

OUR CHILDREN'S CIRCLE

Conducted by **COUSIN HELEN.**

"A little child shall lead them."—Isaiah xi., 6

Our Motto:

"Do not unto others, what you would not have others do unto you."

P.O. Box 2000, Cape Town.

My Dear Little Cousins,

Now that you have all made your good resolutions for the New Year, the holiday spirit takes on a different mood, for tomorrow is the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur as it is known in Hebrew.

This is the day on which Jews all over the world remember their sins and ask God to forgive them. They spend the whole day in Synagogue and pray. They remember their dear ones who are dead and they ask God to have mercy on their souls. They atone for their sins by fasting all day and by doing without their every-day comforts and pleasures. This is a very grave and important day for the Jewish people, all of whom feel far from as cheerful or happy as they do on Rosh Hashona or the other *Yomtovim*.

"Kol Nidrei.

The evening before Yom Kippur, as to-night, is sometimes called *Kol Nidrei* night. This is because of the prayer beginning with the words *Kol Nidrei* ("Let us all vow") with which the Yom Kippur eve service begins. It is a very sad and beautiful prayer which has been set to lovely music. It has never been discovered who really composed the music. It is believed that it was composed in Spain during the terrible Inquisition when the Jews were tortured so mercilessly simply because they would not become Christians.

Many Jews in those days died the most horrible deaths rather than give up their religion, but there were also many who became Christians but in their hearts remained Jews, practising their religion secretly. It was on Yom Kippur they expressed their sorrow that they had taken false vows, and asked God to forgive them. These thoughts are contained in *Kol Nidrei*.

A Yom Kippur Story.

It is Yom Kippur Eve. The little Beth Hamedrash is already filled with worshippers.

Through the windows on the western side can be seen the rose-red glow of the setting sun. The birds without are heard calling all creation to sleep, and with their twittering lullaby seems to be mingled the mystic strains of *Kol Nidrei*.

Further and still further sinks the sun, fainter and still fainter grows the twitter of the birds. It is already time for *Kol Nidrei*. But the Rav—where is the Rav? . . .

All eyes are fixed on the door through which he is expected to enter. The night

hurries on, but still he does not come. The Shammash, who has been sent to Reb Eliezer's home to discover why he has not yet arrived, returns with the news that the house is locked and that the Rav is nowhere to be found.

"It is quite simple," ventured someone, "The Rav is at present in heaven interceding on our behalf with the Holy One, blessed be He. Is it not told of Rab Lev Yitzchak, the Berdichever Rav (peace be upon him), that one Yom Kippur Eve, just before *Kol Nidrei*, he went up to plead with the Almighty for the people. There he remained until Neilah, when like Moses, our teacher, he heard with his own ears the Divine pronouncement, *Salachti Kidvarecha!*"

Of course, all were convinced that their Rav had gone to heaven, how else could his absence on so solemn an occasion be explained? And so it was decided to wait no longer.

The service was now concluded, and the more holy ones remained to spend the whole night in reciting *Tehillim*. Suddenly the door opened, and their beloved Rav reverently entered the Beth Hamedrash.

"Rebenyu! Rebenyu!" they cried out, pressing towards him. "How soon you are back on earth!"

"And so you thought I was in heaven," smiled the Rav.

"What then," said they, a little dismayed.

"The duties of this life lie not in heaven," answered he.

And then he told them how on his way he heard the crying of a baby coming from one of the houses. He entered the dwelling and found in it a little girl, herself but a child, trying to lull her little brother to

sleep. Mother and father had gone to *Kol Nidrei*, leaving him in her care, and he had been troublesome ever since. And so, taking the baby in his arms he lulled him to sleep.

"We have much to weep for," concluded the saintly Rav, "for we have sinned; but the tears of a blameless child grieve the Holy One, blessed be He!"

Correspondence.

Zelda Kaplan (N. Paarl).—I am so very glad to hear that you are taking up Hebrew lessons again, and I am also very pleased to hear that your brother is continuing lessons after Barmitzvah. Good luck to both of you.

Anna Ben-Arie.—Thank you so much for your letter. I was most interested in all you told me. The book your Auntie sent you sounds lovely—do tell me some more about it.

John Ben-Arie.—I was so sorry to hear you had a sceptic throat, and I hope you are quite better now. I was glad to hear that you went to *shool*.

New Year Greetings.

I have received lots of New Year cards and good wishes from our Cousins. I can't answer them all separately, but thank you all very much for them. It was very sweet of you to have sent them.

Seaside Fund.

Three cheers for Sybil Emdin who has sent 2s. 6d. for the "Chronicle" Seaside Fund. That is a lovely way of starting the New Year, Sybil. Your name appears on the Grown-Ups' List.

And what about the rest?

Your loving
COUSIN HELEN.

[To become a member of Our Circle write down your name, age, address and anything else you choose, and send it to Cousin Helen.]

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