

CURRENT

COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

COMMENT

Forty Years Ago!

WHILE browsing among some old copies of the London "Jewish Chronicle" the other day, I came across a number dated 2nd November, 1900, and printed, therefore, during the Boer War. My eye was at once caught by a report in it of the celebration of Rosh Hashonah in Johannesburg that year.

It will be recalled that at that time a large section of the Jewish population had "evacuated" the Golden City, and sought refuge at the Cape. Nevertheless, according to the number of the old journal referred to above, it appears that notwithstanding the great shrinkage in the local Jewish population at that time, services were held during the High Festivals in no less than seven congregations.

"At the New Synagogue opposite Park Station," says the "Jewish Chronicle," "the officiating readers were the Revs. S. Manne, D. Wasserzug and Mr. S. Lipschitz. Mr. Manne, who has established his reputation as a vocalist of high order, quite excelled himself on Yom Kippur, and his beautiful and deeply impressive rendering of the services on that day greatly augmented the circle of admirers."

We learn, further, that the Rev. Wasserzug, who also read *shachris*, preached a "powerful sermon during the morning, deriving his text from the fifth Chapter of Daniel."

On Kol Nidrei Night, services were attended by Major-General Wavell and staff. Before the commencement, an unfortunate incident occurred which somewhat marred the solemnity of the occasion. The electric light was suddenly cut off, and efforts to re-connect it proving futile, the worshippers were reduced to the necessity of reading their prayers in the feeble light of a few candles, which "simply made the darkness more visible."

The writer from Johannesburg, in reporting the services to his newspaper in London, stated that the "solemn chanting of the precentor, the burial robes in which many of the worshippers were dressed, the dull gloom of the surroundings, all contributed to investing the service with a peculiarly weird and funereal air."

The "Jewish Chronicle" correspondent goes on to write that "preparations are proceeding for the Succoth Festival," and to describe the rejoicing in the community at the timely arrival of genuine Palestine *esrogim* and *lulabim*. All this had

happened "in spite of the 'block' on the Imperial Railway."

So in a time of war forty years ago did Johannesburg Jewry fittingly observe the High Festivals.

Vichy

THE name of Vichy is now associated with the tragedy and humiliation of France, and the members of the Petain Government are popularly described as the "Men of Vichy." It was recently reported that Jews who are not French subjects were ordered to leave the town.

Apart from the many refugees who must have congregated in Vichy there is also a settled local Jewish community. The town has indeed a whole quarter which is known as "The Jewish Town," and is often referred to in the history of the Jews in France. Vichy is well known as a watering resort in Europe, and since our co-religionists seem to suffer particularly from ailments requiring hot mineral baths the place was well patronised by Jews. This was particularly the case after Hitler had occupied Carlsbad in Czecho-Slovakia. The town has two big synagogues, scores of "minyanim," many kosher restaurants and boarding houses.

An Economist

DR. A. GRANOVSKY, whose fiftieth birthday has recently been commented upon by the Palestine press, is one of the leading Zionist experts on questions of land settlement. Born in Odessa, he comes of a distinguished Zionist family and was amongst the first members of the Jewish intelligentsia to take up Zionism seriously. He gave up a medical career in favour of studies which more immediately concerned the Jewish people, viz., economics and migration problems.

At the end of the last war, Granovsky was invited to take charge of the financial affairs of the National Fund. A few years later he settled in Palestine where, in addition to his daily tasks, he devoted himself to a thorough study of the complicated land problems of Eretz Israel. He laid the basis of a scientific approach to this problem which had hitherto hardly been touched by the scholar.

His studies on Palestine land problems, of which some thirty-five have been published in book and pamphlet form, were of inestimable value to the Zionist cause during the sittings

of the Shaw, Simpson, Peel and Woodhead Commissions. Many of his pamphlets which appeared in Hebrew, English and Yiddish, have been used in Zionist study circles all over the world. He has also written authoritative works on the fiscal policy of Palestine and on taxation problems in the Middle East. His "Land Problems in Palestine," which was published in 1926, has an interesting foreword by Col. J. C. Wedgwood.

The Hatikvah

THERE has been some controversy in Palestine recently regarding the origin of the melody of Hatikvah. Following upon the death of a certain S. Kahan it was stated in several obituaries that it was he who provided the melody for the Jewish national anthem. A number of writers, including S. Imber, a brother of the author of Hatikvah, then came to the fore, and stated that the melody had been known long before Kahan appeared on the scene. Mr. Imber says that the author himself had provided the melody, which was an adaptation from a Rumanian, or rather Moldavian, folk song.

I was surprised, however, to note that none of the writers concerned in the argument quoted the well-known fact that a melody almost identical with that of the first half of Hatikvah figures in the symphonic poem, "Die Moldau," by the famous Czech composer, Smetana. This poem, which is part of a symphonic cycle entitled "Ultawa," expresses Moldavian folk music. It was performed in London about a year ago with great success.

An Unbeliever

AXELROD was having a difficult time in his little fur shop. The woman who wanted to buy a seal coat was asking too many questions.

"You have my word for it," said the shopkeeper, "that the coat will give you good wear."

"Yes, I knew," replied the lady, "that it will do so in sunshine and fair weather, but will it be able to give me good protection in the rain?"

Axelrod became excited with aggravation: "Lady," he protested, "did you ever see a seal carry an umbrella?"

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