

The United Hebrew Congregation.

Tenth Annual Report.

IMPORTANT MATTERS.

The Tenth Annual General meeting of members of the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg, will be held on Sunday next June 7th, at 10 a.m., in the vestibule of the Park Synagogue, Wolmarans Street, when there should be a large attendance. The report which covers some twelve pages of closely printed matter deals with the Congregation's activities during the past twelve months ending March 31st, 1925. The following are some of the many interesting matters dealt with.

CONSECRATION OF THE YEOVILLE SYNAGOGUE AND INDUCTION OF THE REV. B. I. BECKMAN, B.A.

The consecration of the Yeoville Synagogue was deferred till the arrival of its first Minister, and took place on the 29th March, when, after the Chief Rabbi had delivered his Consecration Sermon, he inducted the Rev. Mr. Beckman to his sacred office with great solemnity and in a most impressive manner, after which the new Minister gave his first Sermon, which was received with great favour.

The formal opening of the Synagogue was performed by the Chairman of Council, Mr. Bernard Alexander, J.P., who was presented by the President, Mr. Joseph Ratzker, on behalf of the Congregation, with a golden key for the occasion. Almost the entire Jewish Clergy of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria were present at the ceremony and participated in the consecrating of the Synagogue. The whole Consecration and Induction Service was conducted in a very impressive manner, to which the joint choirs of the Park and Yeoville Synagogues under the baton of Mr. J. Kantor, kindly accompanied at the organ by Mr. Dave Foote, largely contributed. The Service was conducted by the Rev. N. Lopato, assisted by the Rev. I. Goldberg.

The formal opening ceremony was considered a suitable oppor-

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tunity to name the Synagogue "The Yeoville War Memorial Synagogue," and this was accordingly done to mark the transfer of this Congregation's War Memorial from the President Street site to the Yeoville site on which the Congregation's share of the funds obtained from the public collection has been expended.

CALL TO THE REV. B. I. BECKMAN, B.A.

The Council reported last year that, after long efforts and many disappointments, Mr. Harry Lourie had at last been placed in touch with a promising young gentleman who was considered suitable to fill the post of Minister to the Yeoville Synagogue, and that he was highly recommended by the Very Rev. Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, Professor Dr. Buchler and Dr. Daiches. On the strength of such influential recommendations, strongly supported by Mr. Lourie, the Council had no hesitation in extending a Call to Mr. Beckman to be the first Minister to the new Synagogue in Yeoville.

The Rev. Mr. Beckman arrived at Johannesburg on the 17th March, and was introduced to a large number of members at a reception given in his honour at the Yeoville Synagogue Class Rooms on the 22nd March by the Council and the Yeoville Synagogue Ladies' Committee. To the latter's excellent arrangement of the reception was due a very enjoyable afternoon.

Since his arrival the Rev. Mr. Beckman has been making efforts to improve and popularise the Yeoville Hebrew Classes, and is also endeavouring to attract to the Synagogue the Jewish young people by means of a Jewish Social and Literary Society, which has recently been launched with considerable enthusiasm.

CHIEF CANTOR FOR PARK SYNAGOGUE.

The Council has at last succeeded in its long search for a world-renowned *Chazan* of the highest order. It is generally agreed that for this Congregation's principal Synagogue a great Cantor is required—firstly, because it is ardently desired by the vast majority of members; and, secondly, because it is the

surest means of drawing people more frequently to the Synagogue and of securing a big increase of membership, and thus largely augmenting the Congregation's revenue, which is urgently needed to meet the greatly enhanced expenditure of this Congregation. It is also necessary to transfer as soon as possible the Rev. Mr. Lopato to the Yeoville Synagogue as this Synagogue also requires a good *Chazan* to make the services as attractive as possible.

In view of all these considerations, the Council felt justified in agreeing to terms which under other circumstances might have been considered somewhat onerous for the Congregation.

The newly-appointed *Chazan* is Chief Cantor S. Pinkasovitch, who has been for several years Oberkantor in Vienna, and subsequently became famous as the Oberkantor of the Hildesheimer Synagogue in Berlin, from where he received a Call to the New Synagogue in Manchester, and in this latter city he has been for the last three years.

Mr. Harry Lourie, who again kindly conducted all the negotiations on behalf of the Council, and also Mr. B. Gordon, recommended Mr. Pinkasovitch, who is 38 years of age, in the strongest terms as a brilliant and highly esteemed *Chazan* with a most powerful, sweet and best imaginable "Heldentenor" voice, a good Hebraist, and a well-educated gentleman of fine appearance.

The new *Chazan* will arrive in Johannesburg about the end of July, and the local community can consider itself very fortunate in having secured so brilliant a star among the world's *Chazonim*, who, your Council is confident, will make the Park Synagogue

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MR. HARRY LOURIE'S SERVICES.

The Council again expresses its gratitude to Mr. Harry Lourie for the vast amount of time he has devoted to the very arduous and delicate tasks of securing a *Chazan* for the Park Synagogue and a Minister for the Yeoville Synagogue. He is entitled to the appreciation of the Congregation for the very able and conscientious manner in which he has carried out the missions entrusted to him.

RENOVATION AND REPAIR OF PARK SYNAGOGUE.

The renovation and repair of the Park Synagogue is a most essential undertaking which has been referred to in several preceding annual Reports, but has always been put off on the score of the heavy expense this work will entail. The time has now arrived when it can be put off no longer, for this costly Synagogue, which has not been attended to since its erection, is in an unsightly condition, and both the

interior and exterior have to be thoroughly renovated and repaired. At the same time an effort will have to be made to remedy, if possible, the acoustic defects of the building, this work having been authorised some years ago. The Architect has prepared specifications, and the Council asks, as will be seen from the Agenda, for authority to carry out this work, and to borrow a sum of £3,000 to defray the cost thereof and other necessary purposes that may arise.

UNIFICATION OF CONGREGATIONS

A Sub-Committee of the North Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation met the Executive and submitted proposals for unification. The Executive accepted their terms as a basis of negotiation, and, in accordance with their request, reduced the terms and conditions to writing, and embodied them in a letter addressed to the North Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation, and received a reply to the effect that their Committee could not approve their own Sub-Committee's proposals, and were not prepared to submit them for the consideration of their members. This, of course, signified a complete breaking off of negotiations.

Quite recently the Council received similar proposals of unification from another local Congregation, and replied that the question would have to be dealt with by the incoming Council.

PROPOSED FEDERATED COUNCIL OF SYNAGOGUES.

At a Conference of Presidents of Congregations of the Witwatersrand held at the Jewish Guild Building on the 17th August, 1924, convened by the President of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies, the following resolution was adopted:—

"That this meeting, representing the Synagogues on the Witwatersrand, agrees to the principle of forming a Federated Council of Synagogues of the Witwatersrand."

This resolution was submitted to the Council, and it duly communicated its approval of same, but up to now no further step in this scheme appears to have been taken, but the Council hopes that the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies will proceed with this laudable movement.

JOHANNESBURG HEBREW COLLEGE.

A new educational institution for advanced Hebrew education recently established in Johannesburg and known as the

"Johannesburg Hebrew College" appealed for financial support.

The Council decided that, notwithstanding the Congregation's many financial commitments, it would be wrong to refuse entirely the assistance appealed for by a deserving, struggling Jewish educational institution, and accordingly undertook to pay a small subsidy of £5 per month.

PROSELYTES.

The policy of this Congregation and of the local Jewish community in general, has been to discountenance proselytism, and for years all applications have been indiscriminately refused, but it has been forcibly brought home to the Council that it is not only impracticable and unjust but also contrary to the Jewish law to close the door entirely to all, including genuine and deserving, applicants for admission to the Jewish faith. The injustice and futility of declining to consider any applications regardless of their merits is evident when it is found that the people who are refused consideration in South Africa proceed to London and other European cities, where they find very little difficulty in entering the Jewish fold. This in practice means that only the poor applicants who cannot afford to travel overseas are penalised by local obstinate refusal to consider cases of any description.

In view of this, the Council recently consented to the admission of three ladies to the Jewish faith, after full investigation and consideration had proved them to be deserving cases, and after your Chief Rabbi, with the approval of Rabbi M. Freedman, had declared them to be entitled to admission.

The Latest From Roumania.

Roumanian anti-Semitism, like Cleopatra, is infinite in its variety. Just when you feel it has exhausted all possibilities for Jew-baiting, it expresses itself in a new form. The latest news from that land is to the effect that the school authorities in Bukowina, the former Austrian province ceded by the Peace Treaty to Roumania, have decreed that all Jewish school children who for religious reasons refuse to write at school on Saturdays shall be demoted or expelled. Now this is a flagrant violation of the national minorities clause of the very Peace Treaty by virtue of which Roumania now possesses Bukowina; and it will be interesting to see what the League of Nations is going to do about it.



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