

A Hope!

I HOPE that a few of my co-religionists throughout South Africa will find an opportunity of participating in the beautiful Shevuoth spirit during next week. It is on this occasion that the prophetic hope is given expression to—the hope that some day the Jewish people, as typified by Boaz and the Gentile world, as represented by Ruth, will be united into one happy family by the ties of goodwill and comradeship.

It is difficult in these times to believe in so remote a possibility. It is the duty, however, of the conforming Jew never to entertain a feeling of despair or to lose hope in humanity.

The spirit of Shevuoth creates in the Jew, a hope not only for his own salvation, but for that of humanity.

Cheese.

THERE is a custom of eating milk-foods on Shevuoth. Various allegorical interpretations of this have been volunteered. The true one, however, seems to come from comparative folklore. It is a symbol of the fresh fertility of cattle at this season. Milk played a large role in the Roman harvest-festival of the Parentalia, and in the Babylonian Zagmuk, or New Year festival, at the beginning of the harvest in Nisan, a cow was ritually milked "before the mother-goddess Ishtar." In English custom the dance of the milkmaids is an essential part of May Day festivities, and milk-pails are often garlanded at this season. So important, indeed, is milk considered that it is even believed that witches and "the bad folk" make a point of stealing it on May Day and St. George's Day.

There is also a custom of eating cheese especially on Shevuoth. A whimsical explanation is given by the sages. Cheese in Hebrew is *gebinah*. Now in Psalm 68, 16, the "mountain of God" is described as *har gabnunim*. This last word really means "gibbous, many-peaked," but the rabbins connected it directly with *gebinah* "cheese"—a form of exegesis appearing already in the Septuagint who render the word "cheese-shaped."

So much was cheese-eating a feature of harvest-homes that the superstition actually grew up that it had in itself a magical "virtue." If you ate cheese you were proof against the witches' stealing of milk from your cows and goats. Again, in some parts, especially in Greece, the human scapegoat who carried evil and disease away at this critical period, ate cheese before being executed, this act being considered to increase the efficacy of the purification!

Simchas and Cards.

I WAS invited the other day to attend a barmitzvah celebration and looked forward to the event somewhat eagerly, as I happened to be a great admirer of the young confirmand. The parents are popular folk and elaborate arrangements were made for the celebration in their spacious home.

Remembering my own barmitzvah, and those of other friends of my youth, I



could not help contemplating upon the change in the nature of the celebration in my time and that of to-day. To use a slang expression, it "hit one in the eye" to note that most of the celebrants at this modern barmitzvah party were participants in the noble games of poker, bridge and rummy. Refreshment and hospitality were of a high order, but I suppose I was one of the few who actually sought out the barmitzvah to say a few kindly words to him. The little fellow seemed to be smothered in the noise, smoke and turmoil of the atmosphere and I wondered what indelible impression his barmitzvah will have left upon him in the years to come.

Cannot something be done by our spiritual and lay leaders to influence amongst our people the elimination of the playing of cards at important simchas?

Felix Adler.

SO FELIX ADLER has passed away at a ripe old age in New York. I remember attending one of his ethical church services when on a visit to New York some years ago and listening to a deeply intellectual address which he delivered that morning.

Dr. Felix Adler was the son of the Rabbi of the Temple Emanu-El in New York. He studied for the rabbinate, but found that the views he had arrived at with regard to Jewish religious beliefs made it impossible for him to enter the rabbinate. He accepted the chair of Hebrew and Oriental Literature established for him by friends at Cornell University. In 1876, he organised in New York the Society for Ethical Culture, based on the principle of right living, independent of religious beliefs.

The movement spread to include many thousands of adherents; many schools were established and centres of Ethical Culture are to be found in most countries of Europe and America, and also in Asia. For many years Dr. Adler lectured weekly at Carnegie Hall.

He was a member of the editorial board of the International Journal of Ethics, and was the author of many books, including "Creed and Duty," "Life and Destiny," "The World Crisis and Its Meaning." He was Chairman of the National Child Labour Committee, and President of the American Philosophical Association.

Frozen Out.

AMONGST the famous Jewish scientists who have been "frozen" out by the present sinister regime in Germany,

is Professor Fritz Haber, whose researches were responsible during the war for the German war-gas machine, and who, it is said, rather than General Ludendorff, was responsible for the stiff resistance offered by Germany to the advance of the Allies. Professor Haber has resigned his position as Professor of Chemistry at Berlin University and head of the Institute of Physical Chemistry in the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

The Professor, who was born in Breslau in 1868, stands in the front rank of the physical chemists of to-day. His mathematical studies of gas reaction ultimately led him to his exhaustive investigations for the conditions necessary for the synthesis of ammonia, a problem the solution of which, it is believed, will solve all the fertiliser difficulties of the day. The fact that ammonia can be readily converted into stable ammonium salts, or into nitrates which can be used either for fertilising purposes or the preparation of explosives, made Haber one of the most prominent figures on the German side in the war.

It may be recollected that French scientists were consequently indignant when the Swedish Academy in 1918 awarded him the Nobel Prize.

Trading.

THE celebrated violinist, Mischa Elman, was staying at a hotel in the city where he was giving a recital. One afternoon, he was approached by a small boy who asked him for his autograph, and Elman wrote his name on a card.

Presently the boy returned and most politely asked for another autograph on another card, and Elman graciously obliged. Still later, the boy sought another signature.

"But," protested Elman, "I have given you two autographs already. What do you want with three?"

"Well, mister," said the boy, "there's a kid in town who will trade me a Heifetz for three Elmans."

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