

CHIEF RABBI RABINOWITZ AT REFORM CONGREGATION MEETING

North-Eastern Branch Formed

CONSIDERABLE surprise was caused at the inaugural meeting of the North Eastern Suburbs Reform Congregation held in the S.O.E. Hall, Orange Grove, on Tuesday night, by the unexpected appearance of Chief Rabbi Dr. L. Rabinowitz shortly after the meeting had been opened. Dr. Rabinowitz entered the hall and took a seat among the audience.

When the discussion stage was reached, the Chief Rabbi rose to speak from the floor. Mr. N. M. Slood presided. About 60 men and women were present.

Mr. M. Cassell, President of the Johannesburg Jewish Reform Congregation, explained that the new congregation would serve as an extension service of the Mother Congregation. This was found necessary on account of the lack of accommodation at Temple Israel on High Holydays and to overcome the difficulty of distance. For the start, services on High Holydays would be held in the S.O.E. Hall, and members living in that area would still be able to attend all other services at Temple Israel.

Rabbi Dr. M. C. Weiler reviewed the growth of the Reform Movement. He stated that of Johannesburg's Jewish population only 20,000 were members of some congregation, 30,000 belonged to no congregation whatsoever, while some 5,000 attended "mushroom" synagogues on the High Festivals.

"We are not here to compete with any existing orthodox congregation. This never has been, is not and will not be our intention in the future. We only appeal to those who belong to no synagogue at all.

"During the time of our existence we have never been antagonistic to orthodox Judaism. We sometimes did not like the spirit of hypocrisy on the part of those who desired to attack us. We wish no misunderstandings to arise between ourselves and those who do not see eye to eye with us."

He concluded by pointing out that as a result of hard work and initiative the Reform movement had established here a complete religious civilisation, and it would continue with its work.

When the meeting was thrown open for general discussion Dr. Rabinowitz rose to ask the chairman whether he would be permitted to speak.

Mr. Slood then welcomed the Chief Rabbi and invited him to address the meeting.

Dr. Rabinowitz

Dr. Rabinowitz said that he was not unaware of the fact that he had "walked into a Lion's Den," and he appreciated the welcome extended to him by the chairman.

"Rabbi Weiler had declared that he was not antagonistic to Orthodox Judaism. I am afraid I can't say the same as regards Reform Judaism. For this reason I decided to come to the meeting.

"I had hoped to hear something about the principles of Reform Judaism. I don't say that I would have been converted, but an explanation of what Reform Judaism stands for would have been an enlightenment to others.

"All I heard was about the reform of synagogue services and a reference to hypocrites. I say openly and frankly that if it was a question of the reform of services only, I would have regarded it as completely wrong to say anything which might interfere with what you consider as being your approach to God. Unfortunately, this is not so and I have had occasion to express my views to Dr. Weiler.

"I say that when the Reform Congregation takes it upon itself the task of destroying the very basis of Jewish life which has continued for thousands of years, then I feel that I must say something. I have plenty of objections to Reform Judaism, but I shall confine myself to-night only to solemnisation of marriages."

He charged the Reform Congregation with performing marriages which were not permitted by Jewish Law. He referred to "chalitzah," and to women who did not possess a Jewish Get. Children of such marriages, he declared are not recognised by Jewish Law. "I very much regret I can't keep silent on this matter.

"I beg of you who are responsible members of the Reform Congregation and of prospective members to realise the danger and the fact that you are playing with fire—that by allowing the practice to continue, the whole basis of Jewish life may be destroyed."

Dr. Weiler

Replying, Rabbi Dr. M. C. Weiler said that the vast majority of those present were members of the Reform Congregation and they were therefore aware of what Reform Judaism stood for. Moreover, this was purely a business meeting to discuss the formation of a new branch. He declared that when he used the word "hypocrisy," he did not have in mind any Jewish leader, lay or Rabbinic. He spoke about people who did not observe orthodox Judaism and who made attacks on Reform Judaism.

He welcomed the fact that he had had a long chat with Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz. He would tell the meeting what his reply was to Dr. Rabinowitz.

Dr. Rabinowitz, he continued, had remarked to him that he did not mind so much the solemnisation of unauthorised marriages where the applicants were adherents of Reform Judaism, but he was concerned about those who held orthodox views.

Dr. Rabinowitz: I did not say that—to me a Jew is a Jew.

Dr. Weiler: You said so at the end of our conversation.

Dr. Weiler said that they were never happy to come to the assistance of people who were not members of the Reform Congregation, and it was only as the result of persistent requests that they helped such people.

Orthodox ministers had asked the Reform congregation for assistance in the matter of chalitzah cases, as it was against their principles to perform such marriages.

He mentioned that the predecessor of Chief Rabbi Rabinowitz, with whom he had been on very friendly terms, had once summoned him in connection with a Chalitzah case and was not displeased about the action of the Reform Congregation. As far as his congregation was concerned, each case was considered on its merits.

Mr. Slood: I personally would welcome much more co-operation between the Orthodox and Reform communities. Let us discuss our points of difference in an amicable manner.

At this stage Dr. Rabinowitz rose to leave the meeting after referring to the chairman's announcement that it was a business meeting.

After some discussion a resolution to establish a North Eastern Reform Congregation was unanimously adopted.

The following management committee was elected.

Messrs. N. M. Slood, H. P. Alexander, V. H. Brasch, H. Cohen, J. Eskapa, S. J. Geffen, A. S. Gomperts, B. Jacobs, S. Kuby, S. Light, V. C. Lyons, L. Leon, L. Mattison, I. E. Press, N. Saul, H. Sharp, N. Silverman, Mesdames S. J. Geffen, M. J. Jacobson, B. Jacobs, L. Leon, V. C. Lyons, I. E. Press, N. Saul.

Magid-Raikin Concert

THE well-known Jewish musicians, Mr. Eugen Magid and Mr. Bruno Raikin, will appear at a concert of the Johannesburg Musical Society, at the Carlton Hotel, on Sunday, June 17, at 8.45 p.m.

The two artists, who hold a prominent place in the local musical world, have appeared before in combined concerts and have always drawn considerable crowds. Mr. Magid is a member of the S.A. Broadcasting Corporation and is a well-known violinist, and is known for his excellent technique and clear tone. Mr. Raikin, who has appeared as soloist in many concerts in the city, is a distinguished pianist of a very high order.

BRIS MILAH

On the occasion of the Bris Milah of David, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Franks, Port Elizabeth, Mr. J. Gutstein inscribed his name in the Sefer Hayaed.

MRS. VROMEN ADDRESSES BULAWAYO ZIONISTS

UNDER the auspices of the Combined Zionist Societies of Bulawayo, Mrs. L. Vromen recently delivered an address on her impressions of Palestine. Mr. Sammy Rabinowitz, Chairman of the Chovevi Zion, was in the chair, and there was a very good attendance.

Mrs. Vromen said that Palestine was the only country where it was an asset to be a Jew. People coming to Palestine were not received there as refugees, but as children coming home. Palestine held out wonderful opportunities for the Jewish people, and she felt that we could get Palestine if we were willing to work for it and not rely on outside assistance. The children growing up in Palestine were different from the children in the Galut. The rising generation consisted of men and women any country could be proud of.

Mr. Samuel Rabinowitz, Chairman of the Rhodesian Zionist Council, said it was very fitting for Mrs. Vromen to address a Zionist gathering after her strenuous tour of Rhodesia in the interests of the Jewish War Appeal. Her knowledge, experience and guidance was invaluable to Rhodesian Jewry. Her task was discharged more successfully because she believed that the Jewish people had a future in Palestine.

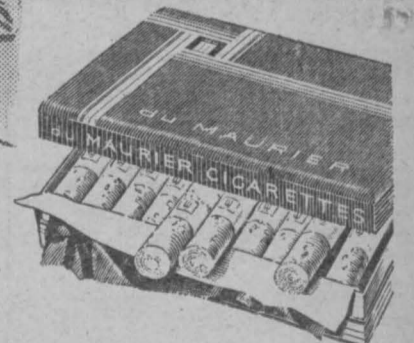
Rev. Dr. I. H. Levine, in thanking Mrs. Vromen for her interesting address, stressed the need for the Jews for their own homeland which was due to them. "Mrs. Vromen," he said, "had brought home to Rhodesian Jewry the need of every Jew to help rehabilitate the needy fellow-Jews in Europe."

A Golden Book Certificate, in recognition of her sterling and devoted services to the Zionist Cause, was presented to Miss Rose Rabinowitz by Mr. Samuel Rabinowitz. Miss Rabinowitz suitably replied.

"The luxury smoke, he calls them"

"Nothing else will satisfy him. He's very particular, almost fussy, about things; food and clothes, as well as cigarettes. He says, thanks to the Filter Tip, he gets a cooler, cleaner smoke."

"He's perfectly right about du Maurier. I like customers who know what they want. The du Maurier filter tip certainly increases the enjoyment of their excellent Virginia Tobacco. These cigarettes are a luxury, but such a reasonable one."



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