

Letters to the Editor

A South African Chalutzah

From Miss Nechamah Genussow (Beth Alpha).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—Having read the comment about me by your contributor, "Hamabit," in which he writes of the brave deeds of myself and other members of our Kibbutz "Tel Amal"—I am constrained to give you and other South Africans an impression of our life, more true and real than can be gained from passing, if enthusiastic visits. A Zionist, living in South Africa or elsewhere—even in a city in Eretz Israel—has the feeling sometimes that the enthusiasm for Binyan Haaretz has vanished.

"There was a time, when Palestine was beautiful and romantic, when malaria-stricken Chalutzim, one-time professors and doctors, worked and suffered all day, but danced enthusiastically all night long . . . Everything was so new and simple . . ." Doubtless that period has passed: nothing is so simple and romantic now. There are cities with their luxuries and culture—there are great buildings and many orchards. But—there are also Chalutzim—hundreds and thousands of them, prepared to work and suffer. There are also hundreds and thousands of acres of land, in malaria-ridden regions and elsewhere, awaiting the hands of those Chalutzim.

These Chalutzim are no more so romantic: they are not only doctors and professors, but also children of a poverty-stricken Golah, who came to Palestine as to a last refuge. But their work and suffering and belief is no less—their life is just as great, though more drab than the life in the dawn of the Movement.

Our kibbutz is one anthill in the process of upbuilding. We are mostly Palestinians. Studying in high-schools we saw that most of the graduates were leaving Palestine in order to study and be doctors, etc. . . . We saw that the nation needed an army of workers and farmers. We felt the call in us, to stay here and participate in the great work of the builders of the land. We are only a handful of Palestinian Chalutzim. Palestinian youth is dispersed in European Universities and Palestinian cities.

The life we chose was not strange to us, for we had seen the kvutzoth growing with us. The change in our ways of life was brief and sharp. For a short time we worked as hired labourers in Ramat Gan. But we felt that we should be farmers—to thrust roots into the soil.

We came to the Emek. Thanks to our earnest endeavours and to the financial help of two South African Zionists—the Senior brothers—we received the right to settle on National land—near Beth Shaan, an Arab city with a history stretching into antiquity.

The valley of Beth Shaan covers hundreds of unconquered acres of land, betwixt the two flourishing regions: Emek Jezreel and Emek Hayarden. Though we are a young kibbutz and our means were slender—our two tractors were soon ploughing the expectant soil.

The land we are to settle on is between Beth Alpha—the eastern-most point of the Emek—and Beth Shaan. It is called by our Arab neighbours, Tel Shok (The Hill of Thorns). The name of our kibbutz is Tel Amal (The Hill of Toil). The two names are significant . . . Our soil is not virgin and rich: it has been exploited for centuries by primitive methods of cultivation. We hope to transform the waste, with its two solitary palms, into a settlement as flourishing as ten years-old Beth Alpha, with its cornfields, vineyards and orchards.

Now we are near our land, but cannot begin to build our future home because national means are slender and settlers are many. We only cultivate a vegetable garden at Tel Shok. Our cornfields are elsewhere. Our members are working as labourers in all parts of the Emek. We are fighting for our living against heat and disease—and hoping. In swamp-surrounded Tel Shok—we shall continue to fight until we have accomplished our aim.

A few words to South Africans before I conclude. Our respect for you is very great. You do your duty towards our national work. But it is only as passing visitors that we meet your sons and daughters. Few of them are in our ranks, working and living our everyday life.

Yours, etc.,
Nechamah Genussow.

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A South African Jewish Colony in Palestine

From Mr. A. BOBROV (Naauwpoort, C.P.).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—It is with gratification that I read in a brief report in the "Zionist Record" that, at a certain function, Dr. Balkin proposed that a South African Colony be founded in Eretz Israel. I hope that Dr. Balkin and his supporters will not relax until this noble idea is realised, and I promise my earnest support.

It is well known that I have advocated this suggestion on more than one occasion. A South African colony in Eretz Israel is not only advisable but necessary. In the first place, such a colony would be another jewel in the crown of Eretz Israel; secondly, it would create a centre for all South African Jews. They would be welcomed and provided with work, at the same time learning the Hebrew language.

South Africans usually know each other well, and it would be simpler for new-comers to become adapted to their new environment with their own people than by working amongst strangers and in the cities.

A while ago my idea was opposed by some whose argument was that it is too egoistic—they said we should not form sects in Eretz Israel, as the Yishub is for all Israel.

It is only too true that Eretz Israel is for all Israel, and it is for this reason that a South African colony is necessary, for it will expedite this very idea that Eretz Israel is for all Israel.

Yours, etc.,
M. Bobrov.

The "Jew's Harp"

From Mr. HENRY SCHNEIDER (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—In your issue of the 17th inst., under Current Com-munal Comments, you refer to an item in Professor P. R. Kirby's book "The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa," namely the Jew's Harp.

You are quite right when you say that few people are aware that the name of the Jew's Harp is in no way connected with the Hebrew people and, I may add, for a very good reason.

It is strange how an error can be perpetuated. If your commentator would take the trouble to walk into a musical instrument store and ask if he could have a look at a packet of Jew's Harps he will find printed on it "1 doz. Jaws Harps," so named from the position in which the tiny instrument has to be held, viz., between the jaws.

Yours, etc.,
Henry Schneider.

From Mr. M. A. FRIEDGUT (Johannesburg).

To the Editor of the "Zionist Record."

Sir,—For the benefit of your readers, as well as for your contributor "Hamabit," who tried in the last issue to explain the origin of the term "Jew's Harp," I may state that the name of "Jew's Harp" was mistaken for "Jaw's Harp," which is its correct term.

Some writers and merchants, however, like to refer to it as "Jew's Harp" for obvious reasons, knowing well that they are using the incorrect term.

Yours, etc.,
M. A. Friedgut.

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