, and in order to encourage the enrolment of persons who were unable to pay the regular rents, seats were provided for them at an annual rental of one guinea. But additional funds had to be found, and it was resolved again to hold a Bazaar. It was three years since the last one and there was hope that a substantial sum might be raised again. The Bazaar was successful in so far as it enabled the Treasurer to pay £365 of the interest on the first bond and a sum of £500 on the second. The Shilling Fund supplied the £300 payable annually in reduction of the capital amount of the second bond.

The general depression continued. In 1909 many members had become so far impoverished that they were quite unable to pay their dues, and the revenue of the Synagogue suffered accordingly. In this situation the Committee took the only course that seemed reasonable, and determined on a substantial reduction, all round, of seat rents. The Congregation was in a critical position. Large sums were overdue to the bondholders as interest. The Congregation could not provide them. The Bonds were called up. The guarantors were required to pay the amounts for which they had agreed to become surety. But in the midst of a general depression many of them would not or could not pay, and a meeting of members went so far as to propose that legal proceedings be taken against them for the purpose of recovering the amounts. But only a small number supported the resolution and it was not carried, the majority of the members refraining from voting either way. Finally, the situation was relieved by Maurice Eilenberg, who went to the

bondholders and effected a settlement with them that enabled the Congregation to carry on. The gratitude of the members is put on record in a special resolution of appreciation of Eilenberg's services on this occasion.

When, in 1911, Mr. Philip Myers again took on the unenvied office of Treasurer, there were welcome signs of returning prosperity in the land. There was an increase of membership. The instalment of £300 was paid for the fourth time by the Shilling Fund. But there was an enormous load of accumulated interest to be paid off, and although the President was able to remark with pleasure the following year that the promise of general recovery from the dreadful depression in South Africa had been fulfilled, he warned them that there was still great need for economy, and that there were heavy arrears to be made up. The amount, in fact, for which the Synagogue property was mortgaged, together with the accrued interest, was greater at the end of 1912 than it had been seven years earlier, when the building was opened. Some reduction was effected during the next year, but the members felt that it was not possible to overtake the mounting charges for interest and at the same time make substantial reductions in the principal. Meanwhile the bondholders threatened to foreclose. It was generally whispered that they would seize the sacred edifice and sell it to a heartless company to turn into a bioscope. It was before the days of palatially built cinema houses, and the members of the Congregation feared that such a fate might really befall their beautiful Synagogue. There were anxious meetings and a perplexed Committee was

at its wits' end. Finally, in 1914, the President, Mr. Hyman Liberman, and the Treasurer, Mr. Philip Myers, resolved to go to the bondholders and explain in detail the position of the Congregation in the hope that some compromise might be effected. Representatives of the Synagogue's creditors were approached, and agreed to meet the Wardens for consultation. It augured ill that on the day of the appointment the President, Mr. Liberman, suffered a serious family bereavement. He was thus prevented from performing his full share of the unpleasant task that the two Wardens had undertaken, and he reluctantly left Mr. Myers to represent the Congregation unsupported. But fortune and the sympathetic attitude of the bondholders favoured the anxious Wardens. Their mission was successful. Such substantial concessions were obtained for the Synagogue as enabled the Congregation to carry on, and to undertake to repay the Second Bond within three years, whilst the interest for the future was to be reduced to two and a half per cent. This happy adjustment of the Synagogue's burden removed the threat with which the Wardens and Committee had been hag-ridden for so many years.

By the end of the following year the liability for mortgages had been much reduced, and with the return of prosperity the Synagogue had enrolled forty-nine new members. A further reduction of the debt was effected in 1916, and when the general meeting of members came round again in 1917 the Treasurer declared that the Second Mortgage had been paid off and that the liability of the Synagogue to the bondholders was now no more than the amount of the original first bond. It was still a heavy burden

for the Congregation to bear, but the Committee, said the President, had every hope of being able to provide adequately for the congregation in future. Hyman Liberman retired from office and the members recorded their deep appreciation of his services, whilst the Treasurer, Mr. Philip Myers, about to remove with his family to England, on going out of office was publicly honoured by a gathering of members and their families who, in recognition of his services, presented him with a portrait of himself, painted by Moses Kottler.

The Committee could now carry out certain pressing repairs and renovations, including the structural alteration of the Ladies' Gallery, to permit of the greater seating accommodation that had long been urgently required. The Old Synagogue was renovated, and continued to be an invaluable meeting place for all kinds of communal activity; almost every day of the week and all the year round it was engaged for educational, philanthropic and social objects. On the public-spirited guarantee of four leading members of the Congregation to defray any expense that might be incurred, the Committee agreed that in future the Old Synagogue would be available for all approved Societies and institutions free of any charge.

Whilst the serious attention of all responsible members of the Congregation was directed towards the object of extricating the Synagogue from its financial difficulties during these years, they were not diverted from a constant solicitude for its proper functioning as a House of Prayer, and the services under the capable conduct of a zealous minister maintained a high standard of decorum. Early in the Rev. Mr. Bender's ministry, the engagement of a professional

choir-master, Mr. Jaretsky, had introduced into the services a new and attractive solemnity. During the next few years there is recorded frequent commendation by the President and Committee of the contribution by the choir to the Synagogue services and the good work of the choirmaster. One special choral service noteworthy in Mr. Jaretsky's time was that of Jubilee Sunday, in 1897. The Congregation celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria also by treating the School children and by transmitting to London an ornamental casket containing an illuminated album from the Jews of South Africa to the Queen. Four years later it was the Funeral Service for Queen Victoria, on 2nd February, 1901, that was being solemnised in the Synagogue. The following year Jaretsky left, and the Committee let no time elapse before engaging a choirmaster from Europe. Mr. Ettman, the new choirmaster, arrived. Not content with the choir boys, he requested of the Committee a paid adult choir. It was 1903, the period after peace had been restored in South Africa, and before commercial depression had settled on the land. The Committee not only agreed to provide the paid adult choir, but also engaged a highly qualified *Chazan*, Mr. Steinfeld, the first official to occupy the post of *Chazan* solely. He and his wife were received at a public gathering by the Congregation. It was an occasion of great satisfaction. The members anticipated beautiful choral services. *Chazan* and choir would make a joyful noise unto the Lord, and the Synagogue would resound with music. There is, however, no recorded commendation by the Committee of the achievements of the new choir, though a

few years later, in 1908, when Ettman had left and the times would not permit of much expenditure except on the most necessary objects, and the Committee had entrusted the training of the choir to the schoolmaster, Mr. Mark Cohen, as a part-time occupation, the President congratulated the Congregation on the "admirable choir," trained by the headmaster of the Hope Mill School. For a number of years Mr. Cohen's choir of schoolboys, supplemented by a few adult voices of willing helpers from amongst the men of the Congregation, continued to adorn the Sabbath morning services and the Young People's services on Sabbath afternoons. Foremost amongst the voluntary adult choristers, and most devoted to the choral work of the Synagogue, was Mr. H. J. Stodel, who, when retrenchment became imperative in 1913, himself took over, as a labour of love, the training and direction of the choir. He continued the task with credit for several years, in fact, until the Congregation was in a position again to engage a professional choirmaster.

Besides the routine traditional services, occasions arose that called for special services, when the choir always rose to the opportunity presented and added harmony to the Preacher's eloquence. There was, for instance, in 1910, a Service to Commemorate the Consummation of the Union of South Africa, and in the following year a Service of Thanksgiving for the Seventieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation. In 1911, also, there was a special service for the Coronation of King George V. When King George ten years before, as Duke of Cornwall and York, had visited the Cape, the members of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation had presented him with

a carved stinkwood casket containing an illuminated address of loyalty from the Jews of South Africa, to be conveyed to his royal father, King Edward the Seventh, on King Edward's accession to the Throne of England.

The choral service held annually on the festival of Chanukah had its origin in the early days of Bender's ministry, and usually had some special military association, Jewish members of the Volunteer Forces being present at the Chanukah service as early as 1897. Intercessory Services also were held in 1915, during the Great War and the two succeeding years, that of 1917 being coincident with the Chanukah service.

A Special Memorial service following the tragic loss of Lord Kitchener, and a Memorial service early in the War for the first member of the Congregation who fell, Max Rothkugel, son of an old supporter of the Congregation, a Trustee for many years of the Synagogue and the School, were amongst the solemn occasions when the Synagogue was filled with worshippers and the impressive eloquence of the Minister did reverence to the dead. There were other losses during these years of warfare from amongst the promising young men of the Congregation, who left their studies and their hopeful careers to fight for their country against the aggressive tyranny of military ambition. Notable amongst them were those of Hyman Baker, a student-teacher in the Congregation's School and a chorister in the Synagogue; the rising young medical man, Dr. Benjamin Cohen; the brothers Stanley and Harold Raphael; and the clever young lawyer, Julius Hermann, Gold Medalist in Law and pursuing advance legal studies at Cambridge.

Besides taking toll of the young men of the Congregation, the War entailed a heavy drain on the resources of the members of the Congregation, who not only contributed generously to the numerous general war funds, but were called upon to furnish large sums in relief of the miserable plight of Jewry in the war zones. The Cape Relief Fund for Jewish War Victims, on the committee of which the Great Synagogue was represented by the Rev. Mr. Bender, the Rev. B. Strod, and the honorary organiser, Mr. I. M. Goodman, organised collections and transmitted to Europe many thousands of pounds for the work of charity and mercy during the war years and those immediately following.

In 1917 the Great Synagogue identified itself also for the first time with Zionism. The Zionist movement, which had grown and developed very greatly in Cape Town during the past decade had, until 1917, received no official recognition from the Congregation as an organised body, though many individual members approved of it and warmly supported it. When, however, with the Balfour Declaration, Zionism was advanced into the realm of practical affairs by the British Government, a general meeting of members declared its adherence to the principle by adopting resolutions of support which were transmitted to London with similar resolutions from other South African Jewish organisations. The Congregation favoured the reconstitution of Palestine as " a National Home for the Jewish people," and recorded its appreciation of the British Government's declared intention to facilitate the Palestine establishment, and respectfully tendered its thanks to His Majesty's

Government. In the Great Synagogue on the occasion of the memorable Balfour Declaration the Minister preached an eloquent sermon from the text, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

Besides this sympathetic gesture towards the Zionist movement, the Congregation associated itself with other Jewish organisations for special purposes. Soon after the establishment of the New Hebrew Congregation, in 1903, it had been suggested to the general meeting of members that a society for the performance of the last rites for the dead should be formed in common by the two congregations. In 1905 the project was again advanced, but not until 1908 was an independent *Chevra Kadisha* established, under the presidency of Maurice Eilenberg. Samuel Wolfe, who had enjoyed the sober gratification of filling the honorary office of Director of Funerals almost as long as anybody could remember, was accorded the same honour in the new *Chevra Kadisha*. But he did not long survive his new appointment. He died in 1909, leaving behind him in his death that solicitude for the propriety of the Burial Ground that he had evinced in his life; for he bequeathed to the Congregation some £400 to be applied to the proper care of his grave and that of his wife, an example which the President of the day exhorted members to follow if they would have the Cemetery kept in good order. The *Chevra Kadisha* did not last very long. It was found convenient for the Congregation itself to take charge of these matters where willing workers in the pious cause were not lacking. A few years later Mr. H. J. Stodel accepted the honour of the direction of funerals, an office which he still exercises in 1941,

and in which he has given valued service to the Jewish community for over twenty-five years.

In 1912 the Synagogue was associated with the foundation of the Cape Jewish Orphanage, the original impetus having come from the Philanthropic Society in which Mr. J. Kadish, a leading worker, had continually urged the necessity of establishing an institution for the support of orphans at the Cape in order that this Province might not be dependent on possible vacancies in the Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg. Though Mr. Kadish was not himself a member of the Great Synagogue, the initial meeting to form an Orphan Aid Society, in 1909, was held in the Old Synagogue and addressed by the Rev. Mr. Bender, and the sympathy of the leading members of the Congregation was enlisted. Three years later, when pressing cases arose that could not be received by the Johannesburg Orphanage, Mr. Kadish and his committee made haste to acquire a house in Mill Street that was suitably reconstructed and opened with ceremony by Sir David Harris on 11th February, 1912. In 1915 the Governor-General of South Africa laid the foundation stone of a new building on a large site that had been acquired in Oranjezicht. The Rev. Mr. Bender opened, in the following year, the handsome building that had been erected, liberal donations having meanwhile flowed in, in response to the busy solicitations of the Committee.

It was during this period also that the Congregation took the main share in the preliminaries to the establishment of the Jewish Home for the Aged. Maurice Rosen presided at a meeting in the Old Synagogue in 1916 that had for its object the founding of such a

Home, an eloquent plea for support being urged by Mr. Bender. A fortnight late a special fund was created for the purchase of a suitable house; but it was not until June, 1918, that Krynauw's Hof was acquired.

Reference has already been made to the *Talmud Torah* attached to the New Hebrew Congregation from its earliest days. This school continued, whilst the members of the Great Synagogue were content with a Sabbath School for their boys and girls, many of whom in addition received instruction from private teachers of Hebrew. In 1906, the *Talmud Torah* adopted Hebrew as the medium of instruction, and a section of its supporters stoutly resisted the use of a medium which almost none of the pupils understood as a living language. The dissenters consequently opened a second *Talmud Torah* where the medium of instruction was Yiddish, possibly a compromise between the difficulties of the unfamiliar medium of Hebrew and the rational use of the secular medium of common communication amongst the pupils, English. But about 1912 the contradictions were resolved and the schools combined as the " Public " *Talmud Torah*, subsequently the United Hebrew Schools, when the support of the Congregation was assured.

The ancient Jewish regard for adult education found expression also in 1917 by the formation of the Talmud Study Circle, which continued to meet in the Old Synagogue for many years. The organisation of Jewish students in the Cape Town University owes its inception to this period and to the Rev. Mr. Bender as Professor of Hebrew and Minister of the Congregation. In 1913 two students, Max Geffen and Cyril Lazarus (subsequently killed in action during the First Great War)

with the help of the Minister, initiated the Jewish Students' Association.

The variety of associations and committees that now used the Old Synagogue as a common meeting place gives some indication of the extent of the communal activities that had grown up during the period under the wing of the Congregation or in the shelter of the Great Synagogue. Besides those that have already been mentioned, there was a Jewish Girls' Association, Girl Guides, Jewish Boy Scouts, Committees of the various War and Relief Funds, and the Board of Schechita that controlled the supply of *kosher* meat; for congregational difficulties on this matter had long become a thing of the past.

The Congregation, which had in fact, begun by including the entire Jewish community and had continued as an integral body of the community, was now, whilst preserving its own integrity, thrusting its beneficent activities into every quarter of Cape Town Jewry where good works could be effected.

Distinguished visitors attended the Synagogue from time to time, the most notable amongst them being Professor Solomon Schechter, the renowned Hebrew Scholar and President of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. He was accorded a public welcome on his arrival in Cape Town in 1909, and a banquet was given in his honour in the Old Synagogue. Sir Matthew Nathan, G.C.M.G., Governor of Natal, attended the Great Synagogue in 1907. In 1910, Rabbi Dr. J. L. Landau, of the Johannesburg New Hebrew Congregation, preached in the Great Synagogue.

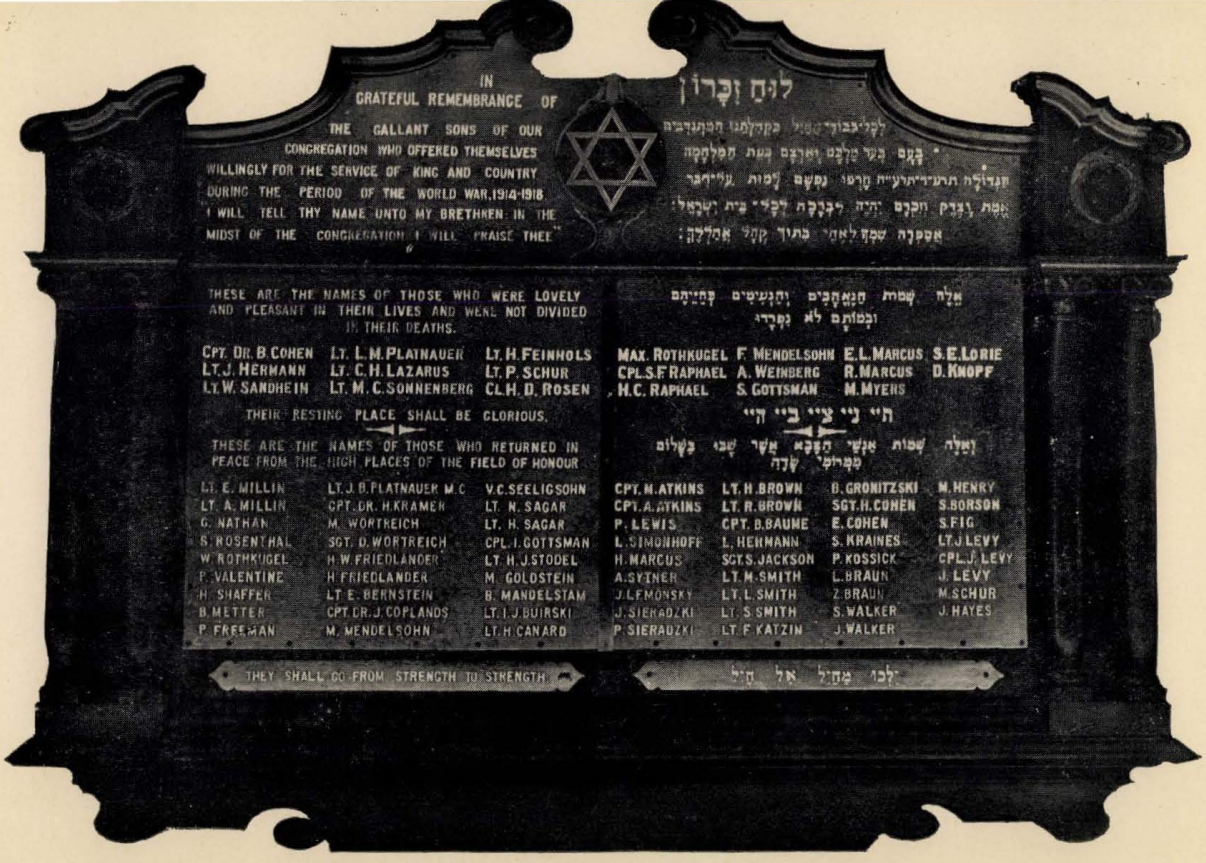
During this period the leading members of the Congregation, the Wardens in the offices of President, Vice-President or Treasurer, were : Hyman Liberman (1905-1910 and 1912-1915), Maurice Eilenberg (1906 and 1907, 1909-1911), Philip Myers (1905 and 1911-1916), A. Newmark (1908-1910), Maurice Rosen (1913-1917), Woolf Harris (1907 and 1917), Abraham Liberman (1917).

The death in 1910 of Moritz Lewis, broke the last link between the Congregation of that day and that of fifty years earlier. Lewis had been a Warden of the Synagogue in the eighteen sixties, and had assisted at the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone of the old Synagogue in 1862.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry: Post War. 1918-1927.

THE year 1918 saw momentous events in the great world: the defeat of the Germans, the Armistice, the Peace Conference and the conclusion of the Peace Treaty. The Congregation rejoiced with the rest of South Africa and the civilised world at the victorious ending of the Great War and looked forward to a long spell of progress and prosperous well-doing. A Special Choral Service in the Synagogue marked the auspicious occasion of the Signing of the Peace Treaty, when services were being held in every house of worship in the City. The Congregation mourned the loss of young lives voluntarily sacrificed in the country's cause, and held a solemn memorial service where, to the eloquent tribute of the Minister, was added an address befitting the occasion delivered in the Synagogue by Advocate Morris Alexander, K.C., M.L.A. It was resolved to erect a permanent memorial to the fallen soldiers of the Congregation, and to those who had freely offered themselves and had returned "from the high places of the field." There were amongst the gallant young soldiers who had given up their lives those especially near to the Great Synagogue: the President's son, Cpl. Harry Rosen; the son of a former President, Lieut. L. B. Platnauer, who left a brilliant academic career, the first Jewish



GREAT WAR (1914—1918) MEMORIAL TABLET.

student from the South African College elected to a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford; Cyril Lazarus, who had just completed a distinguished course of study at the South African College; and the brothers Ernest and Reuben Marcus.

There is in the vestibule of the Great Synagogue a brass tablet on which are engraved the names of " The gallant sons of our Congregation who offered themselves willingly for the service of King and Country during the period of the World War, 1914-1918." It was erected by the Committee and unveiled at a solemn service on Sunday, 3rd April, 1921, in the presence of a large congregation assembled, irrespective of religious demonination, and including representative military men and civil dignitaries of the City.

Members of the Congregation, in common with Jews throughout the Empire, had contributed also to the Jewish War Memorial Fund, organised under the Presidency of Mr. Lionel de Rothschild, O.B.E., M.P., in connection with which the Congregation received and entertained, in November 1920, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire, Dr. J. H. Hertz, M.A., Ph.D., during his pastoral tour of the Jewish congregations of the Empire. The Chief Rabbi was accompanied by the Vice-President of the United Congregations, Mr. Albert M. Woolf, O.B.E., who made the tour in the interests of the Jewish War Memorial. The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation took the lead in organising the Jewish congregations and communal institutions of the Western Province for the welcome and entertainment of the Chief Rabbi and the gentlemen

accompanying him, and arranged meetings, lectures, and social functions in their honour.

Dr. Hertz preached in the Great Synagogue on the first Sabbath after his arrival in South Africa. He visited Jewish institutions, attended receptions and banquets, examined schools, preached, lectured, and participated in conferences during a busy fortnight in Cape Town and its surroundings, before proceeding to the North. He was no stranger to Cape Town, but he has recorded his impressions of the Great Synagogue as a factor in colonial Jewry. "One of the things that strike a visitor from the home country at Cape Town is the Great Synagogue, the Synagogue of the Mother Congregation of South Africa. It is the largest and most impressive Jewish house of worship in the Empire. There are synagogues almost as noble in Johannesburg, in Sydney, and in Montreal. We have nothing like them, especially as to size, in the Home Country. They are monuments to the strongly developed Jewish consciousness of overseas Jewry." After an extensive tour, including visits to all the principal towns in the Union and as far north as Bulawayo, being received with signal honour wherever he went, Dr. Hertz was back in Cape Town early in 1921 *en route* for Australia.

The melancholy tribute of young lives to the fierce demands of War had barely ceased in 1918 than Pestilence brought death again ranging amongst the sons and daughters of South Africa. The country was sorely smitten by the great Influenza Epidemic, and Cape Town more deeply than any other town in the Union. The epidemic brought widespread suffering and sad losses to members of the Great Synagogue, as

to every other section of the inhabitants of Cape Town. The Congregation met and organised volunteers in collaboration with a committee of the City Council for the relief of suffering. They assisted the sick in their homes and in the temporary hospitals hastily improvised, they supplemented the organisations for fulfilling the last rites for the dying and gave their aid in the proper disposal of the dead when deaths were so numerous that the customary arrangements were insufficient to cope with them. The number of funerals conducted by the Congregation, usually thirty or forty annually, rose in 1918 to well over a hundred. When the epidemic had died down, early in the following year, a memorial service was held in the Synagogue for the members of the Community who had died during the period in which the sickness had raged.

Amongst the members lost to the Community by death in 1918 was Solomon Harris, an old and staunch supporter of the Synagogue, punctilious in his attendance at its services and known in the Congregation for his piety. He was the founder of a flourishing South African industrial concern. In 1910, with his son, Mr. Woolf Harris, he established the South African Woollen Mills, and began to manufacture blankets, introducing modern methods and machinery into an industry which, though not new to the Union of South Africa, had been hitherto little developed. Industrial development in this country thus profited by his enterprise and that of his sons.

A memorial service, attended by a large congregation, was held during the year for the numerous victims of the appalling Pogroms in Eastern Europe. On this

occasion an address was delivered by the Rabbi of the Beth Hamidrash, Rabbi M. Ch. Mirvish, and the service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. M. Sandler, together with the Ministers of the Great Synagogue. The Relief Fund for Jewish War Victims, which continued to collect and transmit sums of money in response to the continued great need in Europe for some years after the actual conclusion of hostilities, benefitted to the amount of some £220, the proceeds of Rabbi Mirvish's appeal collected at the Memorial Service.

Other preachers occupied the pulpit of the Great Synagogue from time to time by invitation, ministers from other parts of South Africa or from overseas visiting Cape Town. Dr. J. L. Landau, Chief Rabbi of the Johannesburg Federated Synagogues, preached on a Sabbath in 1918 to the Cape Town Congregation, not for the first time; the Rev. Mr. M. I. Cohen, of Bulawayo, and the Rev. Mr. J. S. Levine, of Robertson, during the same year; and later in the decade, the Rev. E. M. Levy, of Durban, and the Rev. A. Levy, of Port Elizabeth. There were, besides, a series of distinguished visitors to the Community who attended Divine Service in the Synagogue, especially missionaries in connection with Zionism and the development of the Holy Land; Dr. Alexander Goldstein, representative of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine, in 1923, and Rabbi Zlotnik, of the Jewish National Fund, who preached in 1924; Dr. Nahum Sokolow and Dr. Hindes in 1926; in 1927, Rabbi Kahanaman, of Ponovetz, and Dr. Leon Bramson, the philanthropic worker.

During this period the Congregation more definitely affirmed its adherence to the Zionist principle. In 1920 the Committee expressed its gratification that

the Mandate for Palestine had been entrusted to the British Government and the hope that this fact would inspire the Community to contribute to the resuscitation of the Holy Land as the world centre of Jewish life and idealism, and on the eve of Sabbath *Nachmu* a Choral Service of Thanksgiving was held for the occasion. The Congregation associated itself with the South African Zionist Congress, which was held in Cape Town in 1926, and held a special service, which was attended by numbers of the delegates and by Dr. Nahum Sokolow, and in the same year it was proposed at the annual general meeting of members that the Congregation affiliate to the South African Zionist Federation, and the resolution was adopted with unanimous agreement.

The period was, on the whole, a prosperous one for the Synagogue. There was a steady increase of members throughout the ten years, and the Committee were able to meet the expanding liabilities for ordinary expenditure. But the Treasurer reminded the members in 1918 that, although they had wiped off the second bond, there was still the large first bond to be redeemed. The Committee had effected arrangements with the Government for the next ten years which made the Congregation liable to pay five per cent. interest on the amount of the loan and a further one per cent. as sinking fund for the ultimate redemption of the bond. With this end in view, the members agreed to an increase in the seat rentals, the first increase, as the Treasurer remarked, that had been made during a period of marked prosperity.

In 1920, the times being still favourable, a great effort to reduce considerably the burden of the Great

Synagogue debt met with gratifying success. At the annual meeting of members, an appeal, initiated by Mr. I. Carn, was made for contributions towards the redemption of the bond. It resulted in the most generous response, and donations, ranging from the sum of fifteen hundred pounds from Messrs. Liberman and Biurski, and that of seven hundred and fifty pounds from the proprietors of the South African Woollen Mills, and other large sums from wealthy commercial firms, down to the humble half guinea from sympathetic individuals of more modest means, flowed into the treasury of the Synagogue in a remarkably short time. The Committee were able to repay more than half the loan, a sum, in fact, of £13,770 18s. 3d. It was not merely a successful financial response to the appeal for funds. It was a spontaneous expression of devotion to the Synagogue by some 160 members, and an earnest of the effort that would at a time not far distant liquidate the entire indebtedness of the Congregation, leaving it unencumbered to enlarge the scope of its works of piety and charity.

There was an increase of membership in the following year by more than there had been for many years, so that it became necessary to construct additional seating accommodation, and by 1924 further reductions had been made in the amount of the mortgage. Meanwhile the Synagogue had suffered an irreparable loss in the death of its foremost member, Hyman Liberman, who had been associated with it for well nigh fifty years. The memorial service held for him was attended by a large congregation, which included the Mayor and the Town Clerk, with whom he had long been associated in his civic labours. The general meeting of members

put on record in a special resolution their deep sense of bereavement, and that of the entire Jewish community, sustained by his death. A generous bequest to the Congregation by his will now put in sight the total extinction of the Synagogue's debt. A sum of £5,000 would become available under his will when the amount of the bond had been reduced to that sum. Before 1926 the prosperous times had given way to a commercial depression, but still each year the Committee had managed to pay substantial sums in reduction of the bond until, at the end of 1927 the President, Mr. H. J. Stodel, was able to announce that the debt would in all likelihood be cleared before the next New Year, only a few hundred pounds being payable before the reduction to £5,000 would fulfil the conditions for the Liberman bequest to operate.

The expansion of the Congregation during these years was beginning to raise the demand for more accommodation in the Synagogue, especially during the festival seasons, when the crowd of worshippers that flocked to prayers could not be seated in the building. In 1920 overflow services were consequently arranged to be held in the Old Synagogue for the High Festivals under the Wardenship of Mr. I. L. Barnett. The success of the arrangement, and the continued demand in the following year, resulted in their continuation. Each year the Committee voted money to fee suitable persons to officiate at these services. The temporary Synagogue officials chosen performed the services to everybody's satisfaction, and returned the money to be devoted to charity. The Old Synagogue building had been required extensively for services in 1911, when the Great Synagogue was

undergoing renovation. The old building itself underwent needed improvement in 1923 with the object of making it more suitable for the frequent meetings of cultural, charitable and other Jewish bodies that now occupied it almost daily. The applications for the use of it had become so numerous that the demand was revived amongst the members for the erection of a communal hall, a demand which some years earlier had been coupled with the consideration of a suitable form of War Memorial. In 1927 the Zionists erected a commodious hall in Hope Street which, although primarily for Zionist activities, fulfilled in some measure some of the requirements of the Jewish community for a sufficiently spacious meeting place. Improvements were effected in the Synagogue building in 1926. The dome was renovated and additional seats were installed, some twenty, especially for the minor sons of members, carefully planned to avoid any disturbance of the symmetry of the interior. A further result of the pressure on accommodation was the demand first mooted in 1926, for a synagogue at Sea Point. New synagogues in 1922 at Wellington and at Beaufort West were opened by the Rev. Mr. Bender, who also officiated in 1924 at the laying of the foundation stones of the synagogues at East London, Stellenbosch and Muizenberg.

The growth of the Congregation not only rendered necessary more accommodation for the living; deaths were more numerous and the cemeteries had to be extended and necessary buildings provided. In 1921 the mortuary house at the old burial ground at Woodstock, the property acquired by the infant Congregation in 1841, was renovated, and put into use as a much



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE, INTERIOR.

required supplementary Jewish mortuary. A further accessory to the more convenient conduct of funerals was the acquirement by the Congregation in 1927, after adequate assurance from Jewish ecclesiastical authorities of the ritual propriety of the change, of a motor hearse to replace the horse-drawn vehicle that had hitherto been in use.

That the Congregation were not averse to the employment of the most modern contrivances when such contrivances could subserve the practice of the most ancient religion, is evidenced by the instalment in the Great Synagogue in 1926 of an amplifier and loud speaker, provided first by private subscription and subsequently replaced by a more expensive installation at the charge of the Congregation. A motor car had been acquired for the use of the Rev. Mr. Bender in 1923, and had immediately proved a great boon in saving time and fatigue to the busy Minister, whose daily increasing duties took him to every part of the Cape Peninsula for the good of the Congregation and, indeed, for that of the entire Jewish community. In the early days of the Great Synagogue it had been possible for Mr. Bender to perform all the duties of Minister with the assistance of the *Chazan*, the Rev. Mr. A. Weinberg. After some seven years service, Mr. Weinberg left to take up a position with the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, and in 1912 the Rev. Mr. B. Strod became *Chazan* in his stead, an assistant Reader and *Shochet*, the Rev. Mr. A. Robinson being added as a part-time officer to the Synagogue establishment shortly afterwards. Mr. Robinson continued to serve the Synagogue to the satisfaction of the Congregation for many years. The

Rev. Mr. Strod resigned his position after a few years and the Rev. Mr. L. Kirschner was selected by a specially appointed committee in England from a number of applicants and engaged as *Chazan*, arriving in Cape Town towards the end of 1920. Shortly after his arrival he was required to officiate for many months without the Minister, who was absent on a visit to England following a serious illness. The following year a newly appointed Choirmaster, Mr. G. Grosberg, took over the choir from Mr. Stodel, whose honorary offices had kept it going for so many years, during which there had been no professional Choirmaster. At the end of the year the Committee recorded its praise of "the musical rendering of the ancient melodies of Israel by the Cantor, the Rev. Mr. Kirschner, ably assisted by the recently appointed Choirmaster, Mr. Grosberg, and his comparatively small but efficient band of youthful choristers," regretted the absence of men's voices in the choir, and appealed to young men to lend assistance to the Synagogue services by singing in the choir.

Another change in the Synagogue establishment about this time was the resignation of Mr. J. E. Levin, who had held the post of secretary to the Congregation creditably since 1909, when he succeeded Mr. Leon Lewis. Mr. Levin left to return to England and was succeeded by Mr. L. A. G. Neumann, who continued in the office until his death in 1939. In 1926 Mr. Grosberg resigned the post of Choirmaster, and Mr. Boris Rome, of Johannesburg, was appointed in his stead. In the following year the Committee concluded that the Ministers' duties had become too heavy for Mr. Bender and Mr. Kirschner to carry out

without further assistance, and decided to engage the services of a Third Minister. The Rev. Mr. S. Kibel was chosen from amongst the applicants. Mr. Kibel was First Reader in the Cardiff Synagogue, a competent *Chazan* and a Licentiate of Trinity College of Music. He was elected for a period of three years. Mr. Robinson, who had served the Congregation well for fourteen years, was granted a pension, and retired.

The combination of *Chazan* and Choir after the new appointments in the early nineteen twenties greatly enhanced the beauty of the services and elicited general approval. The attendance at Sabbath services improved. The services for Girls and Boys on Sabbath afternoons had been continued without intermission since their inception, and now were attended by children from all parts of the City and the suburbs, including at regular times during each month, formal " church " parades of the Jewish troops of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. A new movement also about this time was instituted by the Minister, a regular Sabbath Eve Service for Young Men and Women. It was initiated by a special Sunday evening service, to which the young people were invited, and which proved to be very popular. Considerable numbers subsequently attended the Choral Service every Friday evening, the impressive character of which was admitted on all sides. These successful efforts on the part of the Minister to make the Synagogue services attractive to the young evoked the admiration of the members and the praise of the Committee for the Minister's zeal.

It was agreed that these were amongst the best means of training young people to the respect for, and

devotion to their Synagogue and a love for its sacred services. The importance also of the instruction of children in the Hebrew language and in the tenets and practices of the Jewish religion was kept in view. The *Talmud Torah* or, as it was now officially styled, the United Hebrew School, was independent of the Congregation, but its President was the Rev. Mr. Bender and its committee met in the Old Synagogue. There were, moreover, prominent members of the Congregation amongst its strongest supporters. In 1922 the members adopted the principle of regular support of the *Talmud Torah* by the Congregation, and agreed to subject themselves to an education tax of 5s. per annum per member, to be devoted to the School, which was giving instruction to 250 pupils, a large number of them free scholars. A Hebrew Kindergarten had lately been established, in which young children, by means of play and song, could learn to use Hebrew as a living tongue. In other directions also the School proved to be doing good work, and during the year it was voted a sum of money by the Trustees of the old Hopemill (Hebrew) Public School, the accrued interest on the funds of the latter institution, which had been an adjunct of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. The Trustees of the Hopemill fund decided at a later date, when the School was finally extinct, to apply the fund to the building of a new Hebrew School, to be under the control of the Congregation though not, like its predecessor, the Hopemill School, providing general secular as well as religious education.

Being now committed to the support of Jewish religious instruction and officially interested in the

progress of the Hebrew schools, the Committee called, in 1924, a conference of representatives to enquire into means of increasing the efficiency of religious instruction. The Conference found that about a third of the Jewish children in the Cape Peninsula received no religious instruction; that whilst English, Hebrew and Yiddish were each used as the medium of instruction in different schools, there was in some schools a mixture of all three ! The curricula differed widely; the classes were held after ordinary school hours, when the pupils were tired; they were indifferently attended, for which parents were to blame; the children began their attendance at a late age and ended it soon after *Barmitzvah*; some of the teachers were not qualified and others not suitable for their profession. They made a number of reasonable recommendations, amongst them that of the engagement of a Director of Hebrew Education. The following year the Congregation subscribed to the Board of Hebrew Education that had been established, and signified its willingness to contribute a sum of £200 towards the salary of a Director of Hebrew Education should a suitable official be appointed. By the end of 1927 no Director had been engaged, the support from sources outside the Congregation being insufficient.

Apart from the cause of religious instruction, the Congregation associated itself with the Community at large in its support of several other organisations during this period. In 1924 the Committee agreed to contribute towards the salary of an inspector in connection with the Board of *Shechitah*. New regulations controlling the slaughter of animals for food were proposed for introduction by the Municipality

about 1926, and the ancient Jewish ritual of *Shechitah* was found to be in conflict with the regulations that were about to be enforced. The views of the Community were urged by representative Jews, headed by the Minister of the Congregation. At the conclusion of lengthy negotiations, the Municipality agreed to recognise the Jewish ritual method of killing and accepted the *Shechitah* Board as the representative of the Jewish people for this purpose. Facilities were thus maintained for the proper ritual slaughter of animals under the regulations of the City Council.

Equal success did not crown the efforts of the Committee to co-operate with the New Hebrew Congregation in the attempts to form again an independent *Chevra Kadisha*. A conference was held in 1925 with that object, but apparently nothing was effected, for at the end of 1927 the two synagogues were still functioning separately in the performance of final rites. The Congregation associated itself with the *Beth Hamedrash Hachodesh* in 1926 by agreeing to vote an annual subsidy to the Rabbi, whose labours extended far and wide outside his own congregation and benefited, amongst others, members of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. In the same year the Congregation sent a representative to the Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and in 1928 it was represented at the Eleventh Congress of the South African Zionists. Charitable organisations outside the Congregation received considerable sums of money each year from the Synagogue by way of the special Atonement Day appeals and the offerings that were made in response to them. The extent

to which individual members of the Congregation were attached to Cape Town Jewish institutions is evidenced by the interesting fact, noted in 1924, that members of the Great Synagogue Committee, albeit in their private capacities, presided over no less than three of the most important Cape Town Jewish institutions: the Orphanage (Mr. Woolf Harris), the Hebrew Schools (Mr. J. Gesundheit), and the Aged Home (Mr. I. L. Barnett). One of the Congregation's good works performed annually since its earliest days, was the distribution of *matzos* and provisions for Passover to the poor and to public institutions where Jews were. As in course of time new Jewish organisations grew up it became customary to convene representatives each year and to collect funds through the various organisations which assisted in the charity. This practice continued to be another of those activities undertaken by the Great Synagogue, in co-operation with the rest of Cape Town Jewry. It was perhaps collaboration of this kind that prompted the proposal pressed at the general meeting of members in 1927 for a Federation of Synagogues, a project simple in conception but in fact bristling with difficulties. With the greater body of Jewry overseas, the Congregation asserted its unity about this time by subscribing to the Board of Deputies for British Jews and appointing a representative to it, and by becoming a subscriber to the Chief Rabbi's Fund.

As the Congregation expanded, the number of those who rendered it conspicuous service became ever greater and the officers of the various Committees more numerous. The Wardens during the decade

1917 to 1927 were: Maurice Rosen (1917-1921), Woolf Harris (1917-1920), Abraham Liberman (1917, 1923, 1926 and 1927), I. L. Barnett (1921-1924), Harry Harris (1922-1925), H. J. Stodel (1924-1927), and S. Goldstein (1925-1927).

CHAPTER NINE.

The Rev. Mr. Bender's Ministry : Closing Years. 1927-1939.

THE beneficient work of the Great Synagogue continued unabated during the next ten years with little variation. The primary function of the Synagogue, the celebration of Divine Service, was discharged with unfailing regularity morning and evening on weekdays throughout each year, and on all the Sabbaths and Holydays in the Jewish calendar. The Overflow Services on the High Festivals in the Old Synagogue had become an established institution like the Services for Boys and Girls on Sabbath afternoons, and the Annual Choral Service during Chanukah, the Festival of Dedication. The last-mentioned became, in 1936, the occasion of a Dedication ceremony for the young girls of the Congregation. In 1934 the Committee, prompted by the Minister, desired to revive the custom of ceremonial consecration of girls to the sacred duties of religion, in some measure of correspondence to the Barmitzvah ceremony that was the privilege of their brothers. The custom instituted by the Rev. Mr. Bender several years before had fallen into disuse, and the Committee announced that special classes would be arranged to prepare girls for the ceremony and train them in the practice of Jewish ritual, in particular in its reference to the home. It was two years before a sufficient number of candidates

offered themselves for consecration, when fifteen girls, trained and certified as having creditably passed an examination in religious knowledge, were ceremonially consecrated at a solemn and beautiful Dedication Service during Chanukah, 1936. Each of the dedicants was presented by the Synagogue with a prayer book, suitably inscribed, as a memento of the occasion.

Of the annually recurring festival services, one especially worthy of note is that of *Simchath Torah*, when children flock to the Synagogue literally in their thousands. In pursuance of a firmly established custom, every child present at the Rejoicing of the Law is presented with a box of sweets, which one may be sure does not decrease the youthful enthusiasm for "going to Shool." There were over two thousand boys and girls at this service in 1933, when the "Bridegroom of the Law" was the Mayor of the City of Cape Town, Councillor Louis Gradner, who, with his companion in the brief honours of the joyful holyday, Mr. Woolf Harris as *Chosan B'reishith*, presented the sweets to the delighted children.

For the second time in the history of the Great Synagogue a member of the Committee had attained the distinguished honour of being elected Mayor of the Mother City of South Africa, and the Synagogue witnessed amongst the special services of this period, two Mayoral Sundays, when Louis Gradner, as newly elected Mayor, and again in the following year as re-elected Mayor, attended, in robes of office, accompanied by his fellow Councillors, Divine Service in the Synagogue. On these occasions some of the



LOUIS GRADNER.

leading citizens of all denominations became, for the time, part of the congregation of the Great Synagogue.

To the President of the Synagogue, in the person of Louis Gradner, fell the high distinction as Mayor of Cape Town, and to Mrs. Gradner as Mayoress, in 1934, of receiving and entertaining His Royal Highness Prince George, Duke of Kent, and there is high testimony, no less than that of both Houses of Parliament, that they filled the office of host and hostess on behalf of the City with credit and renown.

The highest civic functionaries had attended, a few years earlier when, in 1930, a special Choral Service fitly commemorated the Semi-Jubilee of the Great Synagogue, and in 1935 Choral Services marked the Twenty-fifth Birthday of the Union of South Africa and the Silver Jubilee of King George V, the latter event to be followed all too soon by a Memorial Service held by a sorrowing congregation on the death of the King. There were other services for public occasions of joy or sorrow, the chief amongst them being that, on Sunday 9th May, 1937, when service was held in the Synagogue on the occasion of the Coronation of Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, by a congregation that completely filled the building.

In 1931 and 1932, when the Union was suffering from the ill effects on commerce of the great financial depression, felt in common with other countries, drought smote the country places and brought widespread ruin to agriculture. Adversity struck home at every section of the population, and at the request of the Prime Minister, Days of Humiliation and Prayer were held in the Synagogue for relief from the Depression and the Drought during those years; and when, in

1933, copious rains throughout the country gave the promise of recovery the event was celebrated by a Service of Thanksgiving, *Chazan* and Choir filling the House of Prayer with the ancient psalms of gladness.

Rabbis and other Ministers of the Jewish religion visiting Cape Town preached not infrequently from the Great Synagogue pulpit during this period, some from the centres of Jewry in Europe, amongst whom were Dr. Myer Hildesheimer in 1928, Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish Community and Director of the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin; Rabbi Isaac Soloweizig of Wilna in 1932; and Rabbi I. S. Ruch of the Lomza Yeshiva. Preachers from other congregations in South Africa included Rabbi M. Ch. Mirvish, Rabbi W. Hirsch of Pretoria, the Rev. Dr. Romm of Bloemfontein, and the Rev. J. Levine of Pietermaritzburg. There were distinguished visitors from overseas who attended the services from time to time or who were received by the Congregation, and who included both Jews and gentiles. Most of them were associated with the development of Palestine or with some aspect of Zionist endeavour. In 1928 Lieut.-Colonel F. H. Kisch, C.B.E., D.S.O., Chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, and Dr. I. Olsvanger were welcomed by a committee on which the leaders of the Congregation were prominent. Subsequent visitors were Sir Ronald Storrs, K.C.M.G., Governor of Cyprus; Sir David and Lady Ezra; and in the following year, the Rt. Hon. Lord Melchett, P.C.; Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.; and Mr. V. Jabotinsky, leader of the Revisionist party of Zionists; in 1930 the Rev. A. A. Green, Minister Emeritus of the Hampstead Synagogue; in 1931 Dr. Ch. Weizman on behalf of the Zionist move-

ment ; and in 1934, Dr. Nahum Sokolow, President of the World Zionist Organisation.

The Congregation continued increasingly to be associated with the Zionist movement. In 1930, when the South African Zionist Conference was held in Cape Town, the Congregation deputed two of its leading members to represent it, and it was adequately represented at all subsequent Conferences.

Early in 1931, the Congregation sent delegates to a local conference on Hebrew Education. The subject matter of the conference was simple : the Hebrew Schools were in dire need of funds. As a result of the report brought back to the Committee it was resolved to give increased support from the Congregation to the *Talmud Torah*. The members agreed to raise the personal levy to ten shillings per annum. The premises occupied by the *Talmud Torah* were old and inadequate and unsuitable, and new pupils had had to be refused admission by reason of the insufficiency of accommodation. In 1932 the Congregation granted the use of the Old Synagogue daily to the *Talmud Torah* for its senior pupils for a class in Talmudical Literature. By 1933 the President of the Congregation found it desirable to report on the " miserable quarters " occupied by the Hebrew School, and brought forward a scheme by which it would be possible to erect a suitable building, with the help of the Congregation.

Under the testament of the late Hyman Liberman, a sum of money had been bequeathed to the Congregation for the purpose of advancing education in Hebrew and religion. It was proposed to add to this sum, with the consent of the Trustees, the fund that had pertained to the old Hopemill School. Three-

quarters of the total cost of a new building for Hebrew Instruction could thus be provided. Lengthy negotiations followed during the next two years. The Liberman bequest specified that the instruction endowed by it should be under the control of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation; the Hopemill Fund had reference likewise to a school under the control of the Congregation. But the *Talmud Torah*, albeit fostered and supported by the Congregation, was an independent institution, at least in origin, and could not be expected to place itself entirely at the disposal of the senior Congregation. But by 1935 an ingenious compromise had been arrived at. In November a special meeting of members resolved that the Congregation would have its own Hebrew School for the teaching of Religion and for Higher Hebrew Education; a school that would be under the management and control of the Congregation. Arrangements would be made with the United Hebrew Schools for the use of part of their premises for the conduct of the Congregations' classes. The new school was to be styled, "The Hyman Liberman School for Higher Hebrew Education." Meanwhile the funds at the disposal of the Congregation for Hebrew education would be invested with the United Hebrew Schools, which body would use them for the erection of a worthy and convenient building for its own classes and those of the Congregation, that is, the senior classes of the School. An Education Committee was appointed from the Committee of the Congregation, Mr. Abraham Liberman being aptly chosen as the first chairman. During the following year arrangements were being made by the *Talmud Torah* committee for the erection

of a new school on the site of the old buildings, which were entirely demolished, and in April 1937, the Corner Stone was laid by Mr. Maurice Rosen in the prsence of many members of both institutions, Mr. Liberman conveying to the United Hebrew Schools the good wishes of the Congregation and appealing to members of the Congregation to share responsibility in the support of the new venture.

Whilst the foundations of a new school were being laid, the Congregation was interesting its members in the educational needs of the Community in general, In 1929 the Congregation decided to join the South African Board of Hebrew Education, which had recently been established in order to promote closer union with other congregations and co-operation in the instruction of the young. Some hesitation was felt at joining a body, dealing with so intimate a communal matter, that had its headquarters in the Transvaal; and in 1932 the Congregation decided to discontinue the levy of 3s. per member that had hitherto been made for that purpose. But when a Cape Committee began to function and its good work was reported to the Congregation in the following year, the Board was immediately voted a sum of money from the Synagogue Funds as a donation towards its expenses. The Board of Hebrew Education conducted examinations, and in 1934 began to grant certificates of merit to boys about to become *Barmitzvah*, as a means of encouraging adherence to the rites and practices of Judaism and the study of its ancient literature. In 1935 the Congregation agreed to affiliate to and support the South African Board of Hebrew Education (Cape Committee),

and to take its part in supervising Jewish education throughout the Western Province.

The building of a school was not the only large scale undertaking considered by the Congregation during this decade. As far back as 1924 a deputation of Jewish residents of Green and Sea Point had waited on the Committee with the suggestion that the Great Synagogue build a House of Prayer for those of its members who lived in the vicinity of Sea Point. The older inhabitants remembered festival services held in the Sea Point Town Hall during 1900, when Rabbi Dr. Hertz preached to large congregations, numbering many like himself exiled from the Transvaal. But there had been no such services in the intervening years, nor was there any Jewish place of worship nearer than Cape Town. The project lay dormant for three years, but in 1927 it again arose. There were three hundred Jewish families in the area, and a hundred and fifty men had signified their willingness to become members if there should be a Sea Point Synagogue.

The Committee of the Great Synagogue considered the proposal, and after due deliberation, in August 1928, recommended to the Congregation that, provided certain conditions were fulfilled, a synagogue should be built at Sea Point. The Congregation discussed the recommendation at length. Dr. H. Kramer, elected President of the Green and Sea Point Congregation and a member of the Cape Town Congregation, urged strong reasons for the building of a branch synagogue, and a large majority of members carried the decision in September, 1928, to build at Sea Point. In the following May, the offer having meanwhile been discussed by the Sea Point supporters of the project,

the general meeting was again called to consider it on account of one clause in the provisions that was unacceptable to Sea Point. After some debate, this also was conceded. By August, 1929, no move had been made on the part of Sea Point towards fulfilling the conditions. Negotiations appeared to have broken down. Nevertheless, the Congregation, after further discussion, agreed to hold to its original offer. Another year went by and Sea Point was still hesitant. Meanwhile financial depression had settled on the land. The Committee therefore recommended a reconsideration of its offer, and in February, 1931, the matter was debated once more at a series of meetings by the members of the Great Synagogue. They finally re-affirmed the resolution of 1928 to build a synagogue at Sea Point, imposing conditions, however, which limited the total sum to be expended, and providing for the guarantee by Sea Point of a small portion of it. The Cape Town Congregation should have full control over the Sea Point branch Synagogue, with some reservations dear to the Sea Point people. In September, 1931, however, after more discussion by both committees, Sea Point resolved to build its own Synagogue. The Congregation offered its best wishes for the success of the enterprise and any help that was required.

It was not, however, until nearly ten years had elapsed since the first approach to the Mother Synagogue that the Corner Stone of the Sea Point Synagogue was laid by the Rt. Hon. General J. C. Smuts, on 8th April, 1934. In September of the same year the newly built place of worship was consecrated by the Rev. A. P. Bender, being opened by Mr. A. M. Jackson, President of the Green and Sea Point Congre-

gation and a prominent member of the Committee of the Great Synagogue. The members of the Great Synagogue responded whole-heartedly to the general invitation that had been extended to them by the Sea Point Pesident to support the occasion.

Better success attended the Congregation's efforts at co-operation in the formation of a body representative of all the synagogues within a convenient distance of Cape Town. In 1929 representatives of synagogues in the Cape Peninsula and the surrounding country as far as Worcester met for the purpose of forming a permanent organisation. Before the following year they had produced a workable scheme and inaugurated the United Council of Synagogues, with Maurice Rosen as President. There were matters of religious import ance that could be more conveniently dealt with by the United Council than by each synagogue separately: the Council could usefully co-ordinate or control Jewish education and charitable relief, could organise and establish an ecclesiastical court, regulate the admission of proselytes, deal with questions of *shechitah* and with *meshullochim* (missionary collectors). By 1931 the Council was established and in full working order. One of its early successes was the establishment of an Ecclesiastical Court, the *Beth Din*. The Court was opened in February, 1933, and immediately began to function usefully. The Congregation in the same year voted an annual grant from the Synagogue funds towards it upkeep. Before long it proved of service to congregations and to individuals. It is interesting to observe that this Ecclesiastical Court in its very first year had begun to fulfil the function that nearly a century earlier the Cape Town Congregation had

vainly hoped to do. The earliest laws of the Congregation provided for the settlement of civil disputes between members so that they might not need to have recourse to the public law courts. There is no record of any member ever having availed himself of the provision. But the *Beth Din* had the advantage of the sanction of Rabbinical law that the Congregation had not, to inspire the confidence of the litigants.

Another effort at co-operation was directed towards the amalgamation of the Congregation with that of the Roeland Street Synagogue. From 1929 onwards, meetings of special committees representing the two bodies were held from time to time, and the desirability of such an amalgamation was widely expressed in private; but year after year the Committee was bound to report that negotiations had broken down. Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and the very human Committee of the Synagogue was still hoping in 1937 when it reported: "The deliberations were so cordial that the Committee hope that unification will be an accomplished fact in the not too distant future."

A Federation of Charities was also amongst the projects of these years that bore no fruit, despite heroic labours, especially on the part of Mr. H. J. Stodel, who declared in 1928 that he was resigning from the Committee in order that he might devote himself to this object. The Charitable institutions were numerous and diverse, but they might be said to have a common focal point in the Great Synagogue, which received in the way of offerings and distributed to the different charities annually a sum of money usually exceeding two thousand pounds.

It was during this period that the Synagogue, with the help of successive instalments from the Liberman Bequest, gradually disburdened itself of its ancient debt by repaying the last of the mortgage loan. In September 1928, the loan stood at £5,268 11s. 8d. The Committee, announced Mr. Stodel the President, had collected amongst themselves the sum of £68 11s. 8d. They could count on the £5,000 from the Liberman Bequest, and he hoped that the final £200 would be subscribed by the members at that meeting. Actually a total sum of £277 was raised. The same year Mr. Stodel retired from the presidential chair and from the committee, and the members publicly acknowledged his eighteen years of devoted work by the presentation to him of his portrait and a handsome illuminated address. During the next few years various sums became available from the Liberman estate for application to the Synagogue debt, and in September 1932 the President, Mr. Maurice Rosen, announced " with his heart full of joy" that the Bond on the Great Synagogue had been fully and finally paid off. The occasion demanded grateful reference to the public spirit and munificence of Hyman Liberman.

It was in the same year that there was a public unveiling in the National Art Gallery by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of a bronze bust of Hyman Liberman, executed by the sculptor Moses Kottler. It was a token of recognition by the City of Cape Town of Liberman's services to the City.

The Congregation set up in 1934 as a fitting memorial to him and to his lifelong interest in the welfare of the Synagogue, stained glass windows by C. S. Groves enriching the main facade of the Great Synagogue.

The Liberman Memorial windows were supplemented a year or two later, to the much enhanced beauty of the Synagogue, by additional stained glass executed by Mr. Groves, installed by the children of Richard and Ida Rothkugel, in memory of their parents. The adornment of the Synagogue by beautiful glass was a cherished object of the Minister, who had himself in 1928 donated £100 to be devoted to this purpose.

For the embellishment of the Synagogue and the convenience of its services, numerous gifts by members and others are recorded: beautifully written Scrolls of the Law, silver bells and other appurtenances of the synagogue ceremonial, artistically designed draperies especially by the wives and daughters of members, sets of prayer books and other objects pertaining to the synagogue service. The restoration and permanent orderly upkeep of the Old Jewish Burial Ground at Woodstock were the objects of liberal gifts in money in 1931 and 1935 by Mr. Alfred de Pass, grandson of Aaron de Pass, the first President of the earliest synagogue in Cape Town in 1849.

In the field of communal usefulness not exclusively pertaining to the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, there was successful co-operation. The Board of *Shechita* continued to function well and received the regular support of the Congregation. In 1930 a special Committee of the House of Assembly was appointed to consider a Bill having reference to the slaughter of animals for food, and the Minister of the Congregation gave evidence as to the requirements of Jewish law concerning *Shechitah*. With him were associated Dr. J. L. Landau, Chief Rabbi of the Johannesburg Federated Synagogues, and Rabbi M. Ch. Mirvish.

The trio of ministers being introduced by Adv. Morris Alexander, M.L.A., successfully urged a consideration of the claims of the Jewish community for the essentially humane character of their mode of killing animals for food. In Parliament the views of the Jewish community were adequately supported by responsible Members of the House. The Bill was withdrawn.

Another Parliamentary measure which intimately affected the Community in 1930 was the Quota Bill, the effect of which was to restrict immigration from those countries which are inhabited by Jews in considerable numbers. The Bill passed through both Houses rapidly with little opposition and practically denied entrance to South Africa to numbers of Jews who might have hoped to escape from oppression in their less civilised native lands. The Congregation could take no steps to palliate the harsh effects of the Act, but many of its members were associated with mass protests and with measures to alleviate the discomforts of the immigrants who arrived in the eleventh hour from Europe.

The lot of Jews in Europe was to grow from bad to worse within the next few years, and the gateways of refuge to close upon the hapless persecuted people in merciless succession. In 1933 began that reign of terror, torture and degradation for the Jews of Germany that subsequently spread to all the lands where the venom of so-called National Socialism could penetrate. The members of the Great Synagogue could but join with the rest of the Community in prayer and in public protest, and express their sympathy by assistance where it could be given, and

protection of such as were fortunate enough to escape in time from the brutalised countries.

Appeals to the Congregation came also for assistance from the impoverished masses of Jews in Poland about 1935, suffering from economic disabilities, persecution and antisemitism. Vilification of the Jews, following in the wake of an inflamed national egotism was, like a pestilence, spreading throughout Europe and into other parts of the world. In South Africa, a degraded section of the white population, richly fertilised with Nazi doctrine by unscrupulous agents, served as a forcing bed for a rank growth of slander and malicious myth against the Jewish Community. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, to which the Congregation gave its support, expended every effort to check the noxious weed. A successful libel action against the Grey Shirt organisation in the Eastern Province in 1934 effected some measure of eradication amongst the meaner sort, but there were not lacking amongst the more enlightened, those without scruple who were willing to demean themselves by sowing slander in the hope of reaping place and power.

The Congregation willingly supported such measures as could be taken to protect the Jewish community against the cowardly offensive. The general ignorance prevailing on the subject of the Jewish community of South Africa and its relation to the rest of the nation offered fruitful soil for the broadcast sowing of malicious falsehood, which the missionaries of the Munich beerhouse and their deluded converts in South Africa counted an instrument of public policy. To assist in correcting the misconception outside Jewish circles

of the extent to which the South African Jews had been identified historically with the European population in general as citizens of South Africa in the growth and development of the nation, the Congregation handed over to the South African Board of Jewish Deputies, in 1935, a work which it had caused to be written and published some years earlier, " A History of the Jews in South Africa," which now appeared in a cheap local edition.

Ten years before, when the position of Jewry had not yet become a subject of controversy in the Union, the suggestion came from the Chief Archivist, Mr. Graham Botha, that the compilation of a history of the Synagogue would be a valuable cultural undertaking. A committee was appointed to consider the project. Research revealed matter so interesting that an historical work dealing, not specifically with the Synagogue, but with the Jews in South Africa, was recommended, and was commissioned by the Congregation and published early in 1930.

Members of the Congregation played their part in the public life of South Africa, and were sometimes honoured by election to public offices. From time to time the Committee took occasion to record its congratulations to those who attained to some public honour. Reference has been made to Hyman Liberman and Louis Gradner, who each, on more than one occasion, filled the worshipful office of Mayor of the City. In 1929 the congratulations of the Committee went to Eli Biurski, elected Member of Parliament, to Abraham Liberman, elected to the Provincial Council, and to five of its members who had been elected or re-elected as City Councillors; and in 1934,

and again in 1937, to Max Sonnenberg, Abe Bloomberg, and Alfred Friedlander, elected to the Provincial Council.

The Congregation delighted to honour, on the occasion of their Golden Wedding, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Eilenberg. Maurice Eilenberg, the oldest Trustee of the Synagogue, had been a leading member of the Congregation during the greater part of his lifetime, and had been intimately associated with the principal institutions of the Community. He died in 1931, bequeathing to the Synagogue a large sum of money designed to encourage Rabbinical studies, and making other bequests to the principal communal institutions.

The Wardens of the Synagogue during this period were: H. J. Stodel (1927), S. Goldstein (1927-1930), A. Liberman (1927, 1928, 1933, 1936), Harry Harris (1928), M. Rosen (1929, 1931, 1932), Dr. B. Bernstein (1929, 1930), Sigismund Gesundheit (1930-32 and 1934-1938), J. Frank (1931-1933), Woolf Harris (1933-1935, 1937), Louis Gradner (1934-1937).

In 1936 the Congregation created the distinguished honour of Life Membership of the Committee, and conferred it upon Maurice Rosen for his long and valuable services to the Synagogue. The same honour was accorded in 1937 to Abraham Liberman and Woolf Harris, and in 1940 to Philip Myers.

At the beginning of this period the Minister, Alfred Philipp Bender, had already completed thirty-two years of untiring effort in the service of the Congregation, of the Jewish community, and of the South African public, especially in the Cape Peninsula, where in social and charitable work he had become something of an institution. Education, the hospitals, charitable

work in general looked to him as to a guide and friend. In 1930 public subscription caused a bronze bust of Bender by the sculptor Kottler to be placed in the National Gallery in Cape Town. On the occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, in 1933, the Congregation held a reception in his honour, inviting the Jewish ministers of the Peninsula and representatives of all the congregations, and presented him as a token of respect and affection with his portrait, an illuminated address, and a cheque. The cheque he handed to the Committee of the Synagogue as a gift from himself that it might be used for the purchase of a set of carpets for the Synagogue. Four years later, in April, 1937, at a meeting of members specially called for the purpose, it was resolved in view of the Rev. Mr. Bender's long service, advancing age, and ill health, honourably to relieve him of the burden of those duties and cares he had borne so long and well, by appointing him Minister Emeritus. Touching tributes were paid to the deep regard in which he was widely held, and the hope was generally expressed that he would live for many years to enjoy his new appointment.



RABBI ISRAEL ABRAHAMS.

CHAPTER TEN.

The Ministry of Rabbi Israel Abrahams. 1937-1941.

THE same meeting of members that, in April 1937, appointed the Rev. A. P. Bender Minister Emeritus adopted the Committee's recommendation to extend a call to Rabbi Israel Abrahams, M.A., of the Great Synagogue, Manchester, to the office of Chief Minister of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation. Rabbi Abrahams was a minister of standing in England, with a Rabbinical Diploma, trained at Jews' College and the University of London, and recommended to the Cape Town Congregation by the Chief Rabbi.

In August, 1937, Rabbi Abrahams and Mrs. Abrahams arrived in Cape Town, being received at the docks by the Minister Emeritus and the leading members of the Congregation. The Mayor and representative citizens welcomed them to the City, and they were the guests of honour on the following Sunday at a reception held by the Congregation. On 22nd August, the social festivities over, the Rabbi was inducted into the office of Minister in the Synagogue by Mr. Woolf Harris, the President, and by the Minister Emeritus, and settled down without delay to that busy life of religious and social activity that is the lot of the Minister, performing the functions that had been the care of his predecessor within and without the Congregation whilst, to fill in the scanty interstices of time between his communal duties, he was invited to join the Cape School Board

and the Hospital Board, and received the appointment, at the University of Cape Town, of Professor of Hebrew, offices which had all been held for many years by the Rev. A. P. Bender. Nor was he content to follow only in the footsteps of his aged predecessor. New problems arose out of the changing times, and it was not long before he had struck out new paths of usefulness. He rapidly made himself acquainted with the numerous Jewish institutions in the Cape Peninsula and, during his first two years, met, in addition, nearly all the Jewish communities within a range of forty miles of Cape Town. In 1938 he completed a short Pastoral Tour which included Mossel Bay, George and Oudtshoorn and, in 1940, accompanied by Mrs. Abrahams, he visited the scattered Jewish Communities of the Namaqualand districts. Everywhere he met with an appreciative welcome by the Jewish inhabitants of the districts in which he travelled, and with much courtesy and friendship besides amongst the non-Jewish population.

But these excursions were the rare relief from the routine tasks upon which rested the spiritual and social welfare of the Congregation: prayer, charity and other good works, the care of the young, and so on. In 1938 the new building for the *Talmud Torah* was completed, and on 24th January, Mr. Woolf Harris formally opened the United Hebrew Schools building, which included the Hyman Liberman School for Higher Hebrew instruction, the financial responsibility for the conduct of which was to rest on the broad shoulders of the Congregation. During the next two years there were encouraging reports of the work being done by the School. Satisfaction was



THE UNITED HEBREW SCHOOLS.

also expressed by the Committee with the Cape Board of Jewish Education which, by 1938, had caused a marked increase in the number of Jewish children receiving instruction in Hebrew and religion. The Board gave a banquet to mark their five years of fruitful work, the Minister of Education of the Union, the Hon. Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, being the guest of honour.

The Congregation gave its support also to a Youth Centre, which was inaugurated by the Rabbi, with its headquarters at Rose Court, the one-time residence of Hyman Liberman, which the new organisation was permitted to use rent free by the generosity of Mr. Max Sonnenberg. The *Beth Din*, the Board of *Shechita*, the United Council of Hebrew Congregations, the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Gardens Talmudical Society, still continued to receive support from the funds of the Congregation, whilst the organisations which enjoyed the hospitality of the Old Synagogue were unabated in number and variety, many of them now being those of young people —Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Habonim and such—whilst the local Civilian Protection Service also used it as their meeting place.

The Minister Emeritus, whose health had been failing for some time before his retirement from active service, lived but a few months after the installation of his successor. He died on 18th December, 1937, and a sorrowing Congregation buried him, mourned by a multitude of citizens from every section of the population of the Cape Peninsula. The new Minister, Rabbi Abrahams, delivered a touching funeral oration at the Memorial Service held in the Synagogue, and the Congregation recorded its deep sorrow at the

death of one who had been its " greatly revered spiritual leader for forty-two years." By his will, Alfred Philipp Bender bequeathed a sum of £500 to the Synagogue that he had loved and for which he had long laboured. A committee was formed for the purpose of inviting public subscriptions to a fund to be used to perpetuate the memory of the departed Minister, and in due course two Scholarships were founded, one at each of two of the educational institutions with which he had been associated during his lifetime, the University of Cape Town and the Hyman Liberman School for Higher Hebrew Education, both for the encouragement of the study of Hebrew. Arrangements were made also for a memorial tablet bearing a suitable inscription to be erected in the vestibule of the Synagogue.

At the sale of Bender's effects, the Committee purchased several articles from the collection of objects of artistic and historical interest that the late Minister had gathered about him over a period of many years. Following a suggestion of Dr. L. Mirvish, it had been decided to create a Jewish Museum for which the objects thus acquired might serve as a nucleus; a collection which could comprise articles of artistic interest associated with Jewish life and ritual, documents and pictures relating to Jewish life in South Africa, and portraits and other objects connected with persons prominent in the history of the Jewish Community. The late Minister left a large collection of sermons, addresses and other papers, a selection of which the Committee decided to publish. Mr. I. M. Goodman completed the very considerable task of examining and arranging this mass of manuscript, and its preparation for the press was undertaken in 1940



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE FROM HATFIELD ST.

by the Rev. Dr. I. H. Levine, of the Green and Sea Point Congregation.

The old house in which the Minister had lived for many years, and which long antedated the building of the Old Synagogue, together with the other old buildings attached to the Synagogue, it was resolved to demolish to make way for modern buildings, and within a year of the Minister's death it had disappeared. Trim lawns and modern offices, and a committee room and other necessary buildings in due course took the place of the ancient houses.

Changes too there were about this time in the personnel of the Synagogue establishment. The Secretary, L. A. G. Neumann, died in December, 1938, having served the Congregation faithfully for eighteen years, and in the following year Mr. S. H. Rechtman was appointed to fill his place. The Chief Cantor, the Rev. Mr. L. Kirschner retired on pension after eighteen years service in the Synagogue; and the aged Beadle, Mr. L. Freeman, who had served in the Great Synagogue since it was built and in the Old Synagogue for several years before that, retired on a pension with the kindly greetings of the Congregation and a Purse subscribed by appreciative members. Mr. L. Gordon, who had been appointed Assistant *Shammas* in 1933, was engaged in place of the retired *Shammas* in 1938. In September, 1939, the Rev. S. Kibel resigned, after having served eleven years as Assistant Cantor and Minister, during which time he had added to his duties in the Synagogue unremitting devotion to welfare work in the Congregation and in the Community generally. Within the short space of two years the Synagogue had lost all its old and valued

officers—Minister, both Cantors, Secretary and Beadle. On the other hand, the lay offices had been adequately filled by younger, competent officials, and though no new Cantor had been appointed, the duties of First Cantor were being carried out to the great satisfaction of the Congregation by the Choirmaster, Mr. Boris Rome. The new Minister had thrown himself heart and soul into the service of the Community. The Congregation had been deprived by the old minister's death of the advantages of his long and intimate experience and his widely established reputation; it had gained, on the other hand, the energy and enthusiasm of a younger spiritual leader. It had, moreover, acquired what had been lacking throughout the long years of Mr. Bender's ministry—the womanly assistance in communal work of the Minister's wife. From the first, Mrs. Abrahams took her place beside the Rabbi in those situations where a woman may best serve the Congregation. At the outbreak of War she was invited to, and accepted, as representative of the women of the Jewish community, a responsible office on the Staff of the Women's Auxiliary Service. She came at a time when women had begun to bear a greater share than formerly in the affairs of the Congregation.

In 1932, in response to a request from the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa, the Congregation had resolved, on a recommendation of the Committee, to admit women to the full rights of membership, excepting only that of appointment to the executive offices. At the following general meeting, in 1933, three women members, the first of their sex to be thus honoured, were returned as members of the Committee

of the Great Synagogue. They were: Mrs. H. J. Stodel, Mrs. L. Raphaely, and Mrs. Max Cohen. From that time women continued to form part of the Committee each year.

One innovation which the ladies lost no time in introducing was the holding of social gatherings. The successful Girls' Dedication Service in 1936 was also to be attributed in part to the women members of the Committee. The arrival of Mrs. Abrahams strengthened the feminine influence. Arrangements were again made for the training of young girls for the Dedication Ceremony, and it was duly celebrated in 1940. The girls who had completed the Dedication course were each presented with a *Bat-Mitzvah* certificate. There was a special Women's Service in the Synagogue in 1938, and succeeding years on the occasion of the Women's World Day of Prayer, and in 1938 a meeting arranged especially for the women of the Congregation was addressed by the Rabbi and subsequently gave rise to the formation of the Great Synagogue Ladies' Guild, which was formed in 1939 with Mrs. Abrahams as Chairman, enthusiastically supported by Mrs. Philip Myers as Vice-Chairman. The ladies of the Guild carried out many useful functions about the Synagogue and the communal institutions. They provided fine draperies for the Synagogue services, they organised the social meetings that followed the Mid-week Services that they had instituted, they ran a Children's Knitting Circle producing some 200 garments for troops, they sent greetings for the New Year to members and relatives of members on active service. They subsequently established the custom of monthly meetings, where work and prayer

and an address or reading by the Rabbi had special reference to the War and to their relatives and friends in the fighting services. They fulfilled many self-imposed duties for the good of the Synagogue and of the Community, and they interested themsevles in the children of the Congregation.

The Sabbath Service for Children, no longer held as formerly in the afternoon but immediately following the Sabbath Morning service, continued to attract large numbers of the young, and the Rabbi instituted in his first year an annual Yom Kippur Service for Children at the Talmud Torah and a Special Children's Service on Purim, where the relation of the ancient tale of Esther and Mordecai and the wicked Haman was followed by a distribution of packets of sweets. These delights and the *Haman Taschen* provided by the Rabbi's wife doubtless left the children with some suspicion that Haman could not have been altogether bad.

But there was a Haman more imminent than him of ancient story, more vicious a persecutor, and more powerful, with no good Queen Esther to circumvent his wicked plots, who had plunged the world into the bitterest and most destructive struggle in history. In 1939, South Africa had ranged herself along with Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth in defence of liberty and civilised living against the ruthless German aggressor in the Second World War. Large numbers of the sons and daughters of the Community volunteered for the military, naval and air services. Grave crises called forth Empire Days of Prayer in May and September, 1940, and in March, 1941, when special services were held and the Synagogue

overflowed with worshippers. The Chanukah Military Service, attended by a great congregation which included the Administrator of the Province, Captain Joubert, and the Mayor, Councillor Brinton, held on Sunday, 29th December, was relayed from the Synagogue and broadcast by radio over the Union. It was the first Synagogue Service to be broadcast in South Africa, and was received appreciatively by an even greater congregation of listeners, as numerous letters, subsequently received by the Synagogue executive, testified.

From the beginning of his ministry in Cape Town, Rabbi Abrahams gave encouragement to every movement towards interdenominational tolerance and goodwill. He encouraged the local establishment of a Society of Jews and Christians, of which he became Vice-President. The inauguration of Goodwill Sunday by the Church Councils of South Africa was welcomed by the Congregation. In March, 1941, it was celebrated in the Synagogue by a Goodwill Service held on the previous Friday evening when, besides the usual congregation and many additional members of the Jewish community, there were congregants from other denominations, the Archbishop of Cape Town and the Coadjutor Bishop and other Church dignitaries amongst them. The Rabbi thrice delivered addresses to the Unitarian Congregation of Cape Town, and on other occasions in 1940 and 1941 officiated at the interdenominational Civic Services at the City Hall, and delivered an address at a War Memorial Service. He received at the Synagogue in September, 1940, the Minister, the Rev. Mr. Leigh, of the Sea Point Methodist Church, and a party of Methodist visitors, to whom

he lectured on the Synagogue service, instructing them, to their great interest, in the usage and custom pertaining to the various ritual objects in the Synagogue.

Other visitors to the Synagogue during 1940 and 1941 included numbers of Jewish soldiers, sailors and airmen from overseas arriving by the convoys carrying troops to the seats of war, and South Africans transferred to or visiting Cape Town. The cordial hospitality of the members was extended to them wherever it was possible, and sometimes a number of them were entertained by the Congregation, some sixty on one occasion on a Sabbath morning in the Board Room of the Synagogue, whilst the arrival of a Palestinian Battalion afforded an opportunity for the entertainment of many Jewish soldiers.

One specially distinguished visitor to Cape Town in 1941 was the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Isaac Herzog. The Congregation associated itself with a public welcome to him. There was also participation in a public welcome to Rabbi Dr. Woolf Kirzner, the newly elected Minister of the Roeland Street Synagogue, on his arrival in Cape Town. Attempts to amalgamate the two synagogues had still continued right up to 1940, but there was always some insurmountable difference that led to the abandonment of the project for the time, and always sufficient optimism for it to be taken up again.

The Congregation extended its congratulations in 1938 to Alfred Friedlander, M.P.C., elected to the Union Parliament, to Adv. M. Alexander, K.C., on his re-election, and in 1939 to Max Sonnenberg, elected to the Union Parliament; and in 1938 to H. J. Mandelbrote and Dr. F. Forman, appointed to Professorships



COMMITTEE OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE, 1941.

of History and Medicine respectively at the University of Cape Town.

The leaders of the Congregation, Wardens during these years, were: Sigismund Gesundheit in 1938, Louis Gradner in 1938 and 1939, A. M. Jackson in 1938, 1939 and 1940, H. Rosen in 1939 and 1940, P. M. Clouts in 1940. In 1941, the Centenary Year, the senior Wardens were elected; Woolf Harris, whose earliest year of office as Warden was 1907; Abraham Liberman, who had first been a Warden in 1917; and Philip Myers, who was first elected a Warden of the Old Synagogue in 1904.

Amongst the visitors from overseas about this time was Mr. Elsley Zeitlyn, who had for many years represented the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation on the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Mr. Zeitlyn met the Committee and gave an account of his work on the Board. Besides its connection with this Board, the Congregation had maintained its association with British Jewry, principally through the Chief Rabbi, for a period indeed extending over a hundred years; and on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz' occupation of the Chief Rabbinate of the British Empire, had sent congratulations and a subscription towards the presentation that was being made to him.

In the gigantic struggle that was being waged by Britain and the upholders of tolerance and free institutions against the threat of domination by the persecuting forces of National Socialism, the Jewish community of South Africa were doubly bound to give their utmost in support of the democratic cause; for their national obligation as South Africans was reinforced by their

duty to oppose the common enemy of Judaism and Jews. At the general meeting of members in 1940, the President, Mr. A. M. Jackson, made reference to the enlistments in the fighting services and to the absence of those who had left with the troops for the North. At the usual election of committee members for the year the formality of voting was waived in the candidature of Mr. Richard Myers, absent on active service. Before the next general meeting the members were to mourn the loss of two young Volunteers, C. Friedlander of the Navy, and H. Sperber of the Air Force, who had given up their lives in the Country's cause, the former a son of a member of the Committee, belonging to a family that had been associated with the Synagogue for three generations.

In 1940 the Kol Nidrei service in the Synagogue was the hundredth celebration by the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation of the Fast of Yom Kippur. With the return of that solemn day in 1941 the Congregation will have completed a century of devotion to the cause of the Jewish religion. From a handful of settlers in a small British Colony has grown a religious association numbering many hundreds and extending its beneficent influence far and wide outside the walls of the Synagogue, a worthy component of the great South African nation, the birth and growth of which it has witnessed. The modest room of a dwelling house in the Gardens has given place to a noble House of Prayer, and the early efforts of a few, zealous for public devotions and good works have grown, in the favourite phrase of a much loved former minister of the Congregation, "from strength to strength," into a great network of organisations for the practice of Prayer, Piety and Charity, whose centre is the Great Synagogue.