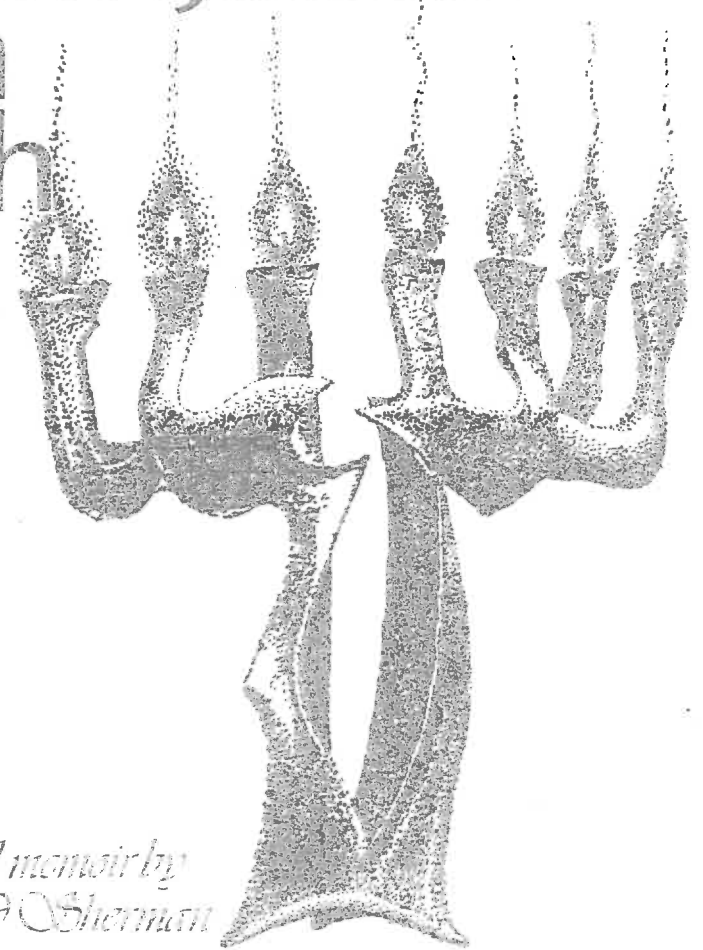


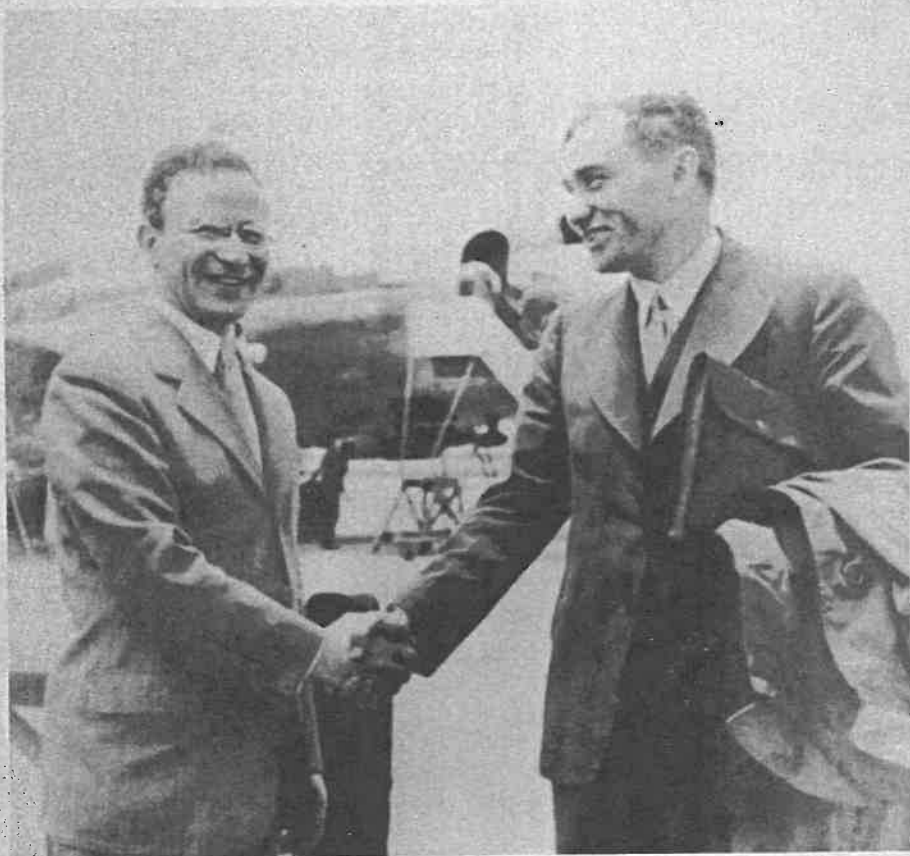


Pioneering
for
Reform Judaism
in
South
Africa



*A personal memoir by
Rabbi David Sherman*

To Jessica
with love
Dad



Rabbi David Sherman meeting Rabbi M.C. Weiler in Cape Town, 1946

FOREWORD

As the Cape Town Jewish Reform Congregation is approaching its 40th anniversary, I was asked by the President, Mr Joe Loebenstein, to prepare a sketch of the origins and history of the congregation. With the passage of time the principal actors are slipping away and memories grow dim. It is important therefore to have some permanent record of this most significant development in the life of Cape Town Jewry.

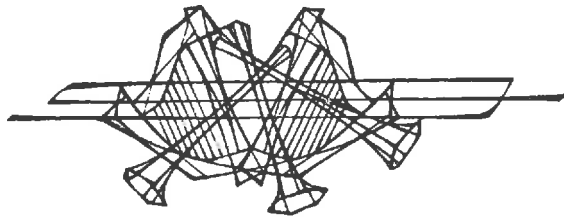
On my arrival in Cape Town on July 3, 1946 the congregation consisted of little more than a hope and a promise. Although the numbers of Cape Town Jewry remained static over this period the congregation grew steadily so that by the time of my retirement from active leadership in October 1982 the congregation embraced some 1 500 family units. We had built two Temple complexes with halls, schools, libraries and ongoing programmes of Jewish activity.

Whatever has been achieved here has been due to the enthusiastic cooperation and devoted labours of a long line of dedicated workers too numerous to mention. As far as possible I have tried to mention the names of those who held some official position, and as for the rest I should like to express my personal appreciation to those who extended so much kindness to me and my wife and who helped in any way to advance the cause of Reform Judaism among our people.

An essay of this sort soon takes on a life and direction of its own. Instead of a mere catalogue of names, dates and events the writing began to take on the character of a personal

memoir - based on my own recollections, observations and reflections. Facts are of interest only as they have some meaning for us. I have therefore tried to present these facts in terms of the meaning they have for me and, I hope, for all those to whom the establishment and growth of the Reform movement at the Southern tip of Africa is something more than just a matter of momentary concern.

I should like to take this opportunity to say how much I owe to the support and encouragement of my wife Bertha; also to Mrs Merle Laubscher for typing the manuscript and Mr Jack Marks, the Executive Director of the Congregation, for his assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.



Pioneering for Reform Judaism in South Africa

The Reform Movement in Judaism began in 19th century Germany as a response to the challenge of the 'Emancipation'. Up to this time Jews had lived behind the physical and spiritual walls of the ghetto. Contacts with their neighbours were limited very largely to trade and commerce. Unable to attend secular schools and Universities, restricted in their choice of trades and professions, they were cut off from the new scientific ideas and thought currents that were swirling through Europe. The ghetto was a world apart, a sort of state within a state with its own system of laws, schools, courts and taxes. It was the scene of an intensive cultural activity but this was confined largely to the study of Bible, Talmud and codes.

Gradually the ideas of the 18th century Enlightenment began to penetrate the walls of the ghetto. It was a movement whose purpose was to apply the test of reason to all social, political and religious institutions.

Under the leadership of Moses Mendelssohn we find the growth of a Jewish enlightenment movement known as the Haskalah. Its aim was to create a greater awareness of the concepts of modern life and to find some way of harmonising them with the teachings of Jewish tradition. The Haskalah sought to prepare the Jews for Emancipation, to prove that they were ready to exercise the rights and responsibilities of

equal citizenship in the modern state.

When the Emancipation came in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Jews emerged from behind ghetto walls to savour the joys of their new found freedom. They could now attend Universities. Trades and professions formerly closed to them were now within their reach. A whole new world of opportunity was open to them.

But there was some question as to what would happen to Judaism once it was removed from the protective wrappings of the ghetto. There were many who in their enthusiasm for the new freedom began to distance themselves from the traditions of their faith. They came to look down on them as an antiquated jumble of medieval superstitions and redundant practices of no further use or interest. The result was a wave of conversions to Christianity in that first generation of Emancipation.

There were others, however, who felt that the essential principles of Judaism were still valid and important, but should be presented in a more modern manner. 'Let us remove', they said, 'the trappings of medievalism and the excrescences of

ghetto thinking in order to make the Synagogue more attractive to the educated Jew'. When they approached the Synagogue authorities with suggestions for the modernisation of the services they got no encouragement. They found it necessary therefore to establish their own schools and Synagogues in order to carry forward these ideas.

The movement for Reform of Synagogue practice began in Germany, because it was here that we find the first sizeable group of Jews who were exposed to western culture. The progress of Reform in Germany however was rather slow. In many places it met with opposition from the state authorities who were suspicious of anything new. Then there was the rigidly structured organisation of the community which was often controlled by the Orthodox making it difficult to introduce any innovations.

Discouraged by the slow progress of their movement a number of Reform leaders went across the sea to the United States in the 1840's. Here they found fertile soil for their activity. There was no government interference and no organised community to hamper their work. It was truly a land of freedom. The

movement spread rapidly and by 1880 nearly all the Jewish congregations were Reform. Then in the 1880's there was a vast influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, most of whom were Orthodox. But as the children and the grandchildren of this new immigrant generation gravitated into the orbit of Reform the Orthodox became once again a small minority group in the United States. The Reform movement began in Germany but enjoyed its greatest success in North America. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform congregational body has a membership of close to 800 congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis has a membership of some 1 300 Reform Rabbis.

In 1925 representatives of Reform congregations in the U.S., Britain and the continent met under the leadership of Claude Montefiore, Lilli Montagu and Rabbi Leo Baeck to form a World Union for Progressive Judaism. Its aim was to promote the growth of Reform in different parts of the world and to serve as a channel of communication between our far flung communities. One of the first projects and perhaps the most successful of the World Union was the establishment of

Reform in South Africa.

HAVA NAGILAH

It all began with my teacher at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Prof. A.Z. Idelsohn. He taught Jewish Music and Liturgy at the college. A noted musicologist, he gained fame as the author of a vast thesaurus of Jewish folk song from all over the world. He had travelled extensively but he collected most of his material in Jerusalem where he found representatives of nearly every Jewish community in the world and was able to record their folk song. It was in Jerusalem that he became involved in the composition of what has come to be regarded as the theme song of Israel - Hava Nagilah.

The song is based on an old Chasidic melody which he was trying to teach to a group of students. The students seemed to have some difficulties with the melody and suggested that it would be easier if there were words to go with it. Prof. Idelsohn suggested that the students try their hands at composing words to fit the music. This was successfully accomplished by a young man,

Moshe Nathanson, who gave us the words for Hava Nagilah which has become the song most closely associated with Israel.

In the early 30's Prof. Idelsohn went to visit family in Johannesburg. His brother Jerry, a well known musical personality in his own right, was very much taken up with what he heard about Reform in the United States. Always a man of action, Jerry Idelsohn organised a public lecture for his brother, who spoke on the History and Principles of Reform Judaism. From among the audience Jerry got together a small committee of interested people to promote the idea of Reform. Serving as Convenor and Secretary of this group Jerry wrote to Lilli Montagu, Hon. Secretary of the World Union asking for a rabbi and assistance in starting a Reform congregation in Johannesburg.

Prof. Idelsohn on his return to Cincinnati managed to persuade a member of the senior class, M.C. Weiler, to accept the post in Johannesburg and recommended him to Lilli Montagu. Miss Montagu agreed on behalf of the World Union to pay Rabbi

Weiler's fare to South Africa and to guarantee his salary for six months. The need for Reform was there. Though long overdue, the establishment of the Johannesburg Congregation was attended by storm and struggle, with vigorous opposition from the Orthodox.

The growth of Reform in Johannesburg attracted favourable notice in other parts of the country. It was not long before Rabbi Weiler began to receive urgent invitations from other centres to come and help them start Reform in their communities. In the early 40's Mr Hyman Salamon who was on an extended visit to the United States sent back letters to his brother Sam telling how much he enjoyed the Reform services which he had been attending there, and urged his brother to do something about starting Reform in Cape Town. Mr Sam Salamon, thereupon approached Rabbi Weiler for assistance.

Rabbi Weiler, though eager to promote the growth of Reform, hesitated. He wanted to see a greater show of support and gave Mr Salamon the names of people

in Cape Town who might be interested. There was Mr Richard Myers a young stockbroker who had been a member of Reform in London and Mr Reuben Glasstone a prominent merchant who had been a member of the Johannesburg Reform congregation.

These three met for lunch over a period of several months. They discussed plans and canvassed for support among their friends. But their repeated pleas to Rabbi Weiler to come to Cape Town to get things started remained unanswered, perhaps understandably so. Cape Town was reputed to be very conservative. That Reform was able to secure a foothold in Johannesburg was no indication that it would be equally acceptable in Cape Town. Then too, it was wartime. Overseas travel was very difficult and hazardous. Hence, it would not be easy to get a rabbi, and without a rabbi the project would fail. A failure in Cape Town would have unpleasant repercussions in Johannesburg. It was a risky business.

But Mr Salamon was determined to get things started.

Towards the end of 1943 he went up to Johannesburg for a meeting with Rabbi Weiler and his committee. The committee appeared reluctant to let Rabbi Weiler go to Cape Town. Mr Salamon threatened to go directly to Miss Lilli Montagu and the World Union if the committee refused to assist. Finally it was agreed that Rabbi Weiler would visit Cape Town in December at the beginning of the summer holiday period. A meeting of interested people was held on December 30th in the board room of the General Estate and Orphan Chamber at the top of Adderley Street. Rabbi Weiler spoke on the principles of Reform Judaism and advised on procedures for organising the congregation.

Another meeting was held on January 10th 1944 in the Banqueting Hall of the City Hall. It was there agreed to found the Cape Town Jewish Reform Congregation and a provisional Executive and Council was formed consisting of: Executive - Dr H. Kramer, President, Mr R. Glasstone and Mr S. Salamon, Vice Presidents, Mr J.H. Levien, Hon. Treasurer Mr R. Myers, Hon. Secretary

Mr L. Berman, Dr Moir Gordon,
Dr J.H.L. Shapiro.

Council — Messrs H. Clarke,
L.H. Lewis, S. Marine, J.J. Reitstein,
W. Rothkugel, S. Roy, Dr N.
Smiedt, Mesdames N. Hirschsohn,
M. Lipschitz, R. Wise

A third meeting was held on
February 29th 1944 to adopt a
constitution and elect a Council.

The following were elected:

Executive - Dr H. Kramer,
President, Mr S. Salamon Vice-
President, Mr S. Roy, Hon.
Treasurer, Mr R. Myers, Hon.
Secretary, Messrs L. Berman and
R. Glasstone, Dr Moir Gordon,
Mrs R. Wise, Sisterhood Represen-
tative.

Council - Messrs H. Clarke,
L. Frank, A. Kempner, L.H. Lewis,
H. Matthews, J.J. Reitstein,
W. Rothkugel, H. Weinberg,
Drs E. Liberman, J.H.L. Shapiro,
N. Smiedt, Mrs J. Kahn, Sisterhood
Representative

Rabbi Weiler returned to Cape
Town for a second visit in April to
discuss problems of organization.
He addressed a number of house
meetings and also a meeting of
women at the Delmonico
Restaurant to launch the Sister-
hood. The first committee consisted



Dr Herman Kramer, President 1944 - 47

of: Mrs Ruth Wise, Chairman,
Mrs Fay Salamon, Vice-Chairman,
Mrs P. Abrahams, Hon. Treasurer,
Mrs G. Gordon, Hon Secretary.

This was an important move,
because, except for High Holy Day
services, Sisterhood was for the
next two years the only really
functioning part of the congrega-
tion. In addition to a few fund
raising activities its work consisted
largely of providing comforts for
patients whom they visited at
military and naval hospitals. These
visits were much appreciated and
created a reservoir of goodwill

among ex-servicemen and women,
many of whom joined the
congregation.

As the congregation was
without a rabbi, the onset of the
High Holy Days posed a serious
problem. Finally the
Johannesburg congregation agreed
to allow Rabbi Weiler to conduct
the services for Rosh Hashanah
and his assistant, Dr S. Rappaport
on Yom Kippur. The services were
held in a hall known as the
Mayor's Gardens. These services
were well attended and attracted
many young people.

An attempt was made to
institute Friday evening services
on April 20th 1945. The service
was conducted by Rabbi Weiler at
the house of Mr and Mrs Simon
Roy. As seating capacity was
limited, only a small number of
members were invited which
caused resentment among those
not invited. It was decided there-
fore not to continue with these
services until a permanent rabbi
and a suitable venue could be
obtained.

In spite of lengthy correspon-
dence with Dr J. Morgenstern,
President of the Hebrew Union

College in Cincinnati no rabbi
was available for the High Holy
Days in 1945. Application for
assistance was made to the
Johannesburg congregation which
once again sent down Dr
Rappaport, and again the services
were held in the Mayor's Gardens.

Dr Rappaport was a promising
young scholar, trained for the
Orthodox rabbinate at the seminary
in Vienna. He came to London as
a refugee where he became
interested in Reform and was
persuaded to join Rabbi Weiler
in Johannesburg. After a few years
personality clashes developed
which unfortunately led to a
separation. Rabbi Rappaport
returned to the Orthodox
rabbinate and also entered into a
distinguished career as Professor
of Hebrew at the University of the
Witwatersrand. His resignation was
a great loss to our movement
because he was one of the leading
Jewish scholars in the country.

ARRIVAL

I arrived in Cape Town, on the
morning of July 3rd 1946. Having
been at sea for 21 days after
leaving New York on the S.S.
Gauntlet, a cargo ship with

accommodation for 12 passengers, we looked forward to the sight of Table Mountain and were advised to be up at dawn to see the sun rise over the mountain. But to our disgust the mountain was shrouded in mist and drizzle - July is winter in Cape Town. The next day Cape Town was its usual sunny self again.

I was met at the docks by a number of members of the committee, among them Sam Salamon, Richard Myers, Marcus Bowman, Ben Fisher and Dr Herman Kramer. Percy Moss-Rendell tried to film my entry on South African soil, but it did not come out very well owing to the poor light. But the warmth of their welcome made up for the dismal weather.

The reception committee took me to the old Queen's Hotel at the top of Sea Point. It was an old fashioned hotel and somewhat of a landmark. The black porters, bare legged in knee pants, recalled pictures I had seen of colonial Africa. For me it seemed all very exotic and exciting, almost like being on safari. The hospitality was overwhelming. The Salamons, the Myers and the Libermans were most attentive and my first

impressions were almost euphoric. I was introduced to the congregation at a reception in the hall of the Metropolitan church and there was a luncheon at the old Bordeaux hotel with the Committee and the Sisterhood. There were speeches about hopes and plans for the future. Some concern was expressed about the intensity of the Orthodox opposition. I told the committee not to worry about that as there were ways of using this opposition to good advantage.

On the ship we had been without news for three weeks. The first news I received on arrival in Cape Town was about the British raid on the Jewish Agency offices in Jerusalem and the imprisonment of the Agency Executive. A mass meeting to protest Mr Bevin's squalid war against the Jews was called for the next day at the City Hall and I was asked to take part.

Invited to say a few words, I compared the cause of Jewish Independence with the struggle for American Independence which was being celebrated that day - the fourth of July. The large hall was filled to overflowing. Some

2 000 of His Britannic Majesty's loyal Jewish subjects had come to voice their passionate disapproval of the policies of His Majesty's Foreign Secretary, in relation to Palestine.

This was my first introduction to Cape Town Jewry. My only previous contacts were with Mr and Mrs Reuben Glasstone and their nephew, Charles Bashew who came to see me in New York, in order to look me over and to persuade me to come to South Africa.

From the moment of my arrival I became aware of the strength of local Zionist sentiment. South African Jewry is the most devoutly Zionist community in the Western world. Indeed, it has been said that the religion of the South African Jew is Zionism.

I have often been asked 'Why did you come to South Africa?' To answer this question I must tell something of my personal circumstances at the time. I had left the rabbinate for a brief period during the last years of the war, in order to work for the American Jewish Conference. This was an effort to create an overall body to represent

American Jewry. It was established largely on the initiative of Dr Chaim Weizmann. He had managed to persuade the heads of the major American Jewish organizations that if they were to get any consideration for Jewish rights at the peace conference which was expected to take place after the war they must create a representative body that could speak for American Jewry with one voice. Elections were held all over the country and together with the elected delegates, representatives of 70 national Jewish organizations were included in the Conference. The Conference called for free Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state.

At the Conference I was appointed Director of Community Relations. It was my job to keep in touch with community leaders and promote support for the Conference all over the country. This involved extensive correspondence and a good deal of travelling to address large gatherings. I found myself in the heart and centre of the struggle for Jewish rights which was very stimulating.

However, as the war came to an

end I began to think of leaving the Conference in order to return to the rabbinate, when I received a letter from Dr Julian Morgenstern, President of the Hebrew Union College offering me a post with the newly formed congregation in Cape Town. This was followed by a letter from Rabbi Weiler depicting in glowing terms the prospects for building a sizeable congregation in that city. I had known Rabbi Weiler when we were both students at the Hebrew Union College, where I had succeeded him as President of the Hebrew speaking society and had since kept in touch with his work in South Africa. The prospect of starting with a new congregation was most exciting. It is one thing to come to an established congregation where you must try to fit into a mould created by others, but it is much more satisfying to build your own congregation in accordance with your own ideas.

To be sure, I had heard rumblings about the political situation in South Africa. But then I was an admirer of General Smuts - his staunch Zionist sympathies, his holistic philosophy and the stirring preamble that he wrote for

the Charter of the United Nations - so how could anything go too far wrong under his leadership. The only time I met General Smuts was at the Zionist banquet to celebrate the first anniversary of the State of Israel. I happened to be seated near him and he told me that the two great aims of his life were to see the establishment of the Jewish State and the coming together of the English and the Afrikaans speaking peoples in a united South African nationhood. He was glad to see that at least one of these hopes was about to be fulfilled.

JOHANNESBURG INTERLUDE

Shortly after my arrival in Cape Town I was whisked off to Johannesburg where I was to be briefed on the special problems of living as a Reform Rabbi in South Africa. The briefing was to have been done by Rabbi Weiler, but he was away in London to attend a conference and to recruit rabbinical personnel for the movement. With the establishment of the Cape Town Congregation, Reform was no longer just a singular aberration confined only to Johannesburg, but was now about to take on the dimensions of

a movement. Unable to discuss matters with Rabbi Weiler I had to try to find out things for myself during my six weeks stay in Johannesburg.

My guide and mentor was Victor Brasch. As some people collect stamps or antiques, Victor Brasch collected rabbis. He travelled widely, both in Europe and the United States in connection with his work, and wherever he went he made a point of getting to know the rabbi or rabbis. Very much involved in the work of the Reform movement and for some years President of the S.A. Union for Progressive Judaism, he was also Rabbi Weiler's emissary to the congregations around the country. During my stay in Johannesburg, he and his wife Cecily were most hospitable. Cecily was a member of a prominent Cape Town family. Her parents, Mr and Mrs Henry Harris, though pillars of the Gardens Synagogue proved very kind and helpful when my wife and I came to live near them in Newlands. Victor tried to explain to me the intricacies of South African racial affairs as well as the implications for our movement of Jewish communal politics.

Another interesting personality was Mr Nathan Sloom, an attorney with many Indian clients. He compared the position of the Indians in South Africa with that of the Jews in Eastern Europe. In both cases the laws were stacked against them. In order to survive they had to find either some loopholes in the laws or some ways of evading them.

I spoke several times at Temple Israel. At that time the Yishuv in Israel was being harrassed by the Mandatory government and I had no difficulty finding texts appropriate to the situation. I also spent a weekend with the newly formed Springs congregation and was the house guest of Dr and Mrs Fram. My most vivid recollection of Springs was the profusion of roses.

I was duly informed that the Johannesburg congregation had developed an unique pattern of Reform ideally suited to South African conditions. Reform practice in South Africa is more traditional than is general in the United States, because most of our people have just come over from Orthodoxy. 'A Guide of Practice' based on the procedures

and experience of the Johannesburg congregation had been drawn up, I was presented with a copy and told that all rabbis coming to this country would be expected to follow this Guide. Such things can be useful, if only as a point of departure - as long as they are not taken too seriously. To make sure that rabbis would take these instructions seriously a Central Ecclesiastical Board was being set up, composed of rabbis and laymen to deal with these matters.

After six weeks in Johannesburg I returned to Cape Town without seeing Rabbi Weiler. I did meet Mrs Weiler, a warm and charming lady. She had been born in Rhodesia and studied at Oxford. Her grandfather, 'Bongola' Smith, a somewhat legendary figure in the Congo had at one time owned vast acreage there, said to be as large in extent as the whole of Israel. She mentioned the name of a Cape Town friend, Miss Bertha Cohen, who might be able to teach Hebrew in the school I was planning to set up.

My trip to and from Johannesburg was made by 'Blue Train', reputed to be the most comfortable and luxurious train in the

world. As we came into the Western Cape I saw arum lilies growing by the side of the tracks. Back home these were considered luxury flowers, but here they were growing wild like weeds. The Western Cape is renowned as a botanists paradise, reputed to have more varieties of wild flowers than the rest of the world.

CONFLICT

The best guidebook for anyone undertaking to do pioneering work for Reform anywhere in the world is to be found in the Reminiscences of Isaac Meyer Wise. Armed with this manual one is never at a loss for what to expect. On my arrival in Cape Town, the Reform group consisted of a small handful of loyal enthusiasts, and there is nothing more zealous than people who are determined to build a new congregation in spite of massive opposition.

We lived in an atmosphere of charge and counter-charge, of grandiloquent manifestoes and petty accusations, sensational rumours and fanatical tirades coupled with threats of violence, boycotts and economic sanctions. Professional men were warned that

they would lose clientele, and it was hinted to merchants that it would not be good for business if they joined the new movement.

I was shown a leaflet put out by the Board of Jewish Education, a solemn warning to those good and innocent people who might be enticed by the glitter and glamour of this new fangled heresy, informing them that the main purpose of Reform was to lead their children to the baptismal font. The local Chief Rabbi, not to be outdone, conducted a series of Forum Meetings on the 'Perils of Reform'. But these scare tactics had a boomerang effect. Unbridled vituperation excites curiosity. People flocked to our services to see for themselves if it were true that we worshipped the Trinity, genuflected to the Virgin Mary or splashed around in baptismal fonts. Many of those who came to scoff remained as members. Some of our keenest supporters were among those who derived their first intimations of Reform from these Forum lectures.

The rapid growth of our membership was in itself a source of some slight embarrassment. It

presented us with the problem of finding a hall large enough to accommodate our people for the High Holyday services. We applied for the use of the Zionist Hall, the only communal hall large enough for our purposes. A similar application the year before had been turned down. This time we were informed regretfully that the hall had already been rented out for the Holy Days to an Orthodox Reverend who planned to conduct private services. Some time later the Reverend Gentleman confessed that he had been put up to this trick by the Chief Rabbi and that he deeply regretted lending himself to this manoeuvre.

Meanwhile we had to find a place where we could start up our Sabbath services. Once again we applied for the use of the Zionist Hall and the committee agreed. Our inaugural Friday evening service was held on September 13th, 1946 in the Zionist Hall. It was my birthday. There was a large attendance and a most enthusiastic response. People felt that we could now look forward to the building of a full congregational life. But on Monday the Dorshe Zion committee which controlled the hall received a

petition for a membership meeting to protest against our use of the hall on the grounds that the playing of the organ constituted a desecration of the Sabbath.

The committee was in a difficult position. The bond on the hall had just been paid off by one of our supporters, and among our members were some of the larger contributors to Zionist funds. Such a meeting would be surcharged with emotion and could be hurtful for collections. In order to avoid a meeting an effort was made to work out a compromise. Councillor Abe Bloomberg, our very popular Mayor was asked to mediate. I was invited to the Mayor's office to meet with the committee. They offered to call off the membership meeting and to let us have the hall if we would dispense with the use of the organ. As this was unacceptable to us they had to go ahead with the meeting.

The meeting was packed out, the atmosphere tense and charged with the high drama of a heresy trial. Speaker after speaker enlarged on the dread heresies of Reform and how they were asked to take their hats off at Temple

Emanu-El in New York. But who were these Cossacks of righteousness, these champions of ritual rectitude? When it was pointed out that they were not themselves the best exemplars of traditional piety and that they were themselves guilty of all the sins imputed to Reform - that they smoked on Shabbos, ate tref and omitted to lay tefillin, etc - they countered with a curious argument. 'Yes' they said, 'we too are sinners, but we have the grace to feel a sense of guilt about these things, while you reformers have no such guilt feelings'. We used to think that the purpose of Judaism was to reconcile man with God and to help remove the burden of guilt. But these new exponents of Unobservant Orthodoxy seemed to feel that the only proper purpose of religion is to nourish exaggerated guilt feelings about ritual peccadilloes.

Despite these theological niceties we were outvoted and denied the use of the Zionist Hall, whereupon we transferred our Sabbath services to the old Sea Point Town Hall which we also used for Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Our High Holy Day services were held at the Old Drill Hall, a huge barn like structure which we were hard

pressed to fill with a warm Holy Day atmosphere. Our portable ark, Torah, pulpit, reading desk, prayer books etc., were stored in Mr Salamon's warehouse and transported back and forth by his nephew Mr Bobby Rappaport.

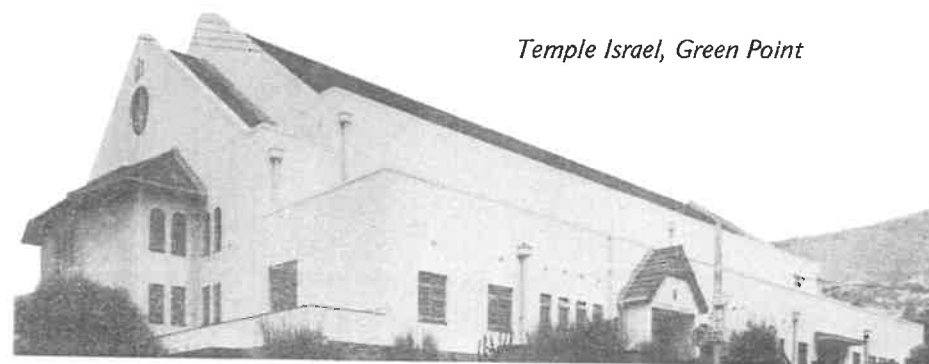
BUILDING

As a matter of fact, the refusal to grant us the use of the Zionist Hall proved most fortunate. It spurred our people on to build our own hall in time for the next High Holy Days.

In the meantime we had transferred our Sabbath services to our own premises. The congregation had purchased in April 1945 a sizeable property at the corner of Main Road and

Upper Portswood Road in Green Point. It contained a large old house in a bad state of repair and a small ballroom. A previous owner, Mr Pevsner had four daughters and the ballroom had been built for them and the entertainment of their friends. It was here that we held our services until our Temple was completed.

I had suggested an overall plan of a Temple opening up into a communal hall that could be used to augment seating for High Holy Days and special occasions. It was decided to begin with the building of the Hall. Mr Milton F. Stern was appointed architect. The turning of the first sod by Mr Max Sonnenberg, a prominent merchant and member of Parliament who



Temple Israel, Green Point

had given us much support, took place on May 14, 1947. The foundation stone was laid on June 25, 1947 by the Mayor, Councillor A. Bloomberg M.P. and the hall was barely completed in time for Rosh Hashanah 1947.

The first thing I did after settling in was to start a Hebrew school. Our problem was to find teachers. Those who had any training or experience were either fully employed or unwilling to work for Reform. Finally on November 2, 1946 we started with two classes in the old house at Portswood Road. There were 35 children and two teachers, one of these was the Miss Bertha Cohen who had been recommended by Mrs Weiler. The other teacher left after one hour but Miss Cohen remained and is still with me. We were married, January 7, 1947, by Rabbi Weiler who came down from Johannesburg for the wedding as well as to

address the National Conference of the Union of Jewish Women.

With a wife I also acquired a father-in-law, Mr Max Cohen. Born in Lithuania he came to Cape Town as a boy, worked hard and brought over his parents, a brother and six sisters. When I knew him he was semi-retired and spent most of his time in communal work and as a sort of one man social service agency, helping people sort out their problems. Having spent a year in New York, where he had attended the services of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise he was among the first to join Reform in Cape Town. A highly respected and much beloved figure, he was referred to affectionately as 'our father-in-law'.

Because of the strong Zionist influence we used the Sefardi pronunciation both in the school,

and in the services. Classes were held twice a week, on Saturday mornings and on a weekday afternoon. The Saturday classes were followed by a children's service conducted almost entirely by the children themselves. The music was provided by a children's choir conducted for many years by Mrs Fay Salamon, an excellent musician with a fine feeling for traditional Jewish music. In recent years Mrs Sherman used to conduct a junior service for the little ones aged 6 - 8. This service was keyed to their level of comprehension and served to prepare them for participation in the larger service. It was an exciting experiment in experiential education which attracted wide attention.

An important adjunct of the Hebrew School is the Temple Library which I started with a donation of some books from my own library. Additional books were purchased from contributions by members in honour of weddings, barmitzva's, births and birthdays or to memorialize loved ones. In the course of the years this has grown into a sizeable collection of Jewish books and a useful communal amenity. But without a librarian, a library is

only a collection of secondhand books. We were most fortunate therefore to obtain the services of Mrs Sylvia Jacobson, a trained librarian who together with her assistants has rendered dedicated service for many years on a voluntary basis.

As word got round that we had instituted modern methods of education, and that children were making good progress, our school grew rapidly. The fact that we were offering free tuition to children of members also helped to swell our membership rolls.

Children of members in the Southern suburbs found it difficult to get to our school twice a week at Portswood Road. In February 1948 we therefore started mid-week classes at the Suburban Masonic Hall in Newlands. By January 1950 this had developed into a self-contained suburban school. In 1965 we had a combined enrolment of 450 children, and engaged the services of an educator from Israel, Mr Israel Malchi. He was a graduate of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and had served as Vice-Principal of a High School in Natanya. Mr Malchi was with us for three

Children from our Hebrew School attending a Purim Party.

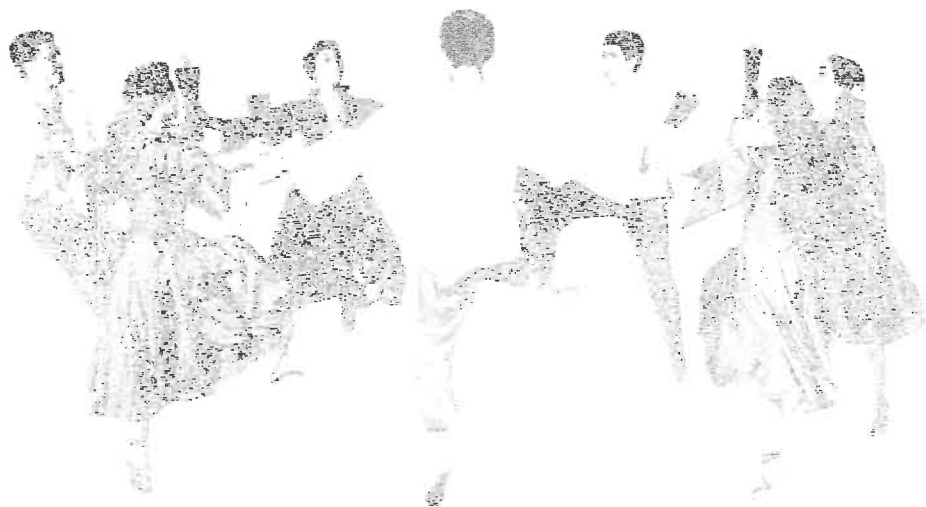


years during which time he provided in-service training for our teachers and raised the standards of instruction.

YOUTH

Generally we looked to the assistant rabbi to take charge of the school. During those periods when I was without an assistant Mrs Sherman took over as Principal. She also served as our first youth organizer. Over the years we developed a program of youth activities and summer camps. The first camp was held in January 1950 at the farm 'Champagne' owned by the Michelson family in Fransch Hoek. It was directed by the Temple Secretary, Mr Sol Marcus assisted

by Mr M. Benjamin, Mr J. Trappler and Miss Billie Silverman. In subsequent years camps were held at farms in Stellenbosch, Caledon, Egin and at Pearly Beach. There was a big upsurge of youth activities in the 60's when Mr Jack Marks was chairman of the Youth Committee. For some time we had 200 young people involved in these programmes. A good deal of the credit for this was due to the dedicated labours of 'Ma' and 'Pop' Herzfeld. Efforts are now being made to acquire a national camp site as our youth have joined with Reform youth in other parts of the country to form a national movement known as Maginim. Maginim are affiliated to the Zionist Youth Council and are assisted by Shlichim from Israel.



For the young adults we organised a group known as the Temple Guild. The first chairman was Mr Herbert Hirsch, who is now the leader of the Progressive Party in the Provincial Council. The Guild sponsored a variety of cultural, social and sporting activities. In January 1950 it got together a cricket team which went on tour to the Eastern Province. They made some friendly contacts in Port Elizabeth which served to stimulate the establishment of the Reform congregation in that city.

South Africans are very sports minded and this serves sometimes to dissolve certain sectional differences. In 1950 a Sports Club was formed within the congregation with Mr Oscar Cohen as chairman. The club sponsored a Badminton section. Not to be outdone the neighbouring Orthodox Shul also sponsored a Badminton group in their hall, known as the Weizmann Hall.

Both groups entered teams in the Western Province Badminton league. But neither was strong enough to remain in the first league. Mr Jack Marks, the Temple Badminton chairman negotiated

a pooling of resources, resulting in an amalgamation of Reform and Orthodox players known as the 'Temple-Weiz' Badminton Club. Just as the first cracks in the apartheid wall are taking place on the sportsfield, so too the Orthodox-Reform conflict began to ease off with co-operation in sports.

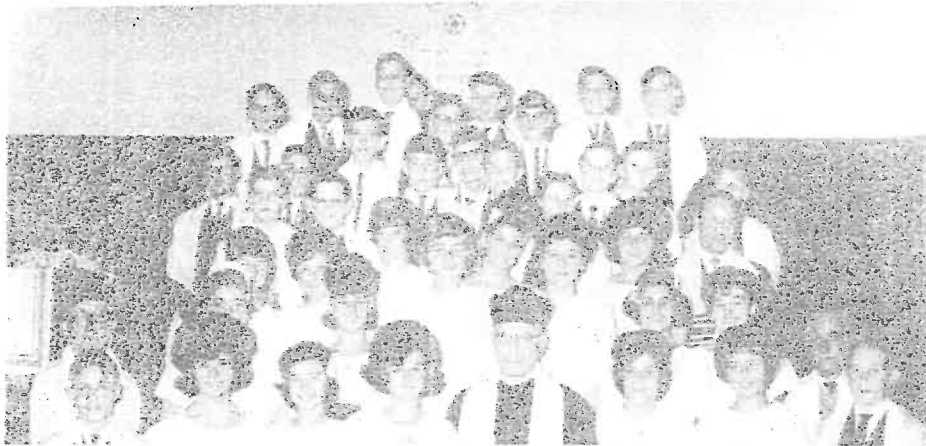
CONFIRMATION

No sooner had we opened the school than I started a confirmation class. The first confirmation was held erev Shavuot 1947 with a class of three - Leonard Glass, Joan Maister and Manfred Salamon. The practice caught on with ever-growing interest. It was not really the first confirmation in Cape Town, as an Orthodox Minister, Rev. Bender, had instituted confirmation for girls around the turn of the century. But he had been forced to discontinue it on account of the opposition of his committee. I also encountered opposition, not from the committee, but from parents and children. The purpose of confirmation is to get the children to continue with their Jewish studies beyond Bar/Bat-mitzvah. Such things are not to be

achieved without a struggle.

It was a long time before any of my colleagues tried to institute confirmation in their congregations, and they still seem to be having difficulties with it. The Orthodox have taken over the idea of

confirmation for girls, which they call Bat Mitzvah. But whereas we make of confirmation a Jewish educational experience encouraging children to continue their Jewish studies beyond the Bar Mitzvah age, they make of it a puberty rite at the age of 12,



Rabbi D. Sherman, Rabbi I. Richards, Mir A. Kohn & Mir H. Kramer together with confirmation graduates, 1964



Rabbi D. Sherman & Mir H. Kramer together with confirmation graduates, 1977

thus defeating its educational purpose. In recent years we instituted Bat Mitzvah on an entirely different basis, giving to girls the same privileges as to boys on their Bar Mitzvahs - reading from Torah and Haftorah and taking part in the service on the Sabbath nearest the 13th birthday. Another innovation was the congregational Seder. We did not want to interfere with family

Sedarim, but there were people living in boarding houses, or those with small families or those who did not feel confident enough to handle a Seder on their own, for whom this served a real need. Some learned in this way to conduct their own Sedarim and others came to look forward to the congregational Seder from year to year.



Members of the Sisterhood Executive and Committee

SISTERHOOD

As a rabbi I am accounted an honorary member of Sisterhood. In my student days I met an elderly rabbi who told me that when his Sisterhood was first started he was asked to serve as

President because no woman was considered fit to hold such a responsible executive position. This, I am told was the general position in the early beginnings of the Sisterhood movement. Well, the position has certainly changed since those days.

Indeed, it was the Sisterhood movement itself which had a good deal to do with this change in the self image of the Jewish woman. Sisterhood and other women's organisations following this example have given the Jewish woman the experience and the confidence to play an ever increasing role in congregational and communal life.

For many years the Sisterhood undertook to subsidize the Hebrew School, thus enabling us to provide free tuition for children of members. It helped to integrate our growing membership through a program of social and cultural activities - Chanukah Dances and Purim Parties, etc.

But most rewarding was a Sisterhood discussion group that I conducted over a number of years. We developed in this way a corps of women who were well versed in matters of Jewish tradition and were able to go into the community and answer questions about Jewish custom and practice. This helped to take the edge off the Orthodox efforts to disparage Reform ignorance and created a more respectful attitude in the

community.

Recognising the important place of Sisterhood in the life of the congregation I tried to work in close cooperation with the Sisterhood Presidents whom I should like to list here:

Ruth Wise	1944 - 46
Fay Salamon	1946 - 48
Celia Liberman	1948 - 51
Ruth Nathan	1951 - 53
Fay Salamon	1953 - 55
Becks Weiner	1955 - 56
Doris Cooper	1956 - 57
Nora Mosselson	1957 - 59
Asne Ginsberg	1959 - 61
Fay Salamon	1961 - 66
Esme Maraney	1966 - 68
Marjorie Horowitz	1968 - 69
Peggy Tobias	1969 - 71
Fay Salamon	1972
Peggy Tobias	1972 - 74
Joy Lurie	1974 - 76
Penny Immerman	1976 - 79
Phina Hoberman & Norma Smolowitz	1979 - 81
Phina Hoberman	1981 - 82
Ina Bernitz	1983 -

Chairmen Suburban Sisterhood

Ruth Nathan & Mollie Reichenberg	1966 - 68
Judy Diamant	1968 - 70

Barbara Bashew	1970 - 73
Judy Diamant	1973 - 75
Ruth Nathan	1973 - 75
Lillian Jamieson	1975 - 78
Gertie Landsberg	1981 - 82
Ruth Nathan	1983 -

I am most grateful to all of them for their loyalty and support, but there are two who deserve special mention.

Mrs Fay Salamon was a founder of both the Congregation and

Sisterhood. She served as Sisterhood President off and on for 12 terms. Whenever there was something to be done she was there to help. A clear and incisive thinker, with a fine feeling for Jewish tradition, she was a vigorous and forthright champion of positive Jewish values. A well trained musician, she served for many years as a volunteer director of the children's choir which was widely acclaimed for its excellence.

Some of the 1 000 senior citizens who attend our annual Simchat Torah party for the Aged.



Mrs Ruth Nathan, also a founder of both the Congregation and Sisterhood, served as President during a trying period in the history of Sisterhood. Her tact, devotion and superb qualities of leadership managed to overcome

all difficulties. It was through her initiative that we established the Suburban Sisterhood and under her guidance that it has grown and developed. Hers is the longest unbroken record of service to Sisterhood.

Mrs R. Nathan, Mrs P. Immerman and Mrs P. Tobias attending the Sisterhood Sabbath and Women's Word Day of Prayer Service.



TEMPLE

Our Temple was finally built and dedicated with a special service on February 8, 1952 with the participation of the Mayor, Councillor Fritz Sonnenberg M.P.C., Members of Parliament and other dignitaries. The dedication was arranged to coincide with a meeting of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism,

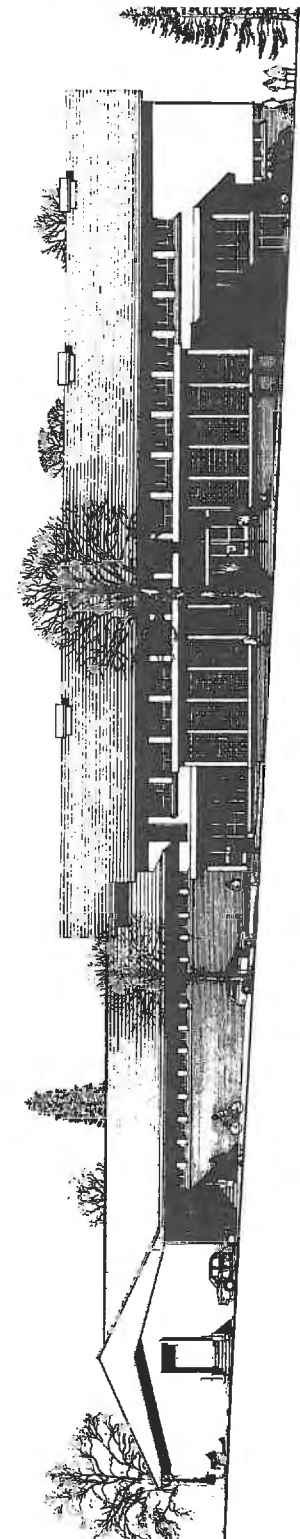
which brought together all our Reform rabbis in the country. This could have led to some embarrassment, as we had 5 rabbis but only 4 Torahs. It being the practice for the rabbis to march in holding Torahs, one rabbi would have been left without a Torah. The problem was solved with a few phone calls by our President, Mr Simon Roy who obtained for us the use of a Torah from the

Green and Sea Point Synagogue. This was a very unusual gesture, made possible by my friendship with the Rabbi, A.T. Shrock, and the high regard in which Mr Roy was held in the community.

SUBURBAN CENTRE

The Temple was separated from the Hall by sliding doors which when opened for the High Holy Days gave us 1 600 seats. But with the steady growth of the congregation this soon proved inadequate and we began to formulate plans for expansion in the Southern Suburbs. We already had a school in Claremont as well as classes in Rondebosch, Milnerton and Muizenberg. With the arrival of Rev. Isaac Richards as Director of Education and Youth Organizer it was decided by the Executive on September 1 1955 to arrange for Friday evening services in the Suburbs. Rev. Richards was trained for the Orthodox Ministry in England, serving as chaplain in the British army during the war he came to feel the need for a more modern approach to Jewish tradition. Rabbi Weiler met him in London and brought him to South Africa where he served congregations in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth before coming to us.

We called a meeting of our



TEMPLE ISRAEL • WYNBERG

CHAPMAN COHEN VERSINO & ASSOCIATES • ARCHITECT

We are extremely grateful and wish to thank Messrs Chapman, Cohen, Versino & Associates for specially preparing the above perspective.

suburban members on November 10, 1955 at the Hotel Cecil to discuss plans for the inauguration of services in the suburbs. The response was most enthusiastic, but premises were needed.

Together with Mr N. Elyan, who was the prime mover in this development, I visited every hall in the Southern Suburbs. Finally we were able to obtain a rather bare Church Hall at St Paul's in Rondebosch for a rental of five guineas per month. Our first service was held there on May 4, 1956. The suburban services were conducted by Rev Richards, and I alternated with him about once a month. We started High Holy Day services at the Rondebosch Town Hall in 1958. Later these were transferred to the Claremont Civic Centre.

On January 14, 1959 Mr Leon Roup and my father-in-law, Mr Max Cohen arranged for the purchase of a property known as 'Manystairs' at Salisbury Road, Wynberg at a cost of 8 900 pounds. It consisted of the an old house and a large garden. A dedication ceremony was held on February 22, 1959. The house was used only for classes until March 19, 1961 when a hall was added on for

services. At the same time the old house at Green Point was pulled down and a Community House erected with offices, schoolrooms and a library. There was always some building to be done.

At this point I should like to mention an unique partnership between Mr Max Cohen and Mr Leon Roup, on account of their initiative and open handed generosity towards all congregational projects whether in Green Point or Wynberg. The Max Cohen Hall in Wynberg was named to memorialize my father-in-law.

Rev Richards who in 1959 had been appointed Assistant Minister conducted the Friday evening services in Wynberg. But as Rev Richards services were required on Saturday mornings by the school at Green Point, the Saturday morning services for the children in Wynberg were conducted by Richard Newman, a graduate of our Hebrew School. With the departure of Mr Newman overseas in July 1962 these services were taken by Anthony Holz who was later to study for the rabbinate at the Hebrew Union College. Finally the old house was pulled down and a modern Temple complex erected

with schoolrooms, halls and offices. There were difficulties and delays over problems of zoning regulations. But these were finally overcome and the Temple was dedicated on April 19, 1966.

Some months later Rev Richards went on Sabbatical leave in order to complete his studies for the rabbinate at the Leo Baeck College in London. During his absence Anthony Holz, a student at the Hebrew Union College, was given a year's leave of absence to assist us. After his ordination Rabbi Richards returned in July 1967, but left in December 1969 to take up a post in Durban where he has had a highly successful career.

It was the better part of a year before we could obtain an assistant rabbi from the United States. In the meantime I had to keep two parallel services going. This I managed with aid of some excellent lay readers, Mr Ben Penn, our versatile Temple Secretary in Green Point and Mr N. Elyan and Mr A. Greenblo in Wynberg, as well as a panel of guest speakers. Then there was the problem of the schools. Mrs Sherman stepped in and took charge of both schools, holding things together until Rabbi

Earl Vinecour came to us later in 1970 as assistant rabbi and Director of Education. During his short stay he built up a large following among young people. When he left in 1971 we were again without an assistant rabbi for about a year.

Once again Mrs Sherman took charge of the schools. She managed to secure the cooperation of the teachers and the parents and to create a happy atmosphere among the children. Enrolments increased to the point where we began to discuss the building of additional classrooms at Green Point.

Rabbi Sherwood Weil took over the school on his arrival in 1972 until his return to the United States in 1976. During this period he took charge of the Youth Programme, conducting camps and seminars. He also alternated with me at the services in Green Point and Wynberg. With his departure I was again on my own until Rabbi Meyer Benjamin joined us in 1977. For him it was somewhat in the nature of a homecoming. He had been with us as head teacher in the early 50's and had left to serve the East London congregation as minister/teacher. After some years in East London he went to study



Rabbi M. Benjamin

for the rabbinate at the Leo Baeck College in London. After ordination he served congregations in Brighton and Springs before joining our staff. The Wynberg Temple functions pretty much as a self contained entity with its own management committee, its own school and activities program. Both Temples however are governed by a joint council and executive drawn from the entire membership. The administration of the congregation is handled through a single office headed by an Executive Director, Mr Jack Marks. A unified administration of this type makes for certain obvious advantages - very considerable economies, more effective utilisation of the talents of the rabbis and congregational resources as well as a larger voice in the affairs of the community.

COMMUNAL RELATIONS

As the congregation grew there was a feeling that we ought to play a more prominent part in the life of the community. The communal establishment was controlled by members of the Orthodox group and people not always friendly to our viewpoint. There were efforts in some quarters to isolate us from the rest of the community. Instead of moaning and complaining I encouraged our people to serve on the committees of the various communal bodies and to assist with their fund raising activities. As our people began to pull their weight in communal life the attitude of the community leadership began to change and became more cordial.

There was however trouble from the very start with the Chief Rabbi, Israel Abrahams. He was a graduate of Jews College in London. Jews College graduates who went to the United States generally gravitated towards the Reform or Conservative movements. But here they seemed obsessed with Chief Rabbinical aspirations.

Coming from the United States the whole concept of a Chief Rabbi

was foreign to me. Professor Salo Baron the noted Jewish historian maintains that there is no basis in Jewish tradition for the office of Chief Rabbi, and that it was originally imposed on the Jews of Turkey by the Sultan. The idea was to have someone who would be responsible for keeping track of Jewish vital statistics for purposes of taxation. That is how the Jews of Palestine came to have a Chief Rabbi. Wherever they could, Jews strenuously opposed the establishment of such a post. To be sure there were rabbis in all countries who exercised leadership in their communities and beyond. They did so not because of any official position but because of a reputation for scholarship, piety and character. The Vilna Gaon was not a Chief Rabbi, in fact he held no official position, but it was to him that Lithuanian Jewry looked for guidance.

In Britain however, the United Synagogue was organized somewhat along the lines of the Anglican Church. Hence it was felt that it should be headed by an official with a status analagous to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury. That is how they came to have a British Chief Rabbi who

claimed hegemony over all the lesser clergy throughout the lands, colonies and dominions of the British Empire. The institution of the Chief Rabbinate had an unfortunate effect on the religious position in Britain. By thus lowering the status of the rabbinate it discouraged abler young men from studying for the ministry. More independent minded young rabbis tended to leave for positions in the United States and the Dominions.

It so happened that in South Africa we were blessed with two Chief Rabbis, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town. I found it strange therefore on my arrival in Cape Town to encounter, the formidable personality of a Chief Rabbi who wore his collar backward, dressed in bishop's gaiters and demanded that we recognise him as the supreme spiritual authority in the community. Rabbi Abrahams was a very eloquent, learned and cultured preacher who knew how to adapt his message to his audience. When he spoke to an academic or non-Jewish group he displayed a wide knowledge and appreciation of modern Biblical Scholarship and liberal thought. But when he spoke to Jewish groups, he was much

more rigid in his views. He regarded the establishment of a Reform congregation as a personal affront and he declared a cherem - a boycott - on our Temple Hall which we rented out for weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, etc. He forbade Rabbis, ministers, cantors and teachers under his jurisdiction to attend functions in our Hall. This did not discourage too many people from renting our Hall, but it was the rare religious functionary who dared to provoke chief rabbinical wrath by attending a simcha in the Temple Hall.

People were not happy with this sort of pressure and after a while it began to backfire. When for the first time, I was invited to speak to the Union of Jewish Women in 1963 there was a storm of protest from the Orthodox establishment. All sorts of pressures were applied to the Union to get them to rescind the invitation, but the women stood firm. We were denied the use of the old Synagogue where these lectures were normally held, and the venue was changed to the Temple Hall. Orthodox women were instructed not to attend the trefe lecture in the trefe hall. The result was an exceptionally large attendance.

The position was even worse in other parts of the country. As President of the S.A. Union of Temple Sisterhoods my wife was invited to attend the Conference of the Union of Jewish women in Johannesburg in 1968. The Conference was held in the Oxford Synagogue Hall, and on her arrival Mrs Sherman saw on the notice board a circular letter from the Federation of Synagogues against fraternising with Reform. She thereupon refused to enter the hall until the insulting notice was removed, which was done with much apology.

Perhaps the ugliest incident of this sort occurred in Port Elizabeth on the death of the wife of the Reform Minister, Rev Richards. The Orthodox Chevra Kadisha which was in control of the Jewish Cemetery refused to allow the burial of the Reform Rebbitzin. The fact that Lily Richards was a pious, observant Jewess made no difference. Both Rabbi Weiler and I rushed to Port Elizabeth to intercede, to argue, to beg, plead and explain, but to no avail. Rabbi Weiler and I had to go to Grahams-town to get an order from a judge in chambers to compel the Chevra Kadisha to allow the burial of Mrs

Richards in the Jewish Cemetery. As a result of this a separate section of the cemetery was set aside for the use of the Reform community. In Cape Town we tackled the problem from the very start by clarifying the legal position and arranged for burial of all Jews without distinction in the Pinelands cemetery.

The aggressive attitude of the Chief Rabbi was not shared by all his colleagues, and it was not long before my wife and I were able to establish cordial visiting terms relations with Rabbi A.T. Shrock, of the Green and Sea Point Congregation. As he put it, 'We don't agree on many things but we don't have to be disagreeable about it'. I never considered it my business to attack Orthodoxy, but only to provide an alternative form of Jewish expression for those who could not accept the Orthodox position.

As my father had been an Orthodox rabbi I understood the problems of my Orthodox colleagues and always tried not to add to their troubles. I also indicated my willingness to cooperate with them whenever possible. However, when attacked

I tried to defend my position as vigorously as I could.

The rabbinate is a lonely profession and it was good to find a colleague, even an Orthodox one, with whom I could discuss matters which only rabbis have in common.

A few years later we were joined by Rabbi Eugene Duschinsky, a most vivid and colorful personality. During the war he had fought with the Partisans in Yugoslavia. Having enjoyed friendly relations with the Reform movement in Hungary he appreciated the need for cooperation among all sections of the community. He and his wife were very kind to my mother. A devout Orthodox woman she wanted to be near a Shul for the festivals. As my home was not within walking distance of a Shul, Rabbi and Mrs Duschinsky invited her to stay at their home over the festival periods. With the retirement of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Duschinsky took over as the head of the Beth Din (Av Beth Din). The boycott of Reform was allowed to lapse. Rabbi Duschinsky spoke together with me at a meeting in the Temple Hall called

by the Zionist Council in 1968 to protest against the persecution of Jews in Iraq. This was the first time that a major Zionist function was held in our hall. The publisher of one of our Anglo-Jewish weeklies who was present at this meeting was not too pleased by this evidence of Reform-Orthodox cooperation. 'Too much Sholom is not good for the press', he said. The press thrives on controversy.

One of the most vexatious problems of Jewish life is that of the get - ecclesiastical divorce. In most Western countries the get has no validity unless preceded by a civil divorce. However, once a civil divorce has been obtained people sometimes neglect to seek a get, or one of the parties may for reasons of malice or through mercenary motives decide to create difficulties. The general Reform view is to accept the civil divorce as a legal and moral fact, and to remarry such divorced persons without a get. However, in South Africa where Reform and Orthodox families are closely intertwined this could cause great hardship to one or the other partner in the divorce who may be in need of a get in order to remarry. Then too there is this horrible business of mamzerut.

Hence, when a divorced person came to us for remarriage we asked for an undertaking to give or accept a get should it be required by the former spouse. In most cases this was speedily arranged through the cooperation of the Beth Din. Nevertheless where it was impossible to obtain a get we were prepared to give relief.

YOM HASHOA

Another problem was posed by the Yom Hashoa observance at the cemetery to mark the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. This function was pre-empted by the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. We were invited to attend but not to participate. This matter was taken up by the Cape Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies who felt that it should be a community wide rather than a mere sectional programme. There was strong resistance to this proposal because of the example of Johannesburg where they had succeeded in preventing Reform participation.

In 1975 matters came to a head when Mr Gerald Kleinman, the Chairman of the Board of Deputies refused to speak at the Yom Hashoa function unless Reform

was allowed to participate. Thereupon the Orthodox Council invited my good friend, the Ambassador of Israel, Mr Yitzchak Unna, to give the address which he did. But when apprized of the situation Mr Unna apologised to me for accepting the invitation and wrote a strong letter to the Orthodox Council indicating that he would never again attend their function unless provision was made for Reform to take part. The following year in 1976, I was asked to give the main address and again in 1980. We are now represented on the Arrangements Committee and our regular participation is assured.

For many years the Aged Home was regarded as an Orthodox preserve. But more recently we were invited, at the request of the residents to conduct Reform services. These services are conducted by Mr N. Elyan and are much appreciated by the residents.

BOARD OF DEPUTIES

The Jewish Board of Deputies is the overall representative body of South African Jewry. It consists of delegates from all synagogues and Jewish organisations who meet in

conference every second year to determine policy and to elect an Executive which has its headquarters in Johannesburg. It also functions through committees elected in all the major centres. We are affiliated with the Cape Committee. But it was some time before we were treated as if we were fully part of the organisation.

This was underscored by establishment of the United Communal Fund under the sponsorship of the Board of Deputies. The principal beneficiaries were to be the Jewish Day Schools and the Board of Deputies with lesser allocations to a number of other organisations with claims on the public purse. In September 1949 we were asked to join in the fund raising effort. I was appointed vice president of the local campaign and Mr Louis Berman, a member of the Temple Executive and President of the Chamber of Commerce was appointed Treasurer. As the larger part of the funds were being earmarked for Orthodox education we asked what sort of allocation we might expect for Reform educational purposes. The answers being evasive and unsatisfactory I resigned my exalted position as vice president and Mr Berman

resigned as Treasurer. We sent in a strong letter demanding equality for Reform.

Our Johannesburg people however, urged us to take part in the campaign. They claimed they had an informal understanding that if all went well we would be given an informal allocation. It could not be publicised, we were told, as it might antagonise Orthodox support and hurt the campaign. We considered the suggestion insulting and insisted on an open allocation. Finally a compromise was worked out - our people would contribute to a separate pool, out of which an allocation would be made to us. This arrangement continued until April 1953 when it was finally agreed to give us an allocation on the same basis as other organisations.

Our people continued to assist in the fund raising efforts and began to play an increasing role in the work and leadership of the

Board of Deputies. In 1977 Dr Aubrey Zabow, a member of the Temple Council was elected Chairman of the Cape Committee of the Board. He was succeeded in the following year by Advocate Harold Levy, the Honorary Legal adviser of the congregation. Over the years we developed very cordial relations with the Board of Deputies.

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Unlike the United States where religious instruction is barred from the public schools in terms of the constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court, it has been an ongoing fact of life in South Africa. Under the present government this practice has been given statutory effect, making it obligatory to give Christian National instruction in all grades. However, children of parents who object may be withdrawn from this instruction on written application. The Board of

Deputies sent out letters urging parents to withdraw their children from these Religious Instruction classes. This, many parents were reluctant to do for fear that their children might be victimised. Then too, even when parents asked that the children be withdrawn they had to remain in the same room as those receiving instruction. They were either excused from participation or given some onerous tasks to perform.

As these arrangements were highly unsatisfactory, the Board decided to initiate some form of Jewish instruction in the schools. A group of mothers who had had some teacher training or experience were recruited and given intensive courses in Bible, Jewish history and religion in order to prepare them for teaching Judaism in the public schools. The project was organised by a member of ours, Mrs Marlene Silbert. She managed to persuade the principals to allow her teachers to instruct the Jewish children when the others were taking Christian Religious instruction.

Most of the principals were only too pleased to cooperate because it helped to solve for them a problem which could have led to a good deal of unpleasantness. It also

served as a great Jewish adult education programme with one hundred women taking those courses in order to teach in the schools. But most important of all it showed that Reform and Orthodox could work together in drawing up a syllabus that would be acceptable to both.

The position is altogether different in Johannesburg. There the Board of Deputies hesitated in tackling the problem, whereupon the Chief Rabbi jumped in and made it a football of sectarian politics. Instead of agreeing on a joint syllabus and training teachers, he prepared a sort of correspondence course with a strong Orthodox bias. Without teachers or proper supervision it has no educational value. Indeed, it is worse than useless because it gives the impression that something is being done when in actuality nothing is accomplished. Moreover it gives the authorities an excuse to resist any efforts to improve the situation.

ECUMENICAL

When I first arrived in South Africa I had some contacts with a Society of Jews and Christians. It



Advocate H. Levy chairman Board of Deputies with Rabbi D. Sherman and Rabbi D. Rosen who spoke at a Brotherhood function at Temple Israel.

appeared to have functioned during the Hitler period in an effort to take the sting out of local anti-semitism. During the absence of the Chief Rabbi overseas I was invited by the late Bishop Lavis to speak at a meeting of the Society in the City Hall. When the Orthodox establishment got wind of the invitation efforts were made to have the invitation rescinded. A compromise was reached by cutting down the time allotted to me.

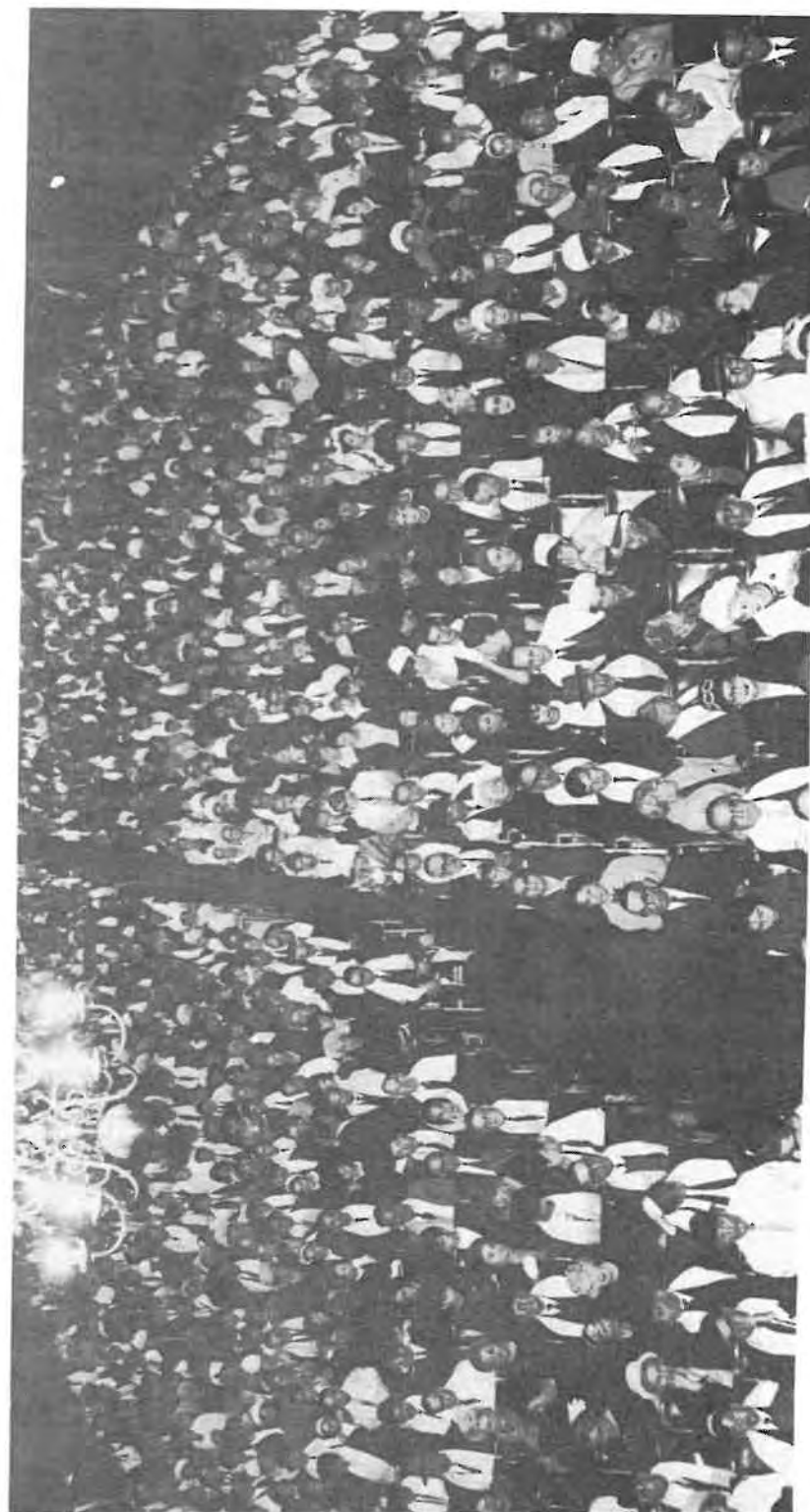
Shortly after that the Society petered out. I don't think it had anything to do with my speech. Anti-Semitism seemed to be on the wane, all Jewish energies were focussed on the establishment of the State of Israel and the Jewish community lost interest in Goodwill movements, nor was there any burning interest on the other side.

From time to time I was asked to speak to various church groups on some Jewish theme. There seemed to be a special interest in the Seder, as it was believed to be related to the 'Last Supper'. On one occasion I was invited to conduct a model Seder at a Catholic High School. At another

time the Sisterhood organised a model Seder for Christian clergy and church women which was very much appreciated. They particularly enjoyed the singing of Dayenu.

Another curious development that I found here was the Jewish observance of the 'Women's World Day of Prayer'. This was distinctly Christian in origin but it had been taken up by the Orthodox community. We decided to combine it with our Sisterhood Sabbath, and it was attended by representatives of non-Jewish organisations. Normally one would expect a woman speaker at these services, but this met with considerable resistance. It was some years before I could persuade Sisterhood to accept this as a regular practice.

At one stage it was suggested that we organise a Christmas party for the Aged of all denominations. I pointed out that this was a time of year when there was no shortage of such parties, and that it would be more appropriate to have such a party in connection with one of our Jewish festivals. The festival most convenient for this purpose appeared to be Simchat Torah. These Simchat



An historic picture of some of our congregants photographed immediately prior to our Kol Nidrei Service.

Torah parties for the Aged were instituted by Mrs Fay Salamon who was President of Sisterhood at the time. Every year for the past 20 odd years we have entertained some thousand elderly people drawn from all the Aged Homes in the city. This is a gala affair which is generally attended by the Mayor and other dignitaries. People look forward to it from year to year and Simchat Torah has become the best known Jewish festival among the senior citizens of Cape Town.

In addition, Sisterhood has developed an outreach programme. Once or twice a year Christian Women's groups are invited to attend a morning function at the Temple when we explain some aspect of Jewish life. One of the most popular of these was an Israeli morning when we served an Israeli breakfast. On another occasion an interpretation of the Jewish prayer book created so much interest that we sold thirty prayer books.

When the British Chief Rabbi, Immanuel Jakobovits visited Cape Town, Rabbi Duschinsky organised a reception, inviting leaders of the various Christian

denominations. In conversation with my Christian colleagues I discovered that this was the first time that most of them had met one another. It took a Jew to bring the Christians together.

Following this we formed an Interfaith Forum. It consists of a small group of Christian, Jewish and Moslem clergy who meet for lunch once a month to discuss matters of common concern. The meetings alternate between church, synagogues and mosque. As a result of these meetings a number of warm friendships have developed across denominational lines. In recent months I have been asked to take over the chairmanship of this group.

BROADCAST SERVICES

Broadcast time for religious services are allocated quite liberally to the major Christian denominations. The Jewish community was limited to four broadcast services in Cape Town and four in Johannesburg. In Cape Town, all four broadcasts were allotted to the Gardens Synagogue, the seat of the Chief Rabbi.

Almost from my arrival, efforts

were made to get one or more of these broadcasts for our congregation. Though our approaches to the Director General and other officials of the South African Broadcasting Corporation were sympathetically received, there seemed to be some mysterious obstacle that could not be overcome. It was hinted that our applications were vetoed by a Jewish advisory body in Johannesburg heavily weighted in favour of Orthodoxy.

Then one Friday evening the local Regional Director and his wife appeared at our service with Mr Hans Kramer. Mr Kramer was the longest serving president of our congregation - 9 years - and a well known musical impresario with wide contacts in the community, which he used for the benefit of the congregation. After the service we all had dinner together at the Kramer's. The Regional Director seemed highly pleased with the service, the music and the sermon. He sent in a favourable report to the Director General and we were duly allocated a broadcast on October 5, 1958. This was so well received that we were given two broadcasts per year. Several years

later it was decided to make these national broadcasts rather than just regional. The number of broadcasts was therefore reduced to one each for us and the Orthodox with a similar arrangement in Johannesburg. Our broadcast services enabled us to reach a wider audience, they evoked much praise and brought us a larger measure of acceptance in the community.

Our only exposure to television was in connection with the Rosenkowitz sextuplets in February 1974. The mother had been converted by us. The family and the gynaecologist were members of the congregation. Three of the six are boys and I conducted the service for the Brit millahs. There was a naming ceremony for the girls at the Temple which was televised and shown overseas.

SOUTH AFRICAN UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

When the congregation was first organised the leadership agreed to be guided by the experience of the Johannesburg congregation, to join the South African Union for Progressive



Delegates attending a Southern African Union for Progressive Judaism Conference.

Judaism, and to abide by a number of conditions laid down by Rabbi Weiler. Among these was a condition not to perform any conversions for at least five years. This was a delicate matter, because the Orthodox were very reluctant to accept converts and made it very difficult for them. Rabbi Weiler was afraid that if the barriers were let down we would be swamped with a flood of converts and would come to be known as a congregation of converts.

Living as we do in an open society a certain amount of marriage across religious lines is to be expected. To refuse to accept converts in such cases could only serve to alienate the family from the Jewish community. Where the non-Jewish partner to the marriage is

converted there is a chance to save the family for Judaism. Many of these converts become devout Jews and most of them bring up their children in the Jewish faith. To refuse to accept these converts is to adopt a harsh, punitive and counter-productive stance.

Once the congregation had its own rabbi, there were increasing pressures from the membership to review the position. Finally Rabbi Weiler agreed to relax the ban on conversions in the case of elderly couples who had been married for some time.

Much as the congregation appreciated the assistance it had received from Rabbi Weiler and the Johannesburg congregation, the people in Cape Town were becoming restive under Johannesburg tutelage. As the

congregation grew in strength and confidence it became increasingly impatient with controls from one thousand miles away.

In order to counteract these stirrings of rebellion there was a move at the Durban Conference of the S.A.U.P.J. in March 1951 to appoint a Chief Rabbi of the Union. Most of the rabbis did not take kindly to this proposal. Fully aware of the tzoers their Orthodox colleagues had from their chief rabbis they did not relish the prospect for themselves.

On my return to Cape Town I discussed the matter quite fully with the Council of the Congregation. Whereupon the Council adopted a resolution opposing the appointment of a Chief Rabbi and any meddling by the Union in our internal affairs.

A meeting of the Union was held in Cape Town on February 9, 1952 in connection with the dedication of the Temple. Efforts to resolve our differences met with no success. The President of the Congregation, Mr Simon Roy thereupon drafted a comprehensive memorandum

proposing a revision of the Union constitution and a reorganisation of the S.A.U.P.J. along more democratic lines. The purpose of the Union as we understood it was not to coerce one another but to help one another achieve common goals. Unfortunately our efforts at conciliation were rejected by the Pretoria Conference on June 27, 1952. This left our Council no choice but to disaffiliate from the Union on October 21, 1952. We did not give this controversy any publicity and played it low key. Although we left the Union we still considered ourselves part of the South African Reform Movement and continued to cooperate with the S.A.U.P.J. on an ad hoc basis.

During the next nine years various efforts were made, particularly by the smaller congregations who felt that they needed our support, to bring us back in to the Union. Then in October 14, 1958 a Conference of Rabbis was called together in Johannesburg. It was decided to form a Rabbinical Council for Southern Africa. I found among my colleagues a broad measure of understanding for our viewpoint and it was unanimously agreed to

support our stand.

As a result of this rabbinical pressure the constitution of the S.A.U.P.J. was revised to meet our objections and we were invited to attend the Port Elizabeth Conference on October 8, 1961 to discuss reaffiliation. The Conference accepted the principle of autonomy for our congregations and agreed that no decision of the Union would be binding unless confirmed by the individual congregation. It was on this basis that we agreed to reaffiliate with the S.A.U.P.J. on November 14, 1961. The following year at the Johannesburg Conference I was elected Chairman of the revised Central Ecclesiastical Board and was asked to officiate at the induction of my old friend Rabbi Aharon Opher as Chief Minister of the Johannesburg congregation.

I had known Rabbi Opher when we were both living in the New York area. He was an accomplished Hebraic scholar with strong traditional leanings; a brilliant orator and dynamic organizer. When he went back to the United States after a few years it was a great loss to the

movement.

His position was taken by Rev Arthur Saul Super who was trained in London as an Orthodox minister and left the ministry to take up journalism in Israel. From there he came to Johannesburg to edit the Zionist Record. As he showed an interest in Reform, Rabbi Opher engaged him as an assistant. With the departure of Rabbi Opher, Rev Super was appointed to take his place. However the fact that he did not have a rabbinical ordination was an embarrassment to the movement. As Chief Minister of the Johannesburg Congregation we would have to rely on him to carry the flag for us in the largest centre of the country. I was therefore asked as Chairman of the Central Ecclesiastical Board to help him obtain an ordination. It has become the trend in recent years to frown upon private ordinations and to restrict the practise to Rabbinical Seminaries. The Hebrew Union College was not interested, so I turned to Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, the past President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism as the leading figure in the Reform Movement and asked him to take

part in a private ordination, but he was reluctant to do so. At my urging however he agreed to ordain Rev Super on the basis of an acceptable thesis and sent me a letter of ordination to be presented to him through the Central Ecclesiastical Board.

CONCORDAT

Soon after his ordination Rabbi Super began to negotiate with the Orthodox Chief Rabbi B.M. Casper for what they called a 'Concordat'. Relations between Reform and Orthodoxy had always been bad in Johannesburg, but with the appointment of Rabbi Super things became even worse, because having been trained as an Orthodox minister his turn to Reform was deeply resented by his former colleagues. It got to the point where Orthodox rabbis refused to sit with him on the same platform at public functions. To overcome this he worked out a special agreement with Rabbi Casper without any consultation with his Reform colleagues. The terms of this agreement were promulgated in 1965 at a National Conference of the Jewish Board of Deputies, meeting in Johannesburg. It was hailed as a

'Concordat' designed to bring about peace between Reform and Orthodoxy.

The text is as follows:

'With a view to clearing up the confusion and misunderstanding that seem to be rife in some communal circles, the Orthodox Chief Rabbi B.M. Casper and the Senior Reform Rabbi A.S. Super have agreed as follows:

1. From the religious point of view there is an unbridgeable gulf between Orthodoxy and Reform. Therefore there can be no question of Orthodox Rabbis, Ministers or Chazonim participating in any Reform services, or vice versa; nor can there be any joint Orthodox Reform religious services.
2. At public communal functions such as banquets, dinners or luncheons, Grace before and after meals will be recited completely by an Orthodox Chazan.
3. At the Annual Memorial Meeting at Westpark Cemetery, organised by the Board of

Deputies, as an Act of Mourning and Homage representative of the entire Community, the traditional Memorial Prayers will be recited by an Orthodox Chazan; and an Orthodox Minister and a Reform Minister will both be seated on the platform.

4. With regard to Chaplaincy at Military Camps, the duly appointed Orthodox visiting Chaplain will use his good offices with the local camp Commander to facilitate visits by a Reform Minister to the Reform personnel who happen to be there. In other words, the Orthodox appointed Chaplain would ask his local Commander if a Reform Minister would be allowed to visit the Reform boys.

5. In social, welfare, and other non-religious matters, Orthodox and Reform should co-operate (as is indeed already the practice) in the general communal interest. Where religious issues become involved, the principles stated in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this letter would apply.

6. It has long been the custom for the Chief Rabbi to recite a Prayer at the opening of Conferences of the Board of Deputies and of the Zionist Federation. This has become an accepted 'Minhag' of the South African scene; and it is therefore agreed that the Chief Rabbi or his representative shall continue to offer the Prayers on such occasions.

Signed:

B.M. Casper

A.S. Super

It is obvious that by abdicating the right to recite prayers at public functions we would be losing rights for which we had fought long and hard in Cape Town and other centres. By giving up the right to the appointment of Reform rabbis as chaplains and depending on the goodwill of the Orthodox chaplains to gain access to our own boys we were accepting a position of inferiority vis-a-vis the military authorities. But worst of all, by accepting the concept of an 'unbridgeable gulf' between Reform and Orthodoxy we were allowing ourselves to be read out of the community of Israel - out of Klal Yisrael.

The publication of the 'Concordat' under banner headlines in the Jewish press sent shock waves through the rabbinate and the leadership of our movement. Meetings were called of the Central Ecclesiastical Board and the Union Executive to repudiate this 'Concordat'. When Rabbi Super was taken to task for his failure to consult his colleagues in this matter, he replied that it was just a private arrangement between him and Rabbi Casper and intended only to meet the needs of the local situation. Moreover he regretted his failure to make the point clear.

However, the fact that the 'Concordat' had been formally promulgated at a National Conference of the Board of Deputies lent to it a national character, and as such it had become an acute source of embarrassment to our movement, particularly so in communities where some measure of success had been achieved in our struggle for equality of status. It was felt that many of these gains would be lost.

We were also deeply perturbed about the fact that the agreement

was based on the notion of an 'unbridgeable gulf' between the two sections of the community, making it impossible for Reform and Orthodox Jews to pray together. This was a principle which the Reform movement had never been prepared to concede, because it would be a dangerous surrender of our claims to a share in Klal Yisrael.

Even though this 'Concordat' was repudiated by the C.E.B. and never accepted by the Union it continues to plague us in many ways. Our representations to the National Chaplaincy committee of the Board of Deputies for the appointment of Reform rabbis as Chaplains have been regularly turned down on the grounds that in terms of the 'Concordat' we have forfeited any such rights. Though we quote chapter and verse to prove that we never accepted this agreement it suits them to act as if it were still in force. No matter how well disposed an Orthodox rabbi may be, he must be very circumspect about any exchange of courtesies with his Reform colleagues lest he be belaboured by the 'Concordat'.

This happened immediately

after the publication of the 'Concordat'. Temple Shalom in Johannesburg sent out invitations to the local orthodox rabbis to attend its 21st anniversary celebrations. Those who replied sent regrets, but two young rabbis added a few polite words of greeting. They were immediately censured by the Beth Din which sent out a letter calling for a ban on any fraternisation between Reform and Orthodoxy. For this ban the Beth Din invoked the authority of the 'Concordat' with its principle of an 'unbridgeable gulf' between our two sections of the community. In response to this letter of the Beth Din I replied with the following statement:

'Whatever the differences between Reform and Orthodoxy we must never forget that the things which unite us as Jews are vastly more important than any of these differences.

'We worship the same God, we cherish the same Torah, we draw inspiration from the same historical traditions, we celebrate the same festivals and holydays, we support the same communal and charitable institutions and we

defer to no one in our loyalty to the cause of Israel.

'To impose a ban on brotherhood, therefore, to forbid the exchange of normal civilized courtesies, and to speak of an unbridgeable gulf - especially in a community such as ours, where there is in actual effect very little difference of belief or practice between the overwhelming majority of Orthodox and Reform Jews - is like an excursus into Alice in Wonderland.

'In terms of the present day realities of South African Jewish life it makes no sense except as an ill tempered display of spiritual arrogance, medieval bigotry and just plain bad manners.

'It is more in keeping with the spirit of the religious wars, the heresy hunting and the Inquisitions of the dark ages than what we have a right to expect from a more enlightened religious leadership today.

'Nevertheless, I am convinced that this attitude of the Beth Din is not at all representative of S.A. Jewry.

'I feel sure that most Jews, whether Orthodox or Reform, will continue to exchange the normal courtesies of civilized discourse, and that they will continue to work together for common Jewish purposes.

'And may I also express the hope that some way will be found to impress upon the gentlemen of the Beth Din that the real function of a religious leadership is not to create unbridgeable gulfs between brethren, but to build bridges of brotherhood and understanding, of love and kindness, of tolerance, co-operation and goodwill - for the glory of God and the blessing of Israel'.

A MULTI RACIAL SOCIETY

South African Jews are often condemned for living in a racist society? Well, the fact is that Jews came to South Africa to escape poverty and persecution. They found here a land of opportunity and they prospered. They are not responsible for the disadvantaged position of the Blacks, and they stand in the forefront of those who are trying to improve the situation. If Jews were to leave would that be of any benefit to

Black people?

The most serious problem of the Blacks is poverty and lack of employment. As an entrepreneurial element Jews play a very important role in opening up employment opportunities for Blacks. If Jews were to leave, many of these opportunities would close down. More than that, Chief Buthelezi, one of the foremost spokesmen for the Blacks has been quoted as saying that 'Jews have done more than any other group to assist the underprivileged'. Jewish concern for a juster and more open society has been evident at all levels.

Whenever I had occasion to make a statement against repressive legislation or discriminatory action on the part of the government, I could always count on the support, not only of my own congregation, but also of the general Jewish community.

On May 24, 1964 there was a mass meeting at the City Hall to protest against the 90 day detention act. I was asked to speak together with the Catholic and the Anglican Archbishops.

My remarks were reported in headlines all over the world and were endorsed not only by my Johannesburg colleagues but also by Rabbi B. Rabinowitz of the Orthodox congregation in Sea Point who said 'Sherman spoke for Judaism'.

On another occasion the repercussions were rather ugly. A student demonstration had been broken up by the police and some of the young people had been beaten. The students thereupon organised a protest meeting at the Weizmann Hall on June 7, 1972 with Helen Suzman as the main speaker. When it became known that I had agreed to speak at this meeting I began to receive threatening phone calls. This did not deter me from speaking, but the next morning my wife received an anonymous phone call threatening to fire-bomb the house as had been done recently to the home of a Christian minister. We were worried, because having arranged to go overseas within the next few days it would mean leaving our four daughters alone in the house to face this threat. I spoke to the captain of the local police station who promised to look after the house. That evening,

it being Friday, after the Shabbat meal, two uniformed policemen arrived with a hearty, 'Gut Shabbes Rabbi'. They were two Jewish police reservists who had been assigned to keep watch on the house, which they did until after our return from overseas.

For greater impact I generally preferred to make my statements of protest in the context of some united religious front, and on several occasions I issued joint statements with the Av Beth Din, Rabbi Duschinsky. But there were times when more than statements were required, particularly as concerned the squatter situation. Cape Town, like every city of any size all over the world has a squatter problem. There is a population explosion in the African homelands; but these territories have insufficient development to satisfy the growing demand for jobs. Hence the trek to the cities. The government tries to regulate this influx in accordance with the availability of jobs and housing as well as considerations of labour policy. But it is a tide that cannot be stemmed. They come in their hundreds and thousands. If you send them back, they come again. They squat with their women and

children on the outskirts of the city in an area known as Crossroads where they put up flimsy shelters. Conditions are barely tolerable in good weather, but in the winter rains it becomes a scene of unrelieved misery. In the winter of 1977 the authorities began to bulldoze the shacks of the squatters in order to force them back to the homelands. Church and Synagogue groups moved by the plight of the squatters tried to bring some relief. The Temple Sisterhood took a prominent part in this work and embarked on a drive to provide blankets and sleeping bags for the squatters. On another occasion, the squatters were brought to us in lorry loads, fed and allowed to sleep over in our Temple Halls, both in Green Point and in Wynberg.

REFORM AND ZIONISM

Reform is often taken to task for having been anti-Zionist. But these people seem to forget that Zionism was for some time a minority movement and was bitterly opposed by the Orthodox. My father was one of the founders of the Mizrahi movement in the United States. The purpose of

Mizrahi was to enlist support for Zionism among the Orthodox. My father was known as an ilui - a talmudic prodigy - having received his rabbinical ordination (semicha) at the age of 16. He was also attracted to the Haskalah movement for enlightenment and modernism which may explain his interest in Zionism. Some of the earliest memories of my childhood are those of the times when I accompanied my father as he travelled around making speeches for Zionism. I also recall the opposition he encountered from many of his rabbinical colleagues. But with Orthodoxy as with Reform, the logic of events made of Zionism a majority movement, and nowhere more definitely so than in South Africa.

Our South African Reform movement supported Zionism from the very start. Both Rabbi Weiler and I were active Zionists and we were the first in this country to introduce the Israeli pronunciation of Hebrew, both in the school and in the Synagogue services. Ever since the establishment of Israel we have observed the birthday of Israel at the Friday evening service nearest to Yom Ha-Atzmaut.

Indeed it has now become an established tradition that the Israel Ambassador gives the anniversary address at our Yom Ha-Atzmaut services. Nevertheless the Zionist establishment treated us with a certain amount of reserve. The position changed somewhat when the World Union for Progressive Judaism entered

the World Zionist Organisation and joined the Jewish Agency. It improved still more with the establishment of the first Reform Kibbutz, Yahel - and we are now in the process of building a second Reform Kibbutz in the Aravah. It is through the Kibbutz that Reform is becoming fully integrated into the structure of Israeli life.

Back - Mr L. Tobias, Ambassador Y. Unna
 Centre - Mr D. Robinson, Mr I. Tobias, Rabbi D. Sherman
 Bottom - Miss M. Hanson, Miss K. Robinson, Miss S. Asher



Some years ago when Ambassador Unna gave the anniversary address at our Yom Ha-Atzmaut service, he spoke on the need for Aliya. After he spoke I had a little ceremony of dedication for a group of youth planning to settle at Yahel - three Kathy Robinson, Ivan and Libby Tobias have since settled there. The Ambassador said that in all the years he has been speaking on Aliya this was the first time that he had ever had such an immediate response to his speech. There are about 17 Reform congregations in Israel, situated in the various main centres. As my wife and I go to Israel frequently to visit our daughters and grandsons, we like to attend these Reform services wherever we may be. The membership is small but very devoted. They are having a hard struggle and must rely on the World Union for support. The World Union maintains the congregations, assists the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, supports two Kibbutzim - Yahel and Lotan and is building a Headquarters and Educational Centre in Jerusalem next to the Hebrew College which is training rabbis for the Israel congregations.

Unlike the Orthodox, Reform gets no support from the government. Whereas the government builds synagogues for the Orthodox Jew and pays the salaries of his rabbis, the Reform Jew is denied these benefits. But even worse, his rabbis are not allowed to serve as marriage officers. Strangely enough, marriages which I perform in Cape Town are fully recognised in Israel, but I would not be allowed as a Reform rabbi to officiate as a marriage officer in Israel.

It is this sense of unfairness about the Reform position in Israel that has led to the formation of our Democratic Zionist Association (DZA) in this country. The purpose is twofold:

To bring our people into the orbit of Zionist activity and to fight for equal rights for Reform in Israel. Similar organisations have been formed in the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia. Together we form a world body known as Artzenu whose aim is to promote Zionism among Reform Jews and to strengthen the position of

Reform in Israel.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS

Nestling between the mountain and the sea, Cape Town has often been described as the most beautiful city in the world, a verdict which few Capetonians will dispute. The climate and living conditions are most pleasant. I found the work challenging and stimulating and the community responsive. My wife and I have been very happy here. The only drawback, perhaps, has been a sense of isolation and remoteness from the main centres of Jewish life. To compensate there were regular trips overseas to conferences of the World Union where we met old friends and made new ones, and learned about developments in other parts of the world. Then there were visits to family in Israel. Here one meets people from all over the world and learns to see Jewish life in its global aspects.

In 37 years I have been back to the United States only four times. The first time was in 1959 to accept an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew Union

College in recognition of my work in South Africa. This coincided with my Silver Jubilee in the rabbinate and 13th year of service with the congregation, which were marked by a special service with the participation of the Board of Deputies, the Zionist Council and other communal bodies. The second time was in 1973 to accompany my wife who had been invited to speak in New York at a Conference of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. The last two visits in 1977 and 1982 were devoted to seeing family and friends, with a few speaking engagements thrown in.

When a person who is normally critical of current policy is confronted by a vast misunderstanding of South African conditions, the effort to explain what is actually happening becomes a very frustrating experience. American and European academics who deal with South African affairs are generally well informed. The American press however takes its cue not from them but from people who have some sort of political axe to grind. As a

result reports in the press about South Africa are generally surcharged with so much self righteousness, that even when the facts are correct they are likely to be so out of focus as to give a distorted image. Despite its tremendous resources the American press has never been able to give its readers any clear understanding of what is happening and what people are thinking overseas. How wrong they could be can be seen from the fact that they kept on saying that the people of Iran were anti-American because Americans supported the Shah. Only too late did they discover that it was just the reverse. They hated the Shah because he was pro-American. The coverage on the War in Lebanon was highly misleading and much of the comment on South Africa has been equally short of the mark, which makes it very difficult to convey a balanced picture of the tragedy and the promise of South Africa.

Far away as we were, we were able to entertain a constant stream of most welcome visitors. Whether they came on lecture tours, fund raising missions or

simply as tourists they brought both an element of excitement and a sense of linkage with a wider Jewish world. The first such visitor that I recall was Professor Salo Baron who had been brought out by the Board of Deputies to give a series of lectures on Modern Jewish History. His lectures were of a very high standard; they were enthusiastically received and he was invited back several years later.

One of the most notable of these visitors was Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. This was of special interest to me because my first position in the rabbinate was as assistant to Rabbi Silver in Cleveland, Ohio. He was the greatest orator of his time and the leading Jewish personality in America. A man of commanding appearance he had an almost mesmeric effect on his audiences. He took a prominent part in the civic and welfare affairs of the community. The first unemployment insurance law of the State of Ohio was drafted in his study. It became the model for the national unemployment insurance act. As chairman of the Cleveland Jewish Welfare Fund

and later as chairman of the United Palestine Appeal he proved an effective organiser and fund raiser.

Committed to the establishment of the Jewish State Rabbi Silver saw that the influence of the United States would be decisive in the post war period. Called to head the American Zionist Emergency Council in 1943 he succeeded in mobilising public support both Jewish and non-Jewish, for the Zionist cause. On May 8, 1947 as chairman of the American section of the Jewish Agency he made a very moving presentation of the case for a Jewish state before the Assembly of the United Nations. On his visit to South Africa in 1957 he was hailed as the great tribune of the Jewish people and an architect of the Jewish State.

The purpose of his coming to South Africa was involved with Zionist politics. He was seeking the support of the local Zionists on some issues that were to come up at the forthcoming Zionist congress. Efforts were therefore made to prevent him from speaking at our Temple. He was advised not to have too much to

do with the Reform movement in this country as it might lose him the support of the South African Zionists at the Congress. But Silver was not easily intimidated. He agreed to speak at the Temple on Friday evening and to mollify the Orthodox he spoke at the Gardens Synagogue on Saturday morning. I accompanied him to the Orthodox service and we were both given aliyot to the Torah. This served to ease tensions on all sides.

The first official visit by a President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism was that of Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof who together with Mrs Freehof came to us in February 1962. A renowned scholar and eloquent speaker, he was known as the answer man of the Reform movement. Rabbis sent him their questions on points of Jewish law and their application to modern problems. Within a few days they would get from him a Responsum with an analysis of the traditional views and their application to the issue in question. During the Second World War he served as Chairman of a joint Responsa committee of Orthodox, Conservative and

Reform rabbis to give guidance to Jewish chaplains on matters of traditional law.

We arranged a Mayoral luncheon in his honour. Possessed of a wry sense of humour Rabbi Freehof made this tart observation at the luncheon: The Americans have given away billions of dollars, in consequence of which we had become the most hated nation in the world. But you have come along and taken our place, and it has not cost you a cent. He gave the sermon at the Friday evening service in the Temple, addressed a public meeting organised by the Board of Deputies and was the

guest speaker at the Inaugural meeting of the Temple Brotherhood. The Brotherhood got off to a good start under the chairmanship of Mr Jack Marks with Mr Hans Kramer as programme convenor. They arranged a series of exciting luncheon meetings and a range of varied activities. But after a few years interest petered out as it did also in the rest of the country. The only Brotherhood that is still functioning in South Africa is in Port Elizabeth. The sole remembrance that we have of the organisation is our Rosh Hashanah Brotherhood Annual which is still published every

Mr Ben Penn, Mr Phil Furman and Mr Max Cohen attending a Brotherhood Luncheon.



year largely through the efforts of Mr Jack Marks and Mr Bobby Rappaport. The first editor was a local journalist, Mr Paddy Richardson.

The visit of Rabbi Freehof was followed by that of Rabbi and Mrs Jacob Shankman. Rabbi Shankman, his successor as President of the World Union, and a very dear friend is one of the most beloved personalities in the American rabbinate. He spoke on February 21, 1963 at a late Friday evening service, which was attended by City Councillors, Members of Parliament and community leaders. As Rabbi Shankman was eager to meet government spokesmen, I took him to the Houses of Parliament where we spoke to Mr J. Fouche who was then Minister of Defence and later

President of the Republic. We had a very pleasant conversation, and as we were about to leave Mr Fouche said, 'Rabbis pray for us'.

Dr Sol Liptzin, Professor of Comparative Literature at City College New York, a prolific writer and dynamic speaker on Yiddish literature, Biblical and Jewish historical themes made a very strong impression in Cape Town. He settled in Jerusalem and we made it a point to visit him on our trips to Israel. Rabbi Edgar Magnin of the Wiltshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, one of the largest Jewish congregations in the world, stopped by on a sea voyage in March 1965 just in time to speak at the 21st Anniversary Banquet of the Congregation.

In August 1967 Rabbi and Mrs Harold Saperstein came to us after an extended stay in Israel where they were caught by the Six Day War. Rabbi Saperstein one of the leading rabbis in the New York area and a very eloquent speaker gave the address at the dinner in honour of my 21st Anniversary with the congregation and brought us first hand impressions of Israel during the Six Day War.

Rabbi and Mrs Gunther Plaut of Toronto, Canada were our guests in November 1968. A celebrated author, noted scholar and leader of Canadian Jewry, Rabbi Plaut was the main speaker at the festivities to mark the 25th anniversary of the congregation. The recently elected President of the Central

Conference of American Rabbis, he was back with us in August 1983 to deliver the 'David Sherman lecture.'

In March 1969 we had a visit from Rabbi and Mrs Maurice Eisendrath. As the dynamic President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Rabbi Eisendrath had guided the phenomenal growth of the Reform movement in the United States after the war and made of it a major force in Jewish life.

In October 1971 we welcomed Rabbi Bernard J. Bamberger, the President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. A noted scholar and author, his 'Story of Judaism' is still one of the best introductions to an under-

Rabbi and Mrs D. Sherman with Rabbi and Mrs H. Saperstein on their first visit to Cape Town in 1967.



Rabbi and Mrs D. Sherman with Rabbi and Mrs G. Plaut and Mr H. Kramer on their first visit to Cape Town in 1968.



standing of the growth and development of Jewish faith and culture. He was the main speaker at the functions in honour of my 25 years of service with the congregation. To mark this occasion the congregation decided to institute an annual lecture to be known as the 'David Sherman Lecture'. Its purpose is to bring to the community outstanding lecturers on themes of Jewish interest. The lectures were delivered by the following:

- 1974 Rabbi Harold I. Saperstein of New York
- 1976 Prof. Sefton Temkin of the University of New York
- 1977 Rabbi Adi Assabi, Co-ordinator of the

- 1979 Prof Shlomo Morag of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem
- 1980 Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, former chairman of the conference of Presidents of major American Jewish Organisations; a leading spokesman for American Jewry and a key figure at the Camp David talks between Presidents Carter and Sadat and Prime Minister Begin
- 1981 Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Rabbi Hirsch came to

L - R Rabbi D. Sherman, Mr N. Elyan, Dr L. Anstey, Rabbi A.M. Schindler, Mr S. Jocum.



- us with a Reform Pilgrimage Group headed by the President of the World Union Mr Gerard Daniel and Mrs Daniel
- 1982 Rabbi Jerome Malino, past President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.
- 1983 Rabbi Gunther Plaut President Central conference of American Rabbis

Among other notable visitors we had Sir Basil Henriques in 1956 a distinguished social worker and a leading personality of the Liberal Jewish movement in Britain. Rabbi Philip Bernstein of Rochester, New York, a past President of the Central Conference and author of that best seller, 'What we Jews Believe' came as a tourist in 1966.

In 1976 we were hosts to Dr Jane Evans, Executive Director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and President of the Jewish Braille Institute of America.

Prof. Paul Steinberg Dean of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, a noted



Rabbi Richard Hirsch Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

scholar and educator visited us in 1980. In 1981 we were visited by Rabbi and Mrs Robert Rothman of Rye, New York and Rabbi and Mrs Martin Rosenberg of Port Washington, New York. Early in 1982 Mr Eric Feldheim an Educational Director from Great Neck, New York spent several weeks with us in order to make a survey of our educational programme.

A frequent visitor was Eva, Marchioness of Reading, one of the great ladies of Anglo-Jewry. A daughter of Sir Alfred Mond she

was not brought up in the Jewish faith, but with the onset of the Nazi persecutions she and her brother converted to Judaism. Always interested in Jewish causes she became an ardent supporter of Zionism and was deeply involved in the work of the World Jewish Congress, serving as President of the British Section of the Congress. After her conversion she became a leading figure in Liberal Judaism and was at the time of her death President of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues in Britain. She loved Cape Town and used to spend some months every year in our city. She came to our services and spoke at Sisterhood and congregational functions.

These visitors served a dual purpose. They helped our people to feel that they were not cut off from the mainstream of Jewish life, and were themselves enabled to take back with them a better understanding of the position and the problems of South African Jewry.

THE FUTURE

We are often asked, what are the prospects for the future? Most

observers would say that if there is a future for the White man in South Africa there will also be a future for the Jew. But prospects for both Whites and Blacks will depend on their ability to come to some amicable arrangement about living peacefully together.

South Africa is after all not a banana republic, but a high voltage mixture of first world and third world societies, with all the problems of both. On the one hand you have a highly sophisticated technological super-structure, and on the other hand you have a large mass of people who have just begun to emerge from the Kraal. The problem is how to bring these people into this advanced modern society without destroying it in the process. It is a problem of immense complexity, for which there are no easy solutions, and requiring a wisdom which no South African party or leader has yet been able to demonstrate.

Looking back over the past 37 years one cannot fail to notice the slow but gradual advancement of Blacks at all levels of South African life. No longer confined almost entirely to menial jobs,

new opportunities have been opened up to them in trades and professions, in commerce and industry. People were becoming accustomed to being served by Black sales people behind the counter, by Black receptionists and cashiers at hotels etc. But most spectacular is the degree of racial integration on the sports-field, something that would have been considered unthinkable ten years ago. To dismiss this development as merely cosmetic is to underestimate the important change in attitudes which is taking place. It must be borne in mind that the first breakthrough in race relations in the United States also took place on the sportsfield. To be sure it is only a straw in the wind, but it is an indication of the way the wind is blowing.

Much will of course depend on the understanding of our unique problems by people overseas. There are those whose approach is angry, punitive and vindictive. They would like to smash apartheid by force of sanctions. This would lead only to a hardening of attitudes all around, resulting in ever deepening conflict and chaos, of benefit to

no one but those who thrive on chaos. Those who really want to do something to improve the situation might pay heed to the suggestion that the best way to help the Blacks is through a massive investment in South African industry. It is only through the rapid expansion of the South African economy that Blacks can be provided with jobs and opportunities for advancement together with the strengthening of their unions and all that this means for the improvement of their status. Short of large scale intervention by the super-powers the situation in South Africa will be shaped by the balance of forces within the country as determined by the state of the economy and the changing attitudes of its people.

These attitudes are not likely to be changed for the better by efforts to impose a cultural quarantine on South Africa. Anything that isolates South Africans from exposure to Western cultural values is bound to be counter productive. It must be borne in mind that there are many South Africans who are open to these cultural influences. Instead of rejection

these people need strengthening and encouragement if these influences are to be carried to other segments of the population. To prevent international artists and modern plays from being presented here is much more hurtful to opponents of apartheid than to its supporters.

Unfortunately it is Jews who are among those who suffer most from this form of cultural isolation. It is both as entrepreneurs and as heirs of a great humanizing tradition that Jews have made and will continue to make a significant contribution to the improvement of race relations in South Africa and they need a wider measure of overseas understanding.

PERSONALIA

There is a certain element of ambiguity in the relationship between the rabbi and the lay leadership. On the one hand the rabbi occupies a highly exalted position as the spiritual leader of the congregation. On the other hand there are those who would regard him as the 'hired man' to be kept in 'his place'. The Orthodox practice in South Africa has been

to effect a separation of powers. The layman must not interfere in spiritual matters which are the special domain of the rabbi, and the rabbis must not interfere in administrative matters which are the domain of the committee people. As it is not always possible to maintain this strict separation of powers the results are often painful.

The American Reform pattern however is based on the concept of a partnership between the rabbi and the lay leadership. The rabbi will discuss with them any ritual innovations and they will discuss with him all management problems. It was this type of relationship that we were able to introduce from the very start, and for the most part it worked very satisfactorily. That the congregation was able to grow so rapidly was due in large measure to the unstinting support that was given me by the lay leadership and more particularly to the happy confidential rapport that I enjoyed with many of my Presidents.

Dr Herman Kramer (1944 - 47) the first President, was the doyen of the Jewish doctors, their mentor and adviser. He brought

into the congregation a considerable number of Jewish medical men. Ten years earlier he had helped to found the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation (Orthodox) which he also served as President. His leadership in our newly formed congregation inspired confidence and helped to overcome many of our teething problems.

Mr Simon Roy (1948 - 55) was a man of many parts, a founder of the clothing industry in South Africa, he served as National Chairman of the Clothing Industry and as President of S.A. Chamber of Industries. But his main interest was in the charitable work of the Jewish Board of Guardians, of which he was President, and the welfare programme which he initiated for his Coloured workers. He was one of the most remarkable and beloved personalities in the community. It was a stroke of good fortune to have his staunch and unswerving support.

Mr Richard Myers (1951) had served as Honorary Secretary of the congregation from its very inception. A dedicated and energetic worker he was by



Mr Simon Roy 1948 - 55

profession a stockbroker and the business of the congregation when I first arrived was conducted in his office. Never before or after have I spent so much time in a stockbroker's office.

Mr Percy Moss-Rendell, (1956 - 59) was another founder member of the congregation. Under his dynamic leadership we commenced the building of our Community House in Green Point and the Temple in Wynberg. He was President of the S.A. Union for Progressive Judaism at the time of the trauma over the 'Concordat' and helped considerably to minimise the damage that could have arisen out of that ill conceived document. After his term of office he continued to serve as a much valued member of the Council and as Honorary Life President. His was the longest record of continuous service on the Council until he went on Aliya to Israel, several years ago. His support and friendship are deeply cherished.

Adolph H. Kohn (1961 - 63)) an engineer by profession, was a member of an old Cape family, his mother was confirmed in the Gardens Synagogue by the late



Mr Richard Myers Hon. Secretary 1951



Mr Percy Moss-Rendell President 1955 - 59

Rev. Bender at the turn of the century, before this practice was stopped by the committee. A very dedicated and much beloved personality, he presided over the completion of the Community House in Green Point and the dedication of the Temple in Wynberg. This period witnessed a spectacular upsurge of youth activity. The Adolph and Lily Kohn Hall was named to memorialise him and his wife.

Mr Hans Kramer had the longest term of office - nine years, from 1964 - 1972. The leading musical impresario in Cape Town, Mr Kramer is known as 'Mr Music'. Deeply involved in communal and civic affairs he has wide contacts which he used to enrich the programme of the congregation. During his term of office we enjoyed a period of expanding membership in the suburbs as well as in Green Point, increasing enrolments in our Hebrew School, wider participation in our youth activities and growing strength in the community.

During most of his term of office Mr Kramer was very ably assisted by Mr Eddie Walder as Treasurer. Mr Walder, a highly



Mr Adolph Kohn President 1961 - 63



Mr Hans Kramer President 1964 - 72

respected member of the Cape Town City Council devoted much time and effort to the finances of the congregation. His broad visioned policies helped to foster the growth of the congregation.

Mr I. Miller (1973 - 74) had served some years as chairman of the Suburban Management Committee. During his term of office we hosted the Biennial Conference of the S.A. Union for Progressive Judaism and efforts were made to organise a national youth movement.



Mr Issy Miller President 1973 - 74

Mr K.G. Druker (1975 - 76) was our youngest President. During this period we had a special Masonic service. Maginim came into being as a national youth movement and a new constitution was adopted giving the Suburban congregation a larger measure of autonomy.



Mr K.G. Druker President 1975 - 76

Mr Lionel Tobias (1977 - 78) had been for many years an active member of the Council much involved in youth work, and his wife Peggy, a dedicated worker for Sisterhood served for some years as its Chairman and also as President of the South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods.

During this period we had a visit from Rabbi M.C. Weiler. We also saw the formation of a 'Garin' pledged to go on Aliyah. In this group were two Tobias children who have since joined the Reform Kibbutz, 'Yahel', Mr and Mrs Tobias have also gone on Aliyah.

Mr Simon Jocum (1979 - 80) is a leading figure in the clothing industry and was President of their national organisation. This period saw the establishment of and growth of the Democratic Zionist Organisation (DZA) to promote Reform interests in Israel. There was a considerable expansion of our cultural programme and our involvement in communal affairs. Provision was made for sending Robert Leib to the Leo Baeck College in London to study for the rabbinate. We were visited by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, who delivered the 'David Sherman Lecture'.

Dr Len Anstey (1981 - 82) whose ebullient personality sparked off a wide range of activities. Our old prayer book was replaced by the new American 'Gates of Prayer'.



Mr Lionel Tobias President 1977 - 78



Mr Simon Jocum President 1979 - 80

Chanting of Torah and Haftorah portions by Bar/Batmitzvah children was introduced. An educationalist from New York, Mr Eric Feldheim made a survey of our Hebrew School Programme. Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn, one of the most dynamic speakers in the American Rabbinate, a former President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the very active President of the American Reform Zionist Association visited us in the interests of the DZA. Rabbi Jerome Malino, past President of the Central conference of American Rabbis delivered the 'David Sherman Lecture' which was combined with a community wide farewell function on my retirement.

Mr J. Loebenstein (1983 -) the past chairman of the Suburban Management Committee, by profession a business consultant.

Three gentlemen who deserve special mention for their leadership in the establishment and development of our Suburban congregation are Messrs Hemmy Elyan, Alfie Greenblo and Leon Roup, the first two as devoted chairmen of the Suburban



Dr Len Anstey President 1981 - 82



Mr Joe Loebenstein President 1983 -

Management Committee and Mr Roup for his vigorous advocacy, and generous support, wise guidance and warm friendship over these many years.

During these years I worked with four very able and devoted administrators, Messrs Solly Marcus, Roger Hayden, Ben Penn and Jack Marks. The first three also acted as lay readers. Mr Marks also helps with various services and has a special flair for communication.

In this period we have also had four choir directors in Green Point. The first, who laid the basis of the choir, was Mr George Tobias a former conductor of the S.A.B.C. orchestra. He was succeeded by Mr Nat Schulman, a gifted musician who also composed and arranged music for our services. The third was Mr Wolfgang Simon, a member of the Cape Town City Orchestra and lecturer at the College of Music. The choir is now under the direction of Mrs Rosalind Heller, a graduate of the College of Music, and the children's choir is directed by Mrs Louise Miller, also a College of Music graduate.

The Suburban choir has also had a number of directors, including Miss Barbara Canin, Dr Freund, Mr Sid Kaye, Mr Tommy Rajna and now Miss Mandy Kark.

Since November 1982, Rabbi John Spiro has taken over my post at the Green Point Temple. He brings with him varied talents and experiences. Brought up in Israel he studied music at the Juilliard School in New York and served for some years as Cantor of the Temple in Rockville Centre New York. In the meantime he studied for the Rabbinate at the Hebrew Union College in New York. After his ordination he

Ambassador E. Lankin together with Rabbi J.G. Spiro at Rabbi Spiro's inauguration.



served the Temple in Perth, Australia for three years. In the year that they have been here, he and his wife Galli have made many friends and are becoming well integrated into the community.

My last official act as Rabbi of the congregation was to take part with Rabbi Ralph Kingsley of Temple Sinai in North Miami Beach in a ceremony for the twinning of our two congregations. The initiative for this move came from Mr Paul Barnett, a former member of our congregation in Cape Town, now a leader of Temple Sinai. The twinning idea has met with some interest in the United States. It could serve a

twofold purpose, to give the American congregations a sense of the wider dimensions of the Reform movement, and to give congregations remote from main areas of Jewish settlement a sense of belonging to a larger Reform fellowship.

It is in this sense that I envisaged my task as a Reform Rabbi in South Africa, to build a bridge of understanding and appreciation between the modern acculturated Jew and the claims of the traditional faith, to build a bridge of fellowship between Reform and Orthodox brethren, and to build bridges of tolerance and cooperation between all sections of our multi-racial society.

Participants in the inauguration service for Rabbi John G. Spiro which was conducted by Rabbi Walter Blumenthal.

L - R Mr J. Loebenstein, Rabbi M. Benjamin, Dr L. Anstey, Rabbi J.G. Spiro, Rabbi W. Blumenthal, Mr S. Jocum, Mr R. Harris



Rabbi Robert I. Kahn Past President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the guest speaker at our 40th Anniversary celebrations.



Green Point Administration Block, Library and Classrooms

Layout: Jack Marks

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