

Letters to the Editor

The "Zionist Record" invites correspondence on subjects of interest to the Jewish people in this country, but disclaims responsibility for or endorsement of the views expressed by the writers.

The Hebrew Movement in South Africa

From Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. L. Landau (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—My name was mentioned by Mr. Rubik in your last issue in connection with the publication of the "Basad." I, therefore, feel reluctantly compelled publicly to state that I fully agree with the article of *Ha'aretz* quoted in the same issue.

True, I gave Mr. Rubik small moral support, in the hope that the "Basad" would improve. I regretfully see, however, that the improvement I had hoped for has not so far materialised.

Yours, etc.,

J. L. Landau.

Hebrew Education in South Africa

From Rabbi K. L. Frenkel (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

SIR,—In the "Zionist Record" of July 7th, a letter appeared signed by Mr. L. Zadikoff, concerning Hebrew Education in South Africa. The letter contains abuses and attacks on the Mizrahi Organisation and on me personally. Had the attack been made only on me personally, I should not have replied. However, as the Mizrahi Organisation has also been mentioned, I must reply to the attack. The truth is that neither the Mizrahi Organisation nor I, in my private capacity, have uttered anything against the Jewish Board of Education as such, or against any private person, including Mr. Zadikoff, who is, in fact, not known to me personally.

Mr. Zadikoff is under a misapprehension when he says that the Mizrahi Organisation "holds the monopoly for God and His Torah." The Mizrahi would be only too happy if all Zionists who participated in the upbuilding of Palestine would endeavour to realise the Torah and carried it out in their practical work. The Mizrahi has been specially interested in education, both in Palestine and the Diaspora. Wherever the Mizrahi Organisation is in existence, it interests itself in educational problems and establishes as *Tachkemoni* and *Jayne*. Therefore, I consider that the Mizrahi in this country should have a say in educational matters.

At the South African Zionist Conference I emphasised the necessity that the Jewish Board of Education should re-organise the education system in South Africa. I was not against the principals and teachers, but I criticised the syllabus; and I expressly said that the Mizrahi would support the Jewish Board of Education if amendments were made in the syllabus.

I had the pleasure, during the war, to be a principal of a Mizrahi school in Warsaw. At this school not only Jewish subjects were taught, but also general subjects of importance. Children of various ages exceeding the number attending all the Hebrew schools in Johannesburg were trained at that school. Therefore, the education problem is not strange to me. During my tour through this country, I visited practically all the schools and was interested in their welfare. So I came in touch with the reverends and teachers in each place, and am, therefore, acquainted with the facts of the education system in South Africa. More attention and time should be devoted to Jewish education here. Our aim should be to use two or three hours of Jewish tuition for teaching the child that which will enable him to remain a faithful Jew.

At the Conference, I referred to the syllabus of the Board of Education (which I have studied) and I observed that too much time was given to history. The prayers in the higher classes end at *Schochen Ad*, the middle of the Shabbos prayer. Prayers for holidays, *Rosh Hashonah* and *Yom Kippur*, have been entirely omitted. I am of the opinion that attention should firstly be paid to the prayers so that when the child grows up and when entering a school, the prayers should not be strange to him. Then the teaching of the *Tanach* and *Dinim* are necessary and then *Mishne* and *Talmud*. However, most important of all, the child must be taught the love and feeling for the religion, and such a feeling can only be inspired by religious teachers.

With reference to the history tuition of the syllabus I estimate highly the teaching of Jewish history in this country. However, in the short time given to the child for education, the child can read the Jewish history in English, if it has been written in the Jewish National spirit. The same applies to the Hebrew language which the Board desires to introduce here. I do not believe that the method adopted will succeed. Hebrew

can be the living language if it is spoken by the masses at school and at business. Palestine is the only country where Hebrew is the living language. Even in the Diaspora where a great number of Jews dwell, only the few who were brought up in Hebrew high schools can speak and write Hebrew. I cannot believe that this can be achieved in this country if a course of two or three hours a day is given to all Jewish education. On many occasions I have heard many complaints from teachers and reverends against the new method which is to be introduced. I have observed in many places that the *Shochet*, though he is not a thorough Hebrew teacher, is devoted to Jewish education and desires to bring up a generation of good Jews if parents do not interfere.

On account of the new method, many teachers have complained that they are on the point of being discharged by those who wish to introduce the new system of *Ivrith B'Ivrith*. The result will be that those places which are not in a position to keep a special *shochet* and a teacher will have to choose between the two. I ask, is this fair to education? If the teachers do not bring this fact openly to the Press, it is due to the fact that they are afraid they will be discharged from their billets. It is the Mizrahi's task to do this, so as to preserve *Kashruth* and the education at such places.

I again repeat that the Mizrahi's criticism was not aimed against any individuals but against the syllabus. Our intention is to amend the education.

Yours, etc.,

K. L. Frenkel.

Local Cantors and Rosenblatt

From "M.G." (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—Allow me, through the medium of your columns, to express my surprise and chagrin at the attitude adopted by the local *chazonim* at the demise of that great world-renowned chazan Jossele Rosenblatt.

It is nothing new to the Johannesburg community that amongst our *chazonim* no unity, friendship or organisation exists and that there is continual strife among them. The most that could be expected, however, on an occurrence such as this from congregation heads was for them "to throw all pride to the winds" and unite to express their intense grief at the passing of this "King of Chazonim."

Instead, the occasion is allowed to pass unnoticed. It is true one chazan endeavoured to pay tribute to the deceased through the medium of a local paper; he succeeded only in extolling some of his own virtues (not already known to us).

Perhaps there is still time for these venerable gentlemen to show that the passing of a great personage has bereft the world of one of the greatest singers in Israel.

Is there any reason why there should not be closer cooperation among our "Sheliach Tziboorim"?

Yours, etc.,

"M.G."

Herzl Memorial Meeting

From "Zioni" (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—A report appeared in your paper dealing with the Herzl Memorial meeting held in Johannesburg under the auspices of the combined Zionist Societies. I had expected that representatives of all the Zionist groups would address the gathering and not anyone belonging to one special party in Zionism.

I was, therefore, surprised to notice that besides other speakers at the function, a representative of the Zeire Zion-Zionist Socialist Party addressed the meeting.

Will those who are responsible for this function give a satisfactory explanation as to why there were no representatives also present from the Revisionist and Mizrahi parties?

Yours, etc.,

"Zioni."

[Mr. L. Tager, who was one of the speakers at the meeting, addressed the gathering purely in his capacity as an ordinary Zionist and not as a party man.—Ed.]