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A Zionist Lecture Tour

By **W. Rybko**

Gwelo

Gwelo, the fourth largest town in S. Rhodesia, is the capital of the Midlands. It was founded in 1894 and is a centre of supply for the most mineralised districts in Southern Rhodesia. It is also an important railway and a cattle centre. Frequent stock sales, probably the largest in the country, take place in Gwelo and attract buyers from all over the country and from the Union of South Africa.

Jews came to Gwelo in the early years of this century, their relationship with the non-Jews always being good. In 1914 Gwelo became a municipality and Mr. Max Danziger was elected Mayor. Although he declined the mayoralty, he was prominently associated with every phase of life in Gwelo, and for many years he represented the town in Parliament. The late Mr. M. Jacobson was the most active of mayors, and rendered Gwelo conspicuous service. Other people who did good work in Gwelo were Mr. Joe Granger and Mr. M. L. Price.

Mr. J. Baredach, one of the oldest Jewish pioneers in Gwelo, told me that on his arrival in 1911 he found a minyan and a Sepher Torah. The first shochet was Rev. Orenstein, who served the Hebrew Congregation for 13 years. He was satisfied with a very small salary, and in the years of drought he was not paid at all. The Sepher Torah was kept in a cigarette box and was accommodated in a kind of hut where the reverend had his lodging. One day Rev. Orenstein told Mr. Baredach that a host of white ants had attacked the Sepher Torah, and both of them hurried to its rescue. They took it out of the cigarette box, spread it in the sunshine and cleaned it free of ants.

Mr. Baredach ordered the first Aron Kodesh in Gwelo for the Torah, by which time, he told me with a sigh, there were good Jews in Gwelo—Jews who cared for kosher meat, for a minyan and even for a Hebrew school. The names of these good Jews were Messrs. Sher, Gershon, Ch. J. Saider, and especially Mrs. Lidsky, who insisted on keeping kosher. These people could not rest in peace so long as they had not a proper house of prayer. They began collecting money for the building of a synagogue and the Government granted them a stand. They managed to get hold of a pious, childless

Hollander, who undertook to build the synagogue for the small amount of money they had been able to collect.

In 1932 the synagogue was founded, and thanks to the efforts of Mr. Baredach, the synagogue was soon furnished with all essentials. After the death of Rev. Orenstein, they were fortunate enough to get reverends for very low salaries, and the congregation developed slowly but



Mr. M. Pearl, chairman, Zionist Society

surely.

But to-day they are without a reverend at all. The old pioneers who insisted on kosher meat have passed away, and the young generation does not care for traditional Judaism. It is also impossible nowadays to obtain a reverend for a small salary, and Gwelo Jews are neither accustomed nor able to pay big salaries to a minister of religion. They have a fine synagogue, and some of them believe the Rhodesian Council of the Jewish Board of Deputies ought to assist them in their need for a spiritual leader and a teacher for their children.

The Jewish community of Gwelo consists of 15 families, comprising 49 souls of whom 11 are children. They are engaged in commerce and there are two jewellers, one tailor, one shoemaker, one shop assistant, one farmer, one butcher, one railway man and one barber.

The leaders of the Jewish community are as follows: Mr. Gavronsky, president of the congregation; Mr. Loventhal, vice-president of the congregation; Mr. M. Pearl, chairman, Zionist Society; Mrs. Sher, treasurer and secretary of the Zionist Society; Mrs. P. Levi, president of WIZO group, and Mrs. M. Seider, secretary of WIZO.

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**DR. SHOSKES GUEST OF
"OPHIR"**

DR. HENRY SHOSKES, the well-known journalist and emissary of HIAS in this country, was the guest-speaker at the "Ophir" (Jewish Arts Association) function on Saturday, November 1. A large gathering was present.

Speaking on "Jewish Cultural Islands throughout the Dispersion," Dr. Shoskes gave his impression of Jewish life in South American countries and other parts of the world, showing that of late, a considerable Jewish spiritual revival was noticeable, even in countries where it seemed Judaism was doomed.

The pianist, Maisie Cohen, provided the musical programme of the evening, which was greatly enjoyed by all present.

Mr. M. Szur was in the chair.

**THE JEWISH CENTRE
CONCERT AT THE 20th
CENTURY THEATRE**

A unique opportunity will be afforded the Johannesburg community when Simcha Kusevitsky and Joseph Eidelson will perform at the celebration concert of the Jewish Centre on November 23 at the 20th Century Theatre.

Simcha Kusevitsky belongs to a family of famous cantors, whose name is a household word in Europe and America. From early childhood he officiated in Synagogues, appeared on concert platforms, and in opera, and also did numerous recordings of liturgical and other traditional Jewish folk songs. He was elected the Chief Cantor for the Duke's Place Synagogue, London, and was chosen to appear at the Albert Hall last year to sing with an orchestra of over a hundred, and a choir of several hundred.

Joseph Eidelson was the Chief Cantor of Vilna. He was placed in a concentration camp, and after many hardships found himself in Italy, where he continued his studies. In Palestine he was hailed as one of the foremost cantors of our time. He appeared at concerts and Synagogues, when he received a call from Johannesburg, which he readily accepted.

The other artists appearing are Jayne Susman, the popular coloratura soprano, Anne Sacks, violinist, and Betty Pack, cellist. Jerry Idelson will be the accompanist.

**MR. GERING TO VISIT
DURBAN, EAST LONDON
AND PORT ELIZABETH**

Mr. B. Gering, chairman of the S.A. Zionist Federation, will address a mass meeting of Durban Jewry at the Durban Jewish Club on Sunday, November 16. The meeting has been organised by the Natal Zionist Council, and Mr. Gering will speak on "Balfour—UNO and To-morrow."

On Monday, November 24, Mr. Gering will fly to East London where he will address a mass gathering, and on Tuesday, November 25, he will be the speaker at a mass meeting in Port Elizabeth, organised by the Eastern Province Zionist Council, which will be held at the Emanuel Hall.

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