

# Eretz Israel — Day by Day

## An Interesting Letter From Palestine

By

"Pitput"

A Concert at the University — Some Pesach Experiences — The Scarcity of Labour — Millions of Oranges — The Levant Fair

ONE of the most remarkable sights in all Palestine is the view from the Hebrew University Grounds on Mount Scopus. If you turn your back on Jerusalem and look to the East, you see as far as the Mountains of Moab, and of Transjordan, a thousand solemn hills shrouded in mystery. In the centre is the Dead Sea, a sheet of pale blue glass, and you can see where the Jordan flows into it. And over all the scene hangs a heavy brooding air, which fills you with an emotion you have never felt before, and which turns your mind to noble and holy things. All this happens to you whether you are emotional or not, and whether or not you are willing to let yourself go. A little below you on a terrace is perched the stage of the open-air theatre, and here, against this inspiring background a few thousand fortunate people heard a magnificent concert by the Jerusalem Academic Chorus on April 1st.

The chorus was accompanied by the Jerusalem Chamber Orchestra. "Solomon's Judgment," from Handel's oratorio "Solomon," and Carissimi's "Jeptha" were extraordinarily well suited to that impressive setting. It was easy, sitting in that amphitheatre, and listening to the noble music, to recapture the atmosphere of heroic far-off days. The many South Africans present agreed that this concert had an emotional quality far beyond any previous experience. The numerous members of the British community in Jerusalem, who were present, were also obviously greatly affected. Playing in the orchestra was a young Johannesburg girl, Miss Peggy Hayman, daughter of Mrs. Ethel Hayman, who was spending a few weeks in Palestine with her mother.

The concert season generally promises to break all records this year for the number of famous performers. Huberman and Schnabel have given several performances within a few weeks of one another. Palestinians are justly proud of having been visited by these two great artists. It is doubtful if Schnabel, who is considered to be the greatest living pianist—certainly the greatest interpreter of Beethoven's works—stirred the popular imagination as much as Hubermann. Perhaps it is true to say that a great violinist will always score more of a success with a Jewish audience than a pianist. Then Arthur Rubinstein has been playing to large audiences. It is astonishing how great is the proportion of music lovers in Palestine. If the proportion were the same in London, a hall many times the size of the Albert Hall would be required to hold the people.

IN Tel-Aviv great crowds flock to the Ohel Shem in Balfour Street and pack it to the roof; and since in Palestine no one need be ashamed of being poor, a large crowd remains outside the hall to hear the concert through the open windows. This extramural audience joins in the applause, voices criticism if necessary, and generally regards itself as part of the official attendance.

Now Joe Schmidt is singing in Tel-Aviv. He is a rare combination of radio hero and famous film star, who is at the same time a really great artist. His voice is a remarkably beautiful tenor, just the voice which our people, trained by a long tradition of "chazanath," knows how to appreciate. At his concert on Saturday night the crowd displayed such enthusiasm that the furniture and the very building itself were threatened with destruction. Poor Joe Schmidt was compelled to give innumerable encores. The accompanist was no less a person than the famous conductor Taube, and his remarkable work gave added colour and brilliance to the performance.

FOR Pesach, one has to be in Jerusalem.

This is in accordance with the ancient custom which goes back to the days of the first Temple. Then all the roads and paths were filled with O'le Regel, and the great Capital was crowded with people. This pilgrimage is now being observed more meticulously each year, especially as nowadays one need no longer go on foot, and there are sufficient hotels and boarding houses in Jerusalem to provide accommodation — if you book in time. Many thousands of people make the journey, especially from abroad, and this year Jerusalem was crowded beyond capacity. On Erev Pesach there was not a single room to be had in the whole of the city, and in the boarding houses and the lesser hotels people were sleeping in the bathrooms and behind screens in the corridors.

For Pesach night the city puts on its most bewitching air. A great moon rides the skies, and adds to the romance and beauty of the night. The Yishub, of course, observes one Seder only; but for the benefit of the visitors, who are bound to have both Sedorim, a communal Seder was arranged at the Menorah Club by the Zionist Bureau. There was a very large attendance, including most of the South African visitors. Mr. Nahum Sokolow was present, as were several other members of the Actions Committee, which was then sitting. There was a wonderfully happy atmosphere, and there were speeches and songs. After the Seder all those present, old and young, danced Palestinian dances until about two o'clock in the morning. No one who took part in the Seder will ever forget that memorable evening.

THE scarcity of labour for agricultural purposes, and especially for the orange groves, continues to be a grave and menacing problem. A few weeks ago the difficulty was to obtain enough help to pick the fruit from the trees; now workers are needed for turning the soil in the "pardes-sim," to lead water to the trees, and for the many other indispensable attentions which the groves require. There are simply not enough Jewish labourers, and the pardess owners say that either they must endanger their crops or employ Arab labour.

Matters came to a head in the Sharon a few days ago at Kfar Saba. Some grove owners asked for a dozen or so labourers each, and the local labour offices could only give them one or two. They then called in Arab labourers. With the Jewish Labour Organisation it is a matter of life and death not to allow the Arabs to obtain a foothold in Jewish groves. Even the most rabid Arab Nationalists do not claim that we should give them work which so obviously belongs to Jews; so when it became known that Arabs had been taken on, there was an immediate cessation of all work, and a general move was made for the pardessim concerned. The whole situation was full of ugly possibilities, and representatives of the farmers and of the Histadruth sat day and night in an effort to solve the whole problem. A solution has now been found, the farmers have undertaken to employ Jewish labour only, and the Histadruth have promised in turn to provide all the hands required. A call has been issued for volunteers to come to the Sharon to avert the danger which threatens Jewish labour, and a remarkable response has been obtained. A wonderful spirit is being shown by many young men and women who are leaving far easier and more lucrative work and are coming from as far as Haifa to assist in the groves.

The full complement for Kfar Saba has now been obtained, and the volunteers are being diverted to neighbouring colonies to ease the situation there. Of course, the relief being given in this branch of labour is being made at the expense of the trades and occupations whence the volunteers are being drawn.

CLOSE to five and a half million cases of oranges have so far been exported from Palestine during the present season. The final figures will not be far short of six million. Next year the export will undoubtedly be higher, and it is almost certain that the extraordinary total of ten million cases will be reached within a few years. Of course, the quality of Palestine oranges is such that they have a definite advantage in the world's markets over the products of other countries. This is a wonderfully reassuring fact, but at the same time it is important to ensure the future of the industry in other ways as well.

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## The Jewish Woman in South Africa

### An Interesting Symposium in Johannesburg

THAT the Jewish women of Johannesburg are a vital and self-conscious group of persons was evidenced by the extremely successful meeting of the Saxonwold branch of the Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, which took place last Monday afternoon, at the residence of Mrs. Sam Denton.

Over a hundred persons, representative not only of the Saxonwold branch, but of the entire League, attended for the purpose of listening to a symposium, in which five speakers participated, dealing with the function of the South African Jewish woman in the life of her people.

Mrs. I. Marks (who has been acting chairman of the branch during the prolonged absence of Mrs. Ethel Hayman oversea) presided, and welcomed Mrs. Hayman back to South Africa.

Mrs. J. M. Edelstein, speaking on the function of the South African Jewish woman in the home, stressed the necessity for the introduction and maintenance therein of a true spirit of Jewishness. The efforts of the mother, she said, were epitomised in the manner in which she recognised the Sabbath. If she observed here, and in the other fields of Jewish life, the minutiae of our religion she could bequeath to her children an emotional consciousness of their Jewishness, which would stand them in good stead.

Mrs. Shrock, who took the place of Mrs. E. Jacobson, who had found herself unable to speak, dealt with the battle against anti-Semitism. She stated that since Palestine could not absorb all Jews, the two possible escapes appeared to be assimilation and segregation, neither of which were really acceptable to the Jew. The only remaining solution was that the Jewish woman, and with her her family, should be herself, in consciousness of her heritage, and at the same time should attain a mean of living, avoiding that exaggeration which aroused the dislike of the Gentile world.

Mrs. Jack Fredman, of Benoni, in dealing with the Jewish woman's pre-occupation with the religious aspect of her life, called for an understanding of what that religion meant. Judaism was not merely a great heritage, she said; it was also so great a burden that often one was tempted to wish that it had found a natural end at some stage in history. Since, however, it appeared incapable of extinction, it was necessary to discover its true content, and to realise that it alone was holding Jews together and that Jewish women had played a great part in its preservation. Jewish children, to-day, must be fed by their mothers with the best of their re-

ligion, so that they might have a true hope for the future.

Miss R. M. Franks, speaking on the social aspect of the Jewish woman's life, declared that it was here that she was obviously at her worst. She had the ability and the time to make much use of her mental equipment, yet she frittered away her leisure in frivolous social preoccupations. The speaker called upon the Jewish woman to introduce into her ordinary daily existence that same fervour which she displayed in her work for Zionism. If she did this there was the hope that she might rise to great heights of scholarship.

Dr. Deborah Katzen dealt at some length with the part played by Zionism in the life of the South African woman. She dealt first with the value of Zionism, which gave the incentive of the upbuilding of a national home in Palestine, and at the same time supplied a platform from which the Jew might face the world. It was necessary that supporters of Zionism should first educate themselves, should then educate their children and their fellows. Having explained the work of the Jewish National Fund and the Keren Hayesod, Dr. Katzen stated that although much fine work had been done by local Jewish women, yet they had the leisure to do much more. She reminded them that in reality work for Zionism was essentially selfish, since it gave the enthusiast unending joy and satisfaction.

During the course of the afternoon Mrs. Frances Freedman performed at the piano with her customary brilliance, and was warmly applauded, as was also Mrs. A. S. Hersov, who sang two delightful operatic solos.

A certificate for five trees in Palestine was presented to Mrs. Marks in recognition of her services to the Saxonwold branch of the League.

Mrs. B. Patley, chairman of the League, extended a welcome to Mrs. Hayman on behalf of the Zionist women of Johannesburg, and called upon all present to do their best for the forthcoming Keren Hayesod campaign; and Mrs. K. Gluckman announced that the Women's Keren Hayesod Committee would give a reception to Mr. Nahum Sokolow, Dr. Celina Sokolow and Mr. Leib Jaffe at the Carlton Hotel on the 22nd inst.

Mrs. D. Ordman, seconded by Mrs. Capnek, extended a vote of thanks to the speakers, while the company's appreciation of the services of the artists and of the hostess, Mrs. Denton, was expressed by Mrs. Marks.

## ERETZ ISRAEL FROM DAY TO DAY

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Can some way be found for storing oranges so as to enable the home market to be supplied during the summer season? Palestinians love oranges, almost subsist on them during the winter. There is a stall which sells pure orange juice on practically every corner in Tel-Aviv. The juice is known to everybody as "Mitz," and costs 1d. per tumbler. The stalls are besieged all day, and Palestinians don't merely drink oranges, they eat them as well, and altogether the number of oranges so consumed is of steadily growing importance to the industry. Yet a few weeks after Pesach all supplies of the fruit cease, and not an orange is to be had during the hot summer months when it is most wanted.

Another important outlet for oranges is being found by a factory started about a year ago in Rehoboth. This factory uses the entire orange, pips and all, and already exports to several European countries. Its chief product is oil, and in addition it manufactures essences and other unexpected things. The first year it consumed sixty tons of oranges, this year six hundred, and the estimate for next year runs into thousands of tons. The factory is owned by pardess owners, and is conducted on a co-operative basis for the benefit of the fruit growers themselves. Such industries are obviously of the greatest importance and significance.

THE Levant Fair opens in a week's time.

The site on the side of the Yarkon to the north of Tel-Aviv is almost ready. I heard a Tel-Avivite just back from a visit to the grounds telling his friends that another town as large as Tel-Aviv had been erected there; and, in fact, there is some justification for his remark, for the great halls and pavilions of the "Yerid" cover a most impressive area. The amount of interest being displayed in the Fair by the various European countries is astonishing. Almost every boat brings representatives from different States to organise and to take charge of the exhibits of their respective countries. Poland is making a great bid for the most comprehensive exhibit, and representatives of Great Britain, France, Roumania and other Balkan States have been in the country for some time. Lord Melchett, Sir Herbert Samuel and many members of the British House of Commons are expected in Palestine for the exhibition.



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