



Letters to the EDITOR

Is The Correct Pronunciation

I was greatly interested in the views expressed by several of our correspondents in favour of the Sephardic pronunciation in all our schools as well as in the synagogue service.

There are now some twelve or thirteen schools that the so-called Sephardic pronunciation has been introduced in the local Hebrew school. The change over from the Ashkenazic did not materially effect the students, in fact as the loss of time was considered. In less than three months the students were equally at home in the new pronunciation. Nor did it in any way interfere with students who had never before thought the Ashkenazic from following the synagogue service.

The change over, however, presents another problem. Students who were used to Hebrew as a subject for the Matriculation Examination were penalised because of the change. If the examiner happened to be a non-Jew, having been educated in the Sephardic pronunciation, he showed a measure of understanding. Not so with a Jewish examiner. Very little, often no consideration was shown if the student pronounced Patach instead of a Kametz. In point are three students of the local school who were expected to gain distinction in one case, first class passes in the case of other two, were reduced to 2nd class passes because of the pronunciation. That is in so far as local schools are concerned.

There is also a wider, a more general aspect, whether the adoption of the Sephardic pronunciation, at the juncture, would be practical. As long as Hebrew was only the language of the Synagogue, of the vehicle employed by scholars for the purpose of writing books, the question of the correctness of pronunciation was of little or no importance.

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not only in Palestine, but also in other countries, the question of its pronunciation assumes great importance. The variety of ways in which Hebrew is pronounced presents a problem that cannot be ignored. And there is a growing eagerness to discover the correct pronunciation.

Following the remarkable revival of the language in Palestine it has spread among the Jews the world over, and Jews in other countries naturally regard the way spoken in Palestine as the correct way. Yet from the point-of-view of the Philologists there is no pronunciation of Hebrew, at present in vogue, that can be described as absolutely correct. They have shown that there are at least some nine different ways of speaking and reading Hebrew.

Of course, it may be argued that all existing languages show differences in pronunciation, and are divided into dialects in accordance with the locality, or country in which they are spoken. The case of the Hebrew language differs, however, in one essential aspect from that of every other language spoken to-day. Hebrew is at present undergoing a process of regeneration, of rebirth. In that regeneration the faulty pronunciation of, for instance, the "Sin" and the "Samech," the "Kuff" and the "Kaf," the "Tet" and the "Thaf" and the "Vac" and the "Vet," the "Chet" and the "Caf," the "Aleph" and the "Ayen," the "Gimmel" and "Dalet" with a Dogesh, must be corrected in the pronunciation.

In view of the fact that there is no pronunciation of Hebrew at present that could be described as faultless, it would, to my mind, be a mistake to continue with the existing corrupt pronunciation and have it perpetuated. Rather an attempt should be made, especially now with the establishment of the Jewish State, to eliminate the existing faults. The problem of the correct pronunciation of Hebrew can be solved by the Hebrew University. It would be a comparatively easy matter for that institution to appoint a committee of experts to go into the whole question of the pronunciation of Hebrew, of discovering how it was spoken in ancient Judea. By developing a uniform pronunciation that will be universally accepted, Hebrew will be restored to its ancient glory. Then would be the time to adopt it by the whole of Jewry, both in the school and in the Synagogue.

Yours, etc.,
REV. J. I. LEVINE.

Beth-El House, Pietersburg.

Prestige Of The Jewish Ministry

Sir,—The "Zionist Record" of February 27 contains a letter from Mr. S. Goldberg of Durban, in which he undermines the prestige of our spiritual leaders.

As a former minister I wish to protest most strongly against this letter. Mr. Goldberg is not worthy of attacking our Rabbis and ministers.

I am surprised that his letter was published in your valuable columns. I hope that other members of the community will write suitable replies to Mr. Goldberg, so that it should be impossible for any layman to undermine the prestige of our spiritual leaders.

Yours, etc.,
M. EIDELMAN.

8 Wyndham Moore Road, Durban.

Tribute To Flower Grower

Sir,—Last week I happened to visit the Krugersdorp Transvaal Flower Show, being anxious to see the various flowers grown by amateurs as well as professionals. I came across some of the most beautiful dahlias—large and small varieties—and some of the most beautifully coloured carnations seen in South Africa, with other various flowers, pompoms, etc.

I was agreeably surprised to learn that they were exhibited by Mr. Harry Shulman, of Krugersdorp. They were, no doubt, the most beautiful flowers ever exhibited in South Africa as far as I have seen. Mr. H. Shulman was awarded a prize for this beautiful exhibition. I heartily trust that Mr. H. Shulman will keep up this good work with success.

Wishing him good luck.
Yours etc.,
Dr. Wm. MARK.

66b, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg.

Sephardit At Reform Congregation

Sir,—In regard to the article published under the heading "Johannesburg Synagogues to adopt Sephardic" in your issue of February 17, may I draw your attention to the following facts:

The Sephardic pronunciation has been used by all constituents of the S.A. Union for Progressive Judaism in their Synagogues in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Springs ever since the Reform Movement was first established in South Africa fifteen years ago. In addition, instruction at the Hebrew Schools, under Reform auspices in this country, is also rendered in Sephardic Hebrew.

I feel that it would be only fair to draw the attention of your readers to these facts in your next issue.

Yours faithfully,
C. J. LURIE,
Hon. Secretary.
S.A. Union for Progressive Judaism.

S.A.J.A. CONCERT

THE S.A. Jewish Appeal have much pleasure in announcing that Themeli, the celebrated Blind Pianist, and Theofil, the star tenor of the Athens Opera House, will appear at a celebrity concert on Sunday, March 14 at the Metro Theatre, Johannesburg.

The programme will consist of the Grieg Piano Concerto in A Minor, played by Themeli, and Operatic Arias from Tosca, Pagliacci and others, sung by Theofil. Mr. Solly Aronowsky will conduct the Grand Symphony Orchestra, led by Julius Miller in the Overtures Egmont, by Beethoven, and Ruy Blas, by Mendelssohn, as well as the ballet music from the opera, Faust, by Gounod.

Bnei Zion Concert to be Held at Selborne Hall

The first annual concert of the Transvaal Bnei Zion Movement will be held at the Selborne Hall on Wednesday evening, March 10, at 8.15 p.m. The concert is being produced by David Goldblatt and is called "Radio Tel Aviv." Several prominent artists will participate in the show, among whom are Max Adler, Issie Goldblatt and Dr. Norman Zwick.

Other items will include a Hebrew choir, plays and a novel presentation of a radio-play, by members of the Movement.

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Addresses will be delivered by Rabbi I. Kossowsky (Rav of the Federation of Synagogues and Honorary President of the S.A. Jewish Ministers' Association) and by the Chief Rabbi Prof. L. I. Rabinowitz (President and Chairman of the Association).

The public is cordially invited to attend the Opening Session on Saturday evening and the Cultural Session on Monday afternoon.

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