

60

th
ANNIVERSARY
1931 - 1991



קק שערי שלום

**OF THE
SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION
OF ZIMBABWE**

Delta Cohen



**On the occasion of its
Diamond Jubilee
the President, Executive
and Committee of the
Sephardi Hebrew Congregation
of Zimbabwe
proudly presents this book
with its compliments to**

July 1991

Tammuz-Av 5751



The Kehila Sha'are Shalom with two stone tablets of The Ten Commandments dominating an imposing front.

EDITORIAL

Throughout the blood stained pages of Jewish history, the theme to be found is always one of survival. Civilizations have come and gone, but the Jews remain. The Jews were in the Diaspora before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, not because of their sins as others would have you believe, but because it was the Divine Plan that the Jews were chosen to be a light unto the nations, and that the Diaspora or dispersal is a key factor in their survival.

The Nazi terror is a case in point. It came up with the "final solution" to annihilate the Jews from the face of the earth. They failed, but not before they had murdered six million of our brethren, amongst whom was that pious God-fearing small community of Jews on the beautiful island of Rhodes.

Here in Zimbabwe, we do not have a Jewish environment, and the battle to survive not only as Jews but also as Sephardim, continues. We adhere to our Sephardi customs and the hope that our numbers will increase.

As I wandered about the medieval streets of the Juderia in Rhodes, I often thought of how well our forefathers had fitted into the Divine Plan of the Diaspora. Here, as in other centres of Europe, they had upheld the ethics of the Torah. The quaint box like buildings and narrow cobbled streets suggested to me, that by any other standards, the Jews of Rhodes were not affluent, but were very rich spiritually.

In compiling the commemorative book on the sixtieth anniversary of our cherished community, it also intended to remember the Jews of Rhodes who for more than five centuries prayed to Il Senior del Mundo so fervently and faithfully, and whose heritage we strive to preserve.

BENNY LEON.



MR. SAM BENATAR



Mr Victor Alhadeff who served two years as president in 1988 and 1989. He also served a number of years as chairman of the Chevra Kaddisha.

MESSAGE FROM MR SAM BENATAR, PRESIDENT OF THE SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ZIMBABWE

During July 1991 we shall be celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation and at this point I am particularly privileged that my Executive and I have in some small way contributed to its continued development.

The past few years have been anything but easy for us and it is a credit to the resilience and dedication of past and present Executive Committees, members of our lay Committee and all members of this Congregation that we have not only resolutely faced our difficulties but have to a measure overcome them and attained many of our set goals.

It is most gratifying to note the evident resurgence in pride which congregants now feel for not only belonging to this Congregation but also by participating in its activities. Whilst this is in itself an achievement, our efforts should not stop here. The reason for our existence is not merely to ensure full Synagogues on the Sabbath

and other Holy Days but more important to fill our Congregants with an awareness of their Heritage and Judaism. We must have more functions to do with the Synagogue so that we may make it the centre of our lives and activity.

Whilst we can look back on the past 60 years with a real sense of achievement, it is my hope that the lessons learnt from the efforts and dedication of our past members will act as an inspiration to re-instil in all of us a sense of pride in belonging to this Congregation, a sense of pride in our origins and heritage and a sense of pride in being Sephardi Jews.

It is my pleasure and privilege to congratulate the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of its foundation and to extend to all its members my best wishes for its continued unity, prosperity and good fortune.



ALPHONSE (AL) JUDAH NAIM

He was born in London on the 6th February 1914 and soon afterwards he and his parents went to Egypt before the first world war. He spent 12 years in Alexandria and four in Cairo attending English schools.

He came to Zimbabwe in 1930 en route to Zaire where he spent 2 years, then another year in Zambia after which he returned to Harare in 1933.

He served part time in the Royal Rhodesia Regiment and the Salisbury Volunteer Corps from 1934 to July 1940. In August 1940 he was called up for full time service. July 1942 he was posted to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Egypt then in January 1943 he joined the 6th South African Armoured Division. With the Division he went to Italy serving with Motor Transport because of his technical background. With his knowledge of Italian, he was also useful in certain areas as an interpreter. In December 1945 he was repatriated home and discharged on the 30th January 1946.

He rejoined the Motor Trade in which he had started in 1934.

In November 1946 he married Freda (Babs) Mary Benatar (nee Sklar). Al and Babs have 2 children, Mark and Linda.

In 1949 he and Cyril Landau bought Dominion Garage which name was eventually changed to Naim's Motor Supplies (Pvt) Ltd. He served on the executive of the Motor Trade Association, rising to be Chairman of the Wholesalers Section until the firm was sold in 1975.

He joined the Sephardi Synagogue choir in the early fifties and with the blessing of the late well loved and respected Dr. Rabbi M. Papo introduced the tune of the 'Shema' he knew from his early days in Alexandria. He also served on the Synagogue Committee and was Vice President from 1981 to 1983 and President from 1984 to 1987.



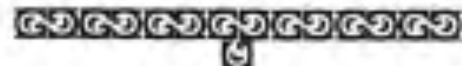
MR DAVID KAY

David Kay was born in Tel Aviv on 23rd September, 1935. On completion of his studies at the Motor Industries Technical College, he served in the Israeli army until 1955. In 1958, he graduated from the Israeli Institute of Engineering and decided to emigrate to this country. He arrived in 1958 and soon became active in communal affairs. He was active as President of the congregation for four consecutive years which included the Golden Jubilee Year of 1981. He has served on numerous committees of the congregation and has been a very active member.

David has involved himself in community services as well. For the past 20 years he has been a member of Lions Club International. In 1985 he served as President of Lions Club of the Phoenix. In 1989 he was appointed to serve as Cabinet Member for District 412 as District Chairman for the Aged which covers Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. He has continued to hold this position for the past three years.

He is a keen golfer and has served as Captain of Wingate Golf Club. More recently, however, he has become an enthusiastic bowler.

He regularly attends Synagogue services Friday nights and Saturday mornings and still sings in the choir, one of his great joys.



**MESSAGE FROM
MRS. MURIEL E. ROSIN,
PRESIDENT, C.A. JEWISH BOARD
OF DEPUTIES**

On my own behalf and on that of the other Hon. Officers, Councils and members of the Central African Jewish Board of Deputies, it gives me much pleasure to extend to the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Harare our heartiest congratulations on the occasion of their Sixtieth Anniversary.

The Sephardi Community has, at all times, been a valuable asset to the Board and many of their members have, and still do, hold office thereon. In fact the whole concept of forming a Jewish Board of Deputies in this country was first conceived by the then President of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation.

The Sephardi Congregation is an integral part of the Board and together with the three other Congregations and the various Institutions which make up its Councils, has at all times played a valuable and useful part in its deliberations. On many occasions, we have been most appreciative of the loan of the Rodis Hall for various functions and meetings; we have also greatly valued the contribution from the Congregation itself as well as from the very fine spiritual leaders who led it in the past.

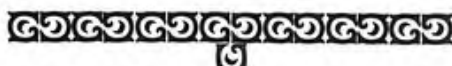
We wish you all the very best on your Anniversary, commend you on the manner in which you have kept your Congregation alive and whole in your governmental upheavals extending over the past few years, and we trust that you will continue to flourish as a viable Congregation for many years to come.



**MESSAGE FROM MR. H. COHEN,
PRESIDENT HARARE HEBREW
CONGREGATION**

On behalf of my Executive, Committee and members of the Harare Hebrew Congregation, I would like to take this opportunity of expressing heartiest congratulations and good wishes on the occasion of your 60th Anniversary... quite a milestone in the history of the Sephardi Congregation!

May you have a joyful and successful year and grow from strength to strength.



**MESSAGE FROM MR ADOLF LEON,
PRESIDENT, CENTRAL AFRICAN
ZIONIST ORGANISATION**

On behalf of the Central African Zionist Organisation and myself, it gives me great pleasure to send you greetings on this, the 60th Anniversary of your congregation.

We, in Cazo, recall, with pleasure, the warmth and enthusiasm with which all your members have always supported and continue to support Zionism in Zimbabwe by contributing generously whenever called upon to do so. Most importantly, we sincerely appreciate their being actively engaged in Cazo's various committees even to the extent of making Aliyah, which is the ultimate aim of Zionism, and carrying on with their sterling work in Israel.

In spite of your depleted numbers, your unwavering support for Israel, Zionism, and our community in general has not diminished. Your influence to this day is very much felt and appreciated and I hope it will carry on for as long as possible in peace and harmony for the benefit of all our people, both here, Israel and the world over.



**MESSAGE FROM
MRS DOROTHY MELTZER,
PRESIDENT, ZIMBABWE
PROGRESSIVE JEWISH
CONGREGATION**

The Zimbabwe Progressive Jewish Congregation sends sincere congratulations to the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation on their attaining 60 years of service to their Community.

We thank them for all the practical help, and support, they have given our Congregation since its inception. We do appreciate this very much. We rejoice with them as they celebrate this special anniversary and give our Best Wishes for the future.





The temporary place of worship in Montague Avenue, while the Synagogue was under construction in the early 1950's.

sense than for their utility, and at the first lively ceremony of Seum Hatorah, the ritual for the completion of the scroll in the time honoured manner of writing in an initial, the vast sum then of £200 was realized in order to purchase the two Silver Teaks (religious scrolls) which adorn and grace our Ark.

At no time was the Hebrew education of the growing children allowed to lapse. Mr B.D. Almeleh taking it upon himself to tutor and see that those who had started off their studies in the Ashkenazi way reverted to the Sephardi manner of pronunciation. The first Barmitzvah to be celebrated in this manner was that of the writer—an occasion of great jubilation and festivity within the new community.

Our 1931 story is told. Anniversaries are occasions not only for celebrating and revering the past, but also give us an opportunity to take stock of ourselves and to resolve to conduct ourselves in such a way as will enable those who follow to have cause to celebrate anniversaries in the future.

Time, of course, brings many changes. Circumstances have drastically reduced our numbers, but let those of us who keep the fruits of our lovely community remember with pride and gratitude those three stalwart and gallant gentlemen who in 1931, planted the tree and founded our Sephardi Hebrew Congregation.

The staff of the Sephardi complex who have given the congregation many years of loyal service. L to R: Carmelo Chidumba (26 years), James Muzawazi (22 years) and Paul Nyahotai (18 years).



THE EARLY YEARS

In the early years the young Hebrew Sephardi Society of Rhodesia, had no permanent home and services were held in various venues, as divergent as hired halls and private homes. On 9th September, 1934 at the fourth annual general meeting of the congregation, it was decided to purchase a stand in what was then known as Jameson Avenue. In 1940 an adjacent stand was purchased at the instigation of Mr I.R. Rosin and shortly thereafter the Sephardi Hall was built. It was the first true home of the Sephardi community in this country and served as a place of worship, a school and a communal centre.

In 1944 Mr. I.R. Rosin approached the Chief Rabbi of Cape Town, Dr. Abrahams, regarding the employment of a minister for the congregation. Up until that time the founders of the community, all of them lay men, had guided the congregation and attended the services and instruction of the children. But obviously, as the community grew, so the need for a Rabbi became more pressing.

Dr. Abrahams recommended Rabbi Dr. M. Papo who at that time was serving in Manchester. Dr. Papo was persuaded to come to Africa and arrived in 1944. It was the beginning of just under 20 years of distinguished and selfless service. From the beginning Dr. Papo took a keen interest in the affairs of the young congregation. He introduced children's services and brought out news bulletins. His saintliness and inspired teachings helped tremendously towards the development of the community.

In January 1953 the S.N. Alhadeff Nursery School was opened under the supervision of the late Mrs. Clara Mogilnic, a qualified nursery school teacher. The first three children – in fact they were the sum total of pupils – were Bella King, Marc Naim and Victor Hasson. By the second term the numbers however had risen to twenty-five children. The nursery school has continued from that time and now, with Mrs. Eileen Allan as its principle, has more than ninety pupils and a reputation (among Jew and gentile alike) as one of the best nursery schools in the country.

But just as the institutes of learning under the wing of the Sephardi community had to grow, so did the community itself. It became apparent that the hall on Jameson Avenue would not suffice. In 1951 Mr. I.R. Rosin was instrumental in purchasing the site where our community centre now stands. Shortly after the hall was sold and work began on the new complex. The Rhodes Community Memorial Hall was the first building to be erected and served initially the dual purpose of synagogue and community centre.

In 1957 work began on the Sha'are Shalom synagogue. When the architectural plans were first discussed, some members pressed for a more modern, inovated building. But the majority looked for a synagogue in the classic tradition, a building built with simple lines with a warm dignified interior.

The synagogue was consecrated on the 1st June, 1958. On that occasion the Haham, Dr. S. Goan, was a distinguished guest along with the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, Lord Dalhousie.

But the centre was to see more expansion. In 1961 the foundations were laid for the Samuel Leon Hebrew School. The school was officially opened on Sunday 13th May, 1962.

In January 1960, Rev. S.R. Ichay was appointed associate minister of the congregation. He too showed a keen interest in the youth and introduced post barmitzva classes, arranging for the youth to partake more fully in Shabbat evening "youth" services. In 1963, upon the retirement of Dr. Papo to Vienna, Rev. Ichay took over as minister. He held the appointment for five years until he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where he is now the Rabbi to the Sephardi community.

In 1967 Reverend I. Benzaquen joined as assistant minister and was inaugurated as a Rabbi in 1974. He too was popular with the youth. In 1976 he emigrated to Brazil and was succeeded by the Rev. R. Suiza who served as minister until 1979 when he emigrated to South Africa where he is now the minister with the Sephardi community in Cape Town.

From its inauguration in 1931 until the early seventies, the Sephardi community in Zimbabwe grew from strength to strength. In the mid seventies, however, the political uncertainty (made worse by the growing war), took its toll of the Sephardi community as it did every other community in the country. Slowly the numbers of the community have shrunk but the work of the community has not. Today we may be back in the days when we had to rely on lay religious leaders. But it is sincerely hoped that this will only be temporary.

During the sixty years of its span, the congregation has produced leaders in every walk of life. It has counted amongst its numbers University Professors, Judges, Doctors, Attorneys and Advocates, Chemists, Industrialists, Social workers and honest hard working citizens. The Sephardim have etched a proud record of history of this country. They have proved themselves to be hard working, industrious community and it can only be prayed that the years ahead will allow it to gather strength and build its numbers again.

A photograph taken in 1937 at the Eiffel Flats near Gatooma. Seated on the boot are Moshe Amato and Rachel Hasson. On the running board are Sam Hanan and Allegra Trevis.





The Hon. Life Gabbai, Mr Raphael Menashe, holds one of the Sepher Torahs which were brought to this country from Rhodes Island. The Sepharim in the orante casks are from Baghdad. A number of Sepharim were donated in the 1970's to the Sephardi communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Sepharim are never purchased by a congregation, but are loaned to it by other congregations, or donated by congregations in memory of relatives.

FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES

In recognition of his outstanding services to the congregation, Mr Raphael Jacob Menashe, had the title of Honorary Life Gabbai bestowed upon him by the committee in 1982.

In the past ten years, Mr Menashe has continued to take upon himself the task of Hazan, and to lead the services in the Kehila. In the absence of a minister he conducts the burial services and is always available for Zehirot.

Born in Rhodes Island in 1911, R.J. Menashe emigrated to Rhodesia in 1936, settling in Salisbury where he immediately became a member of the congregation. He established himself as a merchant here and in later years as a clothing manufacturer.

He has served on the committee and in the early 1970's, assisted in the conducting of religious services. During Rabbi Benzaquen's absence on sabbatical leave, he conducted the services and recalls that in that year there were twelve barmitzvahs.

In 1946, he married Regina Hassen, a survivor of Auschwitz. They were married in the Salisbury Street Synagogue.

In 1979, he succeeded Leon Mayo as Gabbai to the congregation and the following year the honorary life title was bestowed upon him. Throughout this period of service he endeavoured to keep the

beautiful and cherished traditions of Rodis. He has indicated that he feels a moral obligation to keep these traditions going, but now that he is in his eightieth year he would welcome a gradual retirement.

THE GABBAIS

In the early 1930's before the congregation was able to take on the services of a Minister, it has been the Gabbais who have given spiritual leadership in the services of the community. They have continued their work even during those periods when the community had its own Minister. It is a task requiring considerable devotion and the Sephardi congregation has been particularly honoured to have a succession of such competent and dedicated men:-

Marco Alhadeff, the community's first Gabbai
Behor David Almeleh, the first Hon. Life Gabbai Emeritus;
Salvatore Alhadeff, Gabbai and first Hebrew teacher;
Santo Codron;
Joseph Menashe;
Leon Mayo;
Raphael Menashe, Hon. Life Gabbai Emeritus.
Jacques Hassen; Leon Hanan assistant Gabbai.

CHEVRA KADDISHAH

The Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe is particularly fortunate in being the only Sephardi Congregation south of the equator which boasts of the fact that it has a completely voluntary Chevra Kaddishah. From its inception the Congregation has had dedicated service from both men and women who have served in this indispensable organisation.

The Congregation acknowledges the part played by, and pays tribute to such past members on the men's Committee as J.C. Benatar, J.N. Alhadeff, I.B. Benatar, V. Israel, S.N. Alhadeff, A.I. Menashe, M. Franco, B. Alhadeff, M. Strugo, J. Amato, V. Alhadeff, M. Dozetos and I.E. Menashe; and on the Ladies Committee, V. Amato, E.N. Levy, M. Galante, C. Soriano, F. Menashe, F. Capelouto, R. Surmany, E. Alhadeff, H. Ben Yehuda, R. Benatar, B. Kriker, E. Bondi, S. Piha and D. Hasson.

If we have inadvertently omitted anyone's name, we apologise in advance and would explain that most of our records were sent to Israel and were not available at time of printing.

To present members of this Organisation, we express the hope that they will continue to perform their holy work in the highest traditions of our faith and our forebears.

MESSAGE FROM MR DOREL BEER, PRESIDENT, JOHANNESBURG SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION

Not only in my capacity as President of the Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, but also as a past member of your community for 20 years, it is with great pleasure and honour that I have been asked to send a message to your Congregation on the occasion of your 60th Anniversary.

I want to take this opportunity on behalf of myself, my Executive Committee and, indeed the entire Congregation, to wish you all a very happy, prosperous and successful future. May God Almighty guide you and help you to continue the progress in the work for Hashem and your Community.

Yours sincerely

DOREL BEER
PRESIDENT

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION OF CAPE TOWN

It is a pleasure for me, on the occasion of your Diamond Jubilee, to extend greetings and good wishes to the Congregation.

Your congregation ought to be proud of its past achievements for upholding Sephardi ideals, traditions and customs and for all the efforts presently being made to safeguard our rich heritage. Although numerically small I am sure that your future endeavours will be as fruitful and successful as in the past years.

In a few months time Sephardi communities throughout the world will commemorate the Quincentennial anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and it is indeed of historic value and significance to know that this commemoration, which is a tribute to the survival of Sephardi culture, will also be held in Zimbabwe.

On behalf of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Cape Town I congratulate you on your 60th anniversary and may you be blessed to go from strength to strength.

Cordial Shalom.

MOISE BERKMAN
PRESIDENT



The Gabbai, Mr Jacques Hasson, kindles the eternal light above the Ark where the Sepher Torah's are kept. The lamps burn olive oil upon which a cotton wick is placed.



Ladies Committee 1991

Seated L to R: Mesdames Vivian Codron, Clairette Alhadeff, Stella Cohen, Marie Scemaria. Standing L to R: Ray Cohen, Sarah Shapiro, Nelly Israel, Betty Bondi and Allegra Trevis. Inset left: Sarah Benatar and Rachel Hanan.

THE LADIES SOCIETY

Following a meeting called by Mrs Sarina Koblenz, the Sephardi Ladies Society came into being in 1954. The first chairlady was Mrs Amelie Benatar – a position she was to fill for six consecutive years. On the original committee is Mrs Sarah Shapiro who is still a serving member of the society.

The original committee comprised the following:-

Chairlady: Mrs Amelie Benatar

Vice-Chairlady: Mrs Sarina Koblenz

Co-secretaries: Mesdames, Ruth Ferrera and Sarah Shapiro

Committee Members: Mesdames Behora Alhadeff, Perla Alhadeff, Rosa Ferrera, Alegra Hasson, Rica Menashe, Rachel Surmany and Rebecca Tarica.

This society is an often unsung, but nonetheless vital organisation which keeps the day to day running of the community so well oiled. The duties of the ladies are to attend to the upkeep of the synagogue, to visit Jewish patients in hospital, to assist in raising funds for the congregation and especially to cater for Barmitzva's, weddings and festivals. Over the years the society has done sterling work for the congregation.

In 1987 under the chairmanship of Mrs Stella Cohen a publication "Sephardi Cuisine" proved very popular and raised a considerable sum for the congregation.

The chairladies of the society, since its inception have been as follows:-

1954	Amelie Benatar
1955	Amelie Benatar
1956	Amelie Benatar
1958	Amelie Benatar
1959	Amelie Benatar
1960	Amelie Benatar
1961	Sarah Shapiro, Rachel Roditi
1962	Sarah Shapiro, Ettie Mizrahi
1963	Amelie Benatar
1964	Justine Piha
1965	Camilla Soriano
1966	Camilla Soriano
1967	Camilla Soriano
1968	Camilla Soriano
1969	Camilla Soriano
1970	Sarah Shapiro
1971	Rosie Benatar
1972	Camilla Soriano, Rosy Benatar
1973	Vivianne Capelluto, Ketty Amato
1974	Eve Bondi, Rosy Benatar
1975	Eve Bondi, Rosy Benatar

OUR CHOIR

A very novel and interesting innovation on the educational faculty of the congregation was the start in 1946 of a choir. Under the guidance of the late Salvator Alhadeff and Leonid Bersin the choir then consisted of the young pupils of our Hebrew School and was limited solely to the youth services. Mr Leon Hanan a foundation member was also instrumental in the formation of the choir. He is still a member and sings regularly at the Shabat evening services.

In 1947, Stella Alhadeff, a music graduate of the Cape Town University, willingly gave of her services and together with the blessing and co-operation of the late Rabbi Dr. Papo succeeded in achieving outstanding results with the new choir which now had attracted the adult members of the congregation.

The present choir is still called upon to participate in several varied functions within the Jewish community. To them we extend our grateful and sincere thanks for their extreme loyalty and the wonderful and important contribution they have made to our Sephardi congregation.



The Sephardi Choir In 1981
From L to R: Mrs Stella Alhadeff, Mrs Rose Leon, Mr Al Naim, Mr David Arenson, Mrs Esther Arenson, Mr Leon Hanan and Mr Jack Benatar.



The Sephardi Choir In 1991

In recent years it has been Mr. Al Naim who has kept the choir going by recruiting new members. One of the highlights of the Shabat evening services has been Mr Naim's moving singing proclamation of the "Shema", a tradition he has kept for over twenty years.

From L to R: Mr Leon Hanan, Daniel Hasson, Joey Hasson, Sadoc Codron, Al Naim, Babs Naim, Rose Leon, Avron Alhadeff, Mary Levinsohn. Inset Esther Arenson and Stella Alhadeff.



"THE HON. Gabriel Mr. Raphael Manache (left) receives a silver tray and a copy of the jubilee publication from the President, Mr David Kay."

SEPHARDIM CELEBRATE 50th ANNIVERSARY IN ZIMBABWE

THE SEPHARDI Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe celebrated its jubilee jubilee at a banquet held at the Mary Margaret Hall, Bulawayo, which was attended by approximately 350 people.

The banquet was attended by the President, Mr. David Kay, and the Vice-President, Mr. Raphael Manache. The President, Mr. Kay, was also the President of the World Sephardi Federation. The Vice-President, Mr. Manache, was also the Vice-President of the World Sephardi Federation.

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In 1981 the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a banquet and thanksgiving service, at which the guest of honour was the Haham of the World Sephardi Federation, Dr Solomon Gaon. On these pages are reports published in the Jewish press. The banquet was attended by 350 people. Three hundred copies of commemorative books were printed. Each family within the congregation received a copy, many other copies found their way to relatives and friends in other countries. This year due to the anticipated demand from congregants four hundred copies have been printed.

Sephardi jubilee in Zimbabwe

Jewish Chronicle Reporter

An optimistic report on the future of the Zimbabwe Jewish community has been given by Dr Solomon Gaon, the chairman of the World Sephardi Federation, on his return to London after attending the jubilee anniversary of the Sephardi community in Zimbabwe.

"I found no animosity during my visit and indeed, towards Jewish feelings among the indigenous community," Dr Gaon told the Jewish Chronicle. Dr Gaon spent time in Bulawayo and part of his time with the Zimbabwe Sephardi community, and addressed the congregation at several services in the Shalom Shalom Synagogue in Bulawayo.

It was his first visit since Zimbabwe's independence in April, 1980, and he said that "both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities are given every religious freedom."

Dr Gaon added: "Although the State (Zimbabwe) has not yet recognised Israel, there is no anti-Zionist activity and Jewish help in building the new nation is welcomed."

During the High Holydays, some



Mr R. Rosen, Dr Solomon Gaon, Mr David Kay and Mr R. J. Manache in Bulawayo

communities had been the absence of a minister until recently, but he praised the leadership, including Mr David Kay and Mr R. J. Manache, the president and secretary of the president of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation.

Rabbi Shimon Anisim, a graduate of the Jewish Law Ministry College in London, was now ministering to the Sephardi community, Dr Gaon added.



Mr David Kay, right, President of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation in Zimbabwe, presents Dr Raphael Manache, Chief Rabbi of the World Sephardi Jewish Community, with a copy of the jubilee book of the Zimbabwe Sephardi community.

Sephardim of Zimbabwe turn fifty

THE Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe celebrated its Golden Jubilee at a banquet in the Mary Margaret Hall, Bulawayo, recently. Guest of honour was the Very Reverend, Rabbi Solomon Gaon, Chief Rabbi of the World Sephardi Federation.

The banquet was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Bulawayo, Mr. Raphael Manache, President of the C. A. B. Board of Directors, Harry Glick, President of the Progressive Conservative Party, and the President of the Progressive Conservative Party, Mr. David Kay. The President of the congregation, Mr. David Kay, presented with a certificate in recognition of his 50 years as President.

An optimistic report on the future of the Zimbabwe Jewish community was given by Dr Gaon on his return to London. "I found no anti-Zionist feelings during my visit and indeed, towards Jewish feelings among the indigenous community," he said.

Dr Gaon added: "Although the State (Zimbabwe) has not yet recognised Israel, there is no anti-Zionist activity and Jewish help in building the new nation is welcomed."



The Sephardi Committee 1991

Seated L to R: Leon Hanan, Victor Alhadeff (Vice President), Sam Benatar (President), Phillip Hasson (Hon. Secretary), Jacque Hasson (Gabbai). Standing: Benny Leon, Bobby Krikler, Sadoc Codron, Raphael Mizan, Isaac Menashe and Salvo Hanan.

Inset: Eddie Hasson, Victor Hasson, Marc Dozetos.



The interior of the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue, Harare. Above the Ark are the shields of the twelve tribes of Israel, and behind the curtain is the organ which accompanies the choir during weddings. The choir also leads the congregation on the Friday night Shabbat services. The synagogue was consecrated in 1958.



The Reading of the Law – around which synagogue services are based – photograph taken during an early morning weekday service, when a congregant celebrated his Barmitzvah. Photography is not permitted during the Sabbath. L to R: Mr Arnold Roth, Mr Leon Hanan assistant Gabbai and Mr Isaac (Zac) Menashe, who for many years has taken it upon himself to ensure that the Torah, or Scroll of the Law is ready to be opened at the correct place for the Shabbat morning service.



And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be frontlets between thine eyes. Deut 6:8. Mr Leon Hanan (70), who was born in Rhodes, carries out the commandments of the Torah, as he teaches Avron Alhadeff to wear the tefelin and read a portion of the Law in preparation for his Barmitzvah this year.



One of the highlights of 1990 was the pastoral visit of Dayan Dr. Pinhas Toledano, Av Beth Din of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogues of Great Britain. L to R: Sam Benatar, Jacques Hasson, Kipps Rosin, Dayan Toledano, Raphael Menashe and Leon Hanan.

The first communal Pesach Hagadah held in the Rodia Community Memorial Hall in 1990. Leading the opening blessings are L to R: Mr Jacques Hesson, Gabbaï, Mr Leon Hagan and the Vice President Mr Victor Alhadeff.



Members of the congregation participating in the Hagadah are L to R: Mrs Felice Hesson, Mrs Dora Alhadeff, Mrs Vivian Codron, Mr Sadoc Codron and the President, Mr Sam Benatar.



The Sephardi ladies preparing food for the communal Hagadah are from L to R: Mrs Donna Hesson, Mrs Elaine Alhadeff, Mrs Lizette Wizen, Mrs Rosemary Codron and Mrs Rosella Hesson.





The street where the Kal Shalom stands. The archways connecting the buildings gives one the impression of being in Jerusalem. The Juderia was known by its inhabitants as Little Jerusalem. Here Mme Lucia Soulam is about to open the doors leading onto the foyer of the synagogue.

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 marked the culmination of the erosion of Jewish Christian relations. In 1391, Christian fanaticism fuelled a series of anti-Jewish outbreaks in Spain, and over the years many Jews were forced to convert to Christianity or face death.

In 1481, at the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition, Christians who were suspected of "Judaizing" (observing Jewish practices), were victimised.

The reign of religious terror led to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. On 31st March, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued a decree of expulsion. The Jews were given only three months in which to settle their affairs and leave the country.

The majority of exiles went to Portugal, but in 1497 they were subject to a forced baptism and official Jewish life there was also terminated. Other groups of Sephardim went to North Africa, the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe.

During this period the exiles suffered great hardship. They often boarded overcrowded ships, where plague, hunger and fatigue took their toll on the lives of the passengers. Ruthless ship captains took their Jewish passengers out to sea and cast them overboard. They then returned to port for another load of ill-fated passengers.

At this time the Turkish Jews enjoyed prosperity and freedom under the Sultan Bayezid II who, in fact, encouraged the immigration of the Spanish exiles. Although the Greek speaking Rumaniot Jews, who were the original Jews of the main centres of Turkey, welcomed their aggrieved co-religionists, they were also wary of them. They considered the Sephardim to be too aggressive and feared that they would soon dominate all Jewish life in the country. There were also differences on matters of Jewish laws and customs. Despite these

fears and differences, the Jewish communities of Turkey soon developed into relatively harmonious congregations. The Sephardic customs became predominant in the religious and social spheres and the Spanish language was adopted by the Ashkenazim and Rumaniot Communities.

In the early 16th Century, following the wave of religious unrest in Spain and Portugal, the Jews of Rhodes faced similar Christian intolerance. The Grand Master of the Knights of St John issued a decree expelling all Jews from the Island. Some Jews converted to Christianity under pressure, while others emigrated, and others were killed for following their faith. All official Jewish life ground to a halt on the Island.

In 1522, under Sultan Sulyman, the Turks again attacked Rhodes Island and this time they were successful and the Jews on the Island rejoiced and returned to openly practicing their faith.

The victorious sultan encouraged Jewish settlement in Rhodes. The historian, Abraham Galante, recorded a tradition passed down through generations of Rhodesites, that Sultan Sulyman issued a decree offering special privileges to Jews settling in Rhodes. There were:

1. Exemption from taxes for 100 years.
2. Enjoyment of the profits of sulphur mines in Rhodes.
3. The right to bury and mourn the deaths, to have processions to the cemetery and even to pass through the Moslem quarters during such processions.
4. The privilege of buying Kosher meat at the same price and under the same conditions as meat sold to Moslems.
5. The right of each family to a house given freely by the Ottoman Government.

RODIS – CHERISHED MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD

By Salvo Almeleh



MR SALVO ALMELEH, was born on Rhodes Island on 4th February, 1917. His father Mr Behor David Almeleh was the first president of this congregation. Together with his family, at the age of nine, he left Rhodes.

I was nine years of age, when my father came over to Rodis from Rhodesia in 1926, to collect his family and return with us to Penhalonga, where he had his business. My memories therefore only go back from that year. But to me, as the song goes, Rodis has always been that "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere", and my memories of that island are treasured ones.

Rodis was a world of its own, combining the old with the new. The new progressive spirit under the Italian colonial influence was beginning to exert itself in all walks of life, amongst the different communities – the Turkish, the Greek and the Jewish. La Juderia, under the benign and protective rule of the Turks, had kept up for centuries, after the expulsion from Spain, its customs, its language, Ladino, and its religious traditions.

The Jews of Rodis lived in a sort of hierarchy, where religion took precedence over everything else. Exemplifying the very strict rigidity of their religious observance, here is a very poignant and touching story narrated by my late father Behor David Almeleh. As a young man, he had been working in Turkey, supplementing the very meagre family income of my grandfather, a poor shoemaker.

After the absence of a year he came home to spend the high festivals with the family. It had become fashionable to be clean shaven and he had removed his beard. That of course, was sacrilege and he had committed the unpardonable sin, almost tantamount to excommunication – putting a razor to his beard.

On seeing him my grandfather promptly turned away and to my grandmother declared "Turks and Greeks I do not receive in my house!" She had to plead with him to bend a little and understand the changing times.

The greatest respect and veneration were paid to our Rabbanim, some of whom were considered truly holy men, with a shining aura of saintliness around them. Nearly all our religious festivals were National holidays for La Juderia. It was against this background, that I spent my idyllic childhood.

We all enjoyed our religious festivals and lived from one to the next. There was Pesach, with the weeks prior to it, spent in removing anything that was "hametz" in the home. The matza was baked in our own local ovens. Rosh Hashanah and Kippur was the big event of the year. We were all fitted out with new clothes. A week before, we had all gone to the cemetery to "bury the Law", and on the way back, we would look amongst the hills for a certain very tender and tasty "bean", called "avica de mulino". The various synagogues, large and small, were all filled to capacity. We loved listening to the shattering and reverberating sound of the shofar, towards the termination of the services. As the different calls were made from the Tevah, window panes had been known to shatter, when the sound went beyond a certain pitch. Tremors used to run through me, as the sounds came, loud and clear.

During Kippur, in the afternoon, we went to the seaside, to cast all our sins into the sea.



The walled city of Rhodes has several gates, and this one known to the Juderia as "la puerta di la mar" was the smallest of them all. It was small because it faced the sea and easier to defend when attacked by medieval armies.



A landmark of Rhodes, three medieval windmills on the Mandraki Harbour. On the extreme left is the fort of St Nicholas, built by the Knights of St. John. The windmills are shown against a cold cloudy winter sky, with no trace of tourists.

Then there was Chanukah and the lighting of the candles in every household, quite apart from those lit in the synagogues; and of course the "burmuelos", dipped in honey.

Purim was something else. The whole city of La Kay Ancha was turned into a veritable fun fair. It was the time, when we used to get Purimlicks from our parents and relations. We would go visiting our uncles, aunts and grandparents, as a matter of duty. It was a nice duty, as we had ulterior motives – the Purimlicks at the end of the visit.

Succoth was another festival I loved, with every home building its own Succa, adorned with myrtle, palm fronds, chinese lanterns and all manner of fruit and nuts hanging from the branches.

Each and every festival had its own special attraction and all inculcated a sense of belonging, of brotherhood and of God, as the object of religion should be. Embodying the spirit of La Juderia, stands alone the Kal Shalom, like a holy shrine, entombing the memories of the living and the dead, our one and only link with our past. It stands alone and solitary, having withstood the ravages of time and untouched by the barbarian Nazi hordes. At the entrance grows a grapevine, age old symbol of our strong, monotheistic spirit, that has survived all the tests of time. The Kal stands there as our guardian sentinel, watching over our treasured past.

Our schooling followed the usual course, beginning with our early years in the Talmud Torah and then on to La scola de L'alianca, as it was then known. The medium was Italian, with French as the second language. Of course we also picked up Greek and Turkish in our daily contacts with those people.

Our holidays were a dream. We were off to the beaches, to the villages Chrimasto, Kumburnu, Kandili, the Chimilikis with the

merry-go-round. Off to the orchards and vineyards. All these we raided, and when the olives were in season, we used to bring armfuls of them for my mother to crush and make "Zitunas Chakiste".

I remember an occasion, when my life was saved by a Turk. My friends and I had gone to the Puerta di la Mar and were playing, jumping from rock to rock in the sea. Eventually they all left, but I carried on, not noticing the tide coming in. The distances between the rocks grew greater and eventually I could not get back to the beach. I stood there in the dusk, with the water fast rising above my ankles. I started to cry. After a while a Turkish fisherman, passing on his way home, heard me and coming over, flung me on his back and took me to safety. I grew to like the Turks. They were kind and hospitable to their friends, but they also never forgot an injury and never forgave.

We had a good understanding with the Turks, who were not unaware of some of our young men's melodious and powerful voices. There were occasions, when a Muezzin being unavailable, they would be asked to go up the minarets and chant out the Muslim call to prayer. An odd and amusing situation! The Muslims have always considered the Jews as the people of the "Book".

I must mention our own "homegrown" doctor, il emmano Aaron Hugnu. He was our orthoped, and faith-healer. He was a legend and everybody went to him with their various ills. The villagers also used to come down to see him. And he was strong! He could break the leg of a horse. We used to go to him with broken limbs, dislocated shoulders etc. We did have our other more orthodox doctors, such as Dr. Hasson and Dr. Gaon.

I remember the winter gales. There was a certain spot around La Calle, by the "Pegnas", along the Puerta di la Mar, where you could



Behind the towering ramparts is "Lu Kemado" now known as Hipocrates Square. The buildings in this square were burnt down in the 1920's and has been known by the Jewish community by that name since.

not get round, for fear of being blown off your feet. I used to love going to 'las Pagnas' and sitting on the rocks. It did something to my soul, watching that surging and tempestuous sea with angry waves coming in with such fury and dashing themselves against the rocks. It was an exhilarating feeling to look out to those mountainous waves and see all the sailing boats, large and small, being tossed about like matchboxes, now on the top of one wave and the next moment invisible behind another. A cyclone at sea was something frightening. Rodis was also subject to earthquakes. I remember one in particular, when we were all sent home from school. Shortly after we left Rodis, we heard of an earthquake submerging a whole island near by. I think its name was Castelrosso.

Then there were the "spookie" stories told in the winter nights when I dared not take one step out of the house, so terrified was I.

This was my Rodis, gem of the Mediterranean, with its sparkling

and lucid blue waters, its beautiful beaches, its fairy-story setting, with its medieval walls surrounding part of the island, its Roman statuary, its Grecian temples, its mythical, classical and Byzantine histories, not omitting the crusaders, who had Rodis as one of their headquarters; and going back to the times of the Persians. This was my beautiful island.

So when you see a Rodsle, stop and think awhile. He deserves your respect. Remember he is one of the very few remaining of the last generation and represents a way of life, that has come down to us through the centuries, with its special traditions, its own culture, its language and even its very special and popular cuisine. He has been the 'pioneer' of our community and like a Marathon runner has succeeded in handing over to us all the values and legacies of our forefathers – "qui sus almas reposin in pas, Amen"

PUBLIC FOUNTAINS

The water supply consisted of private wells in almost every residence, the water of which was used for utility purposes. The drinking water, however, before the 1930's, was brought in from the four public fountains in the Jewish Quarter. The children were responsible for filling the jugs of drinking water. There were times during a drought that the water supply was limited for days and so each family made sure they had an earthenware jug of reserved water.

In the Jewish Quarter, a fountain was situated in La Kay Ancha (The Wide Street), another outside Kal Shalom, one at the entrance of the

Alliance School, and the last on La Fasana. When there was a drought another fountain further away called Aslam Berro, could be used. It was situated between the Jewish and the Turkish Quarter. When a line was formed at these fountains, the Turkish women would sneak into the queue and soon fighting would break out. Many a time Jews returned home with a handle or even the entire jug broken.

In the early 1930's, the Italian government built aqueducts and power stations that provided the utilities so cheaply that almost every home in the Jewish Quarter had water and electricity.



The street where the Kal Grande once stood. The domed building on the left is what remains of the fountain which served this synagogue. The building to the right was the home of Mr Nissim Trevis.

This plaque was erected in the Rhodes cemetery in cherished memory of the employees who worked in the bank of Salamon Alhadeff.



In the cemetery stands this memorial to the six million Martyrs and the Jews of Rhodes who perished in the concentration camps. The inscriptions are in Hebrew, French and Greek. The horizontal stone bears the names of the families of the Rodis Community.



THE LAST DAYS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF RHODES

As told to Benjamin Leon by Rachel Hanan



Mrs Rachel Hanan (nee Hougrou) a survivor of Auschwitz holding a grim memento – a cake of soap with the markings "Pure Jewish Fat". These tablets of soap were handed out for use to the inmates of Auschwitz concentration camp.

For over five centuries Jews of Spanish descent (Sephardim) had lived on the colourful island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea. At the time of the Spanish Inquisition and the subsequent expulsion of Jews in 1492, the population increased as the victims sought refuge from religious persecution. Throughout the centuries the population fluctuated between alternate periods of isolation and persecution. Within the walls of the old city of Rhodes they had lived according to the Laws of Moses. The Torah and the synagogue were the centre of communal life. In the summer of 1944 on July 19, the end of this flourishing Jewish community, with its close family ties, began.

Mrs Rachel Hanan (Hougrou) 65, who survived the horrors of Auschwitz, recalls that during the German occupation of the island of Rhodes, the Wermacht were quite friendly with the Jews most of the time. It was when the SS arrived that the Nazi tyranny began.

Two Jewish brothers, hoping to make favourable impressions on the SS, arrived with two SS officers from Salonica, and called at the office of the Sephardi president one Jacob Franco (Shalem), from whom the Nazis demanded a list of names of all the families in the community.

It was at this time that the Juderia, because of its close proximity to the port, was subjected to Allied bombings. The bombs were

intended for German shipping, but a few stray bombs fell on the Jewish quarter. Consequently, the Sephardim sought refuge in such country villages as Trianda and Kremasto to Vilanova.

Under pressure from the Nazis the president of the congregation visited the Jews in the country side and told them that all males above the age of sixteen should report to an old building outside the old city. They were instructed to bring their personal papers and report the next morning.

The following day the Nazis used the trick they had played on all other Jewish communities throughout Europe. They instructed the remaining women and children to report the next day with all their papers and valuables. Anyone who did not comply would have their menfolk shot. They were later told that they would all be resettled in labour camps on Rhodes. No mention was made of deportation.

The Nazis left no stone unturned and rounded up even those who were sick in hospital. A young Jewish male who had had a leg amputated was turned out of bed. Strangely enough two old Jewish ladies who were unaware of the tragic turn of events, remained in the Jewish quarter until the end of the war. A young Jewish man named Beru who had a Greek girlfriend, hid in a village in Lindos. He was betrayed by the Greeks and shot by the Germans.

Only twenty-five Jews remained on the island, and they were saved from deportation by a Turkish Bey because they were Turkish nationals.

Once assembled, the Jews of Rhodes spent three days in a building under sentry guard without food. Many Italian friends visited them and left baskets of food at the door.

The Nazis were truly amazed that such a poor community had turned in so much gold and jewellery. In the community as such, there were no banking or savings facilities, and gold and jewellery was used as a form of inheritance or dowry to be passed from generation to generation.

The Nazis sounded the air siren drawing the Italian and Greek residents indoors as they sought shelter. It was whilst they were out of sight that the Germans began to load the unfortunate Jews onto boats. A seething mass of humanity was packed like sardines.

The boat under normal circumstances, took one day of sailing to Pirraeus, but because the Germans wished to avoid allied bombing, they only travelled at night, and the journey took about eight days.

Mrs Hanan recalls that the German Wermacht on the boats were very kind and allowed those who wished to cool down, a swim in the sea. They also allowed them to use the boat's cooking facilities.

At Pirraeus they were handed over to the SS officers, who showed no kindness at all. From the dock they were told to embus onto lorries. The SS officers whipped the elderly men and women who could not alight quickly, and it was at this point that many of them realised that this was the end and that certain death was imminent.

After a few days in prison they were loaded into railway cattle wagons. Seventy to eighty people were crammed into these with only two barrels of water to suffice in spite of the summer heat.

Mrs Hanan remembers a nightmare sixteen day journey to Auschwitz concentration camp, at which they arrived on 16th

August 1944. The train was stopped once in twenty-four hours to allow the deportees to carry out ablutions. The train stopped for only five minutes. Those who alighted to go into the bush, were interrupted regardless of what they were doing, by guards wielding whips and were forced back onto the train. In time many began to excrete through the wooden floor boards of the wagon, without privacy.

Many died during the night and the Nazis took away the bodies to be burnt with paraffin on a station platform.

The young man whose leg had been amputated survived the terrible train journey to Auschwitz, only to die in the gas chamber.

At Auschwitz the Jews were confronted by about twenty Nazi officers, amongst whom, Mrs Hanan recalls, was the infamous Angel of Death, Dr Josef Mengele. It was here that their fate was decided. With a pointed finger the Angel of Death would indicate silently – to the left – to the right. The very young and very old were put to one side and that very night they met their death in the notorious gas chambers.

Those who were young and could work were herded into a large hall, where they remained for the whole day without food or water.

The men were separated from the women. Later that night Nazi men shaved the women from head to toe. Soon after Mrs Hanan and her two sisters were thrown into Block 20 where they had to fend for themselves. The place was already overcrowded. The bunks were in three tiers. There was no bedding and one had to squeeze in. Often the flimsy bunks collapsed and sixty people would find themselves in a heap on the floor. Few of them ever had much sleep at night.

Roll call was at four o'clock in the morning. They were permitted half an hour for latrine functions and ten minutes for washing. She remembers that she was very thirsty and when her turn came at the tap, the whistle blew. She continued to drink and was set upon by a guard wielding a whip – she continued to drink. Her left shoulder was raw and bleeding. Today she still has scars from that brutality. The wound bled and festered for a number of days.

Any inmate of Auschwitz concentration camp who reported to the sick bay for treatment would subsequently perish in the gas chamber.

Her own sister Diamante Franco (now living in Cape Town) reported sick and was hospitalised. At night the nurses would give each patient a pill and the next day they were dead. Diamante did not swallow the pills and managed to evade death for the two nights that she spent in the hospital.

In Auschwitz bread was a currency – with it you could buy almost anything. Rachel Hanan exchanged her ration of bread with one of the workers at the hospital, for a doek and uniform. She pretended to be a worker and managed to spend some time with her sister. She would hide under her sisters bedclothes and talk to her for hours.

A few days later the Nazis decided to evacuate the patients by lorry to the showers – one never knew if the latter were real or the gas chambers. In the confusion Diamante managed to worm her way into Block 20. The Nazis were puzzled – there had been one extra inmate at roll call!

As news of the advancing Allies reached the Germans, they realised that they were losing the war. Rachel Hanan believes in Divine Providence. She and her two sisters were already naked and queuing up outside the gas chamber. It only had a capacity of 200 persons. Her little sister was included in the batch. Rachel and Diamante would be herded in with the next batch. One sister



Mrs Stella Habib, (nee Benveniste) who was born in Rhodes on 8th January 1921. At the age of twenty-three she was deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. After the war she settled in Italy where she married and had two children. In 1965 she emigrated to Rhodesia alone and was later married to Mr Jack Habib. She now lives with her sister Mrs Marie Scemaria.



Mrs. Regina Menashe (nee Hasson) was born in Rhodes on 10th September, 1923. Was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 and later transferred to Germany where she was forced to work in a munitions factory. The Russians liberated her in 1945 whilst in Vienna and later repatriated to Italy. She survived in good health. Mrs Menashe arrived in Salisbury in 1946, when she married Mr R.J. Menashe in the Salisbury Street Synagogue.

perished, and at that moment a despatch rider came in on a motor bike. All gassing and cremations would stop immediately!

What was in store for them, was a forced death march to a mass grave miles away! Other inmates were taken to other places of infamy such as Bergen-Belsen, Mathausen and Dachau.

After they were clothed they began a night-long gruelling march through sleet and snow. They were exhausted but they dared not stop. Anyone who did not get up and continue the march after a break was shot by guards. Two young girls, Janet and Belina Hasson were killed because they could not continue.

Again Rachel Hanan believes in Divine Providence. At one stage when Rachel felt unable to continue, her sister Diamante said, "If you don't get up then I won't". This forced Rachel to continue. After another break it was Diamante who could not carry on. Rachel made a similar threat.

At that point a despatch rider arrived in a whirl of snow and spoke to the guards. Unknown to the girls, the Allies were very close. The girls sat there waiting for the order to continue the march. None came! The guards had fled. At that point they thought they were the only survivors of the Jews of Rhodes, four girls from Rhodes and five from Salonica.

They did not know what to do next. They scouted around and eventually found a guards' shed. It was deserted and in the grounds of a large coal dump. They built up the fire and kept warm. They melted snow for drinking water and foraged the guards' quarters for food.

They lived in splendid isolation for about four weeks until a Russian soldier stumbled upon them and informed them of a camp a few miles away.

A week later they reported to the Russian commandant who regarded them with suspicion and after some persuasion let them into the camp.

They stayed there for two months and there was no sign of repatriation. There was even a rumour of being shipped off to Siberia!!

They were moved to Bialistock and then onto another camp. In July 1945 they decided to escape from the Russians.

They boarded a passenger train at a railway station not knowing exactly where they were going. When asked for a train ticket, they pointed to the Auschwitz tattooed number on their fore arms. This was a ticket to anywhere. Europe was in a shambles and chaos reigned. They boarded one train after another and eventually ended up exactly where they had started, having completed a full circle!

They went onto Prague and Budapest. The Red Cross helped them with food. Rachel Hanan ended up at the Italian frontier and eventually stopped at Bologna where she met twenty five other Jews from Rhodes. There she stayed for fifteen months before emigrating to the Belgian Congo in September 1946.

In 1952 she came on holiday to Salisbury (Harare) where she met Leon Hanan. In 1953 they were married and settled in Salisbury.

The foregoing is only a fraction of the experiences Mrs Rachel Hanan and the Jews of Rhodes had at the hands of the Nazis. The brutalities were unspeakable. She was more than willing to relate these stories because she believes that the world should know what had happened and that it should not be forgotten.

She has a rather grim memento in her possession to this day. It is a cake of soap from Auschwitz, with the markings "Pure Jewish Fat".



Mr. JACQUE HASSON, Gabbai of the synagogue and a survivor of Auschwitz, was born in Rhodes Island on 10th December 1927.

His education was interrupted in 1942 when the Germans closed the school he attended. At the age of seventeen and a half he was deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. He was there for forty days before being sent to Ridaultau, Poland, where he was forced to work in a coal mine.

On January 25th, 1945 he was sent to Malthausen until May 5th 1945, when he was liberated by the Americans. He was dehydrated with typhoid and weighed only twenty-seven kilograms. He spent a month recuperating in a hospital in Lintz, Austria. In June 1945 a year after his deportation he was repatriated to Merano in Italy. He later joined other Rodisli survivors in Bologna.

In 1947 he went to the Belgian Congo. Later in 1952 he set up a business partnership with a life long friend and companion in Auschwitz, Sammy Modiano.

In 1957 he married Ray Soriano, who did not wish to live in the Congo. In 1958 they both moved to Salisbury (now Harare).

Jacque Hasson is self taught in Hebrew and has been the Gabbai since 1985.



MY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF RHODES ISLAND

by Lina Kantor (nee Amato)



The last Hebrew class to have been held in Rhodes after Mussolini discriminated against Jewish education in 1938. The class was a private one. The young girl on the right is Lina Kantor (nee Amato). The other pupils perished in Auschwitz. Note the cobblestone floor which is characteristic of Rhodes.

Tourist brochures describe Rhodes Island as "The Bride of the Sun" and, as one ancient writer said... "a town bathed in sunshine, endowed with beauty befitting God."

My childhood memories of Rhodes were somewhat different. As a child of three, oblivious of the horrors to come, I remember having tantrums in the "Mandraki", the main town square, after my mother, distraught at the news that war had been declared, had refused to buy me an icecream.

Warnings of what was to befall our community came with the new Racial Laws introduced by the Fascist Government. Jewish children were not permitted to attend government schools. My parents, together with three other families who lived outside the Jewish Quarters, arranged for a young Jewish teacher, whom we called "La Signorina", to conduct classes for us at the home of my great friend Isi. I was the only girl in the class of four. The Germans had not yet invaded Rhodes and the four of us led an idyllic but sheltered school life. We had our own uniform, the same for the boys and myself, consisting of a shining black pinafore and white collar. At the end of the school year, all four of us, under our wonderfully gifted teacher, even staged a prize giving concert. Two of the boys and our teacher perished in the gas chambers.

During the day, we felt secure in the companionship of our friends and teacher, but nights were filled with the noise of aerial bombing and the wail of the sirens - although we were fortunate to have a shelter under the small block of flats in which we lived. As children, we had not initially understood the trauma of the bombardments. When the sirens first started, I can remember my friend Isi innocently asking "Why don't they throw the bombs?", thereby causing his mother to explode in anger and deliver a parental slap, to the mirth of the others present. We children considered the shelter impregnable and, at the beginning at least, the air raids a glorious fireworks display. After the all clear sounded, we could not wait to run outside to see who could find the largest or most unusual pieces of shrapnel. In the early days of the war my friends and I collected

shrapnel like others collect antiques, until the quantities grew so large that our parents objected. Of course no toys were available in wartime Rhodes, these were our playthings.

After the German invasion, the first realisation of the cruelty and greed of war to penetrate my childhood occurred when a lorry full of German soldiers arrived to requisition our piano. Until then our house had been filled with music. My mother was a wonderful pianist and she and her friends regularly practised and performed at our home.

There were of course a few lighter moments, though they did not seem so at the time. We were not allowed to listen to foreign news broadcasts. When my father did so, my mother was posted near the entrance as a look-out. On one rainy evening she saw strange figures at the front door and screamed a warning to my father. The figures quickly disappeared. The next day, my parents' two best friends described how they had run away from our ground floor flat (where they were sheltering from the rain). They thought, from my mother's screaming, that domestic quarrel was in progress. On another night we heard scuffles outside our home and thought surely the Gestapo had come to collect us. The next morning we discovered that all our neighbours' chickens had disappeared.

My parents were eventually rounded up by the Gestapo S.S. and held at the army barracks with the rest of the Jewish community. Prior to their internment they had placed me in the care of some wonderful Catholic friends. To cover my Jewish identity and for my own personal safety, they had even instructed me in the Catholic religion. I was taken daily to the Cathedral where I received the catechism from a Catholic priest. It was a most bewildering experience for a little Jewish girl, both for its suddenness and for the new surroundings I was thrown into without knowing what had happened to my parents.

Because my granny had Turkish Citizenship (and Turkey's neutrality during the war) my parents, my grandmother and a few other families were eventually released from custody. The rest of the community were shipped out to the Gas Chambers. My father still had to present himself daily to the Gestapo. One day he was told to prepare for another departure - this time by boat. I was collected from my foster Catholic parents and spent the rest of the day on the balcony scanning the harbour for the wretched boat. When it arrived it was commandeered by the Germans themselves trying to escape the Allied blockade. Meanwhile food became scarce and I can remember people with bellies distended by hunger dropping dead in the streets.

Eventually we were allowed to leave for Turkey. We found a decrepit boat to take us to Marmaris on the Turkish mainland. It was January 1945. The day was very windy and wintry. With about thirty people on board, our boat sprung a leak halfway across and started to sink. I remember my father and other men on board bailing out water with their hats and me crying "But I don't know how to swim." We were saved by another miracle. Three motor vessels arrived suddenly as from nowhere and took us in tow all the way to the Turkish mainland.

When I think of the few survivors of that once vibrant and ancient community amongst whom we were fortunate to count ourselves, I can't help feeling "Why us?"

A PILGRIMAGE TO RHODES

Article and photographs by Benjamin Leon



The entrance to the Mandraki Harbour with the Fort of St. Nicholas in the background. The mythological Colossus of Rhodes is said to have straddled the entrance. The fort is now used as a lighthouse.

The airport was crowded, the tarmac was very hot as I stepped off the Boeing 737 at Rhodes on a June summers day in 1990. This was my second visit to this holiday Mediterranean island.

The bus followed the road along the crowded beaches and finally stopped at the terminus a short distance behind the Mandraki Harbour. I hitched a lift and was soon in the very heart of the old medieval city of Rhodes.

The car stopped in the Kay Ancha near the "Fuente" or fountain. The manager of the Old City Hotel was pleased to see me and greeted me with a very friendly hug. He showed me to my room on the floor above his restaurant and I settled in. This would be my quarters for the next week. I walked onto the "balcon" or balcony and looked out onto the Kay Ancha with the fuente in the foreground.

So here I was once again in the city where my ancestors had lived for five centuries. As a child I had heard my parents and relatives speak of the Kay Ancha, la puerta di la mar, the Mandraki, Kremasto and Trianda. Here they were right before me. Although I was born in Zimbabwe and had never met my grandparents I had a feeling of affinity for this place.

I made my way down the Kay Ancha to a narrow road turning off the busy square. On the corner of the building was a sign which read "Synagogue 20 metres". Next to it was a stone set in the wall which read "Martyron Evreon" which is the Greek for Hebrew Martyrs Square. Regrettably, unless one could read Greek, the plaque was meaningless.

I walked along the cobbled stone road as I turned the corner I came across the Kal Shalom, the synagogue after which the one in Harare is named. The archways connecting the buildings on either side of the street gives one the impression that this is part of Jerusalem.

I walked up three steps and was in the foyer of the synagogue. Above me were vine creepers and my feet walked on neat cobble stones. An elderly lady wearing horn-rimmed glasses rose to greet me speaking French. I reply in Ladino informing her that my paternal grandfather was Jacob Leon and my maternal grandfather was Nissim Benveniste. She did not remember them.

This is Madame Lucia Modiano Sulam who has been the caretaker of the Kal Shalom for over twenty years. If it were not for her dedication and loyalty this synagogue would close its doors.

At the entrance on the right is a large stone tablet bearing the family names of all those who perished in Auschwitz.

The synagogue has carpets on a cobblestone floor and from the ceiling hang some magnificent chandeliers.

A wave of emotion came over me as I gazed around this magnificent old synagogue which had been the centre of Jewish culture and tradition for more than five centuries. Here the traditions and commandments of the Torah had kept our ancestors through centuries of persecution and adversity.

The following day I called on the president of the Jewish Community of Rhodes Mr. Maurice Soriano, a hale and hearty man in his



The early morning sunlight falls on the Kay Ancha, with the "Fuente" in the foreground. Within an hour this peaceful medieval setting will be filled with merchandise and teeming with tourists.

eighties. He recalled that in 1949 he returned to Rhodes after the war to discover that all that remained of the synagogue was "los quatro paredis" – the four walls. Slowly but surely with funds from Rodisli's living in the Americas, France, and the Belgian Congo, the synagogue was restored to its former glory.

He showed me an old births register which he came across by some miracle. It was dated from 1850 and contained many names. I was unable to trace any ancestry. It is, according to M. Soriano the only surviving document of the Jews of Rhodes.

He informed me that there were only 35 Jews on the island, six of whom were born in Rhodes, the remainder came from the Dodecanese. Of the six, four were survivors from Auschwitz.

One evening whilst walking alone along the Kay Ancha I met Esther and Leonard Salzman together with her sister Sheila (nee Capeluto) Almeleh, and her husband Albert. Shortly we were joined by Nissim Trevis, the nephew of Mrs Sol Trevis, and his family.

Albert decided that we should have a conducted tour of the Juderia. With everyone talking at once he led us to the house in the Kay Ancha where he was born. He, together with many other young people left Rhodes in 1938 soon after Mussolini had passed his anti-semitic laws. He did not think he had a future under such conditions. He returned to Rhodes for the first time in 1962.

He was most upset to feel the absence of the Jews of Rhodes and sold the building in which he was born. He was now regretting it.

We moved on to the Kal Shalom. Here, we were greeted by M. Soulam.

We moved on down the road and it was at this point the Nissim Trevis met two elderly Greek ladies who had remembered the Jews

of Rhodes. We moved on with both Nissim and Albert pointing to various doorways and saying, "here lived so and so the tinsmith" or "here lived so and so the shoemaker." At one point Nissim choked with emotion, almost in tears said, "They are not here anymore."

We turned the corner and came to the "calegia di la scola" – the street of the Hebrew school and the Kal Grande. Nissim pointed to the building adjacent to the fountain that had once served the Kal Grande, and said, "this is where my family lived." We climbed the stairs and with emotion began to reminisce saying, "This floor was laid by my father." The Greek tenants were most hospitable and understanding.

Again down at street level, Nissim turned to me and pointed to a double storey building across the road and said, "Aki morava il papo tu yu Nissim Benveniste, il tinikiegie" – "Here lived your grandfather Nissim Benveniste, the tinsmith." I looked at the building and it bore the sign "Hotel Cava D'Oro."

At the end of the tour we sat down at a table at one of the many cafes and restaurants in the Kay Ancha and agreed that we would all meet again at the Kal Shalom for the Shabbat evening service.

The following day whilst sitting in the cafe of my pensione, a Greek gentleman approached me, speaking Ladino, and said that someone in Faliraki wished to speak to me. The gent on the phone said that he was a relative of mine and wished to meet me. His name was Joseph Alhadeff. His mother was the sister to the two brothers Ermano Behor and Jacov Leon, the latter being my grandfather.

He was a first cousin to my father. I was indeed surprised that someone had made this connection. It turned out that the Greek gentleman, who spoke Ladino had worked with the Jewish community in the Belgian Congo.



The President of the Jews of Rhodes Mr. Maurice Soriano, now in his eighties, examines the birth register, which he stumbled across by some miracle after the war. It appears to be the only surviving document of this community. Births date back as far as 1850. He also maintains a register for the cemeteries of Rhodes.

perished in Auschwitz. He used to tease her and say that he would wait for her to grow up so that he could marry her. We also spoke about a camera my aunt Violette Hasson had brought from Rhodes, it was the first camera I had used. He remembered it well. I discovered that my name was Benjamin Di Leon, but somewhere along the line the prefix had been dropped.

To finish off an excellent meal he suggested that we go back to the old city where he knew a Turk who made excellent *bacclava* and *cadait*.



Mr Benny Leon, born Kadoma, Zimbabwe on 21st February, 1936. Professional photographer. Keen on historical and archival works.

This we did. There in *Iu kemado* – literally “the burnt” – now known as *Hipocrates Square*, was a little shop where a Turkish gentleman did a thriving trade selling Greek delicacies.

I bid Louise and Joseph Alhadeff farewell after thanking them for an excellent evening.

My week in Rhodes was, a memorable one, and I was indeed fortunate to have met some of my family.

The ruins of a 13th century church stands on Salamon Alhadeff Street the only street in Rhodes to have retained a Jewish name, that of the well known banker.





A photograph taken at the turn of the century with Turkish dress very much the mode. This is the family of Isaac and Mazaltov Benatar, the younger generation of whom, emigrated to Rhodesia. Standing L to R: Joseph Benatar (father of Nick Benatar), Rifca Amato, Marco Alhadeff and Leon Benatar (father of Leon Benatar). Seated Mazaltov Benatar with Haim Amato in arms. Isaac Benatar with Lucy Benatar in arms, mother of Stella Alhadeff. The two little girls in front are Joys and Rachel. Joys later married Isaac Levy and became the mother of Sam Levy and brothers. Rachel married Albert David Bondi and is mother of the Bondi brothers. Miss Violet Benatar, who was not born when the photograph was taken, is part of this family and at the age of 57 is still with us.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF JEWISH IMMORTALITY?

If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of.

He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers.

He has made marvellous flight in this world, in all ages, and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, and the Persian and the Babylonian rose, filled the earth with sound and splendour, then faded to dream stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains.

What is the secret of his immortality?

From the article "Concerning the Jews" by Mark Twain.

DOES THIS AUTHOR HAVE THE ANSWER?

Jewish history consists of a unique series of events – accidental or purposive – which have had the practical effect of preserving the Jews as Jews in an "exile" to fulfil their avowed mission of ushering in a brotherhood of man. Whether this mission was initiated by God or retroactivity attributed to God by the Jews themselves in no way alters our thesis of a Jewish manifest destiny. We contend that this exile is not a punishment for sins, but a key factor in Jewish survival. Instead of having doomed the Jews to extinction, it funnelled them into freedom.

As long as the Jews stick to the ethics of the Torah and the ideology of the Prophets, they will remain indestructible. When all men embrace this ethic and ideology, they, too, will symbolically become Jewish. There will then be only man.

From "The Indestructible Jews" by Max I. Dimont.

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THE JEWS OF RHODES

Marc D. Angel

OUR YEARS OF PROGRESS

Solly Alhadeff

I REMEMBER RHODES

Rebecca Amato Levy

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE JEWS

Max I. Dimont.

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THE SYNAGOGUE IN RHODES, THE KAL SHALOM FOUNDED IN 1370



THE SHA'ARE SHALOM SYNAGOGUE IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE CONSECRATED IN 1958

**TABLE OF PAST PRESIDENTS
OF THE
SEPHARDI HEBREW
CONGREGATION OF ZIMBABWE**

1981 B.D. ALMELEH	1961 A.I. MENASHE
1982 H.S. COURT	1962 A.I. MENASHE
1983 B.S. LEON	1963 I.R. ROSIN
1984 B.S. LEON	1964 I.R. ROSIN
1985 H.S. COURT	1965 I.R. ROSIN
1986 J.N. ALHADEFF	1966 S.M. ALHADEFF
1987 J.N. ALHADEFF	1967 S.M. ALHADEFF
1988 I.R. ROSIN	1968 I.R. ROSIN
1989 I.R. ROSIN	1969 I.R. ROSIN
1990 S.N. ALHADEFF	1970 N.I. ALHADEFF
1941 I.R. ROSIN	1971 N.I. ALHADEFF
1942 I.R. ROSIN	1972 R.J. BENATAR
1943 I.R. ROSIN	1973 R.J. BENATAR
1944 B.S. LEON	1974 H. van den BERGH
1945 S.N. ALHADEFF	1975 R.J. BENATAR
1946 I.R. ROSIN	1976 R.J. BENATAR
1947 I.R. ROSIN	1977 I.E. MENASHE
1948 J.N. ALHADEFF	1978 I.E. MENASHE
1949 S. HABIB	1979 M. MIZRAHI
1950 S. HABIB	1980 D. KAY
1951 A.I. MENASHE	1981 D. KAY
1952 I.R. ROSIN	1982 D. KAY
1953 I.R. ROSIN	1983 D. KAY
1954 I.R. ROSIN	1984 A.J. NAIM
1955 B.S. LEON	1985 A.J. NAIM
1956 A.I. MENASHE	1986 A.J. NAIM
1957 A.I. MENASHE	1987 A.J. NAIM
1958 I.R. ROSIN	1988 H.J.V. ALHADEFF
1959 B. RODITI	1989 H.J.V. ALHADEFF
1960 A.I. MENASHE	1990 S. BENATAR



The Sephardi Ladies Committee 1981

Seated L to R: Mesdames Yvonne Kay, Doris Menashe, Becky Krikler, Eve Bondi, Freda "Babs" Naim and Rosie Benatar. Standing: Mesdames Elsie Alhadeff, Rachel Surmany, Miriam Surmany, Katie Dozetos, Rachel Hanan, Suzanne Alhadeff and Betty Rodman. Not in photo: Stella Cohen.

1976 Etty Mizrahi, Lydia Marks, Betty Rodman
 1977 Rosie Benatar, Babs Naim
 1978 Babs Naim, Doris Menashe
 1979 Rosy Benatar, Gene Trevis

1980 Becky Krikler, Sarah Shapiro
 1981 Stella Cohen
 1982 Stella Cohen
 1983 Stella Cohen
 1984 Stella Cohen
 1985 Stella Cohen
 1986 Donna Hazzoon (Judy)
 1989 Donna Hazzoon
 1990 Clairette Alhadeff, Stella Cohen & Rachel Hanan
 1991 Clairette Alhadeff, Stella Cohen & Rachel Hanan



MRS SOL TREVIS, who at ninety eight years of age is the oldest emigrant from Rhodes Island, where she was born on June 13th, 1893.

Together with many other Rodisls she was brought out by her brother Mr B.S. Leon in 1920. In Rhodes she had married Mr Jack Trevis and on arrival in Rhodesia settled at the Eiffel Flats near Kadoma.

THE JEWS OF RHODES

(Extracts from Marc D Angel's Publication
of the same title)



The Kal Shalom in Rhodes. Built in the 1370's, destroyed in the siege of 1480 and rebuilt, then ransacked after the Nazi deportation in 1944 and finally refurbished in the 1960's, it embodies the spirit of La Juderia like a holy shrine, entombing the memories of the living and the dead. It is the loyalty and dedication of Mrs. Lucie Soulam that keeps open its doors and the only remaining link with our past.

The story of the Sephardi Community in Rhodes Island begins in 1523, when the forces of the Ottoman Empire conquered the Island, and encouraged Jewish settlement there. The immigrants of that time were the descendants of the victims of the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. The Island remained under Turkish rule until it was occupied by the Italians in 1912 and later their Nazi allies who deported nearly all its Jewish inhabitants to the death camps of Europe. Today, only a handful of Jews live in Rhodes, no more than half a dozen.

To study the past of the Sepharadim of Rhodes, one must go beyond the accumulation of historical facts. One must make a study of the people's inner life.

Rhodes Island lies in the Aegean Sea, approximately 12 miles off the South West Asian Coast. Its strategic location in the Mediterranean, has made it the target of many battles and wars over the centuries.

Alphonse de Lamartine, who passed through Rhodes in 1832 said, "Any European Power who was Master of Rhodes, would hold at once the key of the Archipelago of Greece, Smyrna, the Dardanelles, and the seas of Egypt and Syria. I do not know, in the world, of a better Maritime Military Position, a finer climate, or a more prolific

Rhodes, at its extreme, is 20 miles wide and 45 miles long. It has a mild climate and is a productive and scenic island. There are several small towns and villages dotted along its picturesque coastline.

Historical Background

There are various traditions and Legends which describe the origin of human civilization of Rhodes. According to biblical tradition, the inhabitants of Rhodes derived from Rodanim, son of Javan, son of Japheth, son of Noah, who lived in the second generation after the great flood. Greek tradition suggests that the Island's first inhabitants were the children of the sun, descended from the Union of the Sungod Helios, with the Nymph Rhodon, whose name was given to the Island. Another tradition has it that the Island's name was derived from the Greek word for the rose, "Rhodos". Historical information became more precise at about 1000 B.C.E. when Dorian Greeks invaded and occupied the Island. From about 540 to 470 B.C.E., the Island's three main cities united to establish the city of Rhodes.

During the fourth century, B.C.E., Rhodes was occupied and controlled at various times by Athenians, Spartans, Carians, Persians and Macedonians. In 323 B.C.E., Rhodes regained its independence and embarked on its period of greatest glory. It was during this period that one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient



The entrance or foyer of the Kal Shalom with hanging vine leaves and cobblestone floor. On the left at the entrance is the stone tablet bearing the names of the families who perished in the Holocaust.

World, the Colossus of Rhodes, was constructed. The Statue stood astride one of the City's ports and was so wide that ships could sail into the port between its legs. In 225 B.C.E., the city and the Colossus were destroyed by an earthquake. Rhodes became part of the Roman Empire in 164 B.C.E., it remained part of the Roman Empire until 773 C.E., when the expanding forces of Islam took control of the Island, for about 8 years. During subsequent centuries, it was ruled by various local Lords. In 1251 it fell under Byzantine rule, and in 1307, it was given by the Byzantine Government to the Knights of St John to defend against possible Turkish attack. They were driven out by the Turks in 1523. To this day, the walled city of Rhodes reflects the Knights' Two Century occupation of the Island. Its extraordinary fortifications, the Citadel of the Knights, the great hospital (which is now a museum), the medieval buildings and streets, are still visible reminders of the Order's rule.

The Island remained under Turkish rule until 1912, when it was occupied by the Italians. In 1944 the Nazis moved onto the Island and after the Second World War, it became part of the Greek Islands.

Jewish History on Rhodes

Jews may have lived in Rhodes in ancient times, but no information is available as to when they first settled there. The first indications of Jewish inhabitants of the Island are mentioned in the First Book of Maccabees: "Simon, son of Mattathias, who was chosen by Jews as High Priest and Governor, sent a delegation to Rome in 142 B.C.E." As a result of this delegation a letter was sent to the King and countries of the Roman Empire, instructing that no harm should come to the Jewish Communities in their countries. A copy of this

letter was sent to Rhodes and, therefore, one can assume that there was a Jewish community there.

The first specific information on Rhodian Jewry dates from the second half of the 12th Century. Benjamin of Tudela, Spain, when recounting his travels in the Mediterranean, wrote that he encountered a Jewish community of about 400 people on Rhodes. They were led by Rabbis Hananel and Eliah. Under the Knights of St John they were designated a quarter, which extended from the South East angle of the wall surrounding the city, to the Port reserved for merchant vessels. During this period the Jews were treated fairly well and were free to practice their religion without disturbance.

In 1480 the Sultan of Turkey, Meshmet II, attacked Rhodes Island from the Southern perimeter of the city which housed the Jewish quarter. They bombarded the area with thousands of stones and cannon balls for five weeks, but their attack was unsuccessful and they retreated from the Jewish quarter and left the island altogether. Their attack, however, caused extensive damage to the area and there was considerable hardship for some years later. The Jewish inhabitants of Rhodes fought valiantly alongside the Knights of St John during the siege.

The expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 was to have a major impact on the Island's tiny community. Spanish Jewry was the most numerous, influential and cultured Jewry of the middle ages. Their achievements, while living in Islamic and Christian Spain, have rarely been matched by any Jewry before or since. Their contributions to Biblical and Talmudic studies, Hebrew grammar, poetry, Jewish philosophy and literature as well recognised. Their involvement in medicine, astronomy and the sciences in general, was noteworthy.



A close up of the fountain with the plaque commemorating the Alliance Israelite Universelle – the Hebrew school financed by the Rothschild family in 1904. Below the Italian government recognises the Jewish community. This is the only reminder of a Jewish presence.

back as when the Island was under the rule of the Knights of St John.

The houses were made of stone and lined the streets of the Juderia, crowded one building against another and the streets were long and narrow. The majority were paved with tiny pebbles. The main street, "La Calle Ancha" had in the Central Square, an ancient monument with bronze sea horses. This was known as "La Fuente". The Calle Ancha was the main meeting place of the Jewish quarter and many wedding and other joyous processions passed through this street. Another popular place was the Mandraki, where people would meet, stroll along the sea front and enjoy refreshments at the restaurants. There were several synagogues on Rhodes. These were built over the centuries, as the Jewish population grew. There were, however, two main Synagogues in the Juderia, The Kehila Grande, which was built in the 1480's, and the Kehila Shalom, which was built in the 1370's.

There were also Jewish educational institutions on the Island. The

first grammar school was founded in 1895 by Abraham Galante, but owing to poor support it was closed in 1897.

In 1899 another school was started in poor, inadequate accommodation. As the school progressed, they occupied the building which had formerly been used by the Community for Talmud Torah. A school for girls was opened in 1902. This, too, was housed in poor accommodation. In 1903, after visiting Rhodes, Baron Edmond de Rothschild donated 15 000 francs for the construction of an Alliance School. This was completed in 1904. Under Italian rule the Jewish schools progressed at a rapid pace, and on 11th December, 1928, the Government of Rhodes decreed the establishment of the Collegio Rabbinico. This College attracted students from Bulgaria, Egypt, Palestine and Turkey and it soon earned a high international reputation, owing to its high standards. Unfortunately, in 1938, under the rule of the Fascist Government, the College was closed and so ended the short but successful existence of one of the leading Sephardi Rabbinical Seminaries.

SYNAGOGUES OF RHODES

There were six synagogues in Rhodes. One, the largest, was the Kal Grande, which already stood when the Sephardim arrived. It had been built by Greek Jews called Romaniots. This Kehila was demolished by a bomb during World War II. In the late 16th century, members of the community built the Kal Shalom, which remains standing to this day. The Sephardi synagogue in Harare is named after this one.

The restoration of the Kal Shalom after World War II was made possible through the aid of Rhodesis from Zimbabwe, Zaire, the United States and elsewhere.

The other synagogues were Kal Tikkunhsot; Kal del Midrash (situated on Talmus Torah Street); Kal del Ermano Shemuel Hanan (situated on the Kay Ancha); Kal del Ham Yusufachi Franco

(situated in front of one of the doors in the walled city that leads to the sea shore).

All the synagogues had balconies with decorative wooden screens which served the women's section. The women seated in the balcony could see and hear the services below, but the men could only see the screens. The men's area was known as La Kehilah and the women's section as La Azara.

None of the synagogues had social halls. Celebrations were held in the large court-yards of the synagogues. The only social hall that existed was the "Hall Notrica" which belong to all the organisations and was used by the members for social functions. This hall was situated in the same building as the Notrica Girls School.



The newest of three cemeteries in Rhodes. The Italian government required the land to build a stadium and ordered the Jews to exhume and re-inter the remains in this cemetery. Some tombstones, mainly inscribed in Hebrew and Ladino, still show some markings from the move.

THE CEMETERIES OF RHODES

The Jewish community of Rhodes had four cemeteries. It was customary to visit them on Lag B'Omer.

In the oldest, one found tomb stones with Spanish names dating back 300 years. It was situated in front of the Baths of Mar de Cova, next to the beer factory, Beera Dreher. As one climbed up this street to the top, there was another cemetery like the first, not as old, but, completely filled. The third Jewish cemetery was at the end of the street of cemeteries.

The last one that is still in existence and in good condition is situated quite far from the others in the Greek Quarter. It is maintained today by a Greek family that lives on the premises. They are paid from funds collected from the rents of homes that had belonged to Jews of Rhodes and were abandoned during World War II.

Mrs Rebecca Amato Levy writes, "I want to tell you about the last cemetery where one can see tombstones dating back 100 years and more. The tombstones were not the originals. They were transferred from the third cemetery because the Italian government

needed the land to build a stadium and required the Jews to move their dead. When the wives and holy men were transferred, the Jewish community conducted burial services at the new site. Many families had their relatives' remains transferred to this last cemetery."

Mrs Levy personally transferred the tombstone of her father who passed away in 1935. When she visited Rhodes in 1978, she found the grave intact as she had left it.

This burial transfer was not without criticism. The old Jews of Rhodes used to say that this act of moving the dead would come back to haunt them. Strangely enough, not too many years later, the German persecution of the Jews began and then came the end of Jewish life on Rhodes.

(For many years the late Moshe Soulam and his wife Lucia were custodians of Kal Shalom. Mrs Soulam continues as custodian. Mr Moise Soriano and his family who still live in Rhodes, are the custodians of any records belonging to the Juderia).



The Order of the Knights of St. John left imposing evidence of their presence in Rhodes, and gave to the island the particular character it retains to this day, with its impregnable walls, gates, churches, hospitals, inns and palaces. Their stay in Rhodes lasted 213 years, until 1522, when on December 29, the last of the Grand Masters, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, was compelled to surrender the island to Suleiman the Magnificent. Needless to say, it took a siege of six months in the face of strong resistance from the Knights, with the aid of local inhabitants, before the city could be forced to give itself up. After the fall of Rhodes, Charles V and the Pope were instrumental in finding the Knights a new home—in Malta. After that time they were known as the Knights of Malta.

To the Jews of Rhodes it was known as "la puerta di la scala" or "la puerta di Michael Amato" a Jew who sold groceries near the gateway.



The Greeks call it *Episthion* and the Italians "Via de Cavalieri". It is the road of the Knights of St. John which has not changed in centuries. On either side of the streets are the various lines which knights of seven nationalities occupied. Above each door are the various coats of arms. This is one of the best preserved medieval streets in Europe, and leads to the Palace of the Grand Master.

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MESSAGE FROM DAYAN DR. P. TOLEDANO

**Ab Beth Din Spanish and Portuguese
Jews of England**

With praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty we are today celebrating the 60th Anniversary of our Sephardi Congregation. Our fathers in their wisdom and far-sightedness have built not only a beautiful Synagogue but also a communal hall, mikvah and indeed a small temple for our children. All this has been erected in order to preserve our Sephardi heritage. It was built with the hearts and souls of our people in order to retain the eternal values of Judaism. It was built not only to celebrate communal events but also to find an opportunity to come here in times of stress and joy, to pour out our heart and soul to our Maker who dwells in this sanctuary.

The Torah tells us that the Almighty asked Moses that every seven years on Succot of the sabbatical year all Israel should come to the place which the Almighty would choose – namely to the temple in Jerusalem so that the Torah would be read before them: "You will gather the people, men, women, children and the stranger within thine gates so that they will come and hear the word of the Lord that they should learn and fear the Lord".

Our Sages tell us that men came to learn, women to listen to the words of the Torah and the children were brought so that their parents would have their reward for bringing them to the house of God. This teaches us that men and women share the same duty not only for the preservation of the sanctuary but also to study Torah and to convey the message to their children.

The sanctuary, therefore, was not to be merely a house of prayer but also a place of study, a place where the people learnt to know each other, love each other and be responsible for each other.

When this sacred building was erected it was the intention of the founders that in this place there should also be a talmud torah (school) for the children, for children are indeed the backbone of every community.

Judaism, therefore, does not merely recognise a Synagogue as a place of prayer but also as a "Bet-HaKnesset" a place of gathering in which prayer, study and charitable work are exercised. The celebration is meaningless if we do not realise our responsibility towards our Maker and our people. Let us, therefore, make every effort by attending and maintaining the Synagogue. Finally, let us work together in harmony and maintain a strong and viable congregation. Only when co-operation and shalom prevail among us, can our community go from strength to strength.

In conclusion, our Sages tell us that at the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, Moses blessed the Israelites with the following blessing which I feel is also appropriate for our Sephardi Kahal in Harare. "And let the beauty of the Lord, our God be upon us; and may you cause the work of our hands to inspire us. And may this Synagogue which we have built in honour of our deity be the means by which we may come closer to you."

AMEN



MESSAGE FROM HABBI R. SUIZA SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION CAPE TOWN

It is now sixty years since this wonderful Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Harare was established. It became the communal centre and the haven to all the "Sephardim" in this wonderful country at the time and it continues to be so to the present day.

The "Kehillah" has, for the Sephardi Jews, always been not just a place of worship but also the meeting place and the centre of our Jewish expression and the continuity of our customs and traditions.

This warm and prestigious community has served as an incredible source of strength in uniting and educating the present and future generations, as well as inculcating a sense of pride and belonging, to all its members.

I am proud to have served this Congregation for a period of seven years and I am grateful that the "Almighty" granted me the opportunity of gaining communal experience in my rabbinical career together with the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Harare and its prestigious leadership.

May the good Lord continue to bless all the dedicated members of your Congregation and may the next sixty years be as fruitful and productive as they have been in the past.

R. SUIZA

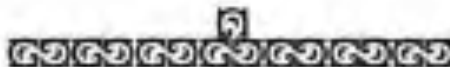


STELLA COHEN, HONORARY CHAIRLADY FOR LIFE CLAIRETTE ALHADEFF AND RACHEL HANAN CHAIRLADY, 1991

FROM THE LADIES' SOCIETY

Our celebration of our 60th Anniversary falls on the eve of 1992. This will be a time of interest in Sephardi Jews with world attention focused on our pride and in our history and culture. It is a time for the revival of great love and intense pride in our language, Ladino.

EL DIO QUE MOS AYGHE A CELEBRAR MUCHOS TROS ANOS
IN PAZ Y FELICIDAD



THE FOUNDATION HISTORY – 1931

By Solly Alhadeff



Solly Alhadeff

Let me start this article by retelling a story – the logic of which has always interested me:

"A Rabbi was once passing through a field where he saw a very old man planting an oak tree.

"Why are you planting that tree?" said he. You surely do not expect to live long enough to see the acorn growing up into an oak tree?"

"Ah," replied the old man, "My ancestors planted trees not for themselves, but for us, in order that we might enjoy their shade or their fruit. I am doing likewise for those who will come after me."

Whilst a handful of our forefathers from Rhodes Island had already passed through or settled in this country at the beginning of the century, amongst them my late father, Marco Alhadeff, it was only from 1907 onwards that a much larger influx began to arrive, encouraged by the regular reports sent by my late father to Rhodes Island, spurring them to come out to make a success in a new country. Fortunately biblical Hebrew was recognized as an official qualifying language for new immigrants and this is how the majority of our ancestors were gladly admitted into this new pioneering country.

For want of members the local Sephardi Jews were members of the Salisbury Hebrew Congregation, with a yearning always to have a congregation of their mother community of Rhodes Island.

In 1931 this desire was finally achieved, when, with the persuasion of the late Marco Alhadeff, B.D. Almeleh and J.C. Benatar separate services for the High Festivals were held in the Duthie Hall, then located at the corner of Jameson Avenue and First Street. The

stalwarts had taken the plunge, the acorn was planted, the sapling was to flourish and become the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation.

Mr J.C. Benatar arrived here in 1906, becoming a founder member, serving on the committee and as chairman of the *Hevra Kadisha*. He played an important role in assisting new Sephardi arrivals. He intervened with police and immigration authorities on behalf of those who had problems. For over a year his home at 86 Salisbury Street, was used as a Hebrew school.

In those days by far the largest percentage of the Sephardi Jews were established in business enterprise scattered in all corners of the country viz:

Elie Capelluto at Chakari, the Hassons, the Fereras, the Scemarias chose Gatooma, Mardoche and Joe Tarica in Darwendale, the Leons, Amatos, Merdjans and the Trevis family in Eiffel Flats, whilst the Menashe family were in force at Que Que, others, too numerous to mention had settled in places like Shamva, Shabani, Penalonga, Bindura and Selukwe.

It will serve as an indication as to the strength of the community and their happiness at being able to have separate services, when it is realized that the *Minyan* numbered considerably over 100 from the outlying districts who had come for the High Festival services. The sweetness of incantation, in the Rhodes Island manner had touched a long forgotten chord to all who were present. Problems there were many, but with perseverance and resolution they were surmounted and the three active leaders, as a team, now set about their task of forming a permanent society.

The first general meeting of the newly formed society bore the unwieldy name of the Hebrew Sephardic Society of Rhodesia, taking place in the Palace Theatre on Sunday 18th October 1931.

Mr. B.D. Almeleh was elected to the Chair and Mr. J.N. Alhadeff was the able, active Secretary. The Chairman explained in detail that the population of Sephardi Jews had now reached such numbers that it had become essential that a Society of this nature should be formed for the purpose of looking after their social happiness and to their religious and burial needs.

The members were wildly enthusiastic and besides themselves with joy at the formation of the new Society and even entrenched a clause in the Constitution that a unanimous 100% acceptance was necessary in the event of a dissolution or disbursement of the new Society.

THE FIRST OFFICIALS 1931-32

President:	Mr. B.D. Almeleh
Vice President:	Mr. Behor Alhadeff
Treasurer:	Mr. M. Tarica
Secretary:	Mr. J.N. Alhadeff
Committee:	Messrs David Franco, A.N. Alhadeff, H.S. Leon and Isaac Mizrahi
Country:	Mr. J.S. Benatar for Gwelo/Victoria Mr. Albert Leon for Mazoe District Mr. Leon Ferera for Gatooma District
Chairman:	<i>Hevra Kadisha</i> : Mr J.C. Benatar
Gabbai:	Mr. Marco Alhadeff

A big Sepher Torah was procured, with beautiful scroll work, exquisite mantling and silver appointments to replace the three very small ones, which up to now, had been used more in a symbolic



The Kay Ancha now named by the Greek authorities as "Matryon Evreon" or Hebrew Martyrs Square. The sign points to the Kal Shalom.

(Below) Another view of the Kay Ancha with the "Fuente" in the foreground. On the right is the "Old City Hotel" where the author stayed.



Mr Alhadeff and I agreed to meet in the Kay Ancha at the fountain the following day. I asked how we would know each other. He said, "Don't worry, I will know who you are."

We met and somehow he knew who I was, although I could not have done the same. Once again we went on a tour of the Juderia. This I welcomed because on my previous visit I found that peoples' memories were not all that reliable and he confirmed what was in doubt or uncertain. He pointed to a door on which the name of a relative had been carved with a penknife. It was still there after all these years. Alado di la puerta di la mar he showed me where my paternal grandparents had lived.

He offered to take me out to dinner after the Shabbat service on Friday night and this I happily accepted.

The Shabbat service in the Kal Shalom was a memorable one. On the tevah was Joseph Alhadeff and Albert Almeleh. It appears that both these gentlemen and their wives come on an annual pilgrimage to Rhodes. The congregation comprised mainly of tourists with three

residents present, Mr Maurice Sorriano, Sammy Modiano and Mme. Soulam.

Prior to the service Mme Soulam was supervising the time honoured custom of lighting the candela di Shabat – the Sabbath candles. A glass containing water with oil floating on top and wick comprised the candle.

The prayer books in use are identical to the ones used in Harare and are edited and compiled by Rev. Dr. David de Sola Pool. In the front pages one comes across some touching inscriptions, written in by tourists, commemorating family and ancestry.

After the service Joseph Alhadeff and his charming wife Louise took me to Trianda for dinner at a Greek restaurant. I discovered that Joseph was a gourmet and recommended some delicious Greek dishes, one of which was slovaki – pieces of fish grilled on a skewer and tastily seasoned.

Whilst chatting over the meal he reminisced about our family and recalled that my aunt Marica – the youngest of the family had

A TRIBUTE TO KIPPS ROSIN



MR. I.R. ROSIN OBE, M.D. FRCS

Now in his eighty-eighth year, Mr I.R. Rosin OBE, FRCS, affectionately known as Kipps Rosin, a man with a distinguished professional career behind him as a surgeon, was made Honorary Life President of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation in 1970. This was a singular honour bestowed by a community in the main transplanted from Rhodes, upon a man who could trace no ancestry to that island. Kipps Rosin's influence upon the Sephardi community is an example of how out of sadness, and perhaps a certain bitterness, good and powerful things grow.

In 1935 Kipps Rosin became disenchanted with the Salisbury Ashkenazi Congregation for the manner in which he felt it had treated his father, the late Rabbi Joseph Julius Rosin, after eighteen years of service.

It was the young Aron King who encouraged him to approach the fledgling Sephardi community, then some four years old, and conducting their services according to Rosh traditions. Kipps joined for Rosh Hashana and remembers that "They welcomed me with open arms."

While training as a houseman in Manchester, Kipps attended the Withington Sephardi Synagogue, where the Rabbi had extended a warm hospitality. Enjoying a similar hospitality in Salisbury, Kipps asked if he could join the young congregation, was accepted and even preached a sermon at the high festivals. This was the beginning of a long custom and since 1935 Kipps has given countless sermons to his congregation.

Soon his influence was being felt. In 1938 he served his first term as president. "If we were going to be a congregation, we had to be a proper congregation," he recalled. "We could not wander around with the Sefer Torah in a suitcase, and take a hall here and a home



there for our Festivals. We had children growing up. We had to teach them to be Jews. We had to find a Rabbi." During his many terms of office as president a piece of land was acquired in Jameson Avenue (Samora Machel Ave.) and the first Sephardi Hall erected.

It was now essential to have a Minister and through Chief Rabbi I Abrahams in Cape Town contacted a Sephardi Rabbi, one who had been an inmate of Dachau concentration camp. He was Rabbi Manfred Papo who came to Rhodesia in 1944.

Kipps remembers that General Smuts had to give special permission for him to travel up from the Cape to Rhodesia, in those war years, Dr Papo was an Austrian, considered in theory an enemy alien.

There were the more subtle and complex problems of trying to harmonise the old Rhodes Island traditions with the needs of a modern congregation. "This was not always easy," he recalls. Many of the old Sephardis wished to stick to the old Turkish ways. But slowly the necessary transformations were made. In this I had tremendous support from B.D. Almelah, B.S. Leon, J.N. Alhadeff, Saul Alhadeff and Salvatore Alhadeff."

In all, Kipps Rosin served sixteen years as president.

He also made a tremendous impact on television viewers in the 1960's when he appeared on a religious programme "Viewpoint", in which members of the Christian and Jewish faith exchanged views. He cleared up many misconceptions Gentiles had about the Jewish faith, even to the extent that many wrote letters expressing the wish to convert to Judaism.

Perhaps the crowning culmination of his work was the building of the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue and the Rhodes Community Memorial Hall. He conceived the complex, was the mastermind behind the plans and with tireless support of A.I. Menashe, saw the centre become brick and mortar.

He recalls that one of the golden moments of his life, was the consecration of the synagogue in 1953. The building was packed. Dignitaries consisted of the Governor General, the Governor and the Mayor, all in morning coats and top hats. He was Master of Ceremonies that day and had the honour of escorting Lord Dalhousie. The ceremony was conducted by the Haham Dr Salomon Gaon assisted by Dr Papo.

Despite the fact that he comes from an Ashkenazi background, Kipps still believes that the Sephardi Community must retain its own identity. "I do not believe in religious tribalism," he says, "but the Sephardi community has many beautiful traditions and rituals which should not be submerged to those of another community." He believes that all communities should work in harmony, each of them in their own separate ways towards the greater glory of Judaism.

Kipps Rosin is now semi-retired but remains passionately interested in the affairs of the congregation and still delivers the occasional sermon. His message throughout his life to Jews and non-Jews alike is that Judaism is not a dogmatic religion but a way of life.