

A New Chazan.

I hear that the Beth Hamedresh Hagodel is negotiating with a great world renowned Cantor—none other than Berele Chagai—to come to Johannesburg to conduct the services during the forthcoming High Festivals. The intention is to engage the great Cantor as permanent *chazan* for the congregation. The monthly salary offered to Chagai will create a record in congregational history in this country. It will be a three-figured amount, and further emoluments are guaranteed. The *Chazan*, who will officiate at the synagogue twice monthly, is also to give a few concerts during the year.

The whole undertaking bristles with responsibility, for I understand that the *Chazan* is demanding a ten years' contract. This singer is at the height of his world-fame and his arrival in this country—if negotiations are concluded—is likely to prove an event of importance. Whether the Beth Hamedresh Hagodel is wise in undertaking so great a responsibility remains to be seen. That Berele Chagai, however, will fill the large synagogue to capacity goes without saying.

Financially the project may ultimately prove successful. Whether, however, the concentrating upon engaging a world famous *Chazan* will prove of advantage to congregational life in the Golden City is quite another question.

Inconsistency.

THE lack of interest taken in Jewish education in this country is not a particularly South African sin. Unfortunately, communities overseas also err seriously in this direction. Recently one hundred and thirty teachers of the Hebrew schools in New York went on strike in order to secure five months' unpaid salaries.

What a terrible indictment of the largest Jewish community in the world, this action by the teachers indicates! There are views advanced that these Hebrew teachers should not have resorted to a strike and thereby paralyse Jewish education in their respective schools. I am afraid I cannot agree with this attitude as I maintain that these particular Hebrew teachers gave proof of great patience and high spirit of sacrifice by waiting so long for their salaries. The lamentable aspect of the incident is to be found in the failing of New York Jewry to provide the means for the Jewish education of its youngsters. All eloquent protests against the ravages of anti-Semitism lose much of their genuineness if men who speak for the survival of the Jewish people, cannot deal with the immediate problems in their own communities.

Current Communal Comments

By
'Hamabit'

This argument holds good for South Africa. For a community like ours, that is able to do so well for national and philanthropic endeavour, it is almost criminal to neglect so obviously the establishment of facilities for the proper Hebrew education of our youth.

Sixteen Million.

HOW many Jews are there in the world?

The latest census indicates that the total, falling short of sixteen million, is in keeping with the general estimate over the past two decades. This suggests that the World War and the sufferings of the post-war period, have taken their heavy Jewish toll and held down the population of Jewry to a stationary aggregate.

The most striking aspect of the census data, however, is not in the grand total so much as in the new division of that total. Thus, out of the recarving of the map of Europe, the fact emerges that today the largest number of Jews to be found in any one country of the world are contained in the United States, with approximately 4,400,000 Jews. That figure is thirty per cent., in round numbers, of the Jewish population of the world. It exceeds the Jewish population of Poland, heretofore characterized as the Jewish Pale, by more than a million souls.

A significant figure is that of the Jewish population of Palestine. The 175,000 Jews in the Holy Land make up more than one-sixth of the entire population of that country. In no other part of the globe is the Jewish percentage so high or anywhere near it.

The main import of the latest census is that we have to grasp a new orientation in-so-far as the Jewish position is concerned. Our brethren in America are no longer a body of recently arrived migrants looking for inspiration to the Jewish centres in the old world. I think I can say that American Jewry, by gaining first place among the Jewish populations of the world, has finally come of age and that responsibility for world leadership now rests upon our brethren in that country.

A Greater Danger.

I was interested to read in last week's issue an article dealing with the Gentile who loves Jews. An interesting fowl of a darker feather is that of the Jewish anti-Semite. His life is a continual verification of the prophecy of Isaiah—"From thine own loins will come thy destroyers."

There are two kinds of Jewish anti-Semites, the conscious and the unconscious, of which the latter is by far the most dangerous. The conscious traitor is he who libels those who but lately were his co-religionists. The unconscious Jewish anti-Semite is that hypersensitive creature—critical of everything Jewish. It is this type which aptly illustrates the dictum that the only thing about which two Jews will agree is what the third should give to charity.

The unspoken slogan of the unconscious Jewish anti-Semite is that of Heine's: "Judaism is not a religion; it is a misfortune." It is this fastidious criticism of our own institutions and our own people which has brought forth the proverb: *Zwischen goyim zoll men leben; zwischen juden shtarben.*

It is this strange lack of appreciation of anything being "worth while" if it happens to be Jewish, which is—in my opinion—a greater danger to our solidarity as a people than the open anti-Semitism of the Gentile.

Two Slices.

The proprietor of a Jewish restaurant found it very difficult to satisfy one of his most favourite customers.

"How do you like our service?" he asked the latter one day.

"It's alright," replied Goldstein, "but you always give two slices of bread."

The next day the proprietor instructed the waiter to give Goldstein four slices of bread in future. When he asked the latter how he liked the service, Goldstein replied that he was satisfied, but added: "But you always give four slices of bread."

This influenced the proprietor to instruct the waiter that Goldstein should receive eight slices in future. When asked whether he was satisfied with the service, Goldstein replied:

"Yes, but you always give me eight slices of bread."

The proprietor was puzzled and finally gave instructions that Goldstein was to receive a whole loaf of bread cut in two. When the next day he asked Goldstein if he was satisfied.

"Quite," replied the latter, "but I notice you've gone back again to two slices."