

Succoth Celebrated Traditionally in Jerusalem

"SIMCHATH BETH HASHOAVA" ONCE MORE RETURNS TO ANCIENT
CAPITAL OF JUDAH

By Julian L. Meltzer

TO those who have been accustomed to seeing and hearing of the gay celebrations of Purim and Passover in Tel-Aviv, all-Jewish city on the Mediterranean strand, there must have often come the thought that Jerusalem at one time, in its far-off antiquity, had witnessed the merry-making of seasonal festivities. For did not the "olei-ha' Regel" come thrice a year to the Holy City?

And it is said in the Mishnah, "He who has not seen the joy of the libations of Tabernacles has never in his life witnessed joy." Simchath Beth Hashoava in the days when Israel was a nation on its own soil, with the mighty Second Temple rearing its stately and massive bulk on Mount Moriah, attracted pilgrims far and wide.

Now, after so many generations of neglect, Jerusalem has come into its own again. On Succoth, the city is in gala attire; its Jewish inhabitants, the majority in the city, feel the aura of festivity more than in any other year; and the streets of its suburb, Beth Hakerem, hum with joyous activity.

The organisers of Simchath Beth Hashoava have chosen an appropriate emblem for the occasion, the passage from Zechariah (viii. 5), "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." It was a truthful prophecy; for Succoth in Jerusalem to-day is essentially a juvenile celebration.

Bronzed, sturdy and fearless boys and girls of Israel; who have known the freedom, the spaciousness and the intense nationalist fervor of a redeemed people grown to their own stature again; the nucleus of a mighty people of the future, steeped in the traditions of their forefathers, and yet withal as modern in outlook, behaviour, and development as those of other countries; whose history goes back thousands of years, and to whom the chronicles of their kinsfolk and ancestors is indissolubly associated with the very places in which that history was written. Proud scions of a proud people the youth of Israel: these are the celebrants of the "ceremony of the water libations of the Temple."

COUPLED with the events of this week last year was the tribute paid to Menachem Mendel Ussishkin, veteran Zionist leader, who has been a stalwart of the movement for fifty continuous years, and who has attained his Biblical span of life, with the augury of many more years of activity to come—up to "one hundred and twenty years!" Menachem Ussishkin is the head of the greatest instrument for redemption of its historic soil that the

Jewish people have known, a redemption won by pacific means, and not by force of sword: an instrument that takes the Mosaic commandment, "And the land shall be theirs for ever," as its guiding principle.

Ussishkin was presented with a scroll of parchment recording his achievements for the Jewish people, in the presence of thousands of happy schoolchildren, to whom the "redemption of the land" is a living reality: he watched the Water Dance: and he presented a banner for J.N.F. work to be presented annually. That afternoon he came to the Hebrew University, where the Open-Air Theatre was crowded for a meeting to pay homage to him, and where he had a rousing reception, which apparently moved him deeply. David Ben-Gurion, Agency Executive member, Rabbi Ostrowsky, of the Vaad Leumi, Leib Jaffe, of the Keren Hayesod, Dr. Rivlin, of the Teachers' Organisation, Shereshevsky, one of the early settlers of the "Brith ha'Rishonim," Leibowitch, of the Bilu group, and Dr. Judah Leon Magnes, dynamic Chancellor of the University—these all paid their tributes to the bulwark of Zionism and land redemption.

It was really Ussishkin's Day in Jerusalem.

The previous evening, some seven or eight thousand people had thronged the thoroughfares of Beth Hakerem, western suburb of Jerusalem, to attend the first celebration of Simchath Beth Hashoava in the annals of modern Jerusalem. A torchlight procession of some two hundred people, from the Teachers' College to the grounds, where a huge stage had been erected with decorations in the form of the Temple, was a striking feature of the occasion.

Beacons on hilltops, electric illuminations around the meeting-place, dense masses of people on the hillsides and in the valleys, and the gleam of the torches—these all provided a never-to-be-forgotten sight for Jerusalem residents.

The blowing of a trumpet, and the ceremony was begun, the Simchat Beth Hashoava according to the traditions of the Aggadah. Youths from dramatic guilds dancing, playing, singing, on that large stage, holding flaming torches in their hands: the joyous carolling of thousands mounting to the still skies: and a dramatic presentation by "Ohel," the Workers' Theatre Guild, with music the whole time provided by the Palestine Police Band, and the orchestra of the Institute of Jewish Blind in Jerusalem—such was the colourful programme. Not a single incident occurred to mar the gaiety of the occasion.

It was a triumphant demonstration of the Jewish love of traditionalism and spectacle based upon historic festivity.

NOW that Jerusalem knows again the sheer, undiluted joy of its own festival, Simchath Beth Hashoava, it looks forward to the repetitions of years to come. Succoth merry-making has come to stay in Jerusalem.

THE SYMBOLISM OF SUCCOTH.

(Concluded from page 16.)

and learned, represented by the Citron, which has both a pleasant taste and a delicious fragrance; (2) those who are learned, but not pious, represented by the Palm Branch, which has taste but no fragrance; (3) those who are pious but not learned represented by the myrtle, which has fragrance but lacks taste; and (4) those who are neither pious nor learned, represented by the willow of the brook, which has neither taste nor a beautiful fragrance. But, continues the Midrash, each class has a value in God's scheme of Life, provided that they will all co-operate in friendly union.

The Four Ages.

AMONG the other interpretations there is one which shows that the "four species" typify the four ages of man—the shapely citron representing childhood; the graceful myrtle typifying Youth; the upright palm tree symbolising Manhood, and the drooping willow a picture of Old Age. They should all unite in religious service—"both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord" (Psalm cxlviii, 12, 13).

But the best lesson of all in connection with the Four Plants is, I think, the one implied by the Rabbis when they say: "One does not fulfil his religious obligations concerning the Harvest Festival unless he holds the four species together, and makes one unit (*agudah achas*) of them (Menachot, 27a)"—the self same words as those which we translate "a single band" in the Amidah Prayer said on the recent solemn festivals ("May they all form a single band to do Thy will with a perfect heart"). Though Jewry consists of divergent and differing elements, one of our chief duties is to realise that sectional quarrellings will always endanger our position. We should therefore display as far as possible a united front in face of the common dangers which so frequently confront us.

The combination of the four species of plants may even symbolise a larger aspiration—the vision of a united humanity, when there will exist in the minds and hearts of all peoples on earth a true spirit of Unity, Brotherhood and Fellowship.

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