

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



**Perth Hebrew Congregation
Centenary Issue**



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Front Cover
David Isaac Freedman
Chief Minister
Perth Hebrew Congregation
1897-1939

A Century of Endeavour

Historical Essays
To Commemorate the Centenary of
the Perth Hebrew Congregation
1892-1992

Perth
August 1992

**A special issue of the Journal of
the Australian Jewish Historical Society.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction.....	721
----------------------------	-----

PART I

“A Century of Endeavour” <i>David Mossenson</i>	723
“President’s Annual Report 5658/1897” <i>Nathan Harris</i>	738
“The Practice of Orthodox Judaism” <i>Rabbi D.Y.A. Freilich and Leila Hoffman</i>	743
“The Rabbinate”	
“David Isaac Freedman” <i>Phillip Masel</i>	750
“Louis Rubin-Zacks; Dr Shalom Coleman” <i>Ossie Tofler</i>	753
“Michael S. Orelowitz”; “David Freilich” <i>David Mossenson</i>	758
“Land Grants” <i>Jeffery Pearlman</i>	760
“One Hundred Years of Leadership” <i>Keith B. Shilkin</i>	767
“Synagogue Officials” <i>Louise Hoffman</i>	775
“The Shule Choir” <i>Lloyd Masel</i>	785
“The Princes Hall” <i>Nate Zusman</i>	792
“The Ladies of the Perth Hebrew Congregation”	
<i>Lita Goldflam and Shush Masel</i>	800
“Education and Youth Activities” <i>Louise Hoffman</i>	808
“Philanthropy” <i>Harry Atlas</i>	819
“The Perth Hebrew Congregation in Public” <i>Rabbi Shalom Coleman</i>	827
“Perth Hebrew Congregation — Beyond 2000” <i>Rabbi David Freilich</i>	835

PART II

“Solomon Levey and Western Australia” <i>Ian Berryman</i>	839
“Jewish Convicts in Western Australia” <i>Louise Hoffman</i>	844
“The Jewish Cemetery at East Perth” <i>David Mossenson</i>	850
“Elias Solomon of Fremantle: His Life and Letters” <i>Coralie Solomon</i>	854
“The Earliest Jewish Doctors in Western Australia” <i>Jack Hoffman</i>	860
“Defunct Congregations” <i>David Mossenson</i>	864
Contributors.....	867

FOREWORD

As President of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, I am proud to welcome this account of the origins and development of our Congregation through this special issue of the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society. In celebration of our Centenary this publication gives us an insight into our history and tells of our steady and continued progress, revealing much of the inner life of our community. Its particular value lies in its showing us that the founding, building and development of our Congregation has demanded a selfless and deeply committed leadership and membership. I believe this history will awaken in our hearts a love of community and I hope it will exercise a strong influence on our young, helping them to be aware that each generation has a responsibility to the next.

Through these various articles there is an opportunity to see how an isolated community in the Diaspora has maintained and enhanced traditional Judaism for over 100 years, and how, at the same time, in remote Western Australia Jews have flourished in the wider community and contributed to its progress.

This is a splendid and impressive publication for our Centenary Year and on behalf of the Perth Hebrew Congregation I heartily congratulate Dr. David Mossenson and his team on their contribution and acknowledge, with pleasure, the support of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in permitting this issue to be devoted to our story.

Albert M. Saddik,
President,
Perth Hebrew Congregation.

On behalf of the Australian Jewish Historical Society I wish to congratulate the Perth Hebrew Congregation on its Centenary. The Congregation has been the mainstay of Jewish life in the State of Western Australia for 100 years.

I also wish to congratulate Dr David Mossenson and the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society for the sterling work that has been done in connection with the history of the Jews of Western Australia and in particular in relation to the production of this edition of the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

Dennis Bluth B.A. LL.M.,
President,
Australian Jewish Historical Society.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Later this year the Perth Hebrew Congregation will complete one hundred years of continuous operation. Of several sister organisations which arose in Western Australia in the closing years of the last century it alone survived the passage of time and flourished. The growing size of Perth's Jewish population consolidated its role and influence. Throughout its history the congregation has been the core institution of Western Australian Jewry and its place in the religious and social life of the State cannot be underestimated. The expansion of recent times confirms its ongoing capacity to promote the practice of orthodox Judaism in Western Australia. In the circumstances the desirability of producing a commemorative publication to mark the centenary is obvious.

Acting on behalf of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society I submitted a proposal of this type to the Centenary Committee of the Congregation. The group entrusted me with the responsibility of undertaking the project. From the outset a quality historical work was preferred to any souvenir style of publication. In advancing the local historical society's proposition I was aware that relevant research papers were already in existence. Determining a list of topics to encompass other facets of the congregation's history presented little difficulty. Similarly, no problems were encountered in obtaining authors with the necessary competence and enthusiasm to tackle the research and writing tasks involved in preparing papers for publication.

The record of the Perth Hebrew Congregation extends from the early eighteenth century to the present time, but the Jewish presence in Western Australia began more than sixty years earlier with the foundation of the Swan River Colony. Although the number of Jews involved in those early days was quite small the exploits of some of the individuals were noteworthy. With this in mind this publication has been designed to consist of two sections. The first, and far larger portion, contains fourteen articles which together provide a comprehensive account of the progress and achievements of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. The second, smaller part, comprises six articles dedicated to the colonial period. Quite rightly the publication can claim to outline much of the history of the Jewish people of Western Australia.

Intending to produce a scholarly work the local Jewish Historical Society concluded that the preferred form of publication would be a special issue of the journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society. This journal enjoys an established reputation

and possesses a large circulation which extends throughout Australia and beyond. My negotiations with the Sydney-based Australian society proceeded informally and amicably. The essential features of the agreement were as follows: all editorial and production responsibilities and costs would be borne by the Perth Hebrew Congregation, the style and format of the publication would conform to the standards of the Australian journal, and the Australian society would be supplied with sufficient copies to circulate to its subscribers leaving the Perth Hebrew Congregation free to make whatever additional distribution it wished.

Acknowledgment must be recorded of many persons who contributed to the preparation of this journal. Thanks are extended to the several authors, all of whom readily accepted the suggestions and requests I made to them. Special assistance was forthcoming from Mrs Louise Hoffman and Dr Keith Shilkin, office bearers of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society, and from Rabbi Freilich, the group to whom certain problems were referred from time to time. Dr Suzanne Rntland, editor of the journal, readily agreed to delegate to me the responsibility for producing this issue of the journal, and her action in this regard is appreciated. Particular thanks are due to Mr Nate Zusman who proved to be my willing and invaluable link with Sydney. Much of the credit for the cooperation which has characterised this enterprise is due to his efforts. The president of the congregation, Mr Albert Saddik, facilitated my task and ensured that no obstacles arose at any time. Thanks must be expressed to Mr Michael Salkin, whose photographic skills were utilised to enhance the list of illustrations. In this connection mention must also be made of the cooperation forthcoming from several people, notably Mrs Ethel Saker, in making photographs in their possession available for publication. The following ladies contributed by typing manuscripts — Mrs Mandy Hymans, Mrs Linda Freedman, and Mrs Maxine Green. Finally, the efforts of Mrs Naomi Zeffertt in editing scripts, and Mr Dick Pilpel in printing the journal, were also appreciated.

David Mossenson.

A CENTURY OF ENDEAVOUR

David Mossenson

The story of the Perth Hebrew Congregation closely parallels the progress and evolution of Western Australian Jewry. Early in its history the congregation became the dominant Jewish institution in the State, and today it remains the largest and best equipped organisation in the community. Its purpose over the years has been to maintain and advance the practice of orthodox Judaism in this remote corner of the world. Despite fluctuating social and economic conditions, and changes in the complexion of the population it serves, the congregation has pursued its primary objective consistently and effectively. Possessing a proud record of achievement, and a promising future, the Perth Hebrew Congregation approaches its centenary in a mood of optimism and thankfulness.

In September 1892 the urge to honour the holy days of the year, *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), brought the handful of Jews then resident in Perth together in order to engage in the age-old religious services.¹ On the initiative of Solomon Levi Horowitz, a recent arrival in the colony, they subsequently constituted themselves into an organisation adopting the title "Perth Hebrew Congregation". The foundation meeting was held on 13 November 1892. Encouraged by modest additions to its membership the embryo organisation survived its swaddling years and planned its future with growing confidence.²

Propitious circumstances developing in the mid 1890s launched the newly established Perth Hebrew Congregation into the most productive phase of its history. The institution's origins had coincided with the gold discoveries which presently attracted immigrants to Western Australia in unprecedented numbers. The Jewish component of the influx raised the colony's Jewish population to above twelve hundred persons by the turn of the century.³ Despite the prior existence of a small Jewish community in Fremantle, and the emergence of others on the goldfields, Perth quickly became the focus of Jewish life in Western Australia.

During its formative period Perth Jewry was homogeneous to a surprising degree. With few exceptions its members had been born and raised, or had spent long

periods of time in the other colonies of Australia, or in Britain, before migrating to Western Australia. Being thoroughly Anglicised they adapted readily to local conditions and several became active in public affairs. Their adherence to traditional Judaism was consistent with the practices and style formulated by the chief rabbis of the British Empire during the nineteenth century.

The fledgling congregation effected its most noteworthy advances during the presidency of Nathan Harris, 1894-97. Regular Sabbath services were conducted by knowledgeable laymen in hired premises. A large block of land stretching between Brisbane Street and Robinson Avenue on the northern outskirts of the town was obtained from the government as a crown grant. The congregation was then incorporated, a loan of £3000 was negotiated, and a building committee appointed.

Eighteen ninety-seven was the climactic year in the annals of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. In March, Reverend David Isaac Freedman was installed as the congregation's and Western Australia's first ordained Hebrew minister. A twenty-two year old graduate of Jews' College and the University of London, Freedman retained the position for the remainder of his life serving the congregation with distinction for a period of forty-two years. A few months later the Brisbane Street Synagogue, with its adjoining manse, and cottages facing Robinson Avenue (to be an investment) were completed.⁴ With its pleasing facade of brick and stone, including a circular tower and a large rose window, the synagogue was a landmark in the district for nearly eighty years. The building could accommodate above three hundred persons, but no more than 50 seats were in the women's gallery.

The congregation engaged other officials and with Freedman at the helm created ancillary agencies to conduct men's and women's burials, to supervise the supply of kosher meat, and to provide help for the needy. From the outset Freedman took charge of the religious school attached to the congregation. In the space of five or six years a fully functioning orthodox Hebrew congregation had emerged. When the critical decisions had been taken to recruit a minister from Britain and erect a synagogue the organisation had had fewer than sixty members.

Early in the new century the arrival of more migrants and the improving balance in numbers between the sexes highlighted the inadequacy of the small gallery in the synagogue. In 1904 the ladies' accommodation was more than doubled by extending the upstairs section along the western and eastern sides of the building.⁵ In the following year a school house was erected at the rear of the synagogue. Containing a hall with a stage, and a kitchen, as well as smaller adjoining rooms, the Princes Hall, as the building was named, also served as the communal centre for public meetings and social functions. While incurring heavier mortgage repayments the congregation still conducted appeals for funds to relieve distressed Jewries in Eastern Europe, and contributed to local charities such as the annual public hospital appeal.⁶ The congregation, with Freedman offering an enthusiastic lead, gave full expression to sentiments of loyalty to the British Empire by conducting special services in the synagogue to mark all imperial events.



The Brisbane Street Synagogue, 1897.

By temperament and training, Freedman was well equipped to command the esteem of the congregation which had employed him. The direction he gave the religious services, his clerical attire including use of the reversed collar on all occasions, and especially his sermons delighted his members. Not only did he participate eagerly in all aspects of communal life but he identified himself energetically with numerous cultural, educational, and charitable endeavours in the wider community. His acceptance of executive roles in public associations won him popular acclaim in his community.

Mixed marriage and admission to Judaism were the most sensitive issues confronting Freedman during the first ten years of his ministry. The dearth of Jewish women in the colony in earlier times had induced a number of men to marry out of their faith. While they and others were pleased to regard the wives and children as Jews, everyone's preference was to regularise the situation by process of formal conversion. Sympathising with the families concerned, the young minister urged their plight with the chief rabbi in London, who eventually sanctioned local conversion, but only under specific conditions, including his prior notification and approval in each instance.⁷ Freedman then inducted a number of proselytes without exciting opposition.

The situation was dramatically reversed in January 1907 when the board of the congregation, acting on its minister's advice, sanctioned the admission to Judaism of a Fremantle man who was marrying a Jewess.⁸ The case was quite unlike the earlier conversions and ignored the chief rabbi's stipulations. News of the action evoked an uproar which plunged the congregation into the most severe schism in its history.

Following five months of bitterness and confusion marked by resignations and a plethora of general meetings, saner counsels prevailed and the dissension subsided. But not everyone was prepared to allow the matter to rest. A small party of critics remained unreconciled and proceeded to form a breakaway organisation. Calling themselves the Perth Jewish Association, they conducted prayer meetings claiming they would conform strictly to traditional practice in all matters. In this atmosphere of acrimony Perth acquired its second orthodox Hebrew congregation.

While the new congregation was being established Perth Jewry was undergoing a fundamental restructuring.⁹ Foreign Jews, a tiny trickle in earlier decades, grew in number as the new century advanced. In the five or six years which preceded the Great War, the arrival of several hundreds of newcomers from czarist Russia and Turkish Palestine conferred a distinct Yiddish-Zionist orientation which proved to be of enduring importance in the evolution of Western Australian Jewry. Sharp differences in background and attitudes between the established Anglicised elements and the growing numbers of Yiddish speakers produced lively clashes within the community the effects of which did not readily disappear.

Unused to the formality of Freedman's religious services many of the newcomers preferred the relaxed atmosphere cultivated by the rival congregation. The lower fees charged by the Perth Jewish Association also appealed as many of the new

arrivals were in straitened circumstances. Freedman, who was unrelenting in his antagonism to the rival body, viewed the developing situation with mounting alarm. When the Yiddish Debating Circle, which commanded a substantial following among the recent immigrants, commenced holding meetings in premises used by the Perth Jewish Association the minister resolved to intervene to preserve his congregation's premier role in the community.

Freedman's first move was to launch a membership drive for the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Directing his efforts primarily to the "Yiddishers", and utilising supportive individuals from that element, his efforts achieved results. Many new members were immediately enrolled and others agreed to join when their finances permitted. The effects of the campaign, combined with the continued growth of Perth Jewry through natural increase and migrants coming from Britain, overtaxed the accommodation of the synagogue. In 1912 a wider, higher section was added to the southern end of the building, thereby adding 250 places to the seating.¹⁰

Freedman executed a second masterly manoeuvre when he created a new secular organisation which he named the Western Australian Zionist Association. The WAZA, as it came to be known, comprised a central executive and a range of semi-independent bodies, cultural, social and Zionist, both English and Yiddish speaking, incorporated under its umbrella. After some early stresses between older and newer elements the organisation prospered, its membership soon numbered several hundreds, and it rented club rooms of its own. With himself its president, and the Yiddish Debating Circle easily its largest and most influential component, Freedman had achieved his objective of ensuring that the mainstream of Jewish life revolved around the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

Western Australian Jewry responded wholeheartedly to the national effort during the Great War. The enlistment rate for overseas service of young men in the community was particularly impressive.¹¹ The Perth Hebrew Congregation for its part raised money for patriotic purposes and at the same time responded to calls from London for funds to assist Jewish communities in eastern Europe devastated by the war.¹² One or two congregational personalities received public recognition for their voluntary services during the war, but by far the most notable contribution was made by D. I. Freedman. Having been appointed Jewish chaplain to the Australian Forces he departed for overseas in November 1915 and remained abroad on active service for the next two and a half years.

While the plaudits Freedman received for his labours among the troops in Gallipoli, the eastern Mediterranean and France embellished his reputation, his absence grew increasingly burdensome for his congregation. Zallel Mandelbaum, the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer of animals and poultry) was called upon to deputise for the minister, but attendances at Sabbath services declined alarmingly and enrolments at the Hebrew School were also depleted. Meanwhile the Perth Jewish Association progressed and purchased land in Palmerston Street preparatory to erecting its own synagogue. Faced with these mounting worries the board of the congregation

Russian Relief Fund.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

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E. E. KRUG, Treasurer.

Rev. D. I. FREEDMAN I. DAVIS

E. MASEL J. SHARP

S. L. HOROWITZ J. L. GLICK

S. COHEN E. A. GREEN, Hon. Sec.

When the reports were received of the appalling horrors which had been perpetrated upon our suffering co-religionists in Russia, immediate steps were taken to express our sorrow and indignation. A meeting of the community was held in the Prince's Hall on Sunday, November 19th, 1905. Mr. E. Casper, President of the Congregation, presided, and there was a crowded attendance. Resolutions of sympathy with our brethren, the victims of cruelty and oppression, were passed and a relief fund opened. A committee was also appointed to appeal to all Jewish residents in the State to contribute to the fund. The response was prompt and hearty. The sum of £427 was remitted by cable to the Rev. Dr. H. Adler, Chief Rabbi, London, requesting him to hand it over to the committee under the Right Honorable Lord Rothschild which organised the Anglo-American Relief Fund. On November 20th a large public meeting, presided over by His Worship the Mayor of Perth (Mr. H. Brown, M.L.A.), was held at the Queen's Hall, and which it may be stated was the first public meeting held in the Commonwealth to denounce the horrors. The resolutions passed were:—

1st Resolution.—“That this meeting of the citizens of Perth, representing all sections of the community, expresses its horror and indignation at the outrages upon and the massacres of Jews in Russia.” Speakers—His Lordship the Bishop of Perth, Hon. H. Briggs, M.L.C., Mr. F. Illingworth, M.L.A.

2nd Resolution.—“That this meeting urges upon His Majesty's Government to use its best influence with the Russian authorities to prevent further atrocities upon Jews.” Speakers—Rev. G. E. Rowe and Mr. C. J. Moran.

Report of W.A. Jewry's First Overseas Relief Campaign.

3rd Resolution.—“That His Worship the Mayor be requested to forward copies of these resolutions to His Excellency the Governor for transmission to the Imperial Government.” Speakers—Rev. A. Deans, Mr. Brebber, M.L.A., and Mr. Hardwicke, M.L.A.

4th Resolution.—“That the best thanks be given to His Worship the Mayor for presiding over the meeting.” Speakers—Rev. D. I. Freedman and Hon. E. Solomon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

[Copy.]

Office of the Chief Rabbi,
22 Finsbury Square,
London, 8th December, 1905.

My Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your cheque for £300, the donation so generously contributed by your Congregation to the Russo-Jewish Relief Fund. I have at once forwarded the same to Messrs. Rothschild and Son, from whom you will receive official acknowledgment. I beg to assure you that we fully appreciate your substantial help in this great need. You will no doubt have seen the cablegram informing you of the steps that have been taken by us to endeavor to prevent the recurrence of these horrible atrocities and to alleviate the sufferings of the survivors.—With best wishes, I remain,

(Sgd.) H. ADLER.

E. E. Krug, Esq., Perth, W.A.

[Copy.]

Messrs. N. M. Rothschild and Sons present their compliments to the Perth Hebrew Congregation, and in their own name and in that of the Russo-Jewish Committee beg to express their most sincere thanks for their generous donation of £300 towards the fund which is now being raised for the poor suffering Jews in Russia.

New Court, London,
8th December, 1905.

[Copy.]

No. 207.

Office of the Chief Rabbi,
22 Finsbury Square,
London, January 23, 1906.

My Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge with warm thanks the receipt of your draft for £127, the second donation so generously contributed by your Congregation to the Russo-Jewish Relief Fund.

negotiated with congregations in Melbourne and Sydney to provide a replacement chaplain. The exercise was protracted and it was not until July 1918 that Freedman resumed his duties in Perth.

Freedman returned home in triumph. He now styled himself "rabbi", having received an honorary award from the authorities in Egypt. His congregation retained his services by upgrading his contract when he received a lucrative offer of employment from the Great Synagogue in Sydney. His presence at religious services quickly improved attendances, and he had a similar effect on school enrolments. Indicative of his new status the board of the congregation accepted his recommendation to cease making submissions to London and to resolve locally matters relating to admission of proselytes.¹³

The Perth Hebrew Congregation and the community it served flourished during the 1920s. The times were prosperous and the resumption of shipping brought a renewal of migration, again largely from eastern Europe and Palestine. By the close of the decade the State's Jewish population reached two thousand for the first time. During the war years, and increasingly thereafter, the merging of the two major components of the community, the British and the foreign born, proceeded apace, a process which the presence of recently arriving Yiddish speakers did little to arrest. Equally significant was the increasing importance of the locally born segment of the community. Another noteworthy feature of the twenties was the drift of Perth Jewish Association members to the Perth Hebrew Congregation once they had adjusted to local conditions and could afford the higher charges. By the end of the decade relationships between the two congregations had been transformed, hostility had disappeared and the Palmerston Street Synagogue became a factor of minor consequence, maintained by a small number of stalwarts. Henceforth religious observance among Perth Jewry was overwhelmingly identified with the Perth Hebrew Congregation whose male seat holders had risen to number more than three hundred and fifty by 1930.

Accommodation pressure, especially in the gallery, again necessitated a further major alteration to the synagogue in 1928. The original section of the building was widened and its roof raised to bring it into conformity with the addition of 1912. As a result 200 additional seats were provided. The three modifications of 1904, 1912 and 1928 more than doubled the original accommodation of 1897. Capable of seating 850 worshippers, the synagogue was among the largest in Australia.

Associated with the blending of diverse elements during the post World War I period was the widespread acceptance by Perth Jewry of Freedman's approach to orthodox Judaism. Few questioned the absence of a *mikvah* (ritual bath), nor the makeshift nature of Freedman's *Beth Din* (ecclesiastical court). Similarly, the use of non-Jews as purveyors of kosher meat was not challenged. Newcomers who had earlier been disconcerted by the minister's attire and style of religious service came to accept both. Only Freedman's preference for a mixed choir was denied him.¹⁴ The locally born certainly regarded the Perth Hebrew Congregation as orthodox in fact as well as in name. Freedman's interpretation of traditional Judaism

that the accelerating northward shift of Jewish homes to the newer sub-divisions of Coolbinia, Yokine and later, Dianella was rendering the Brisbane Street complex of buildings unsuited to communal needs. The pathway to the future was foreshadowed by the Maccabean League when it purchased twenty acres (eight hectares) of virgin land in Yokine in 1950.²³

WEST AUSTRALIAN ZIONIST ASSOCIATION.

Memorial Service
HELD AT THE
SYNAGOGUE, BRISBANE STREET, PERTH,
on the Yahrzeit of
Dr. Theodor Herzl,
Thursday, July 24, 1913.
Tamuz 20, 5673.

EVENING SERVICE.
Scroll of the Law taken out.
אל בלא רחמים:
Special Offerings.
אלהי נשמה:
Scroll of the Law replaced in the Ark.
Address: Rev. D. I. FREEDMAN, B.A.
Collection in aid of the Jewish National Fund.
עלינו:
יגדל:
אדק עולם:
דתקום:

Herzl Yahrzeit Service, 1913.

Late in the fifties when the Maccabean (Maccabi) Memorial Grounds were becoming utilised for social as well as sporting purposes the siting of a future communal centre became a lively congregational issue. The Board of Management sought to perpetuate activity around the old headquarters by adding an expensive banquet hall on the remaining Brisbane Street land. The proposal was hotly debated and finally rejected by the membership.²⁴ After the controversy ended the Princes hall was renovated with funds largely donated by the Breckler family whose name the hall then carried.

Events were to demonstrate that the debate over the siting of the future communal hall marked a turning point in congregational and communal politics. The old guard had played little or no part in the acquisition of the Memorial Grounds whose value became more

obvious with the passage of every year. New leaders of new organisations located their activities on the grounds, which came to contain virtually all of Perth Jewry's instrumentalities with the exception of its houses of worship.²⁵

A more fundamental challenge confronted the Perth Hebrew Congregation after 1952 when it was forced to contend with the advent of progressive Judaism. Liberal or reform Judaism had attracted interest in Perth from time to time, but it was in the post-war period when former refugees from central Europe were established citizens that a popular following emerged. The enthusiasts who experimented with late Friday night services conducted on progressive principles were quickly rewarded. By the mid 1950s the Temple David Congregation had headquarters of its own in Mount Lawley, a full-time minister, and some hundreds of members.

The presence of the new congregation generated bitterness in the community as much because of the split it produced as over questions of doctrine. The leaders of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, Abe Troy, president, and Rubin-Zacks, chief minister, attacked the new organisation and modified their constitution to prevent infiltration by supposed enemies.²⁶ A bizarre situation occurred when the Perth

Hebrew Congregation intervened to prevent the new movement from taking control of the virtually unused Palmerston Street synagogue.²⁷ Another element in the struggle was the willingness of Chief Rabbi Brodie in London to raise Rubin-Zacks's status by conferring on him the honorary degree of rabbi. The Western Australian Board of Deputies (formerly the Advisory Board) acquired a more positive role because of the existence of the rival congregations. No longer in the position to dominate the Board of Deputies, the Perth Hebrew Congregation nevertheless remained its most influential constituent. Temple David's support stemmed largely from the uncommitted sections of the community as the membership of the Perth Hebrew Congregation was unaffected to any appreciable degree.

Religious education was hoisted in the 1950s by interested parents actively supported by the Perth Hebrew Congregation. After the School Board had suffered the disaster of recruiting a teacher from Israel who refused to take up the post, the congregation complied with requests from the school and appointed a youth minister — *chazan* (cantor).²⁸ Other moves initiated by a younger group of parents were already moving in a different direction which led to the creation of the Carmel Jewish day school.²⁹ The Perth Hebrew Congregation's and the Seeligson Trust's financial assistance was crucial to the institution's emergence and survival in its formative years. The congregation was also involved in defining the school's admission policy denying entry to children of a non-Jewish born mother who had not been converted in the orthodox tradition.³⁰ Not surprisingly, the question provoked irritation in Temple David Circles.

As Carmel School flourished, especially following its establishment on the Maccabi grounds, the role of the Perth Hebrew School deteriorated. The congregation continued to maintain the part-time school in the interest of children not attending the Jewish day school.

Rabbi Rubin-Zacks's retirement late in 1964 through ill-health was the prelude to a creative epoch directed by the congregation's new chief minister, Dr Shalom Coleman. Unlike his predecessors, Coleman possessed rabbinic qualifications by examination giving him the authority to reform a congregation more orthodox in name than in fact. The new rabbi quickly modified synagogue services to conform fully with traditional practice. Having established Perth's first properly constituted Beth Din he accepted converts to Judaism but exercised the power conservatively.³¹ The rabbi played a part in the establishment of Perth's first *mikvah*, he supported the moves which established a communal kosher butcher shop in Mount Lawley, and he demanded the employment of *shomerim* (supervisors) therein. Coleman's insistence on kosher catering for communal functions radically changed the popular catering service conducted by the WIZO women. The rabbi's religious reforms and his dealings with opponents, especially the leaders of WIZO, evoked antagonism. But he achieved the purpose of translating the Perth Hebrew Congregation from nominal to genuine orthodoxy.

During the two decades of his ministry, 1965-85, Rabbi Coleman was also involved in replacing old facilities with new buildings. The synagogue, now the last of the amenities in use at the Brisbane Street complex, had become quite unsuited to members few of whom still resided in its vicinity. Coleman tenaciously urged the congregation's requirements with the Minister for Lands. He was eventually rewarded with a crown grant of about one hectare on the corner of Plantation Street and aptly named Freedman Road.³² The site was within a kilometre of the Maccabi grounds and centrally placed in relation to the districts which contained most Jewish homes.

After delays of various sorts, the new synagogue was completed and brought into use in 1974. The principal house of worship could accommodate well in excess of one thousand members, but it was the increase in the women's section, more than the general increase, which represented the major advance on Brisbane Street. The new edifice also contained a number of offices and ancillary rooms, facilities for food preparation, a hall, and a smaller place of worship for lesser services. Some time later a *mikvah* was installed and a Judaica bookshop was operated in its precincts by voluntary workers. The Brisbane Street and Palmerston Street properties were sold, the two synagogues, so rich in communal history were demolished, and the proceeds of the sales were added to the building fund.³³ Two additional buildings erected in the period were a replacement *ohel* (meeting place for mourners) in the Karrakatta Cemetery, and a modern food distribution centre and kosher butcher shop on the synagogue site. This latter project removed the earlier dependence on hired premises of dubious suitability.

Despite the attractive amenities which Perth Jewry acquired in the post-World War II era, demographically the community was far from healthy. The combined effects of emigration, assimilation, and smaller families has taken their toll. The State's Jewish population, which in 1970 totalled about three thousand, was aging to a degree which foreshadowed zero population growth in the not too distant future. Happily, an upsurge in overseas immigration beginning in the mid-seventies and proceeding in the dozen or more years which followed, reversed the damaging trends. By 1986 the unofficial estimate of the Jewish population was about five thousand, easily the largest in the community's history.³⁴ The presence of some hundreds of newcomers, the majority of whom were from southern Africa, revived tensions of the type experienced earlier, but on a milder scale. Far more significant was the replenishment of Perth Jewry's human resources, as a large proportion of the new arrivals were young adults with children.

In the mid-eighties the Perth Hebrew Congregation encountered perplexing but fortunately short-lived difficulties. Rabbi Michael Orelowitz, the new minister, proved to be unsuited to local conditions and he voluntarily severed his contract and left the State after an interlude of less than two years. At about the same time the congregation experienced severe financial problems. A newly elected Board of Management headed by the current president tackled the matter energetically.

As well as raising funds the new board privatised the kosher butcher shop which had been a drain on the institution's resources.³⁵ Within a few years the financial situation was healthy once more.

The same Board of Mangement conferred a greater boon on the congregagation when they secured the services of Rabbi David Freilich as chief minister. Australian born and well qualified in secular and rabbinic fields of knowledge, Rabbi Freilich's personal qualities of warmth and enthusiasm quickly endeared him to his congregants once he took office in mid-1988. His wife Aviva enhanced the Freilich family's standing by her posivite role in the cultural life of the community.

The 1980s were distinguished also by a proliferation of congregations. Included among the many newcomers from South Africa who resided in the new suburb of Noranda were a number who wished to conduct orthodox services of their own. They constituted themselves into the Northern Suburbs Hebrew Congregation and by late in 1991 had built their future hall which in the meantime they utilised as their temporary synagogue. Difficulties had plagued the relations between the executives of the two orthodox congregations for a time, but wiser counsels prevailed, and collaboration was achieved. The Noranda congregation recognised Rabbi Freilich as the head of orthodox Judaism in Perth, and both congregations utilised the services of Reverend Chaim Davidowitz whose dnties included being an assistant to Rabbi Freilich and the minister conducting services in Noranda. A recent small development



New Synagogue, Interior.

whose consequence cannot yet be assessed was the arrival of the ultra-orthodox *Lubavitch* movement operating from its own headquarters, *Chabad House*.

Rivalry between the Perth Hebrew Congregation and the Temple David congregation persisted during Rabbi Coleman's ministry, but ameliorated in more recent years. More important than the clashes of the protagonists was the changing volume of support the two organisations commanded. Following internal dissension the membership of the temple declined to around three hundred and fifty (counting husband and wife individually) by the late seventies. Since that time the liberal congregation has failed to increase its numbers despite the expansion which occurred in the Jewish population.³⁶ By contrast the Perth Hebrew Congregation continued to grow until its membership exceeded six hundred families by the close of the eighties.³⁷ The differing membership trends for the two congregations were somewhat surprising because the progress which the temple had achieved in its early years had fostered the belief that it would continue to grow through attrition from the orthodox body. In point of fact movement has been in the opposite direction. Orthodox Judaism and the Perth Hebrew Congregation remain the core religious institutions in Western Australian Jewry, and by all indications will continue so for the foreseeable future.

The situation in which the Perth Hebrew Congregation finds itself after completing one hundred years of operation is as encouraging as any in the past. Its membership and resources are greater than ever before, and its place in the life of Western Australian Jewry shows no sign of diminishing. Its real contribution has been its capacity to satisfy the traditional religious needs of succeeding generations of Western Australian Jewry. Immigrants established the congregation in the first instance and immigrants from different sources sustained its vitality. For longer than the past half century, however, locally born Jews have constituted the bulk of its membership and assured its continuity. Neither fluctuating economic conditions nor the growing sophistication of the community weakened its role. Inevitably rivalries and clashes of personality occurred on occasions within its membership, but its forward progress has never been seriously impeded. The one doubt cast over the institution related to the long-term viability of Western Australian Jewry, and not to any deficiency in the organisation itself. That threat having been averted the Perth Hebrew Congregation, like the community it serves, confronts the future confidently.

NOTES

1. Western Australia Census 1891 listed 43 Jews in the Perth district (22 males and 21 females).
2. A brief account of the early activities of the PHC covering the years before annual reports were printed is outlined in the introduction to the *President's Report for 1897*. This is the earliest PHC document in existence.
3. The 129 Jews in WA in 1891 rose to 1259 in 1901 (Census of Western Australia 1891 and 1901).

4. Report of the Building Committee appended to the PHC *Annual Report for 1898*.
5. The pillars supporting the extensions necessitated removing the tiered seating on the ground floor of the structure.
6. PHC *Annual Report for 1906*.
7. Hermann Adler to Rev. Freedman, 5 December 1898, 25 March 1902; PHC Minutes 26 April 1903.
8. D. Mossenson, *Hebrew Israelite Jew* (Nedlands: UWAP, 1990), pp. 60, 91-3.
9. *Ibid.* pp. 33-5, 78-82.
10. PHC *Annual Report for 1912*.
11. Out of a total population numbering fewer than two thousand, 180 men served overseas and 47 died on active service.
12. PHC *Annual Reports for 1915, 1916 and 1917*.
13. PHC Minutes, 22 Feb., 13 May 1922.
14. *Ibid.* 19 June 1929.
15. *Westralian Judean* April 1925; *Jewish Herald* 9 Aug. 1928.
16. PHC *Annual Report for 1909*.
17. *Ibid.* for 1929.
18. *Ibid.* for 1941.
19. N. Zusman, "The W.A. Council of Jewish Affairs", *AJHS Journal* Part 3 (1988).
20. PHC Minutes, 29 Aug., 11 Sept. 1943.
21. *Maccabean* Aug. and Sept. 1944; *Westralian Judean* Oct. 1944.
22. Mossenson, chapter 10.
23. The Maccabean Club was reorganised into the Maccabean League in 1949.
24. *Maccabean* 21, 28 Sept. 1953; PHC Minutes, 4 Jan., 15 July 1959.
25. The Memorial Park contains sporting facilities, the Aged Home, Carmel School and the Jewish Centre.
26. *Maccabean* Sept. 1953.
27. Perth Jewish Association Minutes, 8 July, 16 Aug., 8 Nov. 1953.
28. PHC Minutes, 4 March 1959.
29. Mossenson, 177-80.
30. The congregation sought and obtained a ruling on the matter from the chief rabbi in London. PHC Minutes, 25 Oct. 1961, 21 Jan. 1962.
31. With the shochet who possessed a rabbinic degree and Rabbi Rubin-Zacks who lived in Perth in retirement, Coleman constituted a court composed of three rabbis.
32. PHC Minutes, 27 Sept. 1967; *Maccabean* Oct., Nov. 1967.
33. The Brisbane St complex was sold to the PMG Dept for \$175,000. Of the buildings only the old Princes Hall remains standing. The Perth City Council purchased the Palmerston St property for \$19,600 and incorporated it in the Robertson Park sporting complex. The foundation stone and other artefacts of the Palmerston St synagogue were incorporated in the new building.
34. The census figure for 1986 was 3919 but nearly 30% of Western Australians did not respond to the religious denomination question.
35. PHC *Annual Reports for 1987 and 1988*.
36. Mossenson, p. 198.
37. The PHC brackets husband and wife together in its membership lists.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 5658/1897*

Nathan Harris

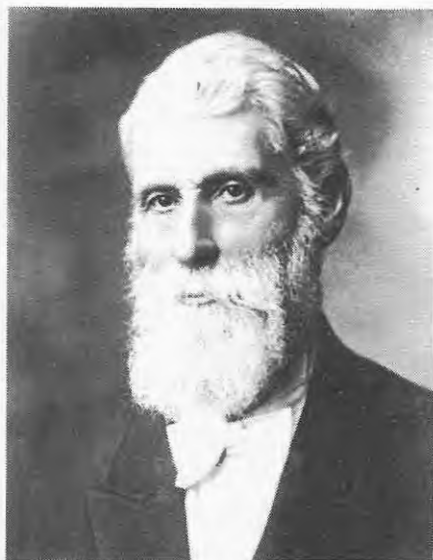
As so many of the Congregation are newcomers, the usual Annual Report would be unintelligible to them without reference to former proceedings; and I propose giving a short account of the formation and growth of this Congregation. About five years ago the few Jews in Perth met together and decided to procure a *Sepher-Torah* and hold services on New Year and Day of Atonement; and the small *Ark* which we only this month discontinued using was provided to hold the Scroll of the Law. The first meeting was convened by Mr S.L. Horowitz, and was held on 13 November 1892. The first President elected was Mr M.T. Wolff; Treasurer, Mr A. Freedman; Trustees, Messrs M.T. Wolff, S.L. Horowitz and A. Freedman; Secretary, Mr B. Fienberg. The consecration of the *Torah* was held at the house and at the expense of Mr and Mrs H. Sam Cohen on 26 December 1892, and for a long time the *Ark* and *Torah* were in his custody and the small Congregation held occasional services there. At the first Annual Meeting on 3 October 1893, Mr S.L. Horowitz was elected President; Mr M. Cohen, our present Committeeman, was Treasurer; B. Fienberg, Hon. Sec. The unexpended balance of funds, 11s.6d., was handed over to the new Treasurer. During this year laws and regulations were made and printed which governed the Congregation until the Congregation was incorporated. New Year and Atonement Services were held in the old Perth Club Room, which Mr Freecorn lent us for this purpose. Passover Service was held at Mr H. Sam Cohen's residence in Stirling Street. At the next Annual Meeting, held 16 September 1894, the following officers were elected:- President, Mr N. Harris; Treasurer, P. Seeligson; Committee, Messrs J. Richards, M. Shrimski, S. Epstein, H. Sam Cohen and H. Seeligson. The Treasurer handed over the unexpended balance of the previous year, amounting to £9 7s.6d. At this meeting objection was taken to some gentlemen voting who had not been members six months, and a resolution was passed that if six months subscription was paid they would be entitled to vote at all General and Special Meetings. Our first care was to ask the Government for a suitable grant of land, and after some negotiations the present site was given to us. Having secured the land our next effort was directed to procure money to build a synagogue and Minister's residence; and at a general meeting of members held on 24 April 1895 a Building Committee was elected for these purposes, and consisted of Mr N. Harris, as President; P. Seeligson, Treasurer; Committee, Messrs A. Freedman, S. Herman, J. Richards, M. Rubinstein, S.L. Horowitz; and M. Samuel,

*This was the first Annual Report of the PHC to be printed. It has the additional virtue of summarising the Congregation's progress during its earliest years 1892-96. [Ed.]

Hon. Sec. Later, Mr S.L. Horowitz resigned his position. Each member was supplied with a Subscription List, and some other gentlemen also consented to receive subscriptions for us. A separate account was opened in the Western Australian Bank, but it took many months before £200 was collected. Contributions making such slow progress, we decided to have the Congregation brought under the Incorporation Act (which had been passed that session) for the purpose of borrowing money on mortgage of our property. Having been registered as an incorporated body we were able to make a start with building, and invited plans to be submitted to a General Meeting on 7 May 1896. The design of Mr Wolf, as you see was now completed, and later the contract was let to Mr M. Cohen for the sum of £1,500. The memorial stone was laid with great éclat, on 13 October last, by Lady Smith, on behalf of His Excellency Sir Gerard Smith, K.C.M.G., Governor of this colony, and by the Rev Mr Boas, of Adelaide, who had accepted our invitation to assist us in the ceremony. This brings us within the scope of the Building Committee's Report, which will be presented to the Congregation later on; also to the Annual Report proper. At the last Annual Meeting, held on 31 August, the following officers were elected:- President, Mr N. Harris; Treasurer, Mr A. Kott; Committee, Messrs S. Herman, G. Saunders, J. Richards, S.H. Cantor, M. Cohen; Hon. Sec., M. Samuel. The proceedings at the meeting have been read to you; and early in October our newly elected Treasurer, Mr A. Kott died. This, together with the illness of His Excellency the Governor, induced us to postpone the ceremony of laying memorial stones to 13 October, and a letter of condolence was sent to the widow of our deeply regretted Treasurer. On 1 November, Mr S.H. Cantor was elected to the vacant office.

MINISTER

It had been decided at a General Meeting held the previous July that a Minister should be chosen for us by a committee consisting of the Rev Dr Adler, Sir Simon Montague, and the Rev D. Singer; the gentleman nominated for us was the Rev D.I. Freedman, B.A., who arrived in Perth late in March when the members and ladies of the Congregation gave him a public reception. His introductory Service was held in the Oddfellows' Hall, on 3 April, and most impressive Sermons and Services have been conducted by him every Sabbath evening and morning besides on other suitable occasions. A letter of thanks was sent to the gentlemen of the selection committee for sending us such an able, zealous, and learned young man for our Minister. We feel sure you will agree with us that we were most fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr Freedman who has already done so much good for our social and religious intercourse. Your committee recommend with the consent of the Reverend gentleman that monthly Sunday *Mincha* and *Marev* Services be held in addition to the usual Sabbath and Festival Services, and await your adoption of this recommendation before arranging for the same. The Minister has also forwarded a request to the committee that the Congregation should insure his life for £1,000, and pay for the same out of the Congregational Funds. This matter the committee place before the meeting and ask for their directions without any recommendation for or against the proposition.



Nathan Harris.

FURNISHING

Previous to the arrival of the Minister, the ladies of the Congregation provided a fund to furnish the Minister's residence in a suitable manner, and organised a *Purim* Ball which was a great success socially and financially. In addition to this the gentlemen organised a Consecration Ball to supplement the ladies' efforts, which you must all know was a most enjoyable function. The two events provided a sufficient sum to accomplish this object without the Congregation having had to pay anything from their funds.

SECRETARY

It is with much regret that we have to inform the members that Mr M. Samuel, who has been our able Secretary for nearly three years, sent in his resignation two months ago. Mr S. Herman and myself tried to induce him to withdraw his resignation until the Annual Meeting. Mr E.P. Solomon then consented to act but was obliged through ill-health to give it up, when Mr S. Harris filled the position of Acting Honorary Secretary. The committee had intended presenting Mr M. Samuel with an illuminated address in recognition of his services, but thought it would have greater value to him if it were the gift of the Congregation, and now recommend that a suitable address be presented to Mr Samuel for his long and devoted service; and while on this subject they also recommend that a paid Secretary be elected at a salary of £37 10s. per annum. The election for Secretary to-day will be subject to your adoption of this recommendation, and it should be confirmed or disapproved of prior to the election.

MORTGAGE

The property of the Congregation was mortgaged for £3,000 at 5 per cent nominally (but charges bring it up to 6 per cent) for three years from 24 December last. This was authorised by a Special General Meeting; £1,000 was to finish the Synagogue and £2,000 to erect residences for revenue purposes on our Robinson Avenue frontage, further details of this matter will be furnished later on in the Report of the Building Committee. Shortly stated, on our retirement from office we will be able to hand over to the Congregation a property worthy £6,000 (of which they have contributed £600) burdened with a mortgage of £3,000, but with a provision for a Sinking Fund derived from the rents of the property and the surplus of the Congregational contributions which should extinguish the debt in six or seven years. The details

of this scheme were arranged principally by Mr S. Herman and our late Honorary Secretary, Mr Samuel, together with our Honorary Solicitor, Mr M.L. Moss, and to these gentlemen the thanks of this Congregation are tendered for their valuable assistance. The question of the future trusteeship of rents and Sinking Funds will also be dealt with in the Building Committee's Report.

SHOCHET

By authority of the General Meeting held on 10 January, the committee engaged Mr Swartz on 21 February as *Shochet* for one month at £2 per week. The engagement was renewed each month with the hope that Mr Swartz would perform his duties to the better satisfaction of the members, but finding no improvement they gave him one month's notice on 1 June. Mr B. Lenzer was written to and offered the position of *Shochet Shomas* collector and Assistant Reader under the direction of the Reverend Mr Freedman, at a salary of £2 per week and 5 per cent commission on his collection, including rentals. This appointment was confirmed for twelve months by a General Meeting called for this purpose.

SCHOOL

The Education Board Committee ask the Congregation to take over their liability of rent for school in the Oddfellows' Hall, which the Board of Management recommend, as the Education Board has no funds to pay it with. The school fees collected previous to the Minister's arrival were used to pay the first two months' rent, £3 10s., and the balance to pay for school books and their requisites for the scholars. The congregation's obligation was to provide a school room, and, being unable to do so on their own premises, the charge on rental should be paid from Congregational Funds. This formed one of the pleas for the collection that was so liberally responded to at the Consecration Service held lately, and the Board of Management requests your adoption to this recommendation. A report from the Secretary of the School Board will be presented later on.

CHIEF RABBI'S FUND

On 21 March a letter was received from P. Ornstein, the Secretary, asking the Congregation to contribute towards this. As we have not our Synagogue paid for we can fairly claim exemption. On enquiry we are informed that the usual contribution is £5 a year. The Board of Management put this matter before the members without any recommendation, and ask them to decide as they think proper.

On 21 March, we received a letter from Secretary of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation asking us to unite with other Australian Hebrew Congregations in presenting a joint Australian Jewish Address to Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary of her coronation. This was consented to and our contribution to this was £2.2s. A photo of this really beautiful address has been received and is now placed on the table for inspection.

FUNERALS

We have had to bury at the congregational expense five members of our faith since our last annual meeting, and this has been a unexpected source of expenditure.

Our appeal for aid under this item was also liberally responded to at the Consecration Ceremony; and, apart from that, we know that it would not in any case have been called into question by the members, as, failing our paying for the funeral and performing the rights, they would have had paupers' graves at the expense of the Government.

DONATIONS OF SHULE FURNISHINGS

Mrs H. Cohen has given the Congregation a white silk Ark Curtain embroidered and trimmed with gold fringes.

Mr A. Cohen, a blue silk velvet Ark Curtain.

Mr J. Richards, a *Sepher-Torah* and *Manteli*.

Mrs G. Saunders, a white silk embroidered *Manteli*.

Mr and Mrs Rubenstein, a Filigree Silver *Jod* (Pointer).

Mr J. Harris, of Menzies, a Silver Cup.

Mr Saunders, of Adelaide, per Reverend M. Saunders, a *Megillah*.

We also require a White and Blue Cover for the Reading Desk, a pair of Silver Candelabra for the Reader's Desk, another *Sepher*, and three sets of Silver Bells for the *Sephorim*. Any lady or gentleman willing to present these articles will please communicate with the Secretary.

CHOIR

A choir has been formed by the ladies and gentlemen of the Congregation (by the ladies principally), and, under the persistent coaching of the Reverend Mr Freedman and the leadership of Mr Mendoza, have obtained a fair extent of efficiency and to their assistance the success of the recent Consecration Service is largely due.

The last item to report is the Consecration of our Synagogue which took place on 1 October, and was a satisfactory crown to three years of work on behalf of this Congregation. As you must all agree it was a most successful function in every way. There was a large, influential and representative gathering. The Choir sang in good time and tune. The Reverend Mr Freedman delivered an able and earnest address, the offerings amounted to nearly £150. Everything exceeded our expectation, and must have been as gratifying to the members as it was to our Minister and the Board of Management. We trust the Congregation will extend the same loyal support to our successors as they have given to us. The emulation shown in the number of nominations for the different offices is a healthy sign of the interest taken by members in the affairs of the Congregation.

In conclusion, we hope that the good feeling existing among us may be continued, uniting us in the bonds of brotherhood, of race and religion, and that all of us will do our best to advance the interests of the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

N. HARRIS,
President.

Perth, 12 September 1897.

THE PRACTICE OF ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Rabbi D.Y.A. Freilich and Leila Hoffman

Orthodox Judaism is based on *halachah* (Jewish Law). It acknowledges the divine authenticity of the Torah (Five Books of Moses), and the authority of the Oral Law, made up of the interpretation of written law by rabbinic sages. Orthodox Judaism never steps out of the guidelines of *halachah*, but there is, within its circumference, room for different interpretations as well as both lenient and stricter adherence. The three bases for the religion are the home, Jewish education and the shule (synagogue).

Rabbi Freilich expresses his aims thus:

The main goal of the various Synagogal activities is to teach the community that Judaism is not . . . forbidding, cold, outdated . . . but a welcoming, warm and very contemporary way of life. This must be shown to our young people if we wish to retain them. Their Judaism should not be seen as a lot of "don't do's" but perceived by them as a religion which is open to their every need.¹

HOME

The home is the basis of Judaism from which all activities spring and where the child learns duties to G-d and duties to man. It is the home which ensures he has a Jewish education, attends the synagogue, and involves himself with the needs of the congregation.

The beautiful Friday night service with the lighting of candles, blessing the children,² praising the wife as a woman of worth,³ typifies Jewish family love and unity.

Hospitality is one of many Jewish duties, and guests are often invited, especially on Sabbath and festivals. The latter are occasions for extended-family gatherings.

Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) facilities support the home: the PHC Bookshop supplies a wide range of books and religious artefacts for Sabbath and festivals; and the Kosher Food Centre supplies kosher meat and bread, and other foodstuffs.

JEWISH EDUCATION

Knowing the importance of Jewish education, the rabbi runs a comprehensive programme under the banner of the Perth Torah Education Centre, a name chosen to indicate that his programmes are not restricted to PHC members.

Rabbi's *shiurim* (lectures) provide for young and old alike. Topics include: Jewish ethics and philosophy, Torah thoughts, Talmud; and audiences include men and women, seniors at the Maurice Zeffert Home for the Aged, Jewish Mount Lawley Senior High School students; post *Bar Mitzvah* boys; university students on campus; and businessmen. There are also talks sponsored by the Perth Beth Din.

Yitzchak Ben-Ami, who is an integral part of the religious life of the shule, runs a weekly course on basic Judaism for men and women. He also holds Jewish knowledge classes for recently arrived Russian Jewish immigrants. Rabbanit Aviva Freilich, besides conducting a fortnightly course of lectures (e.g. *Pirke Avot*), heads the committee of the Jewish Women's Education Programme. Since 1989 they have organised three dinners and run two month-long education programmes. The latter covered a wide range of topics to cater for the diverse needs of the community.

At rabbi's request, librarian Leila Hoffman started a Judaica Lending Library in 1989. It is housed in the Bet Hamidrash (part of the synagogue) and is growing steadily. It is open to Jews and non-Jews alike, and all books are donated.

Rabbi writes a weekly column for the *Maccabean* answering questions of halachah and a short commentary on the weekly Torah reading. His longer commentary sheets are available in shule. He has written and published, at his own expense,



The Mikvah, Perth Synagogue.

a booklet on the New Year and the Day of Atonement which was distributed to shule-goers on New Year.

Historically, PHC members started the Perth Hebrew School, still under the auspices of PHC; and Carmel School, a separate body. At present, the rabbi is the halachic authority for Carmel School. He is an honorary regular part-time teacher there, taking classes in years 11 and 12. His aim in doing this is to establish personal contact with those approaching adulthood. Good relations exist between the school and the PHC, and recent presidents have allowed Carmel School to have a number of functions in the synagogue building.

SYNAGOGUE AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Services are held twice daily with Torah (Five Books of Moses) readings Sunday, Thursday, Sabbath, *Rosh Chodesh* (New Moon) and holy days. Religious Jews live within walking distance of shule for they may not ride on Sabbath or holy days. Sabbath services are held Friday night and Saturday morning which men, women and children attend. The Sabbath morning service includes readings from the Torah and Prophets; and various blessings and prayers. Special prayers are said for the royal family, royal representatives, and the people of Australia, the State of Israel, and the Israeli Defence Forces. Printed sheets giving Torah readings in Hebrew and English, as well as commentary sheets are available.

Boys reaching age thirteen have an individual Bar Mitzvah ceremony. They read portions of the Torah and Prophets; some read part of the service, and the rabbi (or in some cases the father) blesses the boy.⁴

Girls reaching age twelve have a group Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Two different ceremonies are held, each backed by an education programme of some months. Carmel School organises the one for its students, while Rabbi and Rabbanit Freilich organise the other.

PHC holds a communal Seder for Pesach, and a luncheon for Simchat Torah. Carmel School arranges *shabbatons* (Friday night dinners and services) at PHC. This enables students to experience a Friday night service if they do not have one at home. PHC Purim and Chanukah celebrations include entertainment and other activities to delight the young. A large communal *chanukiah* (candelabra) is lit on Chanukah. A large *succah* (leaf covered booth) is built for Succoth, and congregants gather there after the service for refreshments.

All refreshments, whether at home or shule are accompanied by blessings which sanctify the taking of food and wine.

Other special services are held for holy days, some late at night.⁵ Monthly Sephardi services have started, for while congregational unity is desirable, Rabbi Freilich feels we should always keep our own unique family traditions.

JEWISH COMMUNAL FACILITIES

These are facilities provided for the whole Jewish community and are not restricted to PHC members.

The *mikvah* (ritual bath) is situated in the synagogue building. In 1989 Rabbi Freilich halachically upgraded it in consultation with expert Rabbi Wosner, who PHC brought from Monsey, NY.

In 1991 an *enuv* (boundary) was established by Rabbi Freilich in consultation with Rabbi Zaichyk of the Mizrachi, Melbourne. This enables religious Jews to do what they could not do before, viz, carry items, like house keys; and push prams on Shabbat from home to shule.⁶

The main rabbis of the Perth Beth Din (Jewish Court of Law) are Rabbi Freilich and Rabbi Coleman. Other members are mature, experienced men, religiously qualified to serve. The functions of the Beth Din are arbitration, divorce (Get), and conversion. Where possible, Jews prefer disputes to be settled by Beth Din arbitration rather than a civil court.

A Jewish divorce, as well as a civil one, is needed by a couple whose marriage has ended. The Jewish divorce certificate (Get) must be written by a religiously qualified scribe. In Perth, the scribe is David Jacob.

Conversion candidates must present themselves before the Perth Beth Din after undergoing halachic requirements. Each case is judged separately and on its own merit. An applicant is accepted only if the Beth Din is convinced of the applicant's total sincerity and dedication to orthodox Judaism; and not merely as a convenience for the sake of marriage to a Jewish spouse. Once converted, the person attains full Jewish status. No charge is made for the conversion.



Food Distribution Centre.

KOSHER FOOD SERVICES AND KASHRUT

The *shochet*, David Yacob, is the man qualified and employed to ritually slaughter permitted animals and birds. He operates under the halachic authority of Rabbi Freilich and the Kashrut Authority of WA.

Under the supervision of Rabbi Freilich, the *shochet* also did the field work of checking products in factories and putting together the Perth Kashrut List. (This is an update and new format of the list started by Rabbi Coleman.) Now Rabbi Freilich continues the work, supported by a group of young religious helpers. In 1991 there was, for the first time, the production of some local, properly supervised, Kosher Le Pesach goods, including soft drinks, sorbet and cheese. Kosher meat is sold by the Kosher Food Centre in premises owned by the PHC in the shule grounds. Parking is easy and convenient to the shule office. The Kosher Food Centre is under Jewish management, but employs non-Jewish butchers. Kosher bread has been baked on the premises since 1988. Other kosher food stuffs are sold there, and it is a distribution point for Pesach goods annually. At the time of writing, locally produced Cholov Yisroel milk and kosher wine are planned. Several kosher catering services exist as well as a kosher restaurant-and-take-away. Food venues and services mentioned are under the supervision of the Kashrut Authority of WA.

FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

Brit Milah (Religious Circumcision)

Perth is fortunate to have Jewish doctors who meet the religious and technical requirements to qualify as *mohelim*, those who perform *brit milah*. Doctors preferred to do this in hospitals for reasons of safety, but are now encouraged to use the shule as having greater religious significance. The *sandek* (godfather) sits in Elijah's chair, and holds the baby while the circumcision is performed.

Young Adults' Activities

Activities for young unmarried are organised by Rabbi and Rabbanit Freilich both in their home and at other venues, and have resulted in some weddings. PHC has a youth committee which arranges outings; and it provides a phone and premises where the youth movement, Bnei Akiva, can meet.

Marriages

Marriages under a *chupah* (wedding canopy), were always performed in the synagogue, but are now sometimes held at other venues. Blessings and prayers are said, and parents offer wine to both bride and groom to symbolise their acceptance into the family. The *ketubbah* (marriage contract), is read out. The bridegroom breaks a glass to signify that even in our joy we remember the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem.

BAR MITZVAH PRAYER *(formerly used in Brisbane St Synagogue)*

Almighty and Merciful G-d:

At this sacred moment of my life, I come near unto Thee to ask Thy blessing.

Entering upon my religious majority, I take upon myself the fulfilment of duty which falls upon a Son of the House of Israel.

Help me to bear myself with honour and credit. Help me to understand the pride I should feel in my glorious ancestry, and in the men and women who, down through the ages, have upheld so heroically Thy Holy Name.

I ask Thy blessing O Lord, for my beloved Father and Mother.

Grant them length of days, the joys of prosperity, health, happiness and peace.

Fill our home with joy and gladness, and unite us all in the bond of love.

May I know that Thou art with me, to give me courage to do my duty and to perform zealously all that is required of a devoted Son of the Jewish Covenant.

Amen.

(Attributed to Rabbi D.I. Freedman.)

Perth Chevra Kadisha, Funerals, Mourning

Established in 1896, the Perth Chevra Kadisha is one of the oldest and most important organisations within the Jewish community. The objects of the Chevra Kadisha are to perform the Tahara (preparation of the body) and the burial according to halacha and to perform such services as are required for the dying, the dead and the mourners. The membership consists of dedicated men and women who, in an entirely voluntary capacity, devote themselves to the performance of this holy work.⁷

Funeral services are conducted by a rabbi in the Jewish portion of Karrakatta Cemetery in the *Ohel* (Prayer Hall). Mourners proceed to the graveside where more prayers are said. The coffin, religiously required to be a plain wooden box, is lowered and mourners shovel a small quantity of sand on it. No flowers are permitted at a Jewish funeral.

The Chevra Kadisha, once part of the PHC, became autonomous in 1992, although still under the halachic authority of the rabbi. PHC built and paid for the first Prayer Hall in 1906, but in 1983 it was the Chevra Kadisha who erected the second Prayer Hall, financed by their sale of memorial plaques in shule. The plaques are lit on the eve of the *yarhzeit* (anniversary of death according to the Jewish calendar).

Jewish people keep seven days' mourning, saying *kaddish* (a memorial prayer) during this time. On the *yarhzeit* of parents or spouse, a memorial candle is lit in the home and *kaddish* is said at shule. A *minyan* (ten men over the age of thirteen) must be present.

Man's Duty to Man

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is fundamental to Judaism.⁸ This includes

kindness in word and deed, visiting the sick, charity to the poor, and a ban on *loshon hora* (hurting people with words).

Rabbi Freilich visits the sick weekly, as his predecessors did.

He has instituted an official chaplaincy service incorporating all the orthodox Jewish clergy in Perth.

Money for charity to the poor is collected in congregational *tzedaka* (charity) money boxes (hut not on Sabbath when handling of money is forbidden). There are also societies and trusts handling charity on a larger scale.

Because it is a duty to "make peace between man and his fellow"⁹ *loshon hora* (evil tongue), or hurting people with words, is forbidden. The daily services include the prayer, "Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile".¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Some say, "There was nothing here till I came". But they ignore the efforts of past rabbis and congregations. Many migrants struggled to make a living in the days before the dole and social security.

We pay tribute to past rabbis, each of whom did his best according to his training, personality, and the times and conditions of his term of office. We pay tribute to the congregants who clung to the commandments and "taught them diligently to their children"¹¹ so that we are here today. We thank them and G-d who have "kept us alive and have preserved us and have enabled us to reach this season".¹²

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NOTES

1. PHC *Annual Report*, 1990, p.13.
2. Priestly blessing, Numbers Ch.6, v.24-26: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord turn his face unto thee and give thee peace."
3. "A woman of worth who can find? For her price is far above rubies." Proverbs Ch. 31, v.10-31.
4. See note 2.
5. Late night prayers and services include: the special dance through buckets of water at midnight on seventh night Passover, to celebrate the crossing of the Red Sea; Tikun Leil Shavuot, the communal night of Torah study in the shule foyer; and the night of Selichot (penitential prayer) before New Year.
6. D.Y.A. Freilich, *The Eruv and you* (Menora: PHC, 1991). 5p. The eruv boundaries are within Morley Drive, Flinders St, Walcott St, Beaufort St. The Strand.
7. *Magen David Adom Diary 1991-1992* (Yokine: Jewish Centre), p. 270.
8. Leviticus Ch. 19, v.18.
9. S. Singer, *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*. London: Singer's Prayer Book Publication Committee, 1962, p.6.
10. *Ibid.* p. 218.
11. Shema, First section, Deuteronomy Ch. 6, v.4-9: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One . . . thou shalt teach them (these words) diligently unto thy children."
12. Words taken from a blessing said on festivals and important occasions, thanking G-d for giving us life to enjoy them.

THE RABBINATE

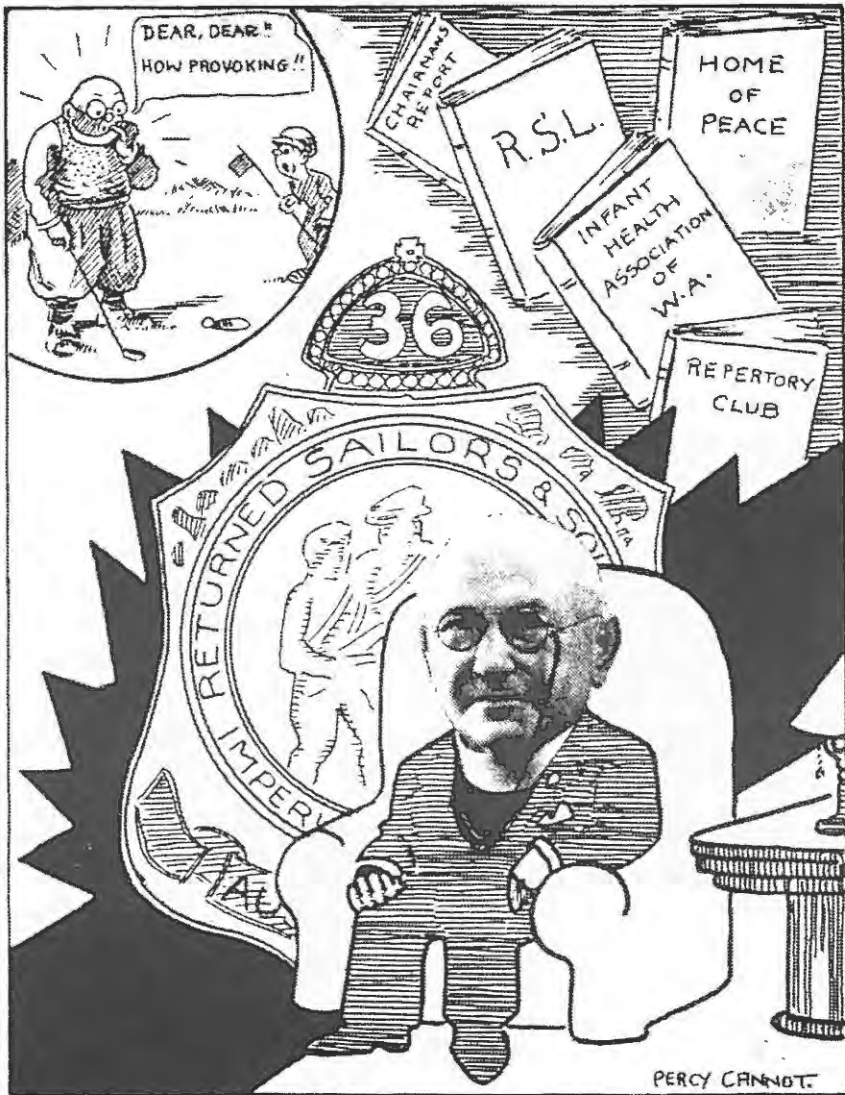
A significant feature of the Perth Hebrew Congregation's operations over the years has been the length of service provided by its chief ministers. Reverend D.I. Freedman, the foundation appointee, occupied the office for forty-two years. Rabbi Rubin-Zacks, his successor, filled the position for twenty-five years, and Rabbi Coleman, the third chief minister, controlled the religious affairs of the congregation for twenty years. Only Rabbi Orelowitz, the next appointee, served briefly for an interval of less than two years. The present incumbent, Rabbi Freilich, took charge in mid-1988, and for many congregants his ministry already promises to emulate those of his earlier predecessors.

DAVID ISAAC FREEDMAN*

Phillip Masel

Rabbi Freedman OBE, BA, VD, JP, was Minister to the Perth Hebrew Congregation from March 1897 till June 1939. During that long period he was a dominating figure, exerting a powerful influence for good, formulating the character of his congregation, setting a noble example in every phase of communal life. In every communal activity he was well to the fore. The history of the Congregation and the career of its first Minister are so closely linked together that a study of one would be incomplete without a study of the other.

*This biographical sketch was written by the late Mr. Phillip Masel for inclusion in the congregation's souvenir publication, *The Story of the Perth Hebrew Congregation 1896-1946*. It has been reproduced here with the permission of his daughter, Mrs. K. Arkwright. The few additions made to the original article are shown in brackets.[]



**FREEDMAN, Rabbi, David Isaac,
O.B.E., V.D., B.A., J.P.**

Rabbi Freedman is a son of Moses Freedman, of London, and is a member of Senate, W.A. University, W.A. Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. He is Past President of the R.S.L., President of the Children's Protection Society, Victoria League, Institute of W.A. for the Blind, Soldiers' Children's Scholarship Trust, and Zionist Association of W.A. He is also Chairman of Prison Gate Committee of W.A. and Repatriation State Education Board of Children of Deceased Soldiers. He takes a leading part in the Infant Health Association, Boy Scouts movement and Perth Symphony Orchestral Society. He is Hon. Secretary and Trustee of the Home of Peace and a Trustee of the Children's Hospital. He is a member of the Committee of the State War Memorial and P.S.G.W. of the W.A. Constitution of Freemasons. During the Great War he served overseas with the A.I.F. as Jewish Chaplain.

His recreation is golf, and his clubs are the Rotary, Legacy, Repertory, Perth and Mt. Lawley Golf.

Cartoonist's Impression, 1936.

David Isaac Freedman was born at Eperise in Hungary on 2 April 1874. The son of Moses Freedman, a London merchant, he was educated at the University and Jews' College in London, and came out to Western Australia in 1897, conducting his first service in the Oddfellows' Hall. In December of that year he married Miss Annie Florence Cohen, who had followed him from London.

Between 1915-1918 the Rabbi served with the A.I.F. as a Chaplain-Major at Gallipoli, France, Belgium, Egypt and Palestine. In 1933, accompanied by Mrs Freedman, he again went abroad, this time to act as Australian delegate at the sixth biennial conference of the British Empire Service League. While in London he accepted an invitation to act as substitute Australian Delegate to the Fourteenth Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva.

A gifted and forceful speaker, he was never afraid to use the pulpit for reproof and correction when the need arose, and his sermons exercised a profound influence upon the lives of his congregants.

In addition to his Rabbinical duties, he rendered outstanding communal service as headmaster of the Hebrew School. He revolutionised teaching methods by writing and setting to music over 150 songs which cover the major teachings of the Jewish religion. The simplicity and efficacy of this method of instruction brought high praise from educational authorities in various parts of the world.

The Rabbi was president and founder of the W.A. Zionist Association, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, the Jewish Returned Soldiers' Circle, and the Hebrew Dramatic Society. [In 1900 he formed the Perth Zionist Society which was the pioneer Zionist organisation in Australia.] He was keenly interested in a number of other communal organisations, to which he gave invaluable service whenever and however it was required.

The great work done within his own community was equalled by his services to the State. Among the more important positions which he held were: member of the University Senate; trustee to the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery; State President of the Returned Soldiers' League; President of the Children's Protection Society; President of the Victoria League, Institute and School for the Blind, and the Soldiers' Children Scholarship Trust; Chairman of the Prison Gate Committee, and of the Education Board for children of deceased soldiers; Past Senior Grand Warden of W.A. Freemasons; President of the Perth Repertory Club. [In his earlier years in Perth, Reverend Freedman had been President of the Literary Societies Union of Western Australia, Chairman of the Perth District Board of Education for six years, and an executive and foundation member of the Children's Hospital and the Home of Peace.]

His humanity was not limited by border or creed. To him the distressed cry from the orphaned son of an Australian fellow-soldier and the distressed cry from the homeless son of a German fellow-Jew sounded equally urgent. He never forgot his responsibilities as a Rabbi; he was always mindful of his duties as a citizen.

By his perfect co-ordination of spiritual strength and national devotion, he did much to enhance the good name of the Jew as well as to influence the character of his community and the direction of its development.

Even when his health was beginning to fail, his activities did not lessen. On a wintry morning in June, 1939, he left his home to attend an executive meeting of the Returned Soldiers' League. Collapsing as he entered Anzac House, he was hurried to the Perth Hospital, but died next day, on 23 June 1939. At the funeral service, which was semi-military in character, Reverend L. Rubin-Zacks said: "He died as he would have wished — in the service of God, in the service of Jewry, in the service of his fellow men."

RABBI LOUIS RUBIN-ZACKS MA (Lond.), JP

Ossie Tofler

The Perth Jewish Community first became aware of Rabbi Rubin-Zacks when he was invited as the rabbi of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation to make the funeral oration for Rabbi D.I. Freedman in 1939.

Some six months later he left Adelaide with his wife Betty to become the second rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

Louis Rubin-Zacks was born in London on 17 October 1909. His early childhood was difficult. His brothers and sisters were separated and each was brought up by a different family. He was very poor, wore ill-fitting secondhand clothes and studied by candlelight. A brilliant student, he won a scholarship to Oxford, but was unable to accept it "because social commitments would have demanded more money" than he had. Perhaps the rigours of his childhood enabled him to have compassion for those under stress.

After training at Jews' College, he accepted a call to the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation in 1935. He was fond of telling the story that one of the big decisions in his life was whether to accept an offer to join the London firm of Ladbrokes or make a career in the ministry. When Jewish communal life presented problems he often regretted his decision.

His wife Betty was an accomplished soprano and they both loved to harmonise during the *Birchat Hamazon* at simchas. It went without saying in those days that the rabbi was the chairman at weddings and Bar Mitzvah celebrations. In 1942 he introduced Perth to the Bat Mitzvah celebration.

During World War II he saw service with the AIF as chaplain. Service in New Guinea proved to be a strain on his psyche and hereafter he was frequently troubled by a mild state of anxiety depression. Betty protected him as best she could despite her ill-health which finally led to her death in 1964.

Rabbi Rubin-Zacks carried on his duties for another five years after the death of his wife until he could no longer cope, for health reasons, with the burdens of his role.



Rabbi Louis Rubin-Zacks.

His sermons in shule on *Yom Tovim* were to some extent predictable. "Watchman, what of the night?" (Isaiah 21.11) was one of his favourite quotations as he exhorted his congregants in his pleasant English accent, to contemplate the future.

Being headmaster of the Hebrew School, which catered for 180 students, was one of his large part-time responsibilities which he inherited from Rabbi Freedman. He was a gentle teacher. During this time there was a choir of Perth Hebrew School boys singing every Shabbat, mostly under the guidance of Leon Zeffert.

His wider communal activities included the RSL and he continued the Anzac Day tradition of having a formal shule service.

In the post-war years pressure was brought upon him to have late Friday evening services and for a short time he agreed.

During his term of office the Temple David Congregation began and this breakaway from his congregation no doubt took its toll on his health.

Mayer Breckler, who was president of the P.H.C. when the rabbi was appointed, continued a close association with him and his wife for many years.

Kindness and sympathy to the sick and those in need often took a practical form. When Ben Ritcher died, the rabbi helped his wife Ettie take over the position of head of the Civilian Maimed and Limbless Association.

For the next thirteen years he enjoyed the company of his fellow Jews. Over the years he had shared simchas and sorrows with them, rich and poor. He was a friend, teacher, a part of everyone's life. After Betty's death he moved from his home in Lawley Crescent to a modest flat near the Perth Oval and within a short walking distance of the shule in Brisbane Street. When he moved from there to the Maurice Zeffert Home he donated his large library to Carmel School.

At the Maurice Zeffert Home he officiated at all the services until he died. He was more than generous to the Maurice Zeffert Home and the G. Korsunski-Carmel School.

There was no pretence of being a great leader. In his earlier years he enjoyed attending Jewish sporting fixtures, particularly when Maccabi Carnivals were held in Perth. During the latter years he loved to be on good mate terms with his congregants. Like many leaders, his popularity was enhanced after he retired and he enjoyed his last days amongst the people who knew him well. He died on 24 January 1983 aged seventy-three.

RABBI SHALOM COLEMAN CBE, AM, JP.

Born 5.12.1918 in Liverpool, UK.

BA, BLit University of Liverpool

MA University of South Africa

PHD University of Orange Free State

Ossie Tofter

An era began at the Perth Hebrew Congregation when president Gordon Bloomfield returned from Sydney to introduce Rabbi and Mrs Coleman and their family to the members.

One could sense a change in the tempo of Jewish life and this became apparent when he took up his position as chief rabbi of the PHC in 1966. With his wife Anna, daughter Romaine and son Martin, he settled into the congregation owned former house of Simcha and Rochma Edelman, on the corner of Adair Parade and Inverness Crescent and transformed it into a rabbinic residence with a formal entertainment area upstairs.

The forty minute walk from home to the Brisbane Street shule and the same distance back was one of the hidden benefits of his salary package, one which will no doubt stand him in good stead in the many years of good health which hopefully lie ahead. During this walk many discussions took place and inspiration for sermons was gathered.

Under the guidance of Rabbi Rubin-Zacks, Jewish public functions were *milchick* WIZO catered affairs. Tightening up on *Kashnut* was only one of his many early challenges, as he sought to introduce *fleishig simchot* along eastern states lines.

Setting up Perth's first Beth Din with Rabbi Kotlar and Rabbi Rubin-Zacks was no problem by virtue of his experience with the London Beth Din in 1954-55 and the Sydney Beth Din 1961-65.

In terms of Jewish education his main contribution was the creation of "The Academy" a name chosen for want of a better one. There, every morning, during and after *Shachrit*, at the regular morning breakfast, he exerted his influence on a small group of boys who later extended their studies and are a credit to his talents and persistence.

Those who have a background of attendance at synagogues elsewhere in the world would know that few could be a better *Ba'al Tefille*. His natural musical talent, his extremely pleasant voice and his natural feeling for *Nigunim* enhanced by his family rabbinical traditions, combined to produce an experience which will be treasured by many in years to come.

His language talents found expression in his forceful sermons. He was and still is in demand as a speaker in the general community. Perhaps his greatest honour in this area was the delivery of the 19th Kyle Oration in the Octagon Theatre at the University of Western Australia which sponsored the oration along with the Rotary Club of Perth. His speeches at various Rotary functions have been the topic of praise in Rotary circles. It is no surprise that he has been nominated Rotary district governor for 1993-94.

If Anzac Day does not fall on Shabbat you can see Rabbi Coleman proudly taking part as a result of his Royal Air Force service as a wireless operator/air gunner in World War II, chaplain of the Z Special Unit of Australia and patron of the Fleet Air Arm. He was a member of the State Executive of the Returned Soldiers League from 1985-87 and editor of *The Listening Post*, its monthly news sheet. Those who go to the dawn Anzac Day services will know that as chaplain of the W.A. Fifth Military District, he has been conducting the services at the Jewish War Memorial since 1966.

The prolonged illness of his first wife Auna placed a great burden on him and all admired the manner in which he coped with the situation. As always, examples speak louder than words.

Building a new synagogue was nothing new for him. During his time as rabbi of the South Head and District Hebrew Congregation 1961-65, he was a driving force behind the transformation of their "*shtetle like*" building into a formal synagogue.

By virtue of his experience in dealing with officials in the UK and South Africa, 1947-60, and Sydney, 1961-65, his presence,



Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman.

powers of persuasion and the dignity of his position in the Perth Jewish Community, a grant of land was made available to the Perth Hebrew Congregation in 1967 in Freedman Avenue.

Anyone walking into his library could sense the love of books that only a scholar has. An avid reader and book reviewer he is also the author of *Hosea Concepts in Midrash and Talmud* (Bloemfontein, 1960); *Habbakuk in Rabbinic Doctrine* (1965); "Malachi in Midrashic Analyses" (prepared manuscript); *What is a Jewish Home* (1978); *What is a Synagogue* (1982); *A short history of the Karrakatta Cemetery* (1979); and numerous articles in local and international academic literary journals and press.

Like many Perth Jewish parents, he has the misfortune of his children living elsewhere. His son Martin is living in Melbourne and his daughter Romaine with her family in the United States. However, the name of Coleman still has a high profile in Western Australia. The North Perth Dental Clinic was renamed the Shalom Coleman Dental Clinic in honour of his chairmanship of the Board of the Perth Dental Hospital from 1984-89 after ten years as a board member. Close to the Smythe Road entrance of the Karrakatta Cemetery, the Shalom Coleman Grove was dedicated in 1989 as a tribute to fifteen years service as a trustee of the Cemetery Board.

His interest in freemasonry of which he has been a member since 1957, led to him being grand chaplain for 1977-79.

In addition to being a visible Jew in all the roles mentioned, he was a member of the Senate of Murdoch University from 1978 to 1987, a vice-president of the Save the Children Fund from 1967, and a vice patron of the St John Ambulance Association from 1967.

Following his marriage to Elena Doktorovich, his already broad interest has expanded even further to embrace the organisation of Russian newcomers to the community.

In recognition of his work for youth, education and the Jewish community, Rabbi Coleman was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in the Queen's 1981 New Year Honours. In the 1990 Australia Day Queen's Honours, Rabbi Coleman was awarded membership of the Order of Australia, and is the only rabbi to have received imperial and Australian honours. Recently he has been made honorary life president of the Association of Rabbis and Ministers of Australia and New Zealand.

Following his retirement in 1985 he helped to bring Rabbi David Freilich from Sydney to Perth to carry on where he left off. He continues to serve the PHC when required.

Ad Mea Ve'Esrim.

RABBI MICHAEL S. ORELOWITZ MA, New York

David Mossenson

Rabbi Coleman's successor, Rabbi Orelowitz, occupied the position of chief minister of the Perth Hebrew Congregation for a period of two years.

Rabbi Orelowitz was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1956. His major tertiary studies were undertaken in New York. He acquired the following qualifications of the Yeshiva University in that city: BA in economics, MA in modern Jewish history, and Smicha from the Theological Seminary of that institution. In addition he studied in Jerusalem where he obtained authorization for Shechita and Mila.

For a period of fifteen months he taught at the renowned Maimonides School in Boston, living in the home and studying with the celebrated sage Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, during that time. His previous rabbinic appointment had been with a congregation in Ottawa, Canada.

Accompanied by his Rebbetzin Julie, Rabbi Orelowitz took up duty in Perth in July 1985. For various reasons his period of office was fraught with difficulties. On his own volition he applied to be relieved of his contract. Rabbi and Mrs Orelowitz returned to the United States before the close of 1987.

RABBI DAVID FREILICH BA (Hons) Lond., MA Syd.

David Mossenson

Rabbi Freilich is the incumbent chief minister of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. He is also the halachic authority for the newly established Northern Suburbs Hebrew Congregation. Rabbi Freilich, his wife Aviva and their four children settled in Perth in July 1988.

Rabbi Freilich was born in Sydney in October 1949 and attended the Sydney Grammar School to matriculation level. He then went directly to Jews' College

London to study for the ministry and was at that college from 1968 to 1973, during which time he gained his BA (Hons) in Semitic studies from London University as well as the chief rabbi's Minister's Certificate. In 1972 he was awarded the Arthur Marmorstein Memorial Prize for Talmud at Jews' College.

He returned to Sydney in 1973 and was shortly afterwards appointed chief minister of the Kingsford-Maroubra Hebrew Congregation. After intensive private study in Sydney, Rabbi Freilich continued his rabbinical studies during a year's leave in Israel in 1977. He gained Smichot from rabbis in Bnei Braq, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

In 1976 he completed a Master of Arts degree in semitic studies at the University of Sydney. At the end of 1977 he returned to the Kingsford-Maroubra Congregation. In 1977 he was also appointed senior teacher with the Ramah Academy of matriculation Hebrew (Classical).



Rabbi David Freilich.

In 1980 he was instrumental in forming the embryo of a new Jewish Day School in Maroubra, the Mount Sinai College, which has now progressed to become a full stream primary school of 140 pupils. Rabbi Freilich held the position of spiritual dean of the college for which he formulated the Jewish Studies curriculum.

In 1984 he was appointed senior lecturer in Judaic studies at the Sydney College of Advanced Education, a new course designed for the training of Australian Jewish Studies teachers.

In 1985 he became lecturer in Talmudic law in the Law Faculty of the University of New South Wales, this being the first time that such a course had been offered by a university in Australia.

Rabbi Freilich's wife, Aviva, is also Australian born and holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Laws with Honours and Master of Laws from Sydney University where she lectured in commercial and industrial law. She is also learned in Jewish law and culture.

In a short space of time Rabbi and Mrs Freilich have captured the respect and affection of large sections of Perth Jewry. The rabbi's indefatigable devotion to his duties and his engaging manner have endeared him to his congregants. Mrs Freilich's accomplishments and activities supplement her husband's efforts. The cultural life of the community in particular, has benefited from her presence.

The Freilich family is warmly appreciated by Perth Jewry.

LAND GRANTS*

Jeffrey Pearlman

Land grants in Western Australia for Jewish communal purposes had been made prior to the foundation of the Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) in 1892. Those grants were for a cemetery at East Perth in 1867 and a synagogue at Fremantle in 1891.¹ Both properties became vested in the PHC in 1906 and 1908 respectively.² This paper discusses grants made to the PHC following requests by or on its behalf. Information has principally been obtained from Lands Department files both current and closed.

BRISBANE STREET

The PHC asked for a grant of land for a synagogue in a letter dated 11 January 1895 and signed by N.A. Harris, president, and P. Seeligson, treasurer, seeking a portion of the old gaol site on the corner of Francis and Beaufort Streets.³ While the Lands Department considered that it would be inappropriate to grant any part of the old gaol reserve for this request, Perth Town Lot N38 in Brisbane Street was available.

The congregation accepted the site offered and Reserve Number 2807 was created on 7 February 1895. The three-quarters of an acre block lay between Brisbane Street and an undeclared street, Robinson Avenue. The PHC sought to obtain the block with power to mortgage it for a sum not exceeding £500 to partially meet building costs. Whilst this caused concern in the department and to the crown solicitor, the request was granted. The correspondence on file stated that the PHC sought the issue of the crown grant as soon as possible in order to commence building. Eventually the buildings on the site consisted of the synagogue, the manse, the communal hall and five semi-detached cottages at the southern end of the block.

During construction of the cottages it was found that their eastern wall encroached some three feet into the adjoining property, which was a government reserve. On 9 June 1897 the secretary of the PHC, M. Samuel, wrote to Commissioner for Crown Lands G. Throssell requesting a grant to the PHC of a strip of land of the western portion of the adjoining Reserve 1137A to take in the buildings then being erected. A plan prepared by surveyors was attached.

* This article has been developed from the paper the author presented at a meeting of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society held on 2 August 1987.

Ackd

Perth, Jan'y 11 1895

To the Commissioner of Crown Lands
Sir.

As the Jewish Community are now in a position to erect a substantial place of worship and have a fund for this purpose. They desire me as President of their denomination to apply to you for a building site and on enquiry find there is a small piece of Land unalienated at the Q^o Francis or near the Museum. If the government could grant us this or portion of it or any other suitable site we could commence operations at once as we have plans & idea of plan all ready subject to approval of the proper authorities. Messrs Solomon or L. G. and Mr. L. Samson together with myself have consented to act as trustees and we hope the building will be an ornamental addition to the neighbourhood. We believe there are 500 Jewish inhabitants daily increasing in Perth and the need of a place of worship will be recognized and we hope meet by the government granting the small piece of land at Q^o Francis and Beaufort Street. Trusting for a favorable Reply

We are

Yours faithfully
N. Harris President
R. Solomon Secy.

The department was sympathetic to the request: Perth Town Lot N155 was formally granted to the PHC on 15 September 1897. That lot was three feet wide! It was granted even though there had been a change of policy from 1 January 1897 whereby crown grants of land to religious bodies were no longer to be made. Rather, they were to receive leases for 999 years. The PHC received this additional crown grant because the main block had been granted prior to 1 January 1897.

The next specific request for land in Perth was a letter of 1 August 1901 from the PHC secretary, H. Casper:

With further reference to the application for grants of land in different parts of the State for Jewish Communal purposes, I have the honor to make application for grant of Perth Town Lot N37. This land is adjacent to the synagogue in Brisbane Street . . . the PHC contemplated erecting a school which is estimated to cost £500, and as nearly £400 has been already promised, we are prepared to erect this building immediately.

He also noted that the Jewish community in Perth was a growing one and that only one grant of land, at Brisbane Street, had been given to it. He also requested that the minister receive a deputation to discuss the request.

Notes on file by various officials, including the under-secretary for Lands, and dated 9 August, 13 August and 19 August 1901, all recommended against the grant: Firstly, the Jewish community in Perth had been liberally treated — the present block was three-quarters of an acre together with the strip accommodating the encroachment. The additional strip was identified as seven feet rather than the three feet actually granted. Secondly, there was a shortage of reserves available in Perth — the Baptists and other churches had been refused.

The minister for Lands received the deputation from the PHC on 19 August 1901. An account of the meeting between the minister and the deputation was reported in the *Morning Herald* of 20 August 1901. A cutting appears on the Lands Department file. The delegation was led by (then) Reverend D.I. Freedman. They stated that they wished to build a school and an almshouse. They had educated their children and looked after their poor without appealing to the government for assistance. With the erection of a school the requirements of the Jewish community in and around Perth would be met. Money was available for the new building and it was essential that it be close to the synagogue. The minister stated that their request would be considered and an answer provided at an early date.

The minister circulated the newspaper extract to the premier, the colonial treasurer, the minister for Works, the commissioner for Railways and the minister for Mines, seeking their views before making a recommendation. He considered that the delegation had made a fairly strong case, especially as “these people look after their sick and infirm and educate their children free of expense to the State”, and was inclined to grant them the land “for a term of years” for the requested purposes. The views of other ministers was also sought because the land was valued at about £500.

The PHC were advised by letter dated 4 October 1901 that Reserve 6048 being Perth Town Lot N 37 had that day been formally set aside for a Jewish school and almshouse, with a 999 year lease.

On 8 April 1902 the PHC wrote to ask for the issue of a crown grant so that they might use the property as security, to which the Lands Department recommended agreement as there had been one issued for the adjoining block.

The crown grant was issued, but there were errors. Firstly, it was issued in the name of the trustees, but the PHC had been incorporated so that it could hold land in its own name. Secondly, the purpose stated was for a place of worship for members of the Jewish faith, whereas the grant had been made for a school and almshouse. H.B. Joseph, honorary solicitor for the PHC, wrote to the under secretary for Lands on 12 August 1902 asking that the Certificate of Title be amended to be issued in the full name of the PHC and that the restrictions on use other than as a place of worship be withdrawn, as after the erection of school, hall and almshouse, the congregation sought to use any vacant ground for the erection of revenue producing buildings to assist in the good work of those institutions.

The grant was surrendered and reissued in the name of the PHC. Six tennis courts were erected by the 1920s but fell into disrepair following the demise of the tennis club in the early 1930s. In the mid 1930s part of the area was provided with lights, and was later used for training for basketball and soccer.

The schoolhouse was first contained in and about the communal hall. It was only in 1936 that the Hebrew School and scout hall was erected on Lot N 37. That building was subsequently used as the Seeligson Kindergarten and Carmel School before they were moved to the present site at Yokine.

There are references on the file during 1906, 1909 and 1912 seeking the consent of the governor to mortgages of the land. In 1906 and 1909 the amounts were £500 and the mortgagees were the Commercial Bank of Australasia and the Bank of Australasia. In 1912 approval was sought for a mortgage of £4850 from the Australian Mutual Provident Society.

The cottages were income producing property but the PHC could not sell them until the passage of the Perth Hebrew Congregation Lands Act which is more fully discussed under "Subiaco". Once the act was passed, it enabled the PHC in 1924 to sell the southern portion of the initial grant (Lot N38), between Princes Hall and Robinson Avenue, for £2000.⁴ A laneway on two sides of the excised block was still vested in the PHC. Details of this sale did not appear on the file until the grant of an easement to Sam Gurfinkel in 1939 and the disposal of the remainder of the site in 1975.

On 6 January 1939 the PHC formally sought the issue of an easement to allow access to the laneway to Sam Gurfinkel who owned a property which abutted the laneway. The Titles Office required the easement to be issued before a mortgage on Gurfinkel's property was registered. It was decided that the grant of the easement required the approval of the Governor in Council as it was a disposition of land in terms of the Perth Hebrew Congregation Lands Act. One of the reasons advanced in support of the application was that Gurfinkel was a co-religionist.

After the PHC had received the grant of land in Mount Lawley in 1967 and had erected the new synagogue, they sought permission to dispose of the Brisbane Street site. A letter to J. Krasnostein dated 27 February 1973 granted approval to sell the Brisbane Street site provided the proceeds were applied to the Mount Lawley site.

In November 1973 the Bank of New South Wales sought the approval of the Governor in Council to mortgages upon both the old and new sites. Interestingly, they only sought security of the synagogue site (Lot N38), and not the second grant (N37).

The Brisbane Street property was finally sold to the Commonwealth government in 1975 for \$175 000.00.⁵ The two reserves were then cancelled.

GREENBUSHES AND DONNYBROOK

On 6 October 1899 S. Herman, president of the PHC, wrote to the Lands Department seeking blocks in the new townships of Donnybrook and Greenbushes.⁶ The file concerning Donnybrook is held by the State Archive.⁵ That for Greenbushes was apparently destroyed during the 1930s.

An extract of the original letter of request appears on the Donnybrook file. The reply concerning Donnybrook was written on 1 November 1899. No blocks were available as lots were not then open for sale or selection. However, the request was noted for consideration in due course.

Donnybrook Lot 306, in Union Street, a site of slightly less than a quarter of an acre, was formally granted for "Hebrew Church" purposes on 6 April 1900 as Reserve 7130, but was not used by the PHC. In 1924 the local hospital sought that and adjoining blocks for its own use. The Lands Department noted on 22 December 1924 and 7 October 1926 that the block had not been utilised or improved and was therefore liable to cancellation. Reserve 7130 was formally cancelled on 26 November 1926 with the creation of Reserve 19387 for the purpose of a hospital.

SUBIACO

The desirability of conducting classes in West Perth for the Hebrew School had already been discussed in 1912, and by 1915 there were classes being held at the West Perth home of Mrs C.S. Nathan.⁸ There were a number of Jewish families living in that area at the turn of the century. In that light there may have been a wish to secure a site in the area at an earlier time, such as 1906, but the request would probably have been declined if only a school site had been sought, rather than land for both school and synagogue.

The then treasurer of the PHC, E. Krug, wrote to the minister for Lands on 16 June 1906:

I have the honour to make application on behalf of the above Corporation [*sic*] for a grant of No. 296 or 297 of Reserve 8198 or a portion thereof for the purpose of a Synagogue and School Building.

I am asked to bring to the notice of the Honourable the Minister the fact of the Jewish Community's great increase of worshippers and the fact that only one grant has hitherto been made to them of the two blocks [three, in fact] in Brisbane Street whereon the present Synagogue, Rectory and School Buildings now stand and on which a sum of over Seven thousand pounds has been expended. The proposed Synagogue at Subiaco [*sic*] will supply a much felt want by the people residing between Claremont and Perth and as similar grants have been made to other religious denominations we venture to hope for a favourable reply at your early convenience.⁹

The Lots 296 and 297 the PHC requested were four and five and a half acres respectively. Because of government feeling that churches had already been liberally treated, the PHC were granted a quarter of an acre. That site is now 279 Nicholson Road, Shenton Park. The PHC balance sheet for 31 August 1909 had the Subiaco block valued at £200,¹⁰ and this value remained on the books until 1923.

On 21 July 1920 the Board of Management of the PHC agreed to dispose of the Subiaco land as well as the cottages behind the Princes Hall, and J. Sharp and M. Gild were deputed to see the minister for Lands.¹¹

In March 1922 the PHC was advised that the act had been passed and copies of the regulations relating to the sale of land by churches were also enclosed. A specimen copy of an application was sent as well. The *Twenty Sixth Annual Report* of the PHC for 1921/22 stated:

The Board have pleasure in reporting that an Act of Parliament giving the Congregation power to deal with its properties was passed last session. This Bill gives the Congregation the same privilege as enjoyed by other denominations.

On 27 August 1922, at the Annual General Meeting, the trustees were given authority to dispose of the Subiaco block. As required under the constitution of the PHC, that decision was confirmed at a Special General Meeting on 5 November 1922.¹²

At the board meeting of 28 February 1923, it was decided to ascertain the value of this property and place it in an agent's hands for sale, the matter being left to the treasurer, Mayer Breckler, and the secretary. Finally, it was reported to the board meeting of 30 January 1924 that an offer of £100 had been made for the Subiaco land, subject to clear title being given. A deposit of £10 had been accepted on this condition.¹³ The Deed of Grant was issued on 10 May 1924 and the transfer to Julian E. Mitchell of 277 Nicholson Road, Subiaco (the next door neighbour) for £100 was subsequently registered on 15 May 1924.¹⁴

MOUNT LAWLEY

After World War I there had been a steady migration of Jewish families northwards from Perth city. Indeed, during the 1920s real estate developers offered the PHC

a site for a synagogue in Rookwood Street, Mount Lawley. There is a one line reference to this offer in the PHC Minute book.¹⁵ It could be inferred that the price sought may have been more than the PHC were prepared to pay. In the post World War II period the northwards shift of Jewish homes intensified. By the 1960s very few congregants lived within easy walking distance of the Brisbane Street Synagogue, the majority residing in Mount Lawley and nearby suburbs.

Rabbi Coleman made his first formal approach for a grant of land in Mount Lawley for a youth centre and synagogue in 1966. There was crown land available in the area comprising the former Scaddan pine plantation. Most of the non-recreational land was to be used for aged homes. Rabbi Coleman was assiduous in his efforts and obtained letters from most of the religious denominations to the effect that they would not consider a grant to the PHC as a precedent. His efforts are all the more commendable as it is known that the PHC and other communal organisations had tried to obtain land grants in Mount Lawley and nearby suburbs without success.

The PHC was granted just under one hectare as Reserve 28831 on 3 November 1967.¹⁶ The crown grant in trust to the PHC was made on 16 March 1973 upon the erection of the present synagogue in Freedman Road, Menora. Subsequently, permission was given to erect a Kosher Food Centre at the site. This comprises a kosher butcher and a bakery/food store.

CONCLUSION

The PHC currently holds the Mount Lawley site as a crown grant. With the development of the Perth Metropolitan Area it will require persuasive advocacy of a high order to achieve similar results over the next one hundred years.

NOTES

Note. Reference to the Titles Office is to the Land Titles Division, Department of Land Administration, Perth, Western Australia.

1. Titles Office, Register of Deeds Enrolment, number 2540; Lands and Surveys ACC 541 2246/1888 (held at J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian History).
2. Titles Office, Register of Memorials, Volume XV, folio 427; Transfer 1865/1908.
3. Lands and Surveys ACC 541 173/1895.
4. Titles Office, Transfer 7000/1924.
5. Titles Office, Transfer B11440.
6. Lands and Surveys ACC541 12570/1899.
7. The hospital did not require the area, and the block, which had a tax value of £15, was sold to the State Housing Commission in 1952 for £20.
8. *PHC Sixteenth Annual Report* Sept. 1912; *Nineteenth Annual Report* Sept. 1915.
9. Lands and Surveys ACC 1632 5463/1906.
10. *PHC Thirteenth Annual Report* Sept. 1909.
11. Lands and Surveys ACC 1632 5463/1906.
12. *PHC Minute Book* 1919-1930.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Titles Office, Certificate of Title Volume 858, folio 120; and Transfer 3866/1924.
15. *PHC Minute Book* 1919-1930.
16. *Government Gazette* 3 Nov. 1967, p 3028.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

Keith B. Shilkin

It could easily be claimed that the strength of a community may be gauged by the quality of its leadership. For a century, the Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) has been remarkably fortunate to have had a succession of outstanding men who have been willing to volunteer their services in the congregation's cause. This essay pays tribute to these key leaders and outlines aspects of their background and contribution to the progress of the PHC. Despite the myriad requirements of a formal constitution, the major responsibilities of the lay leadership since the inception of the congregation have been four-fold. Firstly, there has been the need to secure premises for worship; secondly, to obtain and manage the finances required to carry out the congregation's many functions; thirdly, to administer its routine affairs; and, finally, to obtain the services of the congregation's minister. The emphasis here will be on the part played by the more prominent of the PHC office-bearers in attending to each of these activities. The role of the laity in the more strictly religious affairs of the synagogue and their work in Jewish education, important as these aspects are, will not be the focus here.

But prerequisites to the congregational endeavour of all these individuals was the need to identify strongly with traditional Judaism, to be motivated in wishing to play a part in ensuring the survival of a Jewish way of life in a remote corner of the Diaspora, to be willing to put themselves forward and then to be capable of carrying out the job effectively. In the annals of the PHC, persons with such qualities can be readily identified, none more so than the founders of the congregation. In 1891 there were 129 Jews in Western Australia, of whom 43 lived in Perth, and yet there was soon to be an ambitious move to establish a fully fledged congregational structure.

Solomon Levi Horowitz may be regarded as the prime mover in the formation of the PHC. He was born in Russia in 1852, migrating at the age of thirteen to England, where he became a tailor. He arrived in Australia, at Brisbane, in 1878. Obviously committed to serve his fellow Jews, he became president of the Brisbane Synagogue, but later moved to the USA for two years, after which, together with his wife and family, he returned to Australia where he settled in Perth. He established a successful tailoring business in the city. It was Horowitz who convened, on

13 November 1892, the meeting that formally founded the PHC. At this very first meeting, the first appointment of office-bearers was made, Horowitz becoming a trustee, not president as might have been expected. However, on 3 October 1893 at the first Annual Meeting, he was elected president. During his presidency, the laws and regulations of the congregation were formulated. In 1894 Horowitz stood down after his year in office, but became a member of the committee in 1895, resigning later that year for reasons that are not clear. He obviously remained active in congregational affairs as the grant of land for the Brisbane Street Synagogue, to be completed in 1897, was made out to Horowitz and the two other trustees, Alfred Freedman and Phineas Seeligson. Indeed, he was to become president again in 1903, 1904 and 1907. Arising out of a need he recognized in 1903, he initiated major repairs, renovations and additions to the synagogue which were completed under his guidance in 1904. This was a particularly busy year for him, as the record shows that he attended every one of the thirty committee meetings (exclusive of other sub-committees), and due recognition was paid to him at the time for his supreme efforts on behalf of the synagogue. In 1907 during a vigorous, complicated and long-running altercation on religious matters, he was deeply involved, again as president. His loyal support of his minister, Reverend D.I. Freedman, eventually enabled stability to return to the congregation's administration. In this year Horowitz was also overseer of the amalgamation and integration of the Fremantle congregation into the PHC. Horowitz was a religious man and often led prayers. At one stage he was also responsible for Jewish burials as honorary director of funerals from 1897-1901. To add to all that he was also a leading donor. Horowitz was such a mainstay and leading participant in these pioneering efforts that this somewhat lengthy account seems apt in this centenary year.

Of course, there were others who played a vital part in these early years. The first president in 1892 was M.T. Woolf. He had been active in the affairs of the Jewish community of Fremantle, styled the Western Australian Hebrew Congregation. Woolf was born in Russia and arrived in Western Australia in 1887, setting up as a draper, first of all in Fremantle and then in Perth. He was to serve the PHC just one year before leaving the State.

The next important figure is that of Nathan Harris, who became president in 1894 remaining in office until 1897. Harris was born in England in 1840 and, after leaving his English boarding school, arrived in Melbourne, where he had relatives, at the age of seventeen years. He apparently made several business trips to the Swan River Colony and actually lived in Perth from 1869-74. He moved permanently to Western Australia in 1894, successfully establishing a produce merchant firm. Thus it was in his very first year in this State that he was elected president of the congregation. It was Harris who guided the congregation to the building of its synagogue. The religious services were then mainly held in the Oddfellows' Hall in Hutt Street (now William Street), high holy day services being held in the Congregational Church Hall in St George's Terrace in 1895 and in the Wesley Hall in William Street in 1896. Harris perceived the need to acquire a permanent place of worship and so he, together with Phineas Seeligson in 1895, wrote on

behalf of the congregation to Commissioner of Crown Lands Sir John Forrest seeking a grant of land for a synagogue.

With the eventual success of this application, Harris became chairman of the Building Committee and in 1895 set out to raise the funds for a synagogue and minister's residence. When money was slow in forthcoming, it was decided to incorporate in order to raise a mortgage, to be secured against the property, which was achieved in 1897. Meanwhile, Harris as president and Phineas Seeligson as treasurer of both the congregation and the Building Committee proceeded with the plans for the erection of the synagogue in Brisbane Street. Together with the adjacent minister's residence and a row of houses in adjoining Robinson Avenue, the work was accomplished in time to enable a consecration service to be held on 1 September 1897.

Meanwhile, Harris had sought the services of a minister. After a search in Australia and advertisement in the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, an approach for guidance on the appointment was sought through the chief rabbi in London. The arrival in Perth of Reverend D.I. Freedman in March 1897 enabled Harris to retire as president in that year, having brought the congregation to the point where its foundation with its own synagogue and minister was firmly embedded.

At this stage, mention should be made of Henry Seeligson and his son Phineas, both of whom were involved in the early affairs of the congregation. Henry, born in Poznan on the Polish-German border in 1829, moved with his family to Manchester, England, in 1845. He had a strong Jewish family background. While on a business trip to The Hague, Holland, he met and married the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family and to whom their first son Phineas was born in 1856. Henry was



Solomon Levi Horowitz



Solomon Herman

transported to Western Australia in 1864. Among his many Jewish activities, including religious duties for the congregation, he was an early member of the committee, at the same time as his son Phineas was treasurer. Henry died in Perth in 1906. Phineas was active on the committee for several years and was treasurer at the important developmental phase outlined above. He was a prominent donor to congregational causes and is particularly remembered for the synagogue endowment in his will, known as the Seeligson Trust. Nonetheless, when Phineas completed his term as synagogue and building committee treasurer, the congregation had a mortgage of £3000 and an overdraft of £300.

The in-coming president in 1897 was Solomon Herman. He was born in Russia in 1836 and went to England as a boy. There he trained for the ministry but did not complete his studies. In 1860 he arrived in Australia with his father who had been appointed as the minister of the Ballarat congregation. Herman Senior was later the minister in Geelong and then in Bendigo. Solomon Herman was to become president, for many years, of that Bendigo congregation before moving, in 1894, to Perth where he immediately became involved in the affairs of the PHC. Until Reverend Freedman's arrival he was the leading religious light. He served on the committee and then held the office of president in 1897 and 1898. In 1902 Herman initiated the idea of applying to the government for an additional grant of the land adjacent to the synagogue, and in this he was successful. He died in Perth in 1914, obviously much revered, but paid insufficient tribute in only a very brief mention in the PHC *Annual Report* that year.

During this early period, there were many who were committed to the administration of the congregation. Other presidents who served included H.B. Joseph, a lawyer, E.S. Lazarus, who was also treasurer for a time, Ezekiel Casper, who was also secretary, and A.J. Cantor, who was also sometime treasurer. In Ezekiel Casper's first year as president the decision was made to build a hall and school rooms at the rear of the synagogue. Casper opened the Princes Hall on 17 September 1905. A committee member who made a significant contribution, later becoming treasurer, was Gustus Luber who went on to serve the community for many years. Office-bearers of the PHC were, of course, active in various communal organisations which developed immediately after the turn of the century. This pattern of congregational and Jewish communal service was established early in the history of the synagogue and was one which was to continue, as it does today.

From 1907 to the early 1920s there was a period of no great administrative moment although there were developments in other areas. The ministry of Reverend Freedman was well established, the organisational affairs were in order and the administrators had acquired experience in handling the synagogue's affairs. The membership had increased from the small numbers of 1892 to 80 in 1896, with the number of contributing members listed as 175 in 1905 and 236 in 1912. (Not all members were listed as contributing members.) In general the financial matters of income, mainly seat rentals and donations, and expenditure, mainly salaries and interest costs, could be reasonably easily handled. However, two matters remained as problems. Firstly,

despite the modifications and enlargement of the synagogue in 1904, further additions were deemed necessary; these took place in 1912 under the presidency of Joseph Sharp. The second concerned the debt remaining from the original construction and the 1904 modifications, which was now increased by these 1912 additions. Sharp, a migrant from Eastern Europe, was a successful fruit and produce merchant in Murray Street, Perth. He joined the committee in 1900, was treasurer in 1902, 1909 and 1910 and president from 1911-15. From 1930-35 he was again treasurer and then vice-president from 1937-38. Notwithstanding his having been a moving force for the 1912 additions, it must have been on the one hand galling while on the other a source of pride in the congregation's growth, that overflow services were already again required to be held in the Princes Hall for the holy day services of 1913. Joseph Sharp died in 1938, his obituary in the *Annual Report* of that year describes, in the usual very brief manner, his service to the congregation, and mentions his other contributions to communal life.

Serving the congregation over the same period as Sharp was Charles Samuel Nathan who proved to be a tower of strength. The records show that he was first elected treasurer in 1911, and again in 1912, this being the period of the synagogue building additions. He worked very closely with Joseph Sharp and while the latter was on an extended leave of absence, Nathan became acting president. Thereafter, he remained on the committee until 1917, and was a trustee of the congregation, again together with Sharp, for a number of years. As mentioned previously, the congregation was financially hampered by its overdraft, yet further synagogue building additions were to be made in 1928 under the presidency of Mark Lewis. On this occasion the seating was increased by 120 in the men's section and 126 in the ladies' gallery, with the alteration producing a somewhat detrimental modification to the facade of the structure. The total seating capacity was now 850, double its original capacity and one of the largest of synagogues in Australia. In 1929 Nathan inaugurated an overdraft redemption fund, forming for this purpose a committee of which he was president. Also in 1929 he was elected as the first vice-president of the congregation, a post he held until his death in 1936. The overdraft redemption fund received promises of over £5000, an amount that roughly equated to that owing to the bank. However, with the economic depression and the post-depression malaise the amount actually contributed by 1935 was £3732. The interest earned in the fund was used to offset that required to be paid to the bank, until the balance in the fund was paid over to the congregation in 1941. Sir Charles Nathan, as he had become, was the congregation's most distinguished citizen. A successful businessman, he was a notable figure in Western Australian State and Commonwealth commercial and political affairs. A lengthy account of his life was contributed to this journal (1969) by Harold Boas, himself noted as the architect for the 1928 alterations, honorary architect to the congregation for many years, and sometime communal historian.

The period 1929-49 was dominated by the presidency of Mayer Breckler. He had been connected with communal or congregational activities for many years prior to his assuming this office. He is first mentioned as being a contributing



Sir Charles Nathan



Mayer Breckler

member in 1902 and then as a member of the committee in 1922. By 1924 he was treasurer and in 1925 he became president. With the exception of two two-year gaps of 1926-27 and 1937-38, he remained president until 1949. As an indication of the great respect with which he was held he was then made an honorary life member of the committee. Amazingly, he returned to be vice-president to Gordon Bloomfield for the years 1955-59. Mayer Breckler's presidency has been described as occurring during a transitional period. This period was a difficult one, being overshadowed by the depression, World War II and the post-war problems. Mayer Breckler held the fort during these many years. It was a time of little change; certainly, Nathan's overdraft redemption fund and Breckler's support for it helped the synagogue's finances enormously. The grip which the PHC maintained over communal life was generally maintained despite a degree of opposition to this scheme of things which did reduce somewhat such central authority. In 1939 Rabbi Freedman died. Breckler, as president, was part of the group that attracted Reverend Louis Rubin-Zacks to become the congregation's minister. Mayer Breckler, as a young man, had followed his family from Melitopol, in the Ukraine, to Western Australia, arriving around the turn of the century. He became an extremely successful businessman and property owner, and apart from his high office in the congregation, he made his mark as one who was active in numerous other communal organisations. The transition referred to previously was between the old ways and the new, which were to eventuate in the later post-war period and which were to continue to the present time. Breckler was clearly the key personality of his era.

During Mayer Breckler's term as president there were other valuable members of the committee, including Gustus Luber, previously mentioned in an earlier phase of the congregation's development, who now acted as treasurer and subsequently as vice-president. Breckler's nephews, Alec and Cecil, were strong and loyal

supporters who gave outstanding service to the congregation. Alec was on the committee for virtually thirty years and was a trustee for many years. Cecil became treasurer and also a trustee, then was awarded the honour of life trustee which position he still holds in this landmark centenary year. Sam Masel, a long-time committee member, vice-president for several years and eventually president for the two years 1950-51, was the very first president who was Perth born and bred. Active committee members for unusually lengthy periods and communal pillars of this period included Morris Hoffman and Roy Shilkin. One office-bearer worthy of special mention at this stage is Harry Casper. He held the position of secretary to the board for a period of forty years from 1901 to 1953, thirty-eight of them being continuous from 1915 onwards. The payment of an honorarium for his work does not detract in any way from his devotion and commitment to the synagogue. This truly remarkable effort has not been generally acknowledged, although in each Annual Report he is commended by the president of the day. A recently prepared notice board of the congregation's secretaries goes some way towards addressing this oversight.

In the 1950s several new and younger faces joined the committee. Two of these were very long serving members of the committee and are still active in communal affairs. David Mossenson and Harry Atlas each served around twenty years. Another, Gordon Bloomfield, who was to become president, was on the committee for a total of fifteen years. During his administration, two crucial events occurred. The first was the engagement of Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman as the congregation's rabbi, Rabbi Rubin-Zacks having retired in 1965 after a long and successful ministry. Bloomfield's choice of Rabbi Coleman brought the congregation a new and vigorous form of religious leadership. The second was the planning of the new synagogue to be built closer to the main area of growth of the Jewish population around the suburb of Mount Lawley. As vice-president in 1965 Bloomfield helped commence the planning process and he eventually saw to the construction of the synagogue on a block of land granted to the congregation by the government. He retired as president on the completion of this project in 1974. In that year he handed over to Jack Krasnostein who had been project director for the development of the Mount Lawley Synagogue. Krasnostein had been vice-president for a number of years and before that he served on the committee. He was the ideal man to direct the project. The virtue of the removal to Mount Lawley can be seen in the immediate growth of membership. By 1975 the list of members was 950, a vast improvement over the relatively stagnant or even declining period of just a few years previously. However, there was a price to pay — again the financial burden of the bank loan. This was largely overcome by Krasnostein when he negotiated the sale of the Brisbane Street property. In the eyes of many the loss of the old historical synagogue was a pity. The facade, at least, may well have been worthy of preservation as part of the State's heritage; all that remains is part of the front fence and the Princes Hall, although most of the stained glass windows were removed to be included in the design of the new structure.

The congregation had passed into a phase of re-invigoration. Ambitious plans were about to be prepared to enhance the religious facilities available to members.

As president, Ben Cohny, a surgeon, ensured provision of kosher meat from rented premises. The pressure to improve on these arrangements was responded to by Ron Cohen, who became president in 1981. In 1985 a Kosher Food Centre was built on the synagogue land, adding to the installation of a *mikvah* within the synagogue and a new prayer hall at the Karrakatta Cemetery which had also been built during Cohen's period of management.

However, the cost of maintaining the Kosher Food Centre under the terms which were arranged proved prohibitive and the congregation's financial statement showed a loss of \$40 887 in 1985 and an overwhelming deficit of \$178 726 in 1986. The congregation was shown to be insolvent. There was an impending crisis. The then treasurer resigned, and there was an attempt to bridge the deficit by an appeal which was not as successful as hoped. After the retirement of Rabbi Coleman in 1985, Cohen organised the appointment of Rabbi Michael Orelowitz but his rabbinate did not flourish. These various difficulties caused a vigorous and competitive election in 1986, prompted by the campaign ticket of three medical practitioners John Rosenthal, Max Walters and Keith Shilkin, who immediately moved on to the committee to support the in-coming president, Albert Saddik. The determined action of this new board, brought about a reversal of the financial insolvency. With Orelowitz's departure, this group of four, now the executive, formed a rabbinic search committee which, after a difficult period without a spiritual leader, secured Rabbi David Freilich, the congregation's first Australian-born rabbi. As had occurred nearly a hundred years previously, the board sought the confirmation of the chief rabbi in London for this appointment. The membership again increased to the point where the 1991 *Annual Report* lists over a thousand contributing members, producing the recurring problem of inadequate seating, an echo from earlier times. In the period leading up to the 1992 centenary celebrations, stability had returned to the affairs of the congregation.

It can be seen that for a hundred years the leaders of the congregation, through devoted and often long service, enabled the survival and enhancement of traditional Judaism in Perth. These individuals have come from all walks of life, business and professional, and have been proud to serve the synagogue. Many of them have been notable leaders in the wider community, and in this way have been able to advance the reputation and status of the Jewish religion in Western Australia. With leaders of this calibre in the future, there are grounds for optimism for the security of traditional Jewish life and values in Western Australia into the next century.

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ASSISTANT MINISTERS, SHOCHETS, SHAMASES, CHAZANS AND COLLECTORS OF THE PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION

Louise Hoffman

Like ministers of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, assistant ministers and other synagogue functionaries have also given long and dutiful service. Unlike the Anglicised ministers who have been English speaking, outward going representatives of the Jewish community to the wider society, the other congregation officers have been (with few exceptions) foreign (Yiddish or country of origin) speaking migrants required to perform only congregational duties. These men who for the most part of the century filled the positions of *shochet*, *shamos*, *chazan* and reader, and whose spoken English was "broken", were the men who oiled the machinery of Jewish religious life in Western Australia.

The Perth Hebrew Congregation wanted a lot for their money when first seeking a minister: they advertised for a reader, teacher, *shochet* and *mohel* in that order, to be all in the one person. The secretary, Morris Samuel, in a letter of reply to Chief Rabbi Adler and his selection committee accepting their recommendation of Jews' College graduate the Reverend D.I. Freedman as minister, heartily concurred with their view that the duties of minister should be separate from those of *shochet*.¹ At the same time Secretary Samuel, while thanking the selectors, declined their recommendation of a *shochet* at £100 per annum. It would, he wrote, be cheaper for the congregation to employ a local person, and they did.

Mr Schwartz, who was to keep himself religiously under the guidance of the Reverend D.I. Freedman² was engaged as *shochet* on 21 February 1897 at a salary of £2 per week on a renewable monthly basis. It quickly became evident that Schwartz was capable neither of giving satisfactory service nor of improvement. It was also apparent by now that the services of a *shamos*/collector were urgently required. Since Schwartz would be incapable of these duties, he was given a month's notice on 1 June of that year.

Ben Zion Lenzer of Broken Hill, aged twenty-six years, recently arrived in Australia, and brother of Reverend Jacob Lenzer of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation,

was written to and offered the position of “*Shochet Shamos* collector and Assistant Reader”.³ His salary was arranged at £2 per week, and 5 per cent on the collections, including rentals. His appointment was confirmed by a General Meeting called specially for this purpose.

A subcommittee appointed to define his duties left no doubt as to who called the tune.

- Viz. 1. *Shochet* and Second Reader as directed by the Minister
 2. Collector *Shamos*, To attend at weddings, *Brit Mealahs*,
Taharas and funerals and be under the direction of the
 Minister

Signed D.I. Freedman, S. Herman, N. Harris⁴

Lenzer's term of office in Western Australia was, though comparatively short, colourful. He was an assertive somewhat arrogant man, given to speaking his mind, and his subordinate position in the religious hierarchy was to be a locus of tension. This was particularly so, as in these early years it was essential for the young Reverend Freedman to establish his authority.

There were other religiously qualified persons in the State at that time. The Reverend Moses Saunders, himself a sort of maverick character, had come from Melbourne where he had been a synagogal assistant, in the mid nineties. He performed a range of services including marriages, funerals, *brit mealahs* and conducted high holy day and sabbath services throughout Western Australia. Moses Freedman, father of the minister, was a qualified mohel and shochet. While not in full-time congregational employ, they were invited and paid to perform certain tasks for the congregation from time to time. As fee for service was an added source of income, Lenzer understandably felt hard done by when for example the offer of the services of mohel (for which he was qualified) was given to someone else.

Lenzer was paid only travelling expenses when he would go to Fremantle to supply fresh kosher meat to that Hebrew Congregation which paid £13 to the Perth Hebrew Congregation for his services. Moses Freedman also supplied kosher meat to the Jews of Fremantle on a contractual basis.

But it was over a *Brit Mealah* performed by Moses Freedman in 1899 that the greatest contretemps of Lenzer's career in Perth occurred. The unfortunate death of the infant involved led to public claims of Moses Freedman's incompetency and exposed Lenzer to the threat of legal action for defamation. The issue was resolved when Lenzer reluctantly and grudgingly apologised.

The regrettable difference between Mr M.H. Freedman and Mr B. Lenzer which was the first matter that engaged the earnest consideration of the Executive, was brought to a satisfactory termination, largely owing to the influence and untiring exertions of the Reverend D.I. Freedman, and in the terms of the agreement then arrived at the undermentioned apology was made by Mr Lenzer:-

In consideration of M.H. Freedman's withdrawing all legal proceedings against me, I hereby apologise for any alleged slander that it is supposed I have uttered against M.H. Freedman, and I freely withdraw anything I may have said derogatory to him and his capabilities.⁵

This affair did not deter the congregation from re-appointing Lenzer for a further twelve months with a small increase in salary, expressing their satisfaction with his services, and happily awarding him ten days holiday the following year on the occasion of his marriage to nineteen year old Rosa Sovaloff, recently arrived from Russia and daughter of a minister, Simon Sovaloff.

In 1902 Lenzer accepted a call from the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation as second reader, shochet, teacher and collector at £104 per annum plus 7½ per cent commission. Four years later, having qualified under the Victorian Beth Din, he became Ballarat's minister. Old habits die hard, and he was admonished from time to time by his board "not to speak his mind freely from the pulpit".⁶ He stayed at Ballarat until 1921 when he resigned to accept a call as a minister to the Newtown Synagogue in Sydney.

The circumstances around Lenzer's vacation of office caused considerable expense to the congregation. Mr Caplan, a shochet selected by Chief Rabbi Adler, declined to perform his duties when he arrived from England.

Further expenses incurred for the engagement of another shochet totalled £72.0.0. The board recorded their "thanks to Mr Lenzer for having at some personal loss remained with this congregation in order that they should not be without a shochet".



Reverend Benzion Lenzer



Aaron Green

The Lenzer links with the Jewish community in Perth were not entirely severed. Some years later Benzion's son Hyman, a gifted violinist and for some years first violinist of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, married Bertha (Bebe) Morris, daughter of Solomon Morris who immigrated to Perth from Safed in 1901 and whose family descendants are still staunch members of the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

The executive of the congregation considered themselves fortunate to secure the services of Esekell Lechowsky as a replacement for Lenzer. His salary was set at £117 per annum. Lechowsky was of Russian birth and was one of the many Yiddish speaking Russian Jews who came to Western Australia before the onset of World War I. He proved to be an entirely satisfactory shochet and matters of Shechita which had previously been unsatisfactory in the ensuing twelve years were now running smoothly. The board was therefore unhappy when it was compelled to receive Lechowsky's resignation in 1914. He left to join the Perth Jewish Association, a congregation which had been formed by and was attractive to those Yiddish speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe and Palestine who did not approve of the Anglicised religious manners and style of the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

In the meantime the position of shamos, collector and secretary had undergone some change.

The office of shamos was shed by Lenzer in 1901 when Mr Rosenberg was appointed. He proved unsatisfactory and was replaced the next year by S. Rosner as shamos and collector. By 1903 this officer was paid £52 per annum and 5 per cent commission on his collections.

In 1904 Edward Aaron Green was appointed as paid secretary to the congregation. Mr and Mrs Green were English Jews who'd arrived shortly before. Mrs Green had wide professional experience as a teacher in London and taught at the Perth Hebrew School for many years. Green was an indefatigable worker who contributed greatly to the smooth administration and collections for the shule. Credit and commendation was given to him for the satisfactory financial position of the congregation. Accused of breach of trust of office in 1908, Green was fully exonerated and the executive assured him of their full confidence and respect. Green worked for many communal causes and often without remuneration. The board was so pleased with his work they voted him an honorarium of ten guineas. By 1916 ill-health forced him to take the lesser position of shamos and collector. H. Casper was appointed secretary. As shamos, Green's salary was £52 per annum and collector at a commission of 10 per cent on all collections with the exception of those from motzos, Fremantle rents and bequests and special donations. Not least of his contributions were the communal news items and columns he sent to the Jewish press in Melbourne and Sydney, an invaluable record of events and persons in Jewish communal life in Western Australia.

Pursued by chronic ill-health, Green remained in office until 1921 when he was forced to retire and soon after died. In recognition of his devoted services to the

community, the congregation provided his widow with a living allowance and somewhere to live until her death in 1940. The house in Walcott Street, owned by the congregation, was then sold for £650.

When Lechowsky transferred to the Perth Jewish Association, the Executive of the Perth Hebrew Congregation sent a call to Reverend Mandelbaum of Broken Hill, which he accepted. By 1915 he was in Perth as shochet and second reader to the congregation, where he stayed for more than a decade.

Zallel (or Bezalel) Mandelbaum was born in Russia, in the town of Turov. He was the son of Rabbi Baruch Mandelbaum, known as the Turver Rav, and brother of Rabbi Simcha Mandelbaum after whom the Mandelbaum Gate border post in Jerusalem was named. He arrived at Fremantle in 1905 from Port Said where he had acted for some time as minister to the local Sephardi congregation. On making the acquaintance of Reverend Freedman, he accepted the latter's suggestion that he serve as minister in Broken Hill. He conducted the Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur services there in that year. As shochet too, the Broken Hill community did not, for the first time, have to import kosher meat from Adelaide.⁷ The Broken Hill community was in decline by 1914 when the Mandelbaum family left for Perth.⁸

Mandelbaum was married with two daughters. The eldest, Rose, taught at the Hebrew School and for some years ran a branch of the Perth Hebrew School in West Perth for children of some of the wealthier congregants who lived in or near that locality.⁹ Miss Mandelbaum suffered a degree of physical impairment which did not prevent her, as an accomplished musician, from teaching music.

When the Reverend Freedman went to war at the end of 1915 Mandelbaum became acting minister at an increased salary as well as continuing as shochet.¹⁰ The board continuously expressed their satisfaction with his services and the assiduous manner with which he carried out his duties. Not so, however, some of the congregants. Some were critical of the standards of Shechita, others objected to what they perceived as obsequiousness to the richer and a cavalier attitude towards the poorer congregants. Each complaint was carefully answered.¹¹ The board acknowledged:

one of the greatest difficulties . . . to arrange Shechita matters satisfactorily, has been the number of irresponsible complaints which are made, and on investigation, not substantiated. Many of these are made by non-members of the Shule who contribute nothing towards the expense of keeping a Shochet, and who but for others doing so, could not have kosher meat at all. Any genuine complaint is at once looked into and no difficulty has been found in arriving at a satisfactory solution.

The board, nevertheless, was not generous in regard to Mandelbaum's salary. Shochet duties were onerous. Meat shechting took place three times a week and re-imbusement for travel expenses was often questioned. The sum of three guineas



Reverend Zallel Mandelbaum

to perform a Brit Meilah in Kalgoorlie was not munificent. His telephone, paid for during Freedman's absence, was to be paid for by himself if he wished to keep it for private use.

Mandelbaum remained in Perth until 1926 when he retired to Sydney. The following year he was invited to be minister at Ballarat. He served that congregation until his death in 1941 at the age of seventy-six years. A trust known as the Mandelbaum Trust was established by his daughter some years ago to perpetuate his memory. The income from the trust is for the benefit of Jewish education and endows the Archive of Australian Judaica at the Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

The Reverend E. Kowadlo was recruited as chazan/shochet but after two years he moved to Melbourne where he was a renowned chazan for many years.

In the meantime, Lechowsky, who was with the Perth Jewish Association for some years, advised the Perth Hebrew Congregation of his dissatisfaction with his present position, and was anxious to come back to the congregation. At the same time Abraham Biger, treasurer of the Perth Jewish Association, wanted to become a member of the congregation. He wanted, with Lechowsky, to hold an overflow service in Princes Hall for the coming holy days and said he could guarantee £10 as the result of this service for offerings, etc.

The board was unwilling, saying it would be unwise to take on Lechowsky as an official again, even though he told them he was willing to hand over his fees for the fair quantity of poultry he was killing at the time. However they did have him work for some time as Shaumer at ten shillings per week.

Abraham Biger was shamos/collector from 1921-25. He was among the some hundreds of Palestinian Jews who came to Western Australia prior to 1914.¹² A Yiddish speaking native of Safed, Biger became a bag merchant and was quite well off financially. He was a generous man who was personally responsible for bringing at least ten families from Safed to Western Australia. His daughter Sophie taught at the Hebrew School.

Philip Snider became shamos and collector in 1926 after the resignation of his friend and fellow "Tsvaser" Abraham Biger. Snider's term of office spanned a generation. Married, with two children, he became an institution in his own right within the Jewish community. Responsible, reliable and diligent in his duties, he

was a tall man with a soldierly bearing and voice to match. Dressed in black tail coat and top hat, he kept order in the shule, commanding respect from all, particularly the children who were often apprehensive of him. At the same time he was protective of the young people against intimidation by others. He is well remembered and well regarded by those who knew him. A congregant has recollected a childhood experience how as a timid non-English speaking migrant set upon by a local Brisbane Street bully near the shule, he was rescued by Snider who saw to it that the attacker was brought to justice. "I never worried about going to Shule after that", he said.¹³

He acted as collector for many organisations and some of his neat notebooks and receipt books are preserved in the Congregation Archives. In later years he drove a black Baby Austin car, not very skilfully, with a tendency to back into trees and gates and anything that got into his way.¹⁴ His wife and daughters made Aliyah to Israel soon after the establishment of the State. Philip Snider died in 1954. The president said:

The sudden death of our late Shamos and Collector Mr Philip Snider, came as a great shock to the community of Perth. For almost a quarter of a century, Mr Snider had been an officer of the Board and no greater loss could have been suffered by the Congregation in the passing of such an honest and faithful servant.¹⁵

Early in 1931 the executive began negotiations directly with Hirsch Grochowski, a cantor, and resident of Bialystok, Poland, where he was born. He was invited to come to Perth at his own expense. If, wrote the congregation secretary, he was suitable, then he would be employed and his travelling expenses refunded. He arrived on 27 October 1931 having travelled third class on the S.S. *Otranto*, embarking from Naples. The first services he performed pleased the congregation. They were delighted to hear such singing and he was engaged forthwith at £20 per month as chazan and shochet. Thus began an association with the Perth Hebrew Congregation that was to last more than thirty years. During that time his lyric quality, high baritone voice was to bring pleasure to more than a generation of shule goers, especially his renditions of the melodies of "Gipsy Moon" to the closing of the Ark, and the Love Duet Act IV from *Traviata* to the Mussaph on Rosh Hoshanah.¹⁶

Within three weeks of his arrival the chazan made application to admit to Australia his wife Maya and daughters Sylvia and Freda from Poland.¹⁷ In his application it was noted by the Commonwealth investigator that Grochowski had demonstrated he was a very "satisfactory cantor".¹⁸ Grochowski contributed much to the cultural life of the community. He promoted Yiddish culture, belonging to the Yiddish Stage and Yiddish Debating Circle. He was of short stature but large talents. Illness forced him to retire in 1947 and he lived in Melbourne for some time. He returned to Perth where he worked in a part-time capacity for the congregation.

Unfortunately, when Grochowski arrived to take up his position as chazan/shochet in 1931 it was found that his *shechting* certificate was only for poultry killing. Fortunately for the congregation, the executive was able to engage Israel Zouf as shochet.

The Reverend Zouf had arrived in Western Anstralia in December 1929, a third class passenger on the ship *Capera*. Born in Safed, Palestine, in 1877 he spent some time in Argentina where he became a naturalized citizen. His papers showed his Argentine passport stamped by the British Consul in Beirnt and his occupation given as "Priest".¹⁹ Within two months he applied to have his wife Hannah and his two daughters Avigail and Malka join him in Perth.²⁰ His occupation was now given as that of rabbi employed by the Perth Jewish Association at £6 per week. He became a naturalised Australian citizen in 1947.

The Reverend Zouf remained with the congregation until 1951 when he returned to Israel to spend his last years with his family there. He was regarded with affection by all who knew him, particularly so for his simple and gentle manners. A congregant has recalled how Reverend Zouf used to call at her family home with choice pieces of liver and *Kishke* after a session at the abattoirs, and many of the Safed families were treated to these and other delicacies in a like manner, she said.²¹ The president of the congregation wrote:

He has spared no effort in the carrying out of his sacred duties in the Synagogue and in connection with Kashruth. It is safe to say that there has never been an ill-word spoken of Mr Zouf during the whole of the time that he has been associated with this community, and his departure is keenly regretted by his many friends. A farewell function in his honour was largely attended . . . presenting him with a testimonial in the form of a cheque for £1 400 and some appropriate gifts. Many speakers at the gathering eulogised him in the highest terms and left him in no doubt of the respect and affection in which he is held.

In 1949 it had become evident the workload was too much for Reverend Zouf and efforts were made to find an assistant shochet and chazan. Contact had been made with J. Kotlar of Tel Aviv and the Reverend A. Schueler of Shanghai. Owing to disturbances in these countries, neither could come in that year. But in 1950 the Reverend J. Kotlar arrived with his wife and family as assistant shochet, and later to be shochet, in 1951. The Reverend Kotlar, who had lost his entire family in the Holocaust, had rabbinic qualifications. Although his English was broken he gave sermons that were lucid and showed his knowledge of Torah. He was called upon often in later years to assume the position of acting minister as well as carrying out his duties as shochet. He stayed with the congregation for more than a generation, respected by all the community. He retired to live in Israel where he is a member of Kibbutz Israel with his daughter Shoshanna, her husband and children. Rabbi

Kotlar (as he was later known) epitomised the tradition of service to the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

Isaac Staricoff became shamos and collector in 1954. He was born in Beirut of Russian nationality in 1897 and arrived in Western Australia in 1911. His first job was that of an upholsterer at Zimples Furnishing. He served the community with courtesy and diligence for many years.

With his passing ended the long years of professional synagogal functionaries. Most of those who have followed have had short term careers. There have been many attempts to find replacements but not with great success. In 1953 a chazan/teacher/youth minister was brought from England.²² His first Shabbat service as chazan sent the attending congregation into shock. For a generation brought up on the vocal facility of Hirsch Grochowski the contrast was too great, and the congregation has not had a full time chazan since. Reliance is placed on the voluntary services of the congregants, and occasionally a professional chazan is brought in for the holy day services.

More fortunately for the congregation is the presence of Sydney Berinson as honorary shamos, and without whom the shule would not function. Berinson, who took on the duty in 1982, is descended from families who settled in Perth in the early part the century. The Krasnosteins, his mother's family were from Russia, and the Berinsons from Safed. The weddings, Brit Meilahs, shabbat and high holy day services, funerals and consecrations all depend on his goodwill and efforts in an honorary capacity.

It somehow adds to our sense of communal continuity that the machinery of synagogal practice is being oiled by a descendent of immigrants whose families have always been closely associated with Jewish Congregational life.



Reverend Hirsch Grochowski

NOTES

1. Letter dated 16 August 1896, *PHC Letter Book*, 1895-97.
2. *PHC Minute Book*, March 1897-Sept. 1898.
3. *PHC Annual Report for 1897*. The first position offered Mr Lenzer was that of shochet, shamos and collector. On taking up his duties Lenzer was recognised at his behest as Second Reader.
4. *PHC Minute Book*, March 1897-Sept. 1898.
5. The infant son of the president of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, Horace B. Joseph. The furore led directly to the resignation and replacement of the president and executive in March 1899.
6. N. Rosenthal, *Formula for Survival*.

7. *Jewish Times* 4 Sept. 1975.
8. The Jewish population was in decline prior to World War I. Among those who left were the Krantz and Edelman families who came to Western Australia.
9. *PHC Minute Book*, 1917.
10. *PHC Annual Report for 1916*. A portion of the Minister's Stipend was paid as an allowance while on war service, and a further portion "to the Reverend Mr Mandelbaum upon whom fell the major portion of the additional duties".
11. *PHC Correspondence 1917-18*. Reply to complaint of hasty burial service. Mandelbaum answered the complaint that an additional portion was optional not compulsory. "Usually I say this prior to the lowering of the coffin, but on this occasion the coffin was lowered before I even had time to find the place in the book. As for the insinuation concerning a distinction made between the rich and the poor that is utterly unfounded as you are well aware that my wage is *fixed*."
12. Abraham Biger was one of many who were separated for several years from their families because of the World War. In 1919 he received permission to return to Palestine to find his wife and two daughters. Soon after his return in 1921 he became a naturalised Australian citizen.
13. Interview with Leo Goldflam. He was about 11 years old at the time.
14. Interview with Valda and Wolf Hoffman, with whom Philip Snider lived for some time in his later years. They also commented on his kindness to their young family.
15. *PHC Annual Report for 1954*.
16. It was a favourite trick to slip into the service some excerpts from the better known operas and then quiz his friends to see who had recognised it.
17. As young women the Grochowski girls were renowned for their beauty. The eldest Sylvia, married Sonny Marshall, brother of David Marshall, the first prime minister of an independent Singapore. The Perth Hebrew Congregation advanced Cantor Grochowski the fares for his family and withheld a portion of his salary until the debt was repaid.
18. Australian Archives Office (Western Australia) pp. 302/51, 40/8046.
19. *Ibid.* pp. 302/51, 32/6785.
20. They did not avail themselves of that opportunity and remained in Safed.
21. Interview with Mrs Toby Zeffert who came from Safed.
22. Reverend E. Fisher.



PHC Brisbane Street Complex 1909
showing Rabbi's residence, Synagogue and Princes Hall. Note advertisement for letting Hall.

THE SHULE CHOIR*

Lloyd Masel

A choir has been formed by the ladies and gentlemen of the congregation, (by the ladies principally), and under the driving persistence of Reverend D.I. Freedman and the leadership of Mr Mendoza have obtained a fair extent of efficiency, and to their assistance the success of our recent Consecration service is largely due.

This extract from the *Annual Report* of the Perth Hebrew Congregation in 1897 was the beginning of what is known today as the shule choir. The consecration service was for the original shule building in Brisbane Street. The history of the choir is a combination of liturgical devotion, passionate communal views and some mischievous behaviour.

Some of the early participants were Mesdames D. Crawcour, I. Marks; Misses S. and F. Harris, M. Horowitz, L. Crawcour, N. Herman, A. and M. Flegeltaub, A. Bressler; and Messrs L. Boas, A. Freedman, J. Seeligson, B. Frieze, U. Wolinski and Choirmaster L. Cohen. However, the concept of a mixed choir did not meet with general satisfaction with some members of the community.

At a board meeting on 24 February 1900 a motion was moved "that no mixed choir be allowed". Although defeated, it was clear that strong views of some members would bring about some communal disharmony within the choir.

In 1904 the Brisbane Street Shule was reconsecrated and a musical service provided for the occasion. The mixed choir was again convened, together with organist Signor Lardelli.

Clearly, this did not satisfy the more orthodox view of some members, for in the *Annual Report* in 1905 it was stated a new choral initiative had been undertaken by the minister and the community should be thankful to the "gentlemen" who rendered choral services on the Sabbaths and festivals.

Yet this did not signal the demise of the mixed choir. Nor even a Jewish choir with a non-Jewish choirmaster. On Thursday 19 May 1910 the Perth Hebrew

*This paper was read by the author at a meeting of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society held on 29 November 1989.

Congregation conducted a special memorial service to the late King Edward VII of England. A special programme was printed for this most auspicious occasion. It was noted that the choral portions were rendered by the Jewish Choral Society.

From this we gather that the remnants of the mixed choir still existed but were debarred from singing on religious occasions, confining their singing activities to occasions of a non-religious nature. The ranks had swollen to some 51 singers in all, comprising 20 sopranos, 13 altos, 11 basses and 7 tenors. The honorary conductor was L. Seeligson, the organist Miss A. Luber. This combination was all-Jewish.

The following year, on 22 June, another special service was held, this time the coronation service of King George V and Queen Mary. On this occasion the Jewish Choral Society performed under the baton of Honorary Conductor J.R. Greenwood. Greenwood was probably not Jewish.

Later that year on 25 December a Chanukah service was held in the shule and the Jewish Choral Society rendered the choral portions. It was repeated the following year. On both occasions Greenwood conducted.

So much for the debarring arrangement!

Flushed with success, it was then mooted the Chanukah service be expanded to a full military service in 1913. There is no doubt the Jewish Choral Society contributed largely to the success of these services. The military service was attended by Commandant Irving and his staff together with a large body of men and a regimental band. J.R. Greenwood's name no longer appeared, being replaced by B. Hocking. It is unclear what happened to Greenwood, but Hocking was probably not Jewish, either.

During 1913 an event occurred of significant historical value to the Perth Hebrew Congregation. On 24 July a memorial service was held in the shule for the late Theodor Herzl. At this service a new boys' choir under the leadership of Leon Zeffert made its first appearance. It gave promise of being a useful adjunct to the shule.

In the *Annual Report 1914* this was recorded.

The choir has rendered excellent service during the year. By their regular attendance at services and practices, entailing considerable sacrifice, the members of the choir have placed this community under a heavy obligation. The highly satisfactory results obtained speak volumes for the interest and enthusiasm of the Choirmaster Mr Leon Zeffert.

This highly praiseworthy account was clearly warranted. The boys' choir remained intact for a further six years. In 1920 Leon Zeffert left Perth to settle in Kalgoorlie and resigned his post. J. Walters was appointed his successor, but due to unforeseen circumstances resigned soon afterwards.

Temporary honorary services were offered by L. Flohm until a suitable replacement could be found. This proved difficult and the board decided to appoint a professional non-Jewish choirmaster during 1920.

When the *Annual Report* was printed late in 1920 this appointment appeared to be working satisfactorily. "Thanks to the Ladies' committee for collecting funds towards the upkeep of the choir and who also entertained the boys on occasion." In later years entertainment appeared to take the form of bribery. The boys seemed to earn money and enjoy more outings than sing.

As had been the case in earlier years, just when stability had been reached, trouble broke out. At a special meeting called by forty-seven members on 29 August 1920 S. Silbert moved, "that the action of the Board in appointing a non-Jewish choirmaster be disapproved". The motion was successful and Flohm was recalled as choirmaster.

In 1922 Flohm discontinued his temporary and honorary services and the board commenced negotiations with another non-Jewish choirmaster. On hearing of these discussions some of the members of the community became vocal and in order to maintain communal harmony the board decided to abandon the choir.

The choir did not disband altogether. On 31 January 1923 they were entertained at pictures and afternoon tea at the Piccadilly cafe. Possibly, the board paid for this outing.

An enterprising solution evolved. In February 1923 the president of the PHC, together with the rabbi, engaged the services of H. Summers to train the boys after school each Wednesday and Master Joe Walters to conduct them in the shule. Summers received the sum of ten shillings per hour and Joe Walters an annual honorarium of five guineas.

And to celebrate this clever and intuitive development, with a Jewish choirmaster and a non-Jewish trainer, the choir boys were shouted to a picnic at Mundaring in honour of their honorary services.



Today's Choir at Rehearsal.

But trouble soon broke out between Joe Walters and the choir boys and they went of strike. Joe Walters was dismissed by the Board, paid off the £2-12-6 owing and replaced by the temporary and honorary conductor, L. Flohm. At the board meeting on 20 May 1924 it was reported "the choir boys were behaving badly and continually damaging the chairs. It was decided to entertain them at pictures, followed by supper."

The choirmaster issue proved difficult to resolve. No replacement could be found for Joe Walters and at the board meeting on 22 December 1924 the question was raised why Summers's services were being retained considering there was no choir. Summers's services were duly terminated and in the 1925 *Annual Report* the board regretted the disbanding of the boys' choir.

In March 1926 the board approached Summers to convene a choir for Anzac Day which was a non-religious service. He recalled some of the obviously better behaved boys and augmented this group with members of the Jewish Glee Club which had been singing on Anzac Day for some years. Clearly, the Glee Club must have possessed a more serious element to their repertoire. The combination of the Glee Club and Anzac Day sounds a strange mixture!

During 1927 the board successfully concluded negotiations with Reverend Kovadlo as cantor (*chazan*) of the shule. On arrival, he was immediately appointed choirmaster. Sixteen boys were willing to form a choir and attend practices in order to sing on Shabbat and festival services.

This appointment appeared to coincide with a decision to build a choir loft over the ark. Earlier, a Building Committee had been convened to investigate this possibility. After five years of deliberation they agreed to recommend to members for the construction at the cost of £370-10-0.

The appointment of Reverend Kovadlo was short-lived. He was asked to resign as choirmaster on 24 September 1929. He left Perth shortly afterwards. With this development the boys' choir once again disbanded.

In 1930 the board invited H. Glick and S. Masel to try and convene a choir for the high holidays. In that year the Rosh Hashanah service was reported as being "a disaster" due to the absence of a *chazan*. The board soon found a worthwhile replacement in Reverend Hirsch Grochowski.

Reverend Grochowski arrived in Perth on 27 October 1931 and unlike his predecessor expressed willingness to train and form a mixed choir, not a boys' choir. The board accepted his offer. Invitations were sent out to forty prospective singers to attend a rehearsal. Only four attended and the idea was abandoned. A subcommittee was formed to bring together a choir of male voices instead.

The next four years were bleak for the choir, but in 1935 Leon Zeffert returned to Perth and was immediately appointed professional choirmaster. His duties were to produce a boy's choir for Shabbat and festival services and convene a mixed choir for Anzac Day.

Although this development was successful, not everybody appreciated the boys' choir and at a board meeting on 28 August 1938 yet another attempt was made to introduce an adult mixed choir for all religious services. The motion failed.

The boys' choir thrived for some years, especially during World War II. Many of the current senior choir members sang in Leon Zeffert's choir. He was a strict choirmaster, insisted on musical accuracy and maintained superb decorum in the choir loft.

In 1942 Leon Zeffert advised the board of a change in his employment, necessitating a change in the set-up with the choir. However, it was not a resignation. Later in that year he relinquished his role as choirmaster and the boys' choir disbanded for the time being.

This change was short-lived, for in 1945 Zeffert was again appointed choirmaster and the boys' choir resumed singing for the religious services. He also conducted the choir on Anzac Day and VE Day in that year. In 1947 the Perth Hebrew Congregation, at a specially convened meeting of members, rewarded him with a Golden Book Certificate in recognition of his services to the community over a long period of time.

In the *Annual Report* of 1948 a significant development in the history of the Perth Hebrew Congregation was reported.

Special Sabbath evening services are still held on the first Friday of each month at 8.00 p.m. The service, which is conducted by Rabbi Rubin-Zacks, is mostly in English and he is assisted by a very excellent mixed choir under the direction of Dr H. Briner.

Following World War II and the influx of migrants from Europe to Australia, a growing body of people had expressed interest in the formation of a liberalised service in Perth. Rabbi Rubin-Zacks, being aware of this development, introduced the Friday evening service hoping to maintain the unity within the community.

Yet the development came to an abrupt end at a meeting of members on 5 September 1948 at which a motion was carried, "There be no mixed choir for holy days". With this motion the mixed choir disappeared at religious services for the next forty-four years and probably forever.

Dr Briner, together with his mixed choir, was invited to return to the shule for Anzac Day in 1949. He was also invited by the board to train and conduct an all male choir for Pesach in 1950. He accepted both invitations. The all male choir was a combination of Zeffert's boys' choir — now young men — and Dr Briner's male members from the mixed choir. Zeffert sang in this choir which also performed for the high holy days that year and was greatly appreciated by the community.

Shortly after, Dr Briner accepted the position of music director at Temple David and was no longer able to offer his services to the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

In 1954 a young men's choir emerged under the leadership of Alan Lewis who was very active in the Zionist Youth movement in Perth. This choir contained several of Leon Zeffert's choir and some additional members from Alan Lewis's Habonim choir. Zeffert also joined. He possessed a light lyric tenor voice. Alan Lewis introduced a lot of new material and produced a choir for Pesach, Shavuot,

Succoth and Chanukah in addition to the high holy days. He made a notable contribution with many new melodies and the greatly expanded repertoire.

In 1955 Alan Lewis resigned to make aliyah and the board invited Lloyd Masel to lead the choir. At the same time, Valentine Lewin, a well-known singing teacher, was invited to train the singers in ensemble work. This arrangement lasted until 1957 when a professional musician arrived in Perth from London.

Albert Setty joined the West Australian Symphony Orchestra as a tympanist and being a choirmaster in England, at once became involved in Jewish musical activities in Perth. He was invited to become professional choirmaster but the appointment lasted only briefly due to conflicting commitments with the orchestra. Lloyd Masel resumed as choirmaster and in 1958 the choir made a record. A copy of this record is stored in the Western Australia Jewish Historical Society Library.

In July that year Lloyd Masel left Perth to study singing in Melbourne and Joe Berinson was appointed choirmaster. This arrangement lasted until Lloyd Masel returned and resumed duties as choirmaster in July 1960. He has held that position ever since.

Efforts for form a boys' choir did continue for some time at Carmel School over the next decade and more and by several people. Yet attendances at shule on Saturday mornings continued to decline and the boys' choir has never re-appeared.

In 1962 the death of Leon Zeffert was recorded in the *Annual Report*. It is true to say that he persevered against great odds in maintaining choral music in the shule services. As a choirmaster, a singer, also a composer, his lasting influence still remains in many respects.

In 1963 Reverend Grochowski left Perth to settle in Melbourne. Grochowski possessed a beautiful lyrical voice, sang unerringly in tune at all times and the choir greatly appreciated singing with him. A chazan with the musical ability of Reverend Grochowski has not been found since in a permanent role. Fortunately, Rabbi Coleman proved an admirable substitute.

For most of the 1970s the shule choir only sang for the festival services. It was at the instigation of Sam Atlas that the choir participate more frequently by appearing each month on Shabbat. Not only was this a popular innovation, but in singing more frequently, the quality of singing improved and the numbers expanded.

Since 1980 the choir has performed regularly on Shabbat for the New Moon services. It sings on Pesach, the high holidays and other special occasions. It has been fortunate to have had the services of Monty Rosenthal, Sam Atlas and Stuart Davis to assist in conducting.

It also sings for Bar Mitzvah services and wedding ceremonies on request from members, the financial contributions all being passed on to the shule. Today the shule choir is an honorary choir and has been that way for more than fifty years. This is a record of which the choir members feel very proud.

Efforts to re-form the boys' choir in the last couple of years have only met with limited success, though it is encouraging to see some of the fathers and their

sons singing together. It is hoped that a boys' choir may eventually re-appear in the shule for after ninety-five years it would be a great loss if the choir did not continue. The average age of the current choir is well over fifty years and its lifetime must surely be limited.

The choir has always sung at its best when the services of a genuine chazan were available. This has only occurred on rare occasions since Reverend Grochowski left Perth, but in conjunction with the rabbonim and with additional solo work from individual choristers, the repertoire today is quite extensive and appreciated by the members. The choir will be making a new record in 1992 for the centenary commemoration.



Bat Mitzvah Girls, Brisbane Street Synagogue 1971.

THE PRINCES HALL

Nate Zusman

For almost seventy years the Princes Hall was the centre of social and cultural life for the Perth Jewish community.

It was the focal point from early childhood to maturity.

Perhaps the first acquaintance with Princes Hall was after shule on Succoth when, together with other young children, there was a rush to get into the hall, transformed into a succah, to partake of the goodies on the tables.

This early contact was soon followed by others when the hall was the Hebrew School, then the youth club, social club, cultural club and the venue for meetings of the various communal organisations.

The Princes Hall, situated at the rear of the Brisbane Street Shule, was erected in 1905, eight years after the opening of the synagogue in 1897. Ernest E. Kurg, son-in-law of Henry Seeligson, treasurer of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, organised the Building Fund which led to the erection of the hall.

It was built by the PHC as a school house, but it was really a hall with a few rooms attached to it. It had a stage and a kitchen so was well equipped for social functions and public meetings. It was one of the few halls in the northern outskirts of Perth and was hired to various non-Jewish groups for several years.

It was the Hebrew School until 1936, although it was never satisfactory for that purpose. It could not cope with the increasing numbers of children, nor was there sufficient privacy for each class. To alleviate this problem, classes were held in the two vestries at the rear of the synagogue and in the shule itself.

In 1936 a school building containing eight classrooms and a hall for the Jewish scouts was built on the land adjacent to the hall. However, the Princes Hall continued to be the school assembly hall every Sunday when the marvellous verses composed by Rabbi Freedman, encompassing the principal elements of all the fasts and festivals, were sung with gusto.

Not only the weekly assemblies, but the supervised annual examinations, the prize giving nights, and the demonstration Seders, were all held in the Princes Hall. As most children attended Hebrew School for about seven years, they were

all familiar with the hall and the portraits of the founders and leaders of the Perth Hebrew Congregation which occupied nearly all the wall space.

For those at Hebrew School in 1937 the Princes Hall was the venue for the surprise party tendered to Rabbi and Mrs Freedman by the students and staff of the school to mark the rabbi's fortieth year as headmaster of the Perth Hebrew School.

Apart from its role as Hebrew School, the Princes Hall was inextricably bound up with all aspects of communal life. The Western Australian Zionist Association (WAZA), which was for many years the most important secular organisation, was inaugurated through a series of public meetings held in the Princes Hall early in 1913. At first it rented club rooms away from Princes Hall but in the 1930s it entered into an arrangement with the PHC to use Princes Hall and be responsible for caretaking. The WAZA turned the hall into a hive of activity, encompassing youth, social and sporting activities, in addition to its Zionist programme.

The depression caused the WAZA to surrender its lease of Princes Hall. However, one of its activities continued in the hall without interruption — the Tuesday night meetings conducted in Yiddish. Seated around the covered tressle tables, enjoying a cup of tea and joining in the singing of Yiddish and Hebrew songs, Yiddish-speaking members of the community found it to be a popular night. A regular feature of these gatherings was news of happenings in the Jewish world, particularly Palestine, and readings from the Yiddish poets and writers.

Towards the end of the thirties the Maccabean League leased the Princes Hall from the Perth Hebrew Congregation and undertook responsibility for caretaking. Under the terms of the lease, the hall was made available to the PHC and other communal bodies without charge.

The Maccabean League encompassed a wide range of sporting, social and cultural activities and used the Princes Hall on two or three nights a week.

Who can forget the Saturday night hop at the Princes Hall, where many a romance blossomed, the Sunday games nights, the debates and the other cultural activities. The dance of the year was the Yom Kippur dance after the conclusion of the fast when the youth of the community crowded into Princes Hall.

The *Westralian Judean* of August 1941 lists the month's programme of activities to take place in Princes Hall:

Sunday 3rd August	— Games and Social Night
Monday 4th August	— Maccabean Boys' Club (Physical training)
Sunday 10th August	— Games and Social Night
Monday 11th August	— Maccabean Boys' Club
Saturday 16th August	— Nachamu Celebration Ball
Monday 18th August	— Maccabean Boys' Club
Sunday 24th August	— Concert
Monday 25th August	— Maccabean Boys' Club
Saturday 30th August	— Gala Dance
Sunday 31st August	— Maccabean Boys' Club



Children's Seder, Princes Hall, 1945.

The *Judean* also reported that the Maccabean League was finalising arrangements for a series of cultural evenings to commence during August and that the league was seeking to procure two sets of chessmen to start a chess club. All these activities took place in the Princes Hall.

But the Princes Hall was also the venue for other communal bodies, such as the YMHA and the Yiddish Theatre.

It was truly the centre for the Perth Jewish community.

It was, therefore, surprising that the Perth Hebrew Congregation, the owners of the hall, paid so little attention to its maintenance. It was always anxious to put the responsibility for caretaking onto one of the communal bodies. There were four different tenants within a period of five years. These were all communal bodies with limited finances.

It is no wonder, then, that the hall fell into disrepair and that moves were made, especially by the Maccabean League, to get the PHC to keep the hall in a satisfactory condition.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Perth Hebrew Congregation held on 15 September 1940 there was a recommendation from the board “that an amount of £125 be voted to furnish a 4-bed ward in the Public Hospital as a Memorial to the late Rabbi Freedman”.

Nate Zusman moved as an amendment,

that the communal memorial to the late Rabbi be in the form of remodelling Princes Hall and re-naming it Rabbi Freedman Memorial Hall at an approximate cost of £500, of which £150 be voted from the funds of the PHC and the balance raised by public subscription.

The amendment was seconded by Josh Shimenson and supported by Harold Boas and Ben Vandervelde.

When put to the vote, the amendment was lost by 6-76.

At this same meeting, Nate Zusman drew attention to the bad state of repair of Princes Hall and moved, “that the incoming Board be directed to place Princes Hall in a proper state of repair and provide proper seating accommodation”. This was seconded by Jack Krasnostein. When put to a vote, there was an equal number of votes for and against the motion. The president, Mayer Breckler, used his casting vote to declare the motion lost.

The Princes Hall continued to deteriorate and the matter was again raised by Nate Zusman at the Annual General Meeting of PHC held on 31 August 1941. He moved, “that a sum of £100 be voted for urgent repairs to Princes Hall and for the provision of additional seating”. This was seconded by Jack Krasnostein.

Sam Masel moved an amendment, seconded by Roy Shilkin, “that the Maccabean League be subsidised pound for pound up to £50 to improve the seating accommodation

in the Hall". Nate Zusman withdrew his motion in favour of the amendment, which was carried unanimously.

This was not the end of the matter.

At the meeting of the board of the PHC held on 29 September 1941 Sam Masel reported that,

with reference to the decision of the General Meeting to subscribe £1 for £1 raised by the Maccabean League to improve Princes Hall, Nate Zusman, President of the League, was going round with a subscription list. As this was, (in his opinion), contrary to the spirit of the intention of the resolution, it was decided that Mr Zusman be advised to this effect.

There was no other way the youth body, with its membership declining rapidly, through enlistments in the services, could raise the £50. The outcome was nothing was done to repair Princes Hall. This negative attitude of the board of the PHC was continued to an almost unbelievable degree in the years that followed.

The minutes of the board of the PHC of 28 January 1942 record that, "The Maccabean League advised that, owing to the fact that the majority of its members had joined the forces, it was compelled to relinquish control of Princes Hall after 31 January 1942. The League would discharge all its liabilities in connection with the Hall up to that date."

At this same meeting the president, Mayer Breckler, reported that, following on this advice from the Maccabean League, he had discussed the matter of the hall with P. Snider, the *shammas*, who was prepared to take over the Princes Hall under the same conditions as the Maccabean League.

At the following meeting of the board of the PHC held on 25 February 1942 the president reported that arrangements had been concluded with Snider for him to take charge of the Princes Hall on the same conditions as applied to the Maccabean League.

Attention is drawn to the speed and manner in which control of Princes Hall was transferred to Snider because of what occurred when the revived Maccabean Youth Club sought to regain control of the hall in 1944.

In 1944 many of the parents of the community were concerned that since the Maccabean League had ceased to function, because of enlistments in the services, their younger children, who were now teenagers, had insufficient organised activities within the Jewish community. To overcome this situation the parents called a public meeting in the Princes Hall on 21 May 1944. There was a large attendance and £600 was subscribed to sponsor youth activities. A committee, called the Jewish Young Welfare Committee, was elected with J. B. Baggaridge, president; Sam Edelman and Nate Zusman, vice-presidents; David Mossenson, secretary; and Ben Gunsberg, treasurer.

The first action of this committee was to apply to the Perth Hebrew Congregation to take over the Princes Hall for youth activities on the same basis as had applied to the Maccabean League.

At the meeting of the board of the PHC held on 24 May 1944 the president, Mayer Breckler, reported that a delegation from the Youth Welfare Committee had waited on the board with reference to taking over the Princes Hall for youth activities.

What follows hereafter is a sorry chapter in the history of the PHC.

The board's response to the request from the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee was to decide to convene a special meeting of the board on 31 May 1944 to consider the position. At this special board meeting on 31 May 1944 Sam Masel presented a draft he had prepared, setting out the conditions under which the hall would be made available. These were approved with some slight alterations and it was decided to submit them and the position to the honorary solicitor (Cantor).

The draft agreement, as prepared by Cantor, was read at the meeting of the board of the PHC held on 28 June 1944. It was approved and sent on to the Youth Welfare Committee for its acceptance.

What a contrast to the attitude of the board when the Maccabean League surrendered the lease of the Hall in 1942. Then arrangements were quickly made to hand over Princes Hall to P. Snider without any special meeting of the board or an agreement drawn up by the honorary solicitor.

This was only the beginning of what became a protracted and unedifying obstruction of the youth of the community by the PHC.

The Youth Welfare Committee refused to sign the document prepared by the honorary solicitor of the PHC and advised the PHC of what it was willing to offer as conditions for the use of Princes Hall. The board of the PHC at its meeting on 19 July 1944 found the conditions offered by the Youth Welfare Committee unacceptable. It appointed a subcommittee consisting of A. Raphael, C. Breckler and Sam Masel to discuss the matter with three representatives of the Youth Welfare Committee and to report to the board's next meeting.

The protracted negotiations aroused strong feelings in the community and became the principal issue at the Annual General Meeting of the PHC held on 1 August 1944. At this meeting, J.B. Baggaridge, president of the Youth Welfare Committee, moved,

that the members of the Congregation instruct the Board to allow the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee to have immediate use of Princes Hall, rent and rates free and without entering into any legal agreement provided that:-

1. The Committee respects the religious requirements of the Board;
2. The Committee respects the existing rights of the Board and all other communal bodies to the use of the Hall for meetings and functions.

3. The Committee, and any youth body which it sponsors, uses the Hall only to further the following aims and objects — spiritual, cultural, educational, philanthropy, physical development and sport and social.

Speaking to the motion, Sam Masel reviewed in detail the negotiations that had taken place between the board and the committee and said that unity had been arrived at on all points except that of signing a document which was necessary under National Security Regulations. "This the Youth Welfare Committee is not prepared to do." (The stated requirement of the National Security Regulations was obviously incorrect and raised as an obstruction. No such document was required from Snider in 1942 and none was signed by the Youth Welfare Committee when finally it took over Princes Hall.)

M.E. Zeffert moved an amendment "that the word 'instruct' be replaced by the word 'recommend'." This was seconded and carried.

So much feeling had been aroused over this issue that at this meeting Baggaridge and Sabovsky, sponsored by the Youth Welfare Committee, were elected to the board of the PHC in place of two existing members.

Following the recommendation from the Annual Meeting, the board of the PHC at its meeting on 4 October 1944 decided that the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee would be allowed the use of Princes Hall upon receipt of a letter from the committee embodying the arrangements already discussed and upon the committee undertaking to provide a caretaker.

Subsequently, the meeting of the board of the PHC held on 29 November 1944 noted the receipt of a letter from the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee which contained arrangements under which the committee would have the use of Princes Hall. It was decided to accept these arrangements subject to sundry conditions.

In the issue of the *Maccabean Bulletin* of January 1945 the newly appointed president of the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee, Sam Edelman, reported that the Princes Hall was handed over to the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee on 4 December 1944 and that the PHC was making available £125 towards the cost of renovating and refurbishing Princes Hall. An order had already been placed for 200 upholstered chairs, a library room was to be built and furnished and the hall was to be renovated and repainted.

So ended the drawn-out often bitter, struggle from May to December 1944 for the youth of the community to gain ready access to Princes Hall, the only communal meeting place.

What motivated the board of the PHC to take such a recalcitrant stand against its own youth? The only explanation, unrealistic as it may appear today, was that among the twenty-one members of the committee of the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee there was one member, Morrie Silver, who was a communist, and one vice-president, Nate Zusman, who was also president of the Maccabean Youth Club, who was known for his independent views.

Fortunately, this unhappy episode was followed by friendly cooperation between the PHC and the Jewish Youth Welfare Committee and the Maccabean Youth Club which it sponsored.

Having regained control of Princes Hall, the Maccabean Youth Club turned it into a hive of activity. There was hardly a day in the week when there was not some youth activity in the hall. Apart from dances and games nights, there were discussion and debating nights, play reading, fitness groups and the Habonim, which came into existence at this time under the umbrella of the Maccabean Club through the initiative of Dr Ben Haneman.

After the war, the Jewish community began to move northwards, away from the Brisbane Street area where the Princes Hall was located. This was accentuated when the Maccabeans acquired their own grounds in Yokine and built a pavilion on the grounds which was gradually extended to become a hall. In the 1950s the Princes Hall had become an unsuitable and unpopular venue for youth activities.

In August 1954 the Maccabean League, the successors to the Maccabean Youth Club, surrendered its control of Princes Hall.

A communal hall to accommodate the growing needs of the community was urgently required.

This matter was raised by Alec Breckler at the annual meeting of the PHC in 1957. He proposed major extensions to Princes Hall or the erection of a free standing building on the vacant land in Brisbane Street adjacent to the shule.

At the Annual Meeting of the PHC in 1958 a resolution was carried to build in Brisbane Street a building capable of seating 250-300 people at a banquet. This resolution ignored the realities of the day, the the community no longer found Brisbane Street a convenient location. A special meeting rejected the proposal to build in Brisbane Street. Instead a modest proposal to refurbish Princes Hall was adopted. The issue was finally resolved when the Princes Hall was renovated, largely with money donated by the Breckler family, and it was renamed Breckler Hall.

But this did not restore Princes hall to its former status as the real centre for the youth and cultural life of the community. The movement of the community to the northern suburbs could not be arrested. The location and facilities of the ageing hall were no longer attractive to the youth of the community.

The transfer of the shule to the northern suburbs in 1974 closed the chapter of Brisbane Street as the centre of Jewish communal life. The property, including Princes Hall, was sold to the Postmaster-General's Department. The shule was demolished but Princes hall still stands surrounded by equipment and activities of the PMG. It looks forlorn and deserted, a far cry from when it was alive with the vibrant activities of the Jewish community, particularly the youth.

For those who spent much of their childhood and youth in Princes Hall, it will always be remembered with affection.

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The members participated in varied activities, including a celebration in 1938 on the anniversary of the fortieth year of service by Rabbi Freedman. At a cabaret at the Embassy, the entertainment included a song by Mrs H. Casper, representing the Ladies' Benevolent Society.¹⁵

In 1959 the death of Mrs Getta Pearlman was recorded, after forty years of service to the ladies' work of the Tahara. Her name was placed on the honour board.¹⁶ The minutes of the PHC recorded periodically that the Chevra Kadisha thanked the Ladies' Benevolent Society for their work and invaluable cooperation.

One of the stalwarts of the Ladies' Benevolent Society was Mrs Jessie Cohen. She was born in Poland, came to Loudon and married Henry Samuel Cohen. They migrated to Australia, settling in Perth. Her service to the society was over a period of twenty-one years. Another hard worker was Mrs. Sarah Joseph who arrived in Perth in 1886. She was featured in *The Westralian Judean*, at the age of ninety, as one who had served the society for "years and years".¹⁷

By 1985 the organisation had become redundant and it disappeared. The assets were divided between the Aged Home and the Welfare Society.¹⁸

The Jewish Girls' Guild was formed in 1903. By the 1920s there were two adjuncts, the Holy Vestment Society and the Children's Ministering League. Their duties included helping distressed women and children, and voluntary duties in hospitals, to both Jewish and non-Jewish people. During World War I they concentrated on the Red Cross and on the collection of comforts for the men serving overseas. The ladies who were active in this organisation were the same ladies who worked on other committees, namely Mesdames Luber, Casper, F. Silbert. In 1935 it was recorded that the president was Mrs G. Luber, the secretary, Miss A. Horovitz.¹⁹ In 1909 the guild was congratulated for its good social work in organising a dance which enabled the sum of £12 to be donated to the PHC.²⁰ Over a period of nearly fifty years the Jewish Girls' Guild was mentioned in the minutes of the PHC for donating a velvet cover, an honour board, white linings, a red cloth for the inside of the Ark, and a new curtain for the pulpit.

In 1920 they conducted a Peace Ball, in 1925 they sent money to institutions for holiday cheer, and visited the Children's Hospital: "silent working, a little organisation which carries on its good charitable work. It helps the Red Cross and the Children's Hospital, and makes garments to be distributed to the needy".²¹ Under the auspices of the Jewish Children's Ministering League, a hospital gift evening was arranged and presents were collected for distribution to hospitals.

To the delightful strains of Miss Ettie Roffman's Orchesra, the young people danced away the hours, which passed all too quickly, while in the adjoining card rooms a large number found enjoyment at the tables. A dainty supper helped towards the success of the evening.²²



Sam and Alec Masel dressed for the Children's Carnival, St. George's Hall, 1905.

In December 1931 it was decided to consolidate the administration into a single committee. The Jewish Children's Ministering League was absorbed into the Jewish Girls' League.

During the early years the women's activities were identified with the Perth Hebrew Congregation, but many of these hard working ladies were also active in organisations in the general Jewish community, in particular those associated with Zionism. One such organisation was The Jewish Women's League, formed in 1924, when Madame Pevsner solicited donations for the purpose of purchasing land in Palestine. This was initially led by Rosetta Lubner, and later, Fanny Breckler. It was devoted to sponsoring welfare projects for women and children in Palestine. Of the inaugural meeting it was reported "there wasn't enough warmth to melt butter at the General Meeting convened by the Jewish Women's League to assist Jewish girls in Palestine".²³ The object of this meeting was to consider a request from Madame Pevsner for £300 for a Jewish Girls' Farm in Palestine. The sum of £61 was raised.

In the following year an amount was raised to purchase a strip of land in Palestine, and in 1930 money was raised for Ezra and WIZO to assist colonists and maternity hospitals in Palestine. As well as this, money was raised for a bed at King Edward Memorial Hospital in Perth. It was at this stage that the Jewish Women's League became the nucleus for the National Council for Jewish Women, raising funds for both local and overseas Jewish charities.²⁴

There were many outstanding ladies during this period who gave their skills and talents to the Jewish community, and in particular to the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Mrs Fanny Breckler supported many of these organisations, including the overdraft redemption fund, instituted by Charles Nathan in 1929. Mrs Breckler was for many years one of the major donors, in her own right, to the funds of the Perth Hebrew Congregation.

In May 1932 Rabbi Freedman made an appeal for the formation of a troop of Jewish Girl Guides. Its first official meeting was in June 1932 with thirty girls present.²⁵

Within the tradition of the orthodox synagogue there is no provision for the participation of women in the services. There was always a problem about the shortage of seating in the women's gallery, and this was one of the reasons for the decision to build the new synagogue in Freedman Avenue. The choir loft on the mezzanine floor of the Brisbane Street shule did include women on a few occasions. A mixed choir was formed in 1897, when the synagogue was consecrated. "At the time announced for the commencement of the affair the choristers filed into their places . . . the ladies in their white costumes, relieved by flowers, looking very attractive".²⁶



Louise Casper



Rosetta Luber

In 1901 Rabbi Freedman inaugurated an adult choir which comprised of men and women, including Mesdames D. Crawcour, I. Marks, and Misses S. Harris, F. Harris, L. Crawcour, N. Herman, A Flegeltaub, and A. Bressler.²⁷ This choir was used in a commemorative service for the late King Edward VII, and later for Anzac Day and other national services. In 1947 Rabbi Rubin-Zacks initiated late Friday evening services, partly in English, on the first Friday of each month. A mixed choir was introduced, but these services were soon abandoned.²⁸

The Ladies Advisory Board was established in 1941 to assist the Board of Management in connection with furnishings and vestments for the synagogue. It consisted of Mesdames L. Rubin-Zacks, M. Breckler, G. Luber, E. Masel, N. Sharp and F. Silbert.²⁹

Women's right to vote for members of the board was not always the prerogative of women seat holders. As early as 1924 it was reported

Much hilarity was displayed at the Congregation General Meeting re the motion of Mr M. Hartz to bestow the vote and the opportunity of holding office upon lady seat holders. Several speakers strenuously objected to a scheme which would mean

- a. No Sunday dinner on meeting days.
- b. Continuous wrangle at home as to the suitability of M. _____ for office.
- c. The muzzling of one particular member whose fiery speeches are invariably enlivened by many words of more force than propriety.

Ladies will be flattered to learn the motion was vetoed by 85 to 5.³⁰

From the mid-sixties women commonly attended and participated in PHC general meetings, but few women sought election to the Board of Management. Joan Blank assumed office in 1976, and she was not only the first woman member of the board in Perth, but also the first in Australia.

The Synagogue Ladies' Auxiliary was formed in 1960 under the chairmanship of Mrs G. Bloomfield. It attracted a large number of women. Its membership fee was five shillings per annum. Catering became a valuable and reliable function of the organisation, which was often conducted by ladies who wanted to air their point of view. The auxiliary decorated the shule for the high holy days, and for the *Eshet Hayil* ceremonies, and this was acknowledged by the board. In 1963 a new cover for the reading desk was donated by them. During this time the presentation of *challah* cloths to brides was introduced. In 1965 Rabbi Coleman insisted that the catering was to be strictly kosher.

By the 1970s Bess Sharp, Minnie Simenson and Dora Shilkin had joined the auxiliary and polishing the synagogue silver was included in the work of this band of ladies. In 1973 plans were laid for a kitchen to be included in the new synagogue.

Bella Walters introduced the custom of addressing the bridal couples at the conclusion of shabbat services, accompanied by the presentation of the *challah* cloth.

In 1976 Zelda Pearlman was appointed chairperson. Both Zelda Pearlman and Bess Coheu were inscribed on the honour board for their dedicated services to this organisation.

The new synagogue was opened in 1974 and in the following year a bookshop was established, fulfilling requests for *siddurim*, *mezuzot*, *machzorim* and *tephillin*. It was housed in the Korsunski Memorial Foyer Entrance Hall.

By 1978, due to the services in particular of Louise Hoffman and Mignonne Gubbay, the range increased to include a rich variety of literature and Jewish objets d'art.

In February 1992, to commemorate the visit of the chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Dr Jonathan Sacks, a donation of £10 000 was presented to the PHC by the Bookshop.

There were activities to cater for the adolescents of the community. The *Eshet Hayil* Ceremony was commenced in 1960, with weekly classes conducted for the Bat Mitzvah girls. A Teeners Group, organised by Mrs C. Breckler, was established in 1962. It consisted of three divisions, the early teenagers; the graduates from the former group; and the late teeners. These groups enjoyed fortnightly dances and socials. The activities continued for some time.

During the late 1970s Leila Hoffman played a major role in the organisation of shalshudis meals, during which a quiz concerning the Sedra of the week was

conducted. Zemirot and folk dancing were a regular part of the activities. During the 1980s the facilities of the shule were extended to include a creche, organised by Mrs Ruth Levit for Chagim. In 1989 Rebbitzin Aviva Freilich began to deliver regular shiurim, and in this year Leila Hoffman established a lending library at the Perth Torah Education Centre.

In summary. The themes of activity of all these vital Jewish ladies included philanthropy, welfare, and fund raising both inside and outside the Jewish community. They used their creative talents in decorating and cooking. They showed their qualities of dedication and holiness in the work of Tahara. Their success in hostessing social functions displayed skills in management and efficient organisation. The many examples documented of Jewish women in the Perth Hebrew Congregation's life may well have given Moritz Lazurus the inspiration to write, in *The Westralian Judean*, "This wonderful and mysterious preservation of the Jewish race is due to the Jewish woman. This is her glory, not alone in the history of her own people, but in the history of the world."³¹

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NOTES

1. Philip Masel, *The Story of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Published in Commemoration of its Jubilee. 1896-1946*, p. 17.
2. David Mossenson, *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew*, (U.W.A.P., 1990), p. 64.
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THE ROLE OF THE PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION IN JEWISH EDUCATION AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Louise Hoffman

THE EARLY YEARS

Since early Talmudic times the cornerstones of a Jewish community have been the synagogue and the school. The Jews of Western Australia since the formative and early years of their communities have understood this well, and each congregation in its history endeavoured to provide a Hebrew and religion school.¹

At a meeting of the Perth Hebrew Congregation on 23 August 1896 it was decided to establish an education board to arrange a school for the education of Jewish children in Perth.² The Reverend A.T. Boas of Adelaide, who came to lay the foundation stone of the Brisbane Street Synagogue, October 1896, kindly consented to inaugurate the Hebrew School in a temporary building . . . upwards of fifty children attending the school who are taught by honorary teachers . . ."³

The Perth Hebrew School, which has educated generations of Jewish men and women on the observance of Judaism and knowledge of their Jewish heritage, was born. Throughout the ninety-six year and occasionally chequered history it has never failed to provide some form of tuition, nor has the Perth Hebrew Congregation in that time ever underestimated the importance of Jewish education in Jewish communal life.

The Reverend D.I. Freedman, recently appointed minister and teacher to the congregation, assumed the position of headmaster of the Perth Hebrew School immediately after his arrival in March 1897 as the congregation took over control of the school. He retained this position with but a brief absence at war until his death in 1939, some forty-two years later. As he put his mark not only on the Perth Hebrew Congregation but also Western Australian Jewry, so did he stamp the Perth Hebrew School with his own philosophy and style of Jewish education in his time and beyond. As he sought to unify the disparate social groups within the community so he sought to socialise their children in each generation through the teaching of Hebrew and religion at the Perth Hebrew School. His insistence on the centrality of the school for all the Jewish children of the community never

diminished. Dismayed at the “appalling ignorance” of elementary bible knowledge by the Jewish children in his classes at the public schools where he would teach once or twice a week, he wrote: “A Jewish community should consider as one of its most important duties, the object of rearing and training their children as pious Jews. In a city like this the duty becomes terribly urgent.”⁴

From the start, finance, administration, attendance, teaching and curriculum posed chronic problems and attempts to solve them have occupied succeeding boards of management ever since.

Although the Board of Management at first did not expect to reap any profit from the school, they obviously did not want to sustain any substantial financial loss. To avoid this, the headmaster was voted £26 in lieu of school fees.⁵ Congregation members were to pay a capitation fee of 3d per week; it was thought they would be only too delighted to pay the tax. The school was thus to be free to all children. This changed time and again over the years. To pay or not to pay was the vexatious question. With the arrival in the community of new families who were too poor to be members of the congregation, it was not long before a charge to non-members was made.

The school was administered by an education committee recruited from members of the Executive and Board of Management of the congregation. Characteristic of the committee members was their prominence in the world of business, commerce and some few in the professions. They gave generous time, serious thought and planning to the administration of the school, not only in its financial and educational aspects but to social and sporting activities as well. This has been evident throughout the history of the congregation.

The annual examinations were carried out in conjunction with the headmaster by independent examiners who were appointed each year and who reported their results in the printed congregation annual reports. At first the public examinations took place in the synagogue where the children were tested — before admiring parents and friends.

Prizes were distributed in plenty with support from generous donors. Cash prizes from five shillings to one guinea were common and on occasion ten and twelve guineas. Prize night was one of the highlights of the school year, the prizes being distributed by the minister's wife and the wife of one of the senior members of the board. Scenes have been recalled of the table full of prizes, “everyone got one”, the excitement and pride of walking onto the stage and the concert that followed. It was usually a long concert including recitations (both humorous and serious), instrumental solos, anything up to twenty or more items.⁶

From the start a co-educational school, dux of the school was the prize often taken by girls. The apogee of the school year, following the examinations and distribution of prizes, was the annual school picnic and sports day, a much looked forward to event. The first was in 1899 when the children were taken to Canning Bridge. Thereafter the ferry *Duchess* was hired and a picnic at Point Walter with organised sports and prizes and hampers of food and drink to be enjoyed. No effort was spared by the caring band of men of the Education Committee to ensure

a good time was had by all. In 1905 a near tragedy occurred as the *Duchess* collided with the steam tug *Dunsky*. There were some miraculous escapes, some were injured and many suffered shock. On the Sunday following the ill-fated picnic, "a special thanksgiving service was held in the Synagogue when in the presence of a crowded congregation we offered our gratitude to God for His Divine Providence . . ." ⁷ The annual picnic did not take place the next year but was resumed in 1907.

Names which stand out in Jewish education in the early years are Henry Seeligson, S.L. Horowitz, Solomon Herman, E.P. Solomon, Gus Lubet, E. Casper, Joe Sharp, L. Van Praag and I.H. Boas.

In a short time the Perth Hebrew School became a distinctive Jewish institution. The children took part as a discrete body in the school demonstrations which were part of the 1901 Commonwealth celebrations. While preserving Jewish identity the school was an agent of socialisation and acculturation into the wider society for the children of the English speaking as well as those of the "foreign", mostly Yiddish speaking immigrants who arrived in substantial numbers during the first and second decades of the century.

The children learnt to have concern for fellow Jews in far away places by contributing to charity. In 1905 Mrs Adler, wife of the chief rabbi in England, acknowledged the receipt of £10 contributed by the school children, at the rate of one penny per week, towards the Loudon Children's Penny Dinner Fund. She wrote, it was "a real happiness to know that the kindly Jewish heart, which has ever a warm corner for the suffering of others, was as ever ready to show practical sympathy in the far Antipodes as in crowded London." ⁸ Furthermore she hoped they would all continue in their kind efforts, which they did entirely until the headmaster was asked to join the Annual Protection Society in Perth. A general charity fund was then established and donations made not only to that society but to the Children's Hospital and the "poor Yemenite Jews who were dying" from exposure and starvation. To bring home the tragic violence of the Kishinev massacres in 1903 there was no music or concert at the annual prize giving ceremony.

The availability of suitable Hebrew School teachers was then and ever since a source of worry. Reverend Freedman complained:

I regret to say that the matter of assistant teachers is still in an unsatisfactory state . . . I frequently have had to take the whole school alone, and have been compelled to employ some of the pupils themselves as teachers occasionally. ⁹

Women were the mainstay of the teaching staff and in 1907 Freedman appealed to the young men of the community:

I wonder why it is that young men do not help in the work of the school to the same extent as young women . . . If you read the names of teachers in connection with Synagogue Religion Classes it is so rare to find "Mr" it is "Miss" all the way down. I do



Girls of the Perth Hebrew School, 1912.

hope that some of our Perth young men if capable of teaching will be filled with a sense of their duty and assist us in educating our children. You will understand, therefore, how grateful I am to Mr W. Davis who apart from myself is the only male teacher in the School.¹⁰

Freedman defended his teachers from criticism on many occasions, and although their stipend may have been pitiful, the reward to deserving retirees was often a presentation of a suitably engraved gold watch or diamond and gold locket.

The original synagogue schoolroom was not practical. Notice of a special fund raising meeting for new accommodation read in part:

At present the Synagogue has to be used as a Schoolroom and apart from the injury caused to the property, this weakens the feeling of reverence and respect in which the sacred building should be held by the children.¹¹

The school hall, to be known as Princes Hall, and built in 1905 at a cost of £800 was also impractical and the synagogue was again used as a school. However, Princes Hall, behind the synagogue, came to be the focal point for all community activities for young and old alike until the shule moved to Mount Lawley.

School attendance was encouraged and a gold medal was given for perfect attendance, a silver medal for not more than two absences. This practice continued for several decades from 1902. Absenteeism was not to be tolerated and notes were delivered to parents informing them of absence, or on occasion of leaving their children too long before the hour of instruction commenced.

The first books to be purchased for the school by the headmaster were 100 Hebrew Primers, 50 Abrahams Scripture History, 20 Hebrew Grammars by M. Adler, 1 dozen Pentateuch, 2 dozen Daily Prayers, 2 dozen Bibles (Hebrew and English) and 2 dozen Hagadas.

The curriculum was composed of Hebrew reading, translation, scripture history and religion, *Neginos* of the *Sedra*, a *Barochos* of the Haphtorah, the reading of the law and the Haphtorah for the upper classes.

Tuition took place on Wednesday afternoon, Saturday and Sundays. In various years the headmaster, who gave nine hours instruction as against four by assistant teachers, also taught boys Haphtorah classes three days a week. By 1913 there were classes on six days a week. Boys of seven years and up were able to sight read *Haphtorot* and the school provided a shule choir. Enrolments had increased to 184 from 50 in 1897, due to increased immigration and high birth rate in those years.¹²

A significant change occurred in 1914. A Perth Hebrew School and Choir Board was appointed to guide the school, an experiment to place the school under the control of a body outside the Synagogue Committee. As many of the children were those of non-paying members, regulation was again invoked for non-seat

holders to pay a fee. The teaching staff was the largest ever, comprising the headmaster and twelve assistant teachers.¹³

The syllabus of instruction had been extended and included reading, translation, scripture history, the Jewish religion, the sacred days of the Jewish year, a glossary of Hebrew words and phrases concerning Jewish life and ritual texts, psalms and scripture portions (by heart), Hebrew grammar and Hebrew writing. The examiners applauded the syllabus but regretted "a tendency to recite the prayers in a hurried and in many instances a slipshod manner".¹⁴

A branch of the school was established in West Perth in the home of Mrs Charles Nathan. Nine pupils were enrolled and seven attended regularly. The well-to-do West Perthites paid one shilling for the services of the teacher, Miss Mandelbaum.¹⁵

In 1916 the Reverend Freedman, who had been appointed chaplain to the Australian Military Forces in 1913, went to war where he served in Gallipoli and France. There was a marked drop in student enrolment, down to 112, the Hebrew School and Choir Board disbanded and control returned to a Congregation Committee. Sidney R. Jaffe was acting headmaster. He is remembered as a small man who wore high heels, was very English and "inclined to hit the kids".¹⁶

When Rabbi Freedman returned from the war in 1918 there was a marked change. The social cleavage which divided the Anglicised from the "foreign" Jews was reflected in Jewish education at the time. In that year there were three other schools in existence. First, there was a school conducted under the auspices of the Zionist Association and known as "Mr Honig's School". Mordechai Honig came to Western Australia from Palestine in 1913 as a teacher of languages. He was rejected from the Australian Army at the outbreak of war, officially because of poor eyesight, but some say because he was thought to be a Turkish spy.

Most of the pupils came from the Yiddish speaking families who felt the Perth Hebrew Congregation was not religious enough and resented it. Honig has been remembered as a handsome, gentle man, fluent in modern Hebrew, who taught children the Hebrew names for animals by singing them to the tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm".¹⁷

Secondly, Ben Zion Sharp ran a Haphtorah class for boys only; and third, there was the West Perth School of Miss Mandelbaum. "They used to field three cricket teams (not always an eleven) in the paddock near the shule, where the cries could be heard. 'I belong to Mr Honig's team' or 'I'm in Mr Sharp's team', or 'I'm playing for the Hebrew School Team'.¹⁸

Rabbi Freedman set about reunification, but failed to effect a merger between the Perth Hebrew School and Honig's Hebrew Speaking School. In 1918 the West Australian Jewish Education Association was formed and control of the school passed from the Congregation Board to that body, independent of congregational control. Although under its auspices, it was hoped to be seen by others, particularly members of the Perth Jewish Association,¹⁹ as being free of Anglicised influence.

The Perth Hebrew School had gone backward for the first time since its inception: from 184 enrolments in 1914 to 54 in 1918.

Youth activities were centred around the synagogue and the school primarily, the Princes Hall being a meeting place for various organisations and where younger people could meet. Freedman noted his concern for teenagers as early as 1911, "Something needs to be done for boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen now", but all experiments proved unsuccessful. It was not until the second decade of the century that social activities for the young became institutionalised.

AFTER 1918

The Perth Hebrew School was administered now by the West Australian Jewish Education Association, an independent board, but with permanent representatives from the Perth Hebrew Congregation. The first president was Joseph Sharp, a position he maintained for twenty years until his death in 1938. "Shy, his visits [to the school] were like a visit from the Governor", recalls one ex-pupil of the 1930s with wondrous voice.²⁰

The Hebrew Speaking School and the Perth Hebrew School continued side by side for more than a decade. First Miss Cohen, then Joachim Wardeman, excellent linguists, conducted classes at the Hebrew Speaking School which attracted those who valued the teaching of modern Hebrew language. By the late 1920s this school was absorbed by the Perth Hebrew School which agreed to provide instruction in modern Hebrew. For this purpose Israel and Anuita Savouray-Serebrier were recruited from Palestine. Arrangements were made at the highest level of immigration authority to expedite the admission of the Serebriers to Australia.



First Junior Certificate Hebrew Class, 1935.

*l. to R Seated: Sylvia Walters, Rae Berad, Rabbi Freedman, Eve Golding, Goola Berinson, Ethel Perlou
l. to R Standing: Lionel Horry, Izzy Chester, Eva Spokone (teacher), Syd Hartstein, Eddy Zeffert.*

The Depression had its effect on the school. Enrolments which had leapt to 160 in 1930, fell a year later to 100. The salary bill had doubled and many parents were unable to pay fees. To overcome the financial difficulty, guarantees (bank and individual) were sought, and fund raising activities were initiated. The hope and excitement engendered by the engagement of the Serebriers waned quickly. Their limited command of English proved them unsuitable and as doubts arose of the centrality of Hebrew Language their contract was terminated in 1931. The school reverted to the earlier style of religious knowledge and familiarity with the synagogue service as the core curriculum.

Rabbi Freedman devised new methods of instruction. He composed verses set to music based on traditional melodies of the Synagogue Service, explaining the significance of the festivals. To the tune of *Kol Nidrei* was sung "When Tishri is but ten days old/The story of our life is told/On Yom Kippur the Solemn Fast/The life of every soul is cast."²¹

He later extended the ideas to cover a wide variety of subjects from the ten commandments to parts of Hebrew grammar.

Good things happened in 1936. Biblical Hebrew was introduced as a subject in the State public examinations for Junior and Leaving. A substantial schoolhouse was built on a block of land adjoining the synagogue with eight classrooms to accommodate 250 pupils. At the same time an adjacent hall was built for the Monash troop of boy scouts (and later girl guides). The financial problems of the school were overcome as a result of the magnificent bequest to the Perth Hebrew Congregation from the estate of Phineas Seeligson.

By the 1950s there was a critical dissatisfaction with the standard of Jewish education at the school. A new board headed by Albert Gild led to some reforms. Modern Hebrew pronunciation was re-introduced, Leon Zeffert replaced congregation minister Rubin-Zacks as headmaster, and negotiations to recruit a teacher from Israel began (again).

Isaac Atlas, a graduate of the Hebrew University, arrived in Perth, accompanied by his wife, in 1953. Like on the arrival of the Serebriers a generation earlier, spirits ran high. Optimism based on a touching faith in the ability of the new teacher to lead the Jewish children of Perth toward enlightenment was soon dashed. Plans had been made and executed. The president and the minister of the congregation with the president of the School went to Fremantle to greet the Atlases who arrived on the S.S. *Orcades*. They were taken to a self contained apartment which had been prepared for them and were guests at a reception given in their honour. Hope was high for success. However, a disgruntled Atlas refused to prepare a programme for the school or supervise staff. He would do nothing but teach class. The president and committee were affronted by his intransigence and he left the State with not a lesson given.

Undeterred the committee obtained the services of Sarah Finkelstein, a professional Hebrew teacher from New South Wales. Miss Finkelstein was of English birth, possessed of deep spiritual faith, and was regarded with the utmost respect by

the community. She trained many young boys for their Bar Mitzvah. Trained teachers were now employed on a part time basis and right of entry to public schools for religious instruction was established where there were numbers of Jewish children.

Albert Gild and his committee (of mostly concerned parents) pressed for a young teacher. After several attempts at recruiting a suitable teacher from England the congregation, with its usual penchant for engaging one person to perform multiple offices, decided in 1959 to employ Emanuel Fischer as assistant minister and teacher. He proved unsuitable as a *chazan* but took over in 1964 as principal of the Hebrew School. In that time he was subsidised by the congregation to acquire a professional teaching qualification, which he did. And then in 1968 he left the State with his family to settle in Israel. During his term as principal Fischer oversaw the division of scripture classes at Coolbinia School into liberal and orthodox and arranged with the Education Department that Jewish children should have two days of *Yom Tov* to observe the major festivals. For a time some classes were held at Floreat where a number of young Jewish families lived. Even correspondence lessons were offered to families who lived far away.²²

However all this began to fade as the Jewish Day School movement picked up pace. Jewish education was transferred almost entirely from the congregation to a new secular organisation. It started in 1957 with twenty-four children in the Seeligson Kindergarten with Miss Finkelstein as director and Dr O. Tofler as president. Two years later Carmel School, a day school, started with seven children in Grade one. From 1960 a grade was added each year. Rooms were allotted in the Robinson Avenue schoolhouse until 1963 when the school moved to new premises in Cresswell Road, Yokine, in part of the Maccabean Grounds. The congregation and the Seeligson Trust provided financial support, but advised the school should take only children of orthodox parents. That is, the children were to be *halachically* acceptable as orthodox Jews. An enrolment summary for Western Australian Hebrew Schools in 1960 showed Perth Hebrew School 183, Temple David School 110, Seeligson Kindergarten 25, Carmel School 23.²³

The success of the day school meant a decline but not the demise of the Perth Hebrew School. By 1968 enrolments had fallen sharply and lessons for a few students took place at Carmel School. In 1973 Julia Solomon took over the school as headmistress, a post she retained until 1989. Lessons take place in Breckler Hall within the synagogue building in Freedman Road, Menora.

During Rabbi Coleman's time as minister he started a Tephilin Club and arranged for older boys to take the higher exams in Hebrew from England.

Youth activities have always been supported by the congregation but not necessarily instigated. The role of the congregation in youth, sporting and social activities has been supportive, rather than dynamic as in the sphere of education. In the 1920s the Tennis Club and Zionist Athletic Association were formed, and later the Maccabean Club. In the 1930s a boy scout and girl guide troop was organised. Dances were held in the Princes Hall where young people could meet. Organisations



Hebrew School Class in the Synagogue, 1992.

like the Girls' Guild and Holy Vestment Society had existed from the early days. Later the C. & Y. Juniors were organised. These were all activities within the rubric of the congregation and much of the activity took place in the synagogue precincts.

In 1963 a young people's group was started by Pearl Breckler to encourage young adolescents to mix together. The group, attached to the synagogue, was known as Teeners, joined in supervised dances and outings. The Temple David Congregation were affronted as children of liberal, converted non-Jewish mothers were not accepted. Teeners flourished for some years but then stopped, with nothing to take its place.

The only young group, apart from the school now at the synagogue, is Bnei Akiva. This group which started in 1983 in Perth had developed in the Diaspora as a youth group to make *Aliyah* and to be religious following the way of Chief Rabbi Kook of Israel. There is a membership of sixty children organised into four groups with their own room and phone; they hold meetings in the Breckler Hall, they conduct a youth minyan each Friday night, and their activities include the collection of palm fronds and *lulavim* for the shule on succoth.²⁴

As the Perth Hebrew Congregation celebrates its centenary and enters the final decade of the twentieth century its role in Jewish institutional life is still vibrant despite the increasing secularisation of communal life. It subsidises much social activity, and its role in education, although diminished in terms of number, is still vital in providing a Jewish education.

The advent of Rabbi Freilich as minister to the congregation in 1988 brought new life and enthusiasm for Jewish learning and education to congregants of all ages. A library and a bookshop support the learning process. Fifty to sixty people attend the rabbi's *shiurim*. The Perth Hebrew Congregation is educating all. For those adults who missed out along the way there's now plenty of opportunity to pick up the missing educational pieces.

NOTES

1. Early congregations in Western Australia were Fremantle, Perth, Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Menzies. At Northam, although not a congregation, the community established a Hebrew and Religion School.
2. Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) Minutes 1896.
3. Ibid. Letter Book 1895-96.
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5. The new minister's salary had been fixed at £200 per annum and £50 for school fees.
6. Interview with Edna Luber Smith.
7. *PHC Annual Report 1906*.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. 1900.
10. Ibid. 1907.
11. Ibid. Minutes 1903.
12. In 1911 there were 33 births recorded, and in 1913 there were 55 births recorded.
13. S.R. Jaffe, M.E. Zeffert and the Misses Jacobson, M. Cohen, G. Cohen, N. Book, B. Shineberg, A. Nissenson, I. Luber, D. Shimenson, L. Rotenberg, D. Salter.
14. *PHC Annual Report 1914*.
15. Daughter of Rev. Z. Mandelbaum, 2nd reader and shochet to the congregation 1914-27.
16. Interview with Josh Simenson.
17. Interview with Sylvia Hirsch.
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19. D. Mossenson, *Gemilat Hasidim: The Story of the Perth Jewish Free Loan Society* (Perth: 1955).
20. Interview with Dr J. Hoffman.
21. *Western Judean* 1930.
22. *Perth Hebrew School Headmaster's Report* 1967.
23. *Maccabean* 1960.
24. Interview with David Berinson regarding history and aims of B'nei Akiva in Western Australia.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded November 1987

Chairman: Dr David Mossenson

Vice Chairman: Mrs Louise Hoffman

Secretary Treasurer: Mr Jeffery Pearlman

Committee: Dr Keith Shilkin
Mr Harry Atlas

Meetings: Meetings are held in the foyer of the PHC Synagogue. Three or four meetings are held each year.

Archive: The Society has established an Archive of Western Australian Jewish History which is located within the synagogue complex.

Postal Address: c/- Perth Hebrew Congregation
Cnr. Freedman Rd. and Plantation St.,
Menora, Western Australia, 6050.

PHILANTHROPY

Harry Atlas

Philanthropy (charity) is usually translated by the Hebrew *Tzedakah*. It is limited to mean the giving of alms to the poor. It is a sacred duty for every Jew to provide *Tzedakah*. For all other acts of benevolence or kindness the phrase *Gemilut Hesed* is used. The distinction between the two is defined by the following passage:-

In three respects is *Gemilut Hassadim* superior to *Tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* can only be performed with one's material possessions, *Gemilut Hassadim* both in kind and in service. *Tzedakah* can only be given to the poor, *Gemilut Hassadim* to both rich and poor. *Tzedakah* can only be performed for the living. *Gemilut Hassadim* for both the living and the dead.

The rabbis have laid the greatest stress on the spirit in which charity is given. Under no circumstances was the recipient to be shamed. In the highest forms of *Tzedakah* the donor and recipient are ignorant of each other's identity.

For thousands of years Jewry has been steeped in these doctrines of philanthropy.

One hundred years ago a tiny isolated group of Jews gathered to form the Perth Hebrew Congregation. The duty of *Tzedakah* and *Gemilut Hesed* would prove to be an essential bond for their survival.

One hundred years of philanthropy has seen the Perth Hebrew Congregation exhibiting the finest traditions of *Gemilut Hesed* or charity in its finest form. The organisations and groups that embraced these traditions were as diverse as the congregation they served.

The earliest of these groups were mainly English speaking. They had migrated from other parts of Australia, from England, or were east European Jews who had migrated after a stay in England. Later migrants referred to these early pioneers as *Anglos*.

The 1890s was a time of burgeoning growth. The discovery of gold brought newcomers to the colony. Jewish numbers had increased from 129 in 1891 to 1259 in 1901. This tenfold increase was never to be repeated. Migrant groups who came

to the colony from eastern Europe were easily identified by their use of Yiddish which was the vernacular they used in everyday life. Some of these migrants were extremely poor, and yet no philanthropic organisation existed to help them. Tragically, the extreme poverty of some families was not recognised in time to save them. Other eastern European migrants were more fortunate. They had come via English speaking environments; via England or the eastern states of Australia. Many were fortunate enough to join relatives in the colony.

Newcomers who had failed to gain entry to America were attracted by the opportunities offered by the British colonies and the news of the discovery of gold in Australia. Many migrated from Palestine after finding conditions there extremely difficult and many of these Yiddish speaking migrants had serious problems in settlement. The Palestinians were particularly impoverished. They had few skills or money and insisted on maintaining the Shabbat without resorting to work. They turned to hawking, marine collecting and bag dealing. These tiny enterprises, however modest, required some capital which few of them possessed.

The arrival of Reverend D.I. Freedman in 1897 was to mark a watershed in the religious and philanthropic life of the community.

In October 1897 he encouraged the formation of the Perth Jewish Ladies Benevolent Society to relieve cases of distress and to perform women's *tahara*, the preparation of the dead person for burial. This was Gemilut Hesed at its highest. On Reverend Freedman's initiative the Perth Philanthropic Society was established in 1898 to distribute charity within the community.

The Philanthropic Society continued to monitor needs and dispensed small grants and interest free loans to families in need. At Pesach it issued matzah to indigent families and when necessary to the inmates at Fremantle Jail. The Ladies Benevolent Society assisted with help for Jewish widows and children.



Phineas Seeligson



Godel Korsunski

The early work of Reverend Freedman had encouraged a strong sense of duty in the fledgling community. The Ladies Benevolent Society extended its welfare work to the outside community. The Jewish Girls' Guild formed in 1906 helped distressed women and children in the general community and performed voluntary duties in hospitals. The Perth Hebrew Congregation regularly identified with appeals for hospitals and the Home of Peace.

Its non exclusiveness was confirmed by the Western Australian historian J.S. Battye who commented, "the members of this small community of Jews are particularly prominent in the various charitable and philanthropic movements".

The community's sense of duty did not rest with its responsibilities to charities at home. Following the notorious *Kishinev* pogrom in 1903 in Russia, a mass rally was held and raised £427 for Russian Jewish relief.

During the five year period preceding the First World War, migrants who were referred to as "Yiddishers" outnumbered the English speaking Jews who were attracted to the State.

The year 1909 saw the incorporation of the Perth Jewish Association by the many Yiddishers who decided that they needed a shule that reflected the orthodoxy that they knew and could understand. They resented the Anglos attitude towards them. Much more serious was the resentment many of the Palestinians felt towards the Hebrew Philanthropic Society. It had a long history of assisting new arrivals with grants and loans. The needs of the new arrivals perfectly fitted the reason for the society's existence. Many migrants from Palestine, particularly a group from Safed, were rebuffed when they asked for free loan assistance to establish their hawking and marine collecting enterprises. The antipathy between the Perth Hebrew Congregation's Philanthropic Society and the Safed Jews, who were establishing separate *Minyanim* became a source of serious grievance. It was alleged that the society was overbearing in its attitude to the new foreign born migrants.

With considerable faith and few resources the newcomers established a Gemilut Hesed, calling it the Perth Jewish Free Loan Society. Funds were raised by membership and in its formative years it was closely associated with the leaders and membership of "the little shule". This was to continue into the early 1920s when increasing prosperity led to many members deserting the Perth Jewish Association and becoming members of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. The Free Loan Society, despite periods of instability, was to become a strong communal philanthropic organisation with leadership from both congregations. The difficulties of the Depression saw both the Hebrew Philanthropic and the Free Loan Societies working cooperatively during those dismal years.

Following the declaration of war in 1914, the Ladies Benevolent Society and the Jewish Girls' Guild concentrated on work for the Red Cross. Both organisations spearheaded appeals for comforts for the men overseas. The Perth Hebrew Congregation was deeply involved in the campaign. The outstanding contributions made by Western Australian Jewry during the war years earned fulsome praise

in the *West Australian* newspaper. Many articles expressed praise for the war effort of the Western Australian Jewish Community and Rabbi D.I. Freedman's outstanding leadership.

The women's organisations of the Perth Hebrew Congregation had a strong Anglo leadership. The Ladies Benevolent Society was led by Mrs Joseph Sharp, Mrs Gustus Luber and Mrs Harry Cohen. The Jewish Girls' Guild was now deeply involved in philanthropy within and outside the community. The establishment of a Jewish Women's League, initially by Rosetta Luber and carried forward by Fanny Breckler, had as its aim the sponsoring of welfare projects for women and children in Palestine. In the late 1920s, following a visit by Dr Fanny Reading of Sydney, the league became the Council of Jewish Women.

In 1926 the Immigration Welfare Society was formed and welcomed immigrants who had escaped from czarist Russia, on their arrival in Fremantle. It also helped to find employment for those settling in the State.

The great Depression was a national disaster that affected the whole community. With so many members experiencing serious financial problems, charitable and relief work became the major activity. The number of applications for interest free loans were at record levels. Both the Philanthropic Society and the Free Loan Society were forced to reduce the amount they could lend to any one borrower.

The Ladies Benevolent Society made weekly grants of money and food to destitute families. Rosetta Luber, Louise Casper and Fanny Silbert were leading figures in providing desperately needed aid. When welfare agencies found it difficult to meet the demands on them, generous individual donations enabled the volume of calls for assistance to be met.

Under Fanny Breckler the National Council functioned as the premier women's group, assuming large philanthropic responsibility. Fanny Breckler not only supported all charitable endeavours, but privately helped many families in difficult circumstances on a scale which made her virtually a welfare agency in her own right. In this work she was assisted by her daughter Vera Rosenwax.

When Phineas Seeligson died in 1935 he bequeathed his fortune to the congregation. His bequest transformed the basis of charitable work within the community. His assets were to be administered by the Seeligson Trust, composed of the chief minister and the three trustees of the Perth Hebrew Congregation plus three coopted members. Annual grants were to be made to the Perth Hebrew Congregation and the Perth Hebrew School. An important and far reaching direction of the will empowered the trustees with the discretion to assist deserving members of the community to enable them to pursue studies at a tertiary institution. From 1936 onward, the Seeligson Trust made loans and grants directly to individuals as well as subsidising the charitable bodies such as the Ladies Benevolent Society and National Council of Jewish Women.

Seeligson's generosity introduced an unobtrusive but powerful agency within the structure of the community. The trustees sought and obtained permission to widen the scope of the Seeligson Trust. The origins and support for the Seeligson

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ACCOUNTANTS

11 & 12 E. I. & A. Bank Chambers,

St George's Terrace,

Perth, _____ 193

W.A.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trustees
of the Will of the late Phineas Seeligson, held at the
residence of Sir Chas Nathan on Tuesday 13th August 1935.
Present, Sir C.S.Nathan, Mr M.Breckler, Mr J.Sharp and
Rabbi D.I.Freedman.

Mr M. Breckler was elected Chairman
of the Trustees.

Mr Henry Casper was appointed
Secretary, pro tem, for a period of three months or
until Probate of the Will has been granted, at a
remuneration to be agreed upon.

The Chairman and Secretary were
authorised to see Sir Walter James immediately and
authorise him to take the necessary steps to have
the Will proved.

D.I. Freedman
M. Breckler
J. Sharp
C.S. Nathan

Kindergarten, Carmel School, Jewish Centre, Aged Home and other selected communal projects owe much of their success to Seeligson's munificence.

In 1936 the Jewish community responded to a call for help in the emigration of Jews from prewar Europe. As the prewar situation in Europe worsened, calls were made to the Commonwealth government to relax its restriction on Jewish immigration to Australia. From a few hundred in 1937, several thousands came to Australia in 1939. In June 1937, following the arrival of the first escapees from Nazism, the Perth branch of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society was formed with Rabbi Freedman as its leader. Ill health forced him to retire. His place was taken by Mayer Breckler, the president of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, who was joined by fellow board members and well known communal workers. Nate Zusman was appointed the full-time organising officer. A vacant house next to the Brisbane Street Shule became the headquarters and reception centre. Refugees brought out by Jewish agencies as well as independent immigrants attended English classes, received counselling and an advisory service was also available. Financial help, accommodation and the settling of new arrivals was well organised.

The growing numbers of refugees in 1938 and 1939 were assisted by the Welfare Society. Employment was discreetly handled by the placement of newcomers with Jewish employers.

During the period 1936-39 Australia absorbed 7000 Jewish refugees, Perth less than two hundred. Unfortunately new arrivals without family connections were encouraged to travel to Melbourne and Sydney where the absorption of Jewish migrants was better organised despite the fact that the Perth community needed the injection of these desirable immigrants.

The outbreak of World War II, with the added horrors of the Holocaust, was to create new challenges. Many volunteered for overseas service. A Jewish Women's Red Cross and sections of the Camp Comfort Fund were organised.

The arrival of Jews amongst the displaced persons who were admitted to Australia, presented new pressure. The Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies sponsored 15 000 Jews to arrive between 1946 and 1953. An additional 3 000 arrived following the Hungarian uprising in 1956.

In May 1947 the Welfare Society was revived and strengthened with the incorporation of the Overseas Jewish Relief Fund. The leadership of the Welfare Society rested with members of the Perth Hebrew Congregation Board. Their policy was only to assist those migrants who had relatives in the State or were prepared to spend two years outside the metropolitan area.



Fanny Breckler

Fremantle, the first port of call for migrant ships, became a centre of communal interest. The Welfare Society accepted the responsibility of meeting vessels and greeting Jewish immigrants to Australia. The task was undertaken by a band of workers led by Fremantle identity Issy Orloff. Kosher food, clothing, toys and medical supplies were distributed to the newcomers on board.

Sydney Einfeld, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and president of the Australian Welfare Society, visited Perth to encourage the absorption of several families. Meagre attempts at resettlement in Perth failed.

The 1954 Commonwealth Census revealed the discrepancy between Western Australia's Jewish intake compared with all other Jewish communities in Australia. Between 1946 and 1953 Western Australia had absorbed 130 Jewish refugees compared with the 15 000 Australian intake.

Rabbi Rubin-Zacks, in a public meeting of the Welfare Society, described Perth's record as a "disastrous failure" because Perth had lost two vital opportunities to help secure the community's future.

In 1974 the Hebrew Philanthropic Society joined the Welfare Society under Roy Shilkin's chairmanship. The Ladies Benevolent Society disbanded in 1985 and divided its assets between the Aged Home and the Welfare Society.

Of the welfare organisations that predated the Seeligson Trust only the Free Loan Society endured. The devotion of Cyril Pearlman, its treasurer, has ensured its survival.

Godel Korsunski, a successful businessman and lifelong Zionist died in 1972 leaving bequests of his large fortune to various funds and institutions in Israel. He willed the remaining portion of his estate to the Godel Korsunski Trust to be administered on behalf of the G. Korsunski Carmel School. Parents in need can apply for partial or total remission of fees which can then be met by the Korsunski or Seeligson Trusts.

The mid 1970s and 1980s were the period in which positive efforts were made to encourage migration. The Western Australian Board of Deputies established an Immigration Committee headed by Keith Shilkin.

Advertisements were placed in the Jewish press in South Africa and England, encouraging potential migrants to THINK PERTH. The Welfare Society concentrated on welcoming and assisting families to become established. It acquired a three bedroom unit named Shalom House to provide temporary accommodation for the new arrivals. The migrant groups from Britain, Scotland, South Africa and Russia caused dramatic changes in the communal mix of Perth Jewry.

A preponderance of married couples with young families, particularly from South Africa, provided the community's religious and educational institutions with hope for the future. The philanthropic needs of the community continue to be served by institutions who jealously guard the sacred duty of Tzedakah and Gemilut Hesed.

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The data for this paper has been the definitive work of the Jews of Western Australia, *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew* by Dr David Mossenson.

The minutes of the Phineas Seeligson Trust as well as minutes of the Australian Welfare Society proved valuable.

References to the early editions of *The Westralian Judean* were useful.



The New Synagogue.

PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION IN PUBLIC

*Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman**

It was the prophet Jeremiah who exhorted the exiles to “pray for the welfare of the city in which you live, for in its peace is your peace”.¹ In this regard the Jewish community of Perth has not been found wanting in representing the Jewish contribution in almost every phase of the State’s development. The brief however, pays tribute to the Jewish personalities whose contribution as citizens of Western Australia had never permitted their public or professional careers to abandon or weaken their ties with the Jewish people and Judaism.

While the port of Fremantle has been associated with the name of the Samsons since it was established in 1829, there have been others, notably Elias Solomon, civic leader and parliamentary representative in the State and federal legislatures. Of particular importance is the name L. Alexander, who was mayor of the town between 1901-02. The Fremantle Hebrew Congregation was established by this time. It had met over the shop of Benjamin Solomon in 1887, and Alexander was elected the first president. The first lay reader or *Baal Tephillah* was Henry Seeligson, and it was his son Phineas who, on his demise on 11 August 1935 at seventy-seven years of age, had left his entire fortune to the Jewish community for the purpose of dispensing charity and encouraging education. However, the Fremantle congregation did not last long. Most of the Jewish people had moved to Perth.

There were only 57 Jewish souls in the colony’s census of 1870, and only 129 in the census of 1891. The discovery of gold brought a rapid increase in numbers, and led to the establishment of a synagogue at Kalgoorlie. A special meeting established the congregation on 9 October 1901, and a few years later a timber and iron building in Brookman Street opened as a synagogue.

By far the most outstanding personalities of the town were Louis and Mrs Alman. Louis Alman was a veteran. He was a town councillor for forty years, deputy mayor and then mayor, an office he filled with distinction until his demise in 1969. He was accorded a civic funeral conducted by the rabbi from Perth accompanied by members of the Perth Hebrew Congregation Board. Louis Alman was also

* Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman, CBE, AM, JP, has himself been active in public affairs, some of his posts being past grand chaplain Freemasonry, district governor Rotary, trustee Karrakatta Cemetery Board, president Dental Board and past executive of the RSL.

prominent in a brotherhood known as the Druids. At the same time, alongside his public service he was president of the congregation, and supervised its dissolution when the Jews had left.

In the first half of the century, the Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) enjoyed a reputation which had commanded the respect of all sections of the Western Australian community. There were Jewish men and women in public life whose presence, personality and ability brought lustre to the name of the Jew. It made the congregation the mouthpiece and acknowledged representative of all Jews in the State. Some names still endure, yet the people have gone long ago. Their contribution to public life has done much for the hundred and one societies, associations and organisations which span the entire canvass of human life in the State politically, spiritually and communally.

One of the more famous names is that of Sir Charles Nathan CBE (1870-1936), who led trade delegations on behalf of the government, but who still had time to hold office twice as honorary treasurer of the PHC. It was Sir Charles who helped another outstanding member of the PHC, Harold Boas, to bring to fruition plans, in the first decade of the century, transforming the Brisbane Street Synagogue into a magnificent structure in Byzantine style.

Harold Boas came from Adelaide and became Perth's city planner. He was honorary architect of the PHC until his demise in 1980, and presented the plans of the new synagogue in his ninety-first year. He was awarded the OBE in the 1968 Queen's Honours. As a historian and essayist he wrote articles for the general public on a variety of topics, but his biography of Sir Charles Nathan is one of his best.² Harold Boas compiled the *Australian Jewry Book of Honour* for the Great War 1914-18. He was also a representative for the YMCA and probably the only Jew in Australia to represent a Christian association. A park is named after him in the city.

Harold's older brother Lionel was the second and longest serving administrator of the Karrakatta Cemetery. He was in office for forty-four years (1902-46), and transformed a wilderness into a well-ordered system of burial. The ornamental wrought-iron gates at the Smythe Road entrance, which lead into the Jewish Section of the cemetery, were erected to perpetuate his memory. Lionel Boas was a councillor and mayor of the City of Subiaco, and together with J.J. Simmons, founded the Young Australia League.

There were 17 287 Jews in Australia at the time of the Great War, and 11 percent enlisted voluntarily compared with 9 percent of the total population. Also 15 percent of the Jewish personnel lost their lives against 14 percent of all non-Jews. Figures of enlistments in World War II are available only for Western Australia. Apart from the Senior Jewish Chaplain Rabbi Danglow's personal assessments, there are no statistics for the total number of Jews in the Armed Forces in Australia. However, the figures for Western Australia are significant for those of all other States. Sixteen percent or two hundred persons enlisted, and the names of those who paid the supreme sacrifice are enshrined on one side of the Jewish Memorial in Kings Park, and on a limestone rock in the synagogue grounds acquired for the purpose by Jack Krasnostein OBE when he was president of the congregation. According to



HONOUR BOARD, PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION

Originally erected in the entrance to the Brisbane Street Synagogue at the close of the Great War, the Honour Board is now located in the foyer of the new Synagogue.

Danglow's figures the number of Australian Jews serving in World War II was 3 870. Thirty-seven were decorated for bravery and 134 died.

Rabbi D.I. Freedman, Rabbi of the PHC (1897-1939), was responsible for the building of the Jewish Memorial. He was elected president of the Returned Services League (RSL) and went to London as the Australian delegate to the sixth biennial conference of the British Empire Services League. Being overseas, he accepted an invitation to act as substitute Australian delegate to the 14th Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva.

In a more contemporary setting Ron Stone has given yeoman service to the RSL as acting warden, and as sub-warden of the War Memorial. As chairman of the Jewish Ex-Service League of WA, with Jack London as his honorary secretary, he has been responsible for the Jewish ANZAC Dawn Service, bringing governors, premiers and RSL presidents among other notable men and women, to attend. Ron's public service has been of the utmost value strengthening PHC relations with our neighbours of other faiths. Ron is a veteran of local government: he has served as a member of the Shire of Perth, then councillor of the City of Stirling when the shire's name changed, and has been mayor. He was also a councillor for the City of Perth, has been awarded Australian honours, and in November 1991 was made a freeman of the City of Stirling, the first Jew to be honoured in this way.

Ron never fails to help the congregation with his special expertise and experience, and the PHC appreciates the assistance he gave during the negotiations which led to the granting of land for the new synagogue and youth centre in Mount Lawley.

Eric Silbert is another name linked with the Jewish contribution to local government and the Senate of the University of Western Australia. He too, has been awarded Australian Honours. His stand in the struggle for Soviet Jewry is well recognised.

There are members of the PHC, presidents among them, who have contributed much to Freemasonry in Western Australia. They include worshipful masters, and have been awarded Grand Lodge honours. Masonic services in the PHC Synagogue, in Brisbane Street and Mount Lawley, have given non-Jews of all sections of the community a closer and more intelligent look at the rituals and custom of Jewish worship rooted in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem so much a part of its own tradition. Howard Solomon, a distinguished member and honorary solicitor of the PHC, is the only Jew to have reached the rank of grand master. It is the highest position in Freemasonry, and the writer was privileged to be his grand chaplain. Howard was made a CBE in the Queen's Honours.

There are also many members of the PHC who have been and still are rotarians. Some have been presidents, Paul Harris fellows (Rotary's highest award) and district committee members who continue to play an important part in the numerous charitable, educational, health and community-based enterprises which Rotary embraces. In 1967 Nate Shilkin, while serving as vice-president of the PHC Board, was one of the first, if not the first, district governor of Rotary in the State.

There was another district governor, Dr Jack Hoffman, this time of the Lions Clubs of Western Australia and Jack is also president of the Friends of the Hebrew University. Jack and his wife Louise are respected members of the PHC. Louise was associated with Dr Mossenson in his history of the Jews of Western Australia, and has brought the knowledge of Jews and Judaism to many people from all walks of life, through her involvement with the PHC Bookshop.

The PHC is fortunate to have among its members a scholar of the calibre of Dr David Mossenson. He has given much of his time and experience as a member of the PHC Board and to the Carmel School. In the sphere of education many names come to mind of both men and women that have played and continue to play a significant role. Dr Mossenson has a unique reputation among all of them. It was particularly evident in what has been called "The Great Debate", a national televised discussion he had with the professor of Education of Queensland's James Cook University. Dr Mossenson was director general of Education in Western Australia, twice honoured by the Queen, with imperial and Australian orders, has received many awards, even a coveted honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Western Australia. He is also the only Jew I know who has a mountain named after him.

Nate Shilkin's older brother Roy, who came to Perth from Russia at the age of two, was a master of public relations. He succeeded Sir William Lathlain, one of Perth's more eminent lord mayors, as director and Western Australia's chief representative for Commonwealth War Loans and National Savings. He was great on protocol and combined his professional activities with Jewish communal pursuits. He was acting president of the W.A. Jewish Board of Deputies and established a branch of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1972. Roy was on the executive of the Maurice Zeffert Home, a member of the Council of the Ageing, and between 1980-86 a delegate to the Western Australian Council of Social Services. He was the first Jew in Western Australia to receive imperial and Australian honours.

His son Keith, professor of clinical pathology in the University of Western Australia, was president of the State Australian Medical Association, and led several delegations to Canberra. Philip Kessly was another State president of the AMA and played a major role in the establishment of a chair of family medicine. Ben Cohnsey is another, and he continues to play an important part internationally in his specific sphere of medicine and surgery. Ben was a member of the PHC Board for twenty-one years, four as vice-president and four as president.

Alex Cohen, a prominent member of the Senate of the University of Western Australia, recently named professor of Consultative Medicine, is one of the most highly respected members of his profession. He is scintillating as a speaker and sought after by many. His wife Adele has been involved with the dramatic arts in which she excels, also with the Festival of Perth.

Professor Max Walters has been twice dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Western Australia. He is currently Australian president of the

International Association of Pathologists, an acknowledged scholar and examiner in his field, and close to the PHC. He is a long standing member of the PHC Executive and Board of Management, a regular worshipper and a past president of the W.A. Jewish Board of Deputies. Max is one of the most highly respected Jews both within the Jewish community and outside it.

There are others who have likewise played a part and continue to do so in medicine, law and commerce, politics, journalism, local government, business, the professions and the trades, and they must not go unrecognised. However it is for a more detailed work to expand on their achievements. Public duty by Jews is always good to record and although it is important to do so it lends weight to the misconception that to become recognised for valued service in the general community means neglecting, and for some, even abandoning the Jewish tradition.

One of the first Jews to receive Australian honours in Western Australia was Edna Luber-Smith, a grand lady who makes working for Jewish and non-Jewish causes a natural part of life. It was her upbringing in a family which pioneered the congregation which gave her and her sisters the guidance to show others the way. Edna's older sister Flo was a pianist who accompanied many of the great roadshows which came to Perth. She turned to curtain decor and there are many noble homes in Western Australia which exhibit her extraordinary talent for elegance.

There have been many women of the community who have projected an image of the Jew in a manner which has reflected well on the PHC up the present day. Few of them would match Fanny Breckler, "Mother" of them all. Fanny reflected in business a dignity and integrity which has been the hallmark and standard of the firm she founded, Betts and Betts, something special in the life of the State, and nowadays far beyond its borders. So also her deep sense of charity and benevolence

made the family name one of nobility in all Australia.



Harold Boas.

Her sons Alec and Cecil have been major participants in the development of the State. Cecil has never ceased working for the PHC, the United Israel Appeal, the Seeligson Trust, Carmel School, Maccabi and countless other Jewish and non-Jewish organisations and charities.

Fanny's eldest, Vera Rosenwax, emulated her mother's charitable pursuits, and Vera's son Alec has taken the same path in the city and the community, extending his interests to lead organisations in both. The youngest, Minnie represented the State and the nation with her bridge excellence. In the following generation John and Judy Freedman were squash champions and played State hockey.

Judy's father Gordon Bloomfield was president of the PHC when the writer came to Perth. He retired in 1973 after at least thirty years of service with the PHC, thirteen as vice-president and eight as president. In tennis he was pre-eminent, a founder of the Mount Lawley Tennis Club and captain of the Lawn Tennis Association. He excelled even more at bowls. In business Gordon was honoured by his peers and was elected president of the Fruit and Vegetable Industry of Australia. There were only two others to have reached the position. Highly respected in Freemasonry, his delivery was always clear and meaningful, and one of a privileged few to receive a special jewel from Grand Lodge for serving sixty years in the craft. Gordon's successor, Jack Krasnostein, has combined leadership in the general community with that of his own, and more particularly the PHC, making him a rare and dynamic leader and motivator. In Rotary, Jack is a Paul Harris fellow, a former president of the Mount Lawley Club, a member of the Senate of the University of Western Anstralia for eighteen years, honoured by the Queen with an OBE and the university in 1991 with an honorary Doctorate of Laws. Jack's dynamic leadership gave birth to the new synagogue building and in the earlier times the communal kosher butchery.

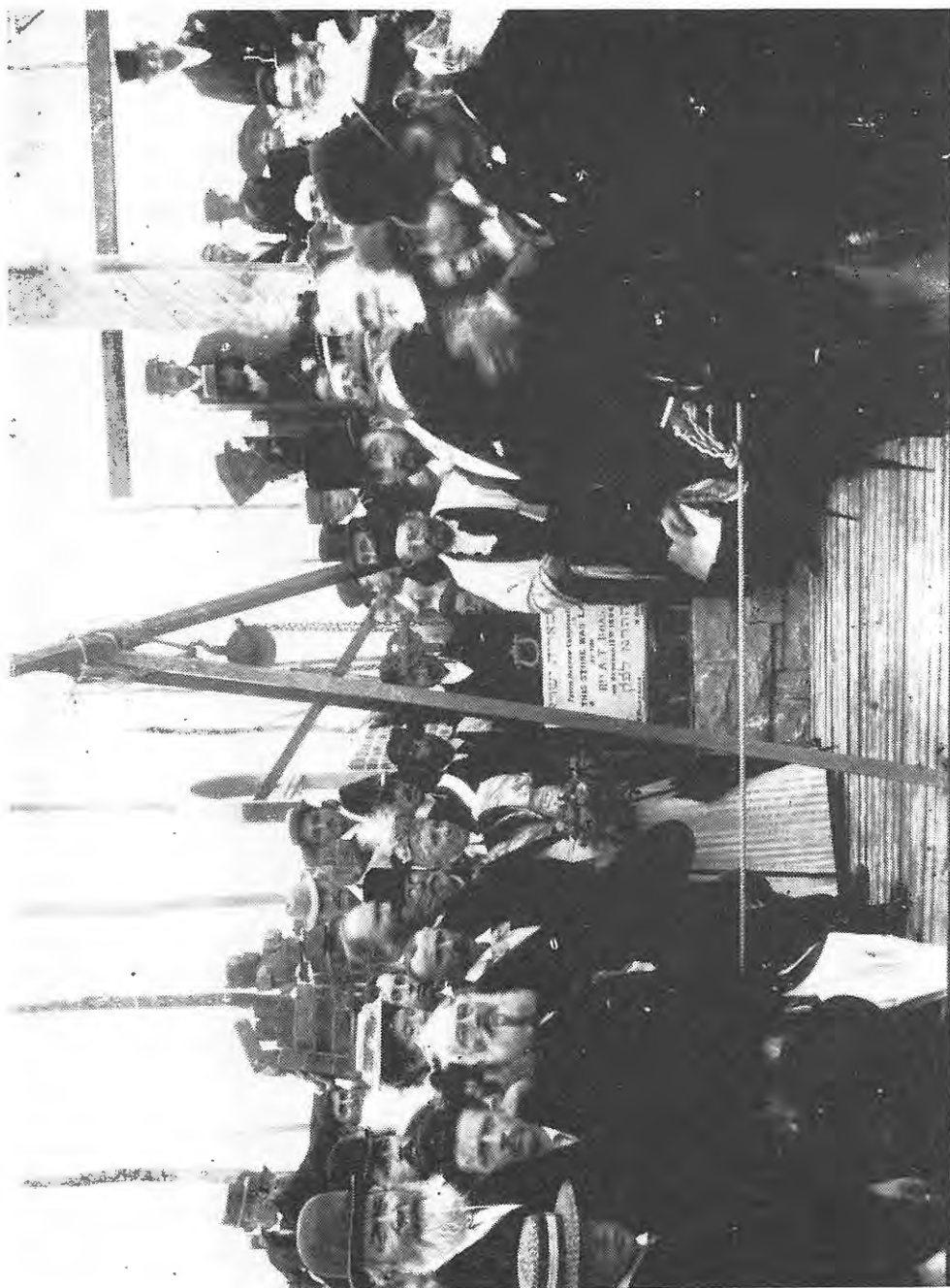
Another member of the PHC combining public activity with the board and numerous other organisations is Harry Atlas. Harry is one of the congregation's more erudite speakers, and his work for sport, more particularly football, small business and corporate affairs have done much to reflect well of the Jew in society.

As chairman of the Council for West Australian Jewry, Doron Ur had done much to clear the air as watchdog and spokesperson of the Jewish community in this part of the world. He is a regular worshipper at the PHC and has been involved in many important negotiations for its benefit. Doron has also been chairman of a quasi-government agency dealing with racial and ethnic affairs.

However, in all the story, J.M. (Joe) Berinson is the classical example of the Jew sincerely aware of his roots, conscious of his traditions, wholeheartedly involved in creating as well as strengthening Jewish values, while at the same time giving of his time and talent to the needs of the country of his birth and training. Joe was a pharmacist, then topped law as he moved into politics and it made him attorney general in the Western Australian government. In earlier years he was a member of federal parliament and held the portfolio of Environment in the Whitlam administration. He has courageously debated issues involving Israel, and the Jewish people in all lands where they are affected. With Dr Ossie Tosler, Joe was a founder of the Carmel Korsunski Jewish Day School, was a member of the PHC Board of Management and is still a regular worshipper at the synagogue. Joe Berinson is a keen member of the choir, and on occasion has taken up the baton.

The PHC can be very proud of its members' participation in public life. No Jew can afford to live in isolation. Nor is there any need to be too cautious for fear that involvement will somehow affect religious susceptibilities. In the climate of rising racial disquiet, it is essential for a greater Jewish involvement, if only to keep the record straight and destroy the lies and vituperation. The Perth Hebrew

Congregation cannot simply dwell on past laurels. Our prayer must be one of thankfulness for what has been achieved in the first century, and now May the Almighty bless the work of our hands with even greater achievement in the next.



Reverend A. T. Boas Laying the Foundation Stone of the
Brisbane Street Synagogue, Oct. 1896.

PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION – BEYOND 2000

Rabbi D.Y.A. Freilich BA (Hons) Lond., MA Syd.

When I was approached to consider accepting the position as Rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation in November 1987, I was both honoured and awed with the thought of having the spiritual responsibility for not only an active and very beautiful Synagogue, but for a whole Jewish community. For the Perth Hebrew Congregation I learned, was the instigator of the many educational and religious institutions of the community, and as such I presumed my role as Rabbi would embrace the many facets of communal life.

The Executive, consisting of Albert Saddik, Prof. Max Walters, Dr. John Rosenthal and Dr. K. Shilkin, who engaged me at that time as the Rabbi, re-enforced this role by advising me that my responsibilities would be spiritual leader and religious representative of Western Australian Jewry. My Rabbinate could embrace any style which I felt would be effective for Western Australian Jewry. This whet my appetite for I saw in this challenge a sense of personal fulfilment as well as the potential to put into practice all that I as a Rabbi visualised a community should be. Having been a Rabbi in Sydney at Maroubra Synagogue for some fourteen years, a Synagogue which will always have a special place in my heart, I could with a sense of hindsight use my experience to plan what I felt, and still feel, would be effective for the community in Perth. To achieve the goals towards which I intended working, I needed a united Orthodox community. To this end I felt that one of my first tasks was to bring some form of reconciliation between my Perth Hebrew Congregation and the newly formed Northern Suburbs Congregation. Not to deprive the Northern Suburbs Congregation of their autonomy, but to work side by side as a united force for the advancement of mainstream Orthodox Judaism. This I like to feel in no small way has been achieved over the past couple of years, despite the disapproval of some.

There has been in recent times the establishment of a Chabad House in Perth. My experience in Sydney as a Rabbi had alerted me to the fact that rarely do the Chabad movement work in with the organised community, but tend to duplicate activities and keep for themselves the freedom to do what they desire within the community without being fettered by the restraints of communal organisation. Although I give the utmost respect to any Jewish movement that works with dedication

to the cause of strengthening Torah Judaism, my belief is that without structure in a community it can only cause divisiveness, confusion, and a waste of resources.

Perth Hebrew Congregation has always been perceived as an Anglo-Jewish style congregation with its strict adherence to the formality and direction as laid down by the Chief Rabbinate of the British Commonwealth. It is this style which in recent times has been proven ineffective in England. Young people seem to find no spiritual satisfaction in this style of Orthodoxy, and have either abandoned it for the left or for the right. It is my belief that the "shtibel" style of service with its warmth, fervour, informality and ability to involve all, rather than just being a mere spectacle, is the formula to attract young people back to the Synagogue and to their Jewish roots. These suggestions come from a Rabbi who was trained in the very institution, Jews' College London, that promotes the Anglo-Jewish tradition of Orthodoxy. But even Jews' College today realises that the old style of performing Chazan and preaching Rabbi no longer is effective in contemporary Judaism. A Rabbi today, must be more of a teacher than a preacher. The fire and brimstone style of old may have been very entertaining and made the pulpit Rabbi somebody to be feared, but its effect or lack of it, can be gauged by the tremendous assimilation and attrition from the ranks of the Jewish community. What I believe is required for today is the Rabbi to assert himself more as a teacher. The pulpit should be used to teach and not preach. The Synagogue must be a place of learning and enlightenment. Our Rabbis told us that if one elevates learning to the status of prayer, this is to be applauded.

This means that learning and teaching have just as much effect if not more than prayer itself. The Shule in my Rabbinate must be just that, A Shule, meaning a School. It is for this reason that the library has been developed, and the Shiurim for all age groups, expanded. Geographically our Shule is not in the area where young Jewish couples live. It is difficult for me to, on the one hand, teach about the Laws of Shabbat and its observance, and at the same time reconcile this with attracting these young couples who live at such a distance from the Perth Hebrew Congregation to come and pray with us on a Shabbat. It is for this reason that their attachment to the Perth Hebrew Congregation could be developed more in the sense of weekly involvement in not only the full spectrum of weekday Services but in the educational activities offered by the Congregation. It is vital that we retain a young membership of the Congregation for its future development. I will be doing my utmost to ensure that Perth Hebrew Congregation does not become the second Maurice Zeffert Home. It is encouraging to see that as young couples become more established they tend to move from the northern suburbs area more towards the city and in particular, to Dianella and Mt. Lawley/Menora.

One of the first suggestions I made when coming to the Perth Hebrew Congregation was that we have under our aegis, a full time day care centre. This for a number of practical reasons did not eventuate, the idea is still very much on the agenda. At which location such a day care centre will exist is still under discussion. Whether it be at the Perth Hebrew Congregation itself or around the Noranda area where many Jewish young couples live, having such an institution under the aegis of the

Perth Hebrew Congregation would give us a feeder for future survival, for such a day care centre would cater for the mainstream orthodoxy which Perth Hebrew Congregation represents.

It is my fervent hope to strengthen the Halachic structure of the community so ably put in place by my predecessors. The Perth Beth Din and the Kashrut Authority of Western Australia must continue to aim to be professionally run and must cater for the whole community. My illustrious predecessor Rabbi Dr S. Coleman laid the foundation for this vital Halachic institution from which the community now benefits. It is important that the Perth Hebrew Congregation ensures, as it has over the past one hundred years, that these structures for the smooth running of the Halachic needs of the community be always in place. As Rabbi, every effort in this direction is a major priority. It is extremely hard to satisfy those who are content with the patronage of the existing kosher facilities and at the same time please those who believe that as we expand as a community so should the facilities expand accordingly. I believe within reason there must be more venues and more caterers from which to choose in the field of Kashrut. Our attitudes must grow together with the community's growth. That is not to say that we should allow open slather and let anybody who wants to cater hop on the bandwagon; it must be intelligently controlled so that there is choice but at the same time caterers must be able to remain viable.

There is only a limited amount of resources from which to draw, both in personnel and monetary terms, and therefore we must also be practical in how Kashrut is supervised in Western Australia. Sometimes I must look to the leniencies allowed by the Halacha to ensure a workable Kashrut in our community but always within the framework of Halacha.

Another attitude which might have been prevalent when the community was smaller but which must change with the community's exciting growth, is in the educational sphere of our young. There is an attitude that if our young do not go to Carmel School it is regarded as disloyal to the Jewish Day School movement to try and facilitate them as far as their Jewish educational requirements are concerned. I vehemently disagree with this attitude and find it archaic in the extreme. All our institutions and all the efforts we put into the community and into our children should have one goal in mind, and that is to guide them to become committed Jewish men and women of the future. Whether this is achieved through Carmel School or the Perth Hebrew School, makes no difference. I see, particularly at the present time, that for one reason or another more Jewish children are going to State and Private Schools rather than Carmel School, and I see a need to strengthen the Perth Hebrew School to cater for the spiritual needs of these young people. To abandon our responsibility to these young people would be Jewishly unacceptable.

The Rabbinate of the Perth Hebrew Congregation has always been the spiritual representative of the orthodox Jewish community in the wider community and this must continue. The excellent work done in this sphere by my predecessors Rabbis Freedman, Rubin-Zacks and Coleman, must continue with strength. Because the community has grown so much my Rabbinate has, by circumstances, been more

insular. There are now more Jewish people to minister to, which does not leave much time for PR work. Apart from this, my Rabbinate began at a time of relative structural disarray in the community, and as such my first few years were spent in trying to re-establish some organisation within the community. This, combined with making every effort to unify the community, left little time or energy for interaction with either clergy of other denominations or Civic Leaders. The time is now approaching where the Rabbinate of Perth Hebrew Congregation must re-establish itself as the unofficial Chief Rabbinate of Western Australia.

I perceive Perth Hebrew Congregation continuing as the Halachic epicentre of the Perth Jewish community. It is, and I would like to feel will always be, the home of the Perth Beth Din, as well as the Perth Mikvah. These institutions will, I feel, continue to flourish as the community expands. I am looking forward to the time when the Mikvah in particular will be used so often that it may be necessary to employ a full-time Director. As long as the other institutions, both religious and otherwise, in the community have the same goals as myself and the Perth Hebrew Congregation in maintaining unity and structure, then it will matter little under whose banner these Halachic institutions remain because communal organisation will be the prime consideration.

Perth Hebrew Congregation by history, experience and 100 years of service to the community deserves the loyalty and recognition of all other institutions which by the good work of Perth Hebrew Congregation in preserving the Jewish community of Perth they are now established. An example of the progress that can be maintained by unity and organisation is the Hospital Chaplaincy which now exists in Perth, run by the Office of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, yet embracing both the Northern Suburbs Congregation and the Chabad House. This I hope will continue to prosper, and is already the envy of communities in the Eastern States as evidenced by an article in the Melbourne Jewish Times recently acclaiming this concept.

I see Perth Hebrew Congregation remaining the focal point to which new Congregations that may develop in the future in Western Australia can turn for guidance and support.

I am a Rabbi, not a Prophet, but every effort will be made through the programmes offered, to direct Perth Hebrew Congregation — Beyond 2000 — in the direction of communal education, involvement of the young and the new in Perth Hebrew Congregation programmes, the strengthening of the Halachic framework of the community, the maintenance of Perth Hebrew Congregation as the mother Congregation of Perth Jewry, and as such the spiritual public relations centre, and above all a warm, welcoming and friendly venue. All this will be done in a spirit of unity, co-operation and organisation with all other organisations of the community for I perceive Perth Jewry to be like a portrait — each colour blending in harmoniously but at the same time each individual part playing its part to the full in maintaining the beauty of the picture — Perth Hebrew Congregation over 100 years has laid its claim to a large section of the portrait.

SOLOMON LEVEY AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

Ian Berryman

Solomon Levey is a figure whose importance in Australian history was not recognised until comparatively recently. Before about 1960 Australian history was mostly a chronicle of the lives and deeds of governors, explorers and pastoralists who were usually British, male and Protestant, and there was no place for a man who was not only a convict but also a Jew. And yet by any criterion Levey is an important and interesting figure in the economic, political and social history of Australia. He is an outstanding example of a convict who rose to prosperity and respectability. Later, he played an important role in the founding of the Swan River Colony in Western Australia, and it was his capital that paid the passage money for about a quarter of the labourers and servants who settled permanently in the colony. Finally, his life is of considerable interest to students of Jewish history. The Jewish community in Australia dates its beginnings to the year 1788, since the ships of the First Fleet carried a few Jewish convicts — at least eight, and possibly as many as fourteen. Levey is probably the most successful and important of all the Jewish convicts who were transported from Britain to Australia. Although he is not known to have any descendants in Australia, several of his brothers and sisters emigrated to Australia, and their descendants have included some prominent members of the Jewish community who have also made their mark in Australian society.

The present writer has published three papers on Levey and his part in the founding of the Swan River Colony. The purpose of the present paper is to offer a brief overview of his life, to discuss several issues that are worth elaborating, and to review some of the literature on him. Levey's life is now reasonably well documented, and the interested reader is referred to the bibliography at the end of this paper.

In Levey's brief life, which spanned a mere thirty-nine years, there were two significant turning points. The first was in the year 1813 when, at the age of nineteen, he was convicted of theft and sentenced to seven years transportation in New South Wales. It is impossible to say what would have become of Levey if he had

*Mr Berryman addressed this topic at a meeting of the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society held on 12 June 1988.

not been convicted, but it was certainly typical of him to turn adversity to his eventual advantage. In this respect Levey was not unique. The brutality of the penal system is well known, yet it must be said that the system did give convicts the opportunity to make a new start in a new society, and many convicts ultimately benefited from being transported. Levey was fortunate in that he arrived in New South Wales at a time when Governor Macquarie was pursuing relatively enlightened policies towards the convicts, and also when free emigrants were beginning to arrive in significant numbers, causing the economy of the colony to expand. Levey's talent for commerce was evident even before he had received his ticket of leave, and in his eleven years in the colony he became one of the wealthiest men in Australia.

The second turning point in Levey's life came in about October 1828. He had gone back to England for what was intended to be a visit — he wanted to see his family again, to put his son to school, and to establish commercial contacts in Britain. In October 1828 Levey was only thirty-four years of age, and his prospects were unlimited. His two years in London had given him an important advantage over his commercial rivals in Sydney. He had been able to convince British merchants of his respectability and reliability, so that he could now import cargoes directly rather than going through an agent. If, as he had intended, he had returned to Sydney, he might have become Australia's first business tycoon. But instead of returning, he chose to become involved with the founding of the Swan River Colony and, as is well known, he was financially ruined and died prematurely, his spirit broken by the failure of the venture.

The future history of the Swan River Colony was determined over a period of about a year, from July 1828, when James Stirling began lobbying the Colonial Office about establishing a British colony in Western Australia, to August 1829, when Levey's partner Thomas Peel left Plymouth for the Swan River. The Colonial Office gave its assent to the annexation of Western Australia in October 1828, and in November a syndicate of four gentlemen — Thomas Potter Macqueen, Sir Francis Vincent, Edward Schenley and Thomas Peel — approached the Colonial Office with a proposal for a land settlement scheme. By the end of January 1829 three of the original four had withdrawn, and Peel received permission to carry on under the terms offered to the syndicate. The major question — which the present writer has discussed at length in previous papers — is when, and under what circumstances, Levey entered the negotiations.

Levey later claimed that he had written the proposal submitted by the syndicate in November 1828, and later, when the others had withdrawn, he had urged Peel to continue by himself. However, a contemporary account of the affair suggests that Levey was not introduced to Peel until sometime after January 1829, when Peel was either in debtors' prison or else in hiding to avoid his creditors. On the basis of the available evidence, the present writer believes that Levey was in fact involved as early as November 1828, and if he was, then he was the originator of the scheme under which land was allocated to settlers at the Swan River Colony. Levey, however, cannot be held responsible for the scheme's proving to be impractical

and unworkable. The original scheme, under which land was to be granted at the rate of one acre for every one shilling and sixpence of capital invested, was put forward so that the syndicate could obtain a grant of four million acres of land, which they would then have allocated in small grants to the ten thousand emigrants that they proposed sending to Western Australia. In December 1828, when Macqueen had withdrawn from the syndicate and the Colonial Office had good reason to doubt the ability of the remaining three members of the syndicate to continue the project, the Colonial Office decided to allow the terms put forward by the syndicate to be offered to anyone who emigrated to Western Australia. The scheme might have been practicable in the form originally proposed, but when offered to all emigrants it proved to be a disastrous failure and the cause of much discontent. The amount of good agricultural land in the vicinity of the Swan and Canning rivers was quite small, and was allocated to the settlers who arrived first, leaving none for those who arrived later. Besides, the terms were so generous that a settler of modest means could be eligible for a grant of thousands of acres, which he was then unable to develop because he did not possess the necessary capital and resources.

If it is a truism to say that history is written by the winners, it is equally true to say that it is easier to write history about those who wielded the pen (or the quill). Solomon Levey left no personal papers, and he is thus a difficult subject for a biographer. In his own lifetime Levey was a well-known figure in New South Wales, and his involvement with Peel was common knowledge in the Swan River Colony and New South Wales, and also in London, where the story had been leaked to a Fleet Street newspaper as early as July 1829. Levey died in London in 1833, and as the nineteenth century progressed his name was forgotten, as part of Australia's collective amnesia about the convict era. Western Australians in general have not shown any great curiosity about the origins of the Swan River Colony, and it must be said that for any Western Australian historian who wished to do research on the subject, the difficulties were formidable, since most of the relevant documentary records were located either in Britain or in Sydney.

It is thus not surprising that the first serious accounts of Levey's involvement in the founding of the Swan River Colony were not produced until 1965. In Sydney Dr George Bergman, who pioneered the study of Australia's Jewish convicts, produced two papers on Solomon Levey. The second paper, dealing with Levey's part in the founding of the Swan River Colony, was read before a meeting of the Royal Australian Historical Society in March 1965, but was not published in the society's journal until March 1968. In Perth, Alexandra Hasluck in 1965 published *Thomas Peel of Swan River*, her biography of Peel.

The publication of *Thomas Peel* represented a landmark in the writing of Western Australian history. Very few books previously published on the history of the Swan River Colony had been based on research of such depth and extent, and the author merits the highest praise for her skill and perseverance in locating the relevant evidence and assembling it into a coherent narrative. Her achievement is all the

more meritorious because the book was published before the availability of standard reference works such as the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, and the occasional inaccuracies in the book are therefore excusable.

The present writer, however, has to record his disagreement with some of the conclusions put forward in the book, particularly about Peel. Much of the evidence about Peel and Levey is fragmentary and contradictory, and equally consistent with different interpretations, and in such a situation historians are unwise to take sides. In particular, the present writer believes that Hasluck not only misjudged Peel as a man but also considerably overestimated the importance of his part in the founding of the Swan River Colony. It is true that he conducted some of the negotiations with the Colonial Office, and he did come to Western Australia, but these facts do not necessarily prove him to be the visionary founder of a colony. It would appear, for instance, that Peel was not the most important member of the syndicate that began negotiating with the Colonial Office in November 1828. Of the other three members, nothing is known of Schenley, but Macqueen and Vincent were both members of parliament, and consequently had greater access to patronage and influence than Peel. Vincent was a baronet, and quite wealthy. Macqueen, a friend and patron of the Macarthur family, had already been granted twenty thousand acres of land in New South Wales, and he was a prominent member of some of the groups that lobbied the Colonial Office in the 1820s about matters concerning the Australian colonies. Peel had always intended to go to Australia, and it is probable that the syndicate wanted him to go to the Swan River and manage the project, while the other members remained in London to raise the necessary capital and organise the recruiting of the emigrants and their transport to the new colony. Under circumstances that may never be adequately explained, Peel may have become financially involved, possibly through signing contracts on behalf of the syndicate, and then become involved with Levey, with consequences that are now well known.

For a man who is so important in Western Australian history, it is disappointing that so little is known about Solomon Levey as a person. No portrait or likeness of him is known, and descriptions of him are rare. It is thus appropriate to conclude this essay with a recently published description of Levey which shows that he took a personal interest in the welfare of the emigrants whom he was sending to Western Australia. Levey himself had endured the long voyage from London to Sydney as a convict, and he obviously wanted his emigrants to be as comfortable as was possible. The description of Levey comes from the pen of Jane Dodds, a passenger in the *Rockingham*, the third ship despatched by Levey to the new colony. Soon after the ship had left the St Katherine's Docks in London, Mrs Dodds recorded that

Mr Levey . . . came on board from a steam boat. He was one of the principals in Mr Peel; it was his unbounded wealth on which the latter relied for support, at least so the tale was told, and if he was a Jew he certainly exercised Christian virtues. He put on

board a case of Bibles and religious tracts to be distributed during the voyage, and ordered additional tea and sugar to be given for the children in lieu of salt meat, and the day he took leave of the ship, he ordered a sumptuous dinner to be served up in the gangway: thus he evinced a due concern for the spiritual as well as temporal comfort of his people.

A sad quarrel occurred between a man and his wife during his visit between decks, which he no sooner observed than he called upon them to attend to him, and after a most friendly admonition, he returned to them the money, which had been advanced for their passage, and desired them to leave the ship with him, which they did and we had no disturbance of the kind afterwards. His kindness to me and mine will ever be remembered with feelings of gratitude. It was with much difficulty that I combated his desire to remove the inmates of the Aft Cabin for us to enter in. . .¹

Solomon Levey has been neglected for too long in Western Australia. He deserves to be remembered and honoured in the State that he helped so much to found.

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NOTES

1. Lilian Heal, *Jane Dodds 1788-1844: A Swan River Colony Pioneer*, (Sydney: 1988), p. 18.

JEWISH CONVICTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1850-1886*

Louise Hoffman

By the late 1840s, following the failure of two immigrant and land settlement schemes, the Swan River Colony was a stagnant backwater with a European population of less than five thousand persons.¹ Progress was impossible without further capital and labour.

For its own reasons Britain accepted with alacrity a proposal by the propertied and leading colonists of the day to transport convicts to the colony where they would be used as an abundant source of labour. The once proud "no pickpocket" Swan River Colony, the initial excitement over its beginnings have been referred to as "Swan River Mania", was declared a penal colony on 1 May 1849.

The convict era in Western Australia began in reality when the ship *Scindian* anchored off Fremantle on 1 June 1850 carrying seventy-five convicts from Portland Gaol in Britain to the Swan River Colony. The last convict ship, the *Hougomont*, arrived at Fremantle on 10 January 1868 marking the end of an era, although the convict system in practice was not formally disbanded until 1886. In the eighteen years of transportation, 9668 convicts were sent to Western Australia, all of whom were men and at least 27 of whom were Jewish.

Agricultural development, population and economic growth followed the introduction of convict labour which gave the colony its first good roads, bridges and public buildings. The treatment of convicts in Western Australia was considered to be less brutal than had been the case in the eastern colonies, although chain gangs, solitary confinement and the cat-o'-nine-tails were commonly, if less indiscriminately, used.

The policy of dispersal into the agricultural districts enabled the convicts to blend into the local working class population. A ticket of leave could be received after a short time enabling that person to enter employment or become self-employed. Conditional pardons could be obtained but return to England was not possible until the period of servitude ended.

*This paper was read at a meeting of the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society held on 17 May 1987.

It is estimated one-third of the convicts sailed away after their sentence expired. This proportion would hold for the Jewish convicts, many more than previously thought to have stayed in the colony. Those who remained in some cases made a significant contribution to the progress of Western Australia, not only by themselves but by their children and their descendants.²

Further and more importantly for Western Australian Jewry was the convict contribution to its communal life.

The mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their poor circumstances as city slum dwellers and resulting social disorganisation, led to the appearance of a discernible Jewish element in the criminal population of London and other industrial cities. The established Anglo-Jewish community, mostly of Sephardic origin, were unhappy by this influx of poor "foreign" Jews who were perceived as a threat to their privileged existence. They reacted by excommunicating the convicted, even in some instances aiding in their apprehension.

The Jewish transportees were of English or European birth. Their occupations were typically those of the Eastern European emigrants. These were small time merchants and traders engaged in hawking and dealing. Trades such as tailoring, shoemaking, watchmaking, jewellery making, engraving, bookbinding, blacksmithing, mattress making and cigar making were represented.

Their crimes were typical of their impoverished urban circumstances, commonly counterfeiting and forgery, stealing and receiving stolen goods, but rarely a crime of violence.

Some had previous convictions and several were reconvicted for offences committed during their time of servitude. There were several court cases involving litigation between some of the Jewish convicts.³ They were mostly literate or semi-literate in contrast to the proportion in the wider convict body, and several at least were well educated in Jewish law, custom and observance. Twelve were known to have been married, some of whom had children, two were widowers and the others were recorded as unmarried.

Unwanted in England, not only by the authorities but also rejected and reviled by their own community, the twenty-seven Jewish transportees would reach Western Australia at a time when there was no community of Jews to offer any services, solace or comfort in their present degraded situation.

There had been a Jewish presence in Western Australia since the first year of colonisation⁴ but Jews were few in number during the first fifty years of existence. This is so despite extant letters from early colonists which suggest a perception of a multitude of Jews arriving, and some complaints that they were given favour and grants of best crown land.⁵

Western Australian census figures for 1859 under the heading "Jews Mahomedans and Infidels" recorded 47 persons plus 4 ticket-of-leave holders. By 1871 under the classification "Jews", the census recorded 57 persons of whom 39 resided in

the Fremantle district (27 male and 12 female), 9 in the Perth district and 9 others scattered from Champion Bay to Albany, none of whom was female. Many of these were ticket-of-leave men or expirees.

The best established of the Jewish free settlers of the time was Lionel Samson and his family.⁶ Lionel Samson not only ranked high in colonial society but also achieved civic and political prominence. Elias Solomon, who came from South Australia with his nephews in 1868 to commence business as an auctioneer and merchant, became a friend and social equal of the Samsons. They were on visiting terms and celebrated Jewish high holidays together. Their convict co-religionists were held in disdain and there was little contact between the Jewish "free" and the Jewish "bond", which precluded any urge to create a community of Jews.

However in the year of 1867 evidence of the first organised Jewish activity in Western Australia appeared. In that year a grant of land known as the "East Perth Cemetery Jewish Section" was made on their application to Abraham Rosenberg, Isaac Harris and Henry Seeligson.

It would be another twenty years before the Jews of Western Australia would come together to form a Hebrew Congregation.

Henry Seeligson did more than any other Jew to bring Judaism in the form of congregational organisation to Western Australia. The significance of the role played by Seeligson and that of his children who later joined him in the colony, in the congregational history of Western Australian Jewry, cannot be overestimated.

Born in Polish Silesia he went to Manchester as a young boy. He became a general dealer and later married Julia van Weerden of Dutch origin. He was father to four children, when he was convicted in Madras of receiving stolen goods. Sentenced to ten years servitude he was transported to Western Australia where he arrived on the ship *Merchantman* on 12 September 1864.

By 1867 he had obtained a ticket of leave and set up business as a watchmaker and jeweller. By 1874 he advertised new premises in St George's Terrace, Perth, where he also made his home. He stood by his fellow convicts. As he prospered he employed eight ticket-of-leave men during the years 1869-75. He signed a petition in 1877 regarding discrimination against expirees. By 1880 he was part owner of the vessel *Theresa* which engaged in the pearling trade until 1888. He travelled to England and the eastern colonies during the 1880s.

Seeligson was a pivotal figure in the establishment of congregational life in both Fremantle and Perth. Although resident in Perth, he acted as reader for the newly constituted Fremantle Hebrew Congregation in 1887 and again as treasurer when it was reconstituted as the West Australian Hebrew Congregation in 1891. He was a committee member of the newly formed Perth Hebrew Congregation and his home in St George's Terrace became the venue of the first Hebrew Religion School. He left a handsome bequest to the Perth Hebrew Congregation on his death in 1901.

He was joined, after gaining a full pardon in 1874, by his elder son Phineas and considerably later by his younger sons Louis and Henry and daughter Theresa, but not by his wife Julia.

Theresa married Ernest E. Krug, a jeweller of Perth and Kalgoorlie, who acted as a most capable treasurer of the Perth Hebrew Congregation from 1904 until 1906. Louis, a successful businessman and prominent member of the congregation possessed a fine voice and sang in the synagogue choir.

Phineas Seeligson was an active participant in the settling up of the Perth Hebrew Congregation and the building of the Brisbane Street Synagogue. He used his expertise as a moneyman and his wealth for the benefit of the community. He remained a bachelor, and at his demise bequeathed his large fortune to the Perth Hebrew Congregation to be held in trust for the benefit of the Jewish community.

The subsequent careers of some of the other Jewish convicts are of unique interest.

Theodore Krakouer, sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, arrived at Fremantle in 1851. It is possible that Brina Israel, who arrived two years later with her sister Esther, had been married to Theodore. The women worked and lived with Krakouer and fellow convict Elias Lapidus running a livery stable and trading in the shipment of horses to the British Army in India. Lapidus took a shipment to Singapore, got caught up in a shady business deal and did not return to Western Australia. Esther subsequently married James Sargent of Fremantle. Krakouer and Brina had six sons and three daughters. The sons became well known hoteliers and teamsters. Sons Rudolph and David Krakouer were members of an exploration party which established for the people of the South West a much needed shorter route to the Eastern Goldfields, known as Hollands Track.

Abraham Moise Josephson, transported for counterfeiting, became a successful businessman, property owner and freemason. A street in Fremantle is named after him. He maintained his Jewish identity, joined the Fremantle Hebrew Congregation when it was formed. Married with two daughters, he travelled frequently to England and Europe.

Bernard Stein, convicted of larceny, was a bookbinder by trade. In a bid to escape the law he walked from Fremantle to Adelaide — the first man known to do so.⁷ He later became a bookseller with premises in Perth and Kalgoorlie where he became a major supplier of reading materials and stationery to the Eastern Goldfields.

Isaac Myers received a ten-year sentence for larceny in 1851. He met and married an Irish servant girl while working as a ticket of leaver. Later, he worked as a self-employed tailor. He maintained his Jewish affiliations until his death in 1906 when he was buried in the Jewish section of the Karrakatta Cemetery.

Abraham Rosenberg, a convicted counterfeiter, was also something of a con man who was not above stealing from his fellow Jews.⁸ His convict record showed him to be married with four children at the time of his conviction, but there is no evidence of his wife and family following him to Australia. He was often

wanted by the convict authority for failing to report his whereabouts at the appropriate time. He was well educated in Jewish custom and practice and was instrumental in obtaining the first Jewish burial ground.

Isaac Harris, the third assignee of the East Perth cemetery land, had been convicted for receiving stolen goods. He married a widow, Mary Turner, of Gingin who was not Jewish. He worked as a tobacconist and later tailor in Perth.

It was not easy to be a Jew in the early days of settlement in Western Australia for the free settler on the land. There were none of the trappings, offices and services that are provided by congregational organisation. The lack of Jewish women meant permanent bachelorhood or marriage outside the faith. As a result there are few if any Jewish descendents today.

Although the convict origins of families were kept hidden for many years, there are today some who can and do claim a Jewish convict ancestor.⁹

Full credit goes to those Jewish convicts transported to Western Australia between 1850 and 1868 who not only kept their faith under awful conditions but actively promoted Judaism in the best way they could for the benefit of their fellow Jews and subsequent generations.

DETAILS OF JEWISH CONVICTS WHO WERE TRANSPORTED TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1850-1868

The information summarised here is in the sequence of name; year or birth; occupation; literate/illiterate; offence and length of sentence; arrival date in colony; dates of ticket of leave (T.L.) and conditional pardon (C.P.); type of work in the colony. (*Source: Erickson, Rica, Dictionary of Western Australians 1819-1914*, Vol. 11: Bond.)

ABRAHAM, Henry. 1839, literate, burglary 2 years, 1865, T.L. 1867 and C.P. 1870, general servant.

BARNETT, Mark. 1844, labourer, literate, pickpocket 7 years, 1866, C.P. 1873, general servant and shingle splitter.

BERRENHARD, Marcus. 1832, tailor, illiterate, theft 7 years, 1858, T.L. 1860, C.P. 1862, worked for self.

GOLDSTONE, David. 1936, literate, arson 15 years, 1866, died 1868.

GONER, George. 1837, shoemaker, literate, burglary 10 years, 1866, T.L. 1871 and C.P. 1875, labourer and worked for self, shoemaker.

HARRIS, Isaac. 1824, dealer, literate, receiving stolen goods 8 years, 1862, T.L. 1864 and C.P. 1867, tailor, worked for self.

JACOBS, Emanuel. 1836, labourer, semi-literate, larceny 7 years, 1852, T.L. 1858 and expirée 1859.

JOSEPH, David. 1829, weaver, literate, breaking and entering 14 years, 1866, died 1867.

JOSEPHSON, Abraham. 1830, tailor and jeweller, literate, possession foreign money moulds 6 years, 1862, T.L. 1864 and expirée 1868, general dealer.

- KRAKOUER, Theodore. 1818, wool sorter, literate, stealing clothes and money 15 years, 1851, T.L. 1852 and expiree 1865, worked for self.
- LAPIDUS, Elias. 1818, jeweller, literate, receiving stolen goods 14 years, 1850, T.L. 1851 and C.P. 1854, worked for self.
- LEVI, George. 1837, cigar maker, literate, stealing 6 years, 1862, T.L. 1862 and expiree 1867, worked for self, reconvicted 1870 burglary, expiree 1879, left for Adelaide 1880.
- LEVY, Joseph. 1812, watch finisher, illiterate, stolen goods 8 years, 1862, T.L. 1864 and expiree 1869.
- LIPSHITZ, Hiam. 1818, hawker, forgery 10 years, 1854, T.L. 1854 and C.P. 1855.
- MICHAEL, Abraham. 1804, arrived 1854, C.P. 1860, reconvicted larceny 1866, T.L. 1868, general servant.
- MORRIS, John. 1832, tailor, larceny 10 years, 1851, T.L. 1851 and C.P. 1855.
- MYERS, Isaac. 1831, tailor, larceny 10 years, 1851, T.L. 1851 and C.P. 1855.
- MYERS, Lewis. 1828, jeweller, semi-literate, receiving stolen goods 14 years, 1856, T.L. 1858 and C.P. 1861.
- OPPENHEIM, Jacob. 1829, commercial traveller, semi-literate, rape 14 years, 1858, T.L. 1860, died 1860.
- POLACK, David. 1819, dealer, illiterate, receiving stolen goods 14 years, 1857, T.L. 1859 and C.P. 1861.
- REECE, Morris. 1839, rag dealer, literate, wounding 1862, T.L. 1870 and C.P. 1871, woodcutter and blacksmith.
- REICHBERG, Chlom. 1815, engraver and jeweller, semi-literate, forgery 8 years, 1863, T.L. 1868 and expiree 1870.
- ROSENBERG, Abraham. 1806, picture-frame maker, semi-literate, possessing plates for bank notes 8 years, 1863, T.L. 1865 and C.P. 1868.
- SEELIGSON, Henry. 1830, general dealer, receiving stolen goods 10 years, 1864, expiree 1873.
- STEIN, Bernard. 1839, bookbinder, literate, larceny 10 years, T.L. 1872, bookbinder and tutor.
- VERNER, Carl. 1842, literate, larceny 7 years, 1866, T.L. 1870, labourer.
- WEBER, Heifman. 1826, master tailor, semi-literate, forgery 6 years, 1863, T.L. 1864 and C.P. 1866.

NOTES

- (i) Land settlement scheme organised by Thomas Peel and Solomon Levey in 1829; (ii) The Western Australian Company to settle Australind near Bunbury in 1840.
- J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1874), chapter I.
- D. Mossenson, *Hebrew Israelite Jew* (Nedlands: UWAP 1990), chapter II.
- Ibid.* chapter I.
- (i) "Twenty-Eight Letters to George Collie 1828-1835"; (ii) M. Durack, *To Be Heirs Forever* (London: Constable, 1976), p. 41.
- (i) Levi and Bergman, chapter 8; (ii) Mossenson, chapter I.
- Rica, Erickson (ed.), *The Brand on His Coat* (Nedlands: UWAP, 1983).
- For example, Mrs. Rhonda Grande, great-granddaughter of Isaac Myers.
- Mossenson, pp. 251, 252.

THE JEWISH CEMETERY AT EAST PERTH

David Mossenson

The first Jew to be buried in the old East Perth cemetery was the convict David Joseph, a thirty-eight year old Londoner who had been transported to Western Australia after being convicted on a charge of breaking and entering. Following his death in May 1867, not many months after his arrival in the colony, he was buried in the Church of England portion of the East Perth cemetery. Three of his fellow Jewish ticket-of-leave men — Abraham Rosenberg, Isaac Harris, and Henry Seeligson — had earlier appealed to the authorities seeking a separate burial ground for Jews. Governor Hampden acceded to their petition. Through the Executive Council he designated Perth Town Lot E72 containing one rood and thirty-two perches bounded on the north by Stokes Street, on the south by Wickham Street, on the east by North Plain Street, and on the west by Town Lot E73 to be “a cemetery for members of the Jewish persuasion”.

Having fenced a section of the land assigned to them, and being permitted to exhume Joseph's body, Rosenberg and his associates re-interred it in their new graveyard in accordance with Jewish custom. Rosenberg and Harris then addressed the following letter of appreciation to the governor and his officials through the medium of the *Inquirer and Commercial News*:

Would you be kind enough to insert in your valuable paper one of the many kindnesses of His Excellency the Governor, namely — In August last year we petitioned to His Excellency to grant us a portion of land for a Jewish Cemetery which he freely granted; and we have completed our duty on Friday 6th instant, of fencing in a portion of the grant, and have had removed from the Church of England Cemetery to our new Cemetery the body of David Joseph, a Jew who died on the 1st May last and we have consecrated the new burial ground according to our law and custom. Now, on the part of ourselves and those of our persuasion in the colony, we feel ourselves bound to return to His Excellency our humble sincere thanks for his kindness and likewise to those gentlemen whom we gave so much trouble on this occasion, namely the Hon.

the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W.H. Knight, Mr. G. Phillips and Messrs. Charles and Bernard Evans.

It is our earnest wish that Western Australia may become a large and prosperous colony, and that those Jews who may make the colony their home in after time will ever remember the great kindness of His Excellency the Governor and his officials of Western Australia.

We remain Sir
Your humble and obedient servants
Abraham Rosenberg
I. Harris
Perth, Dec 9th, 1867

Apart from the events surrounding its formation not much is known about the old Jewish cemetery at East Perth, and of the individuals who were interred there during the thirty-odd years that it operated as a burial ground. Throughout the 1870s and eighties Perth's Jewish population was quite tiny, numbering forty-three in the census of 1891. That year was nevertheless a notable one for the colony's Jews as it marked the first visit to Western Australia by an ordained minister of the Jewish religion. Reverend Abraham Tobias Boas of Adelaide spent several weeks in the colony at the behest of the Fremantle Jewish community which in those days was larger than that in Perth, and already possessed an organised though rudimentary congregation. One of the tasks Boas performed during his stay was to consecrate the Jewish cemetery at East Perth.

Soon after its establishment in November 1892 the Perth Hebrew Congregation assumed control of the Jewish cemetery. No doubt this action was facilitated by Henry Seeligson, the surviving member of the three original trustees, who actively associated himself with the formation of the congregation.¹ For some years Solomon Levi Horowitz, one of the congregation's founders, served as honorary director of funerals. After Reverend Freedman's arrival in 1897 he took charge of all aspects of the congregation's religious activities, and within a few years he constituted an elective Chevra Kedisha to supervise burial arrangements.

When the Karrakatta Cemetery was brought into use after 1899 the East Perth cemetery was closed. Unfortunately the number of Jews who had been buried in the Jewish section on the western side of Plain Street must remain a mystery. Apparently no register of these burials or list of names was maintained by any official or private sources; certainly no such record is extant. With the passage of the years the headstones fell into disrepair and disintegrated.

From time to time in the new century suggestions were made to utilise the East Perth cemetery land located on the western side of Plain Street. This land had been allocated to various denominations and included the Jewish portion between Wickham Street and Wittenoom Street (formerly Stokes Street). Unlike the other allotments, the Jewish area had been partly fenced and was known to contain approximately twenty headstones.² In 1916 the Perth City Council sought to acquire

the Jewish cemetery site and convert it into a public park. No reason is advanced to explain the council's failure to gain the necessary approval, but it can be inferred that the congregation refused to relinquish its holding.³ In 1932 following the continued deterioration of the old Jewish cemetery and the non-usage of other sections located west of Plain Street, the government of the day enacted legislation which re-vested these grants in the crown and placed their management in the hands of the State Gardens Board.⁴

No action followed the passage of this legislation for almost two decades. In the meantime the East Perth cemetery as a whole continued to deteriorate sadly. Also the Education Department sought access to nearby land to serve as playing

Memorial of the Real Estate Vested in the Trustees of the Perth
Hebrew Congregation required to be registered under the provisions
of the Associations Incorporation Act 1896

name or names of Trustees	name of Incorporated Association	Description of property & Nature of Tenancy
<u>Abraham Rosenberg</u> <u>Isaac Harris</u> <u>Henry Seeligson</u>	The Perth Hebrew Congregation Incorporated	Perth Town Lot F.72 Enrolled in 2540 bounded on the North by one and a half chains of Stokes Street. On the South by one and a half chains of Wickham Street On the East by three chains of North Blain Street and on the West by Perth Town Lot F.73 measuring three chains.

I, Ernest Emanuel Frug of St Georges Terrace Perth Financier
being one of the Executors of the late Henry Seeligson who was
the last surviving Trustee hereinbefore referred to in this
Memorial DO HEREBY DECLARE that to the best of my knowledge
and belief the above Memorial contains a true statement of the
names of the Trustees in whom the Real Estate of the said
Congregation was vested AND ALSO a true description of all
such Real Estate.

Declared at Perth aforesaid
this 28th day of
August One thousand nine
hundred and six

before me

Ernest Emanuel Frug
Com. for Aff. of

*This Memorial is required to be registered by William
Frug Emanuel of St Georges Terrace Perth Public Accountant
Signed by the said 1. 3
William Frug Emanuel 3
in the presence of Alfred Thomas P. Clerk*

fields for the East Perth Girls' School (now Police Traffic Branch). This action induced the government to act. Between 1950 and 1952 the East Perth cemetery was restored. Headstones were repaired where possible, rubble was removed and the area was generally cleaned and tidied. Part of this process entailed the closure of Wickham Street east of Plain Street with the resultant land being incorporated in the cemetery. In addition the northern boundary of the cemetery site was extended to Wittenoom Street.

In restoring the East Perth cemetery, now frequently referred to as Pioneers' Cemetery, the original Jewish portion of 1867 ceased to exist. The eight recognisable headstones it then contained were transferred to a new Jewish portion constituted for this purpose from part of the reclaimed former Wickham Street. The rubble from the collapsed and broken headstones was removed and buried in Karrakatta. The original Jewish cemetery remains today an unused block on the corner of Wickham, Wittenoom and Plain streets.

The eight headstones now preserved in the relocated site within the main cemetery area relate to burials undertaken by the Perth Hebrew Congregation between 1892 and 1899. The essential details contained in these memorials are as follows:

Abraham Kott, Aged 29 years, buried 1896;
Louis Hyam Seeligson, Aged 5 months, buried 1896;
Lipman Kaufman, Aged 39 years, buried 1898;
Philip Bernard Kensler, baby, buried 1897;
Charles Gustus Israel Cohen, Aged 3 years, buried 1896;
Eric Abraham Joseph, baby, buried 1898;
Barnett Fein, Aged 34 years, buried 1898.

The eighth stone bears no inscription and may be part of the headstone of Herman Salomons, aged fifty-nine years, buried 1896.

With the exception of David Joseph's name, and the names listed above, nothing is known of other Jews who had been buried in the old East Perth cemetery between the granting of the Jewish portion in 1867 and its use by the Perth Hebrew Congregation after 1892.

Today the Perth Hebrew Congregation possesses a substantial collection of documents covering its own activities and much of the history of Western Australian Jewry from the 1890s to the present day. In view of the completeness of these archives it is somewhat surprising, and also disappointing, that over the generations which encompassed the period 1892 to 1950 no congregational official recorded the data depicted on the other, then recognisable headstones at East Perth. As a consequence valuable information relating to Perth Jewry and its history, especially in the pre-gold rush days, has been irretrievably lost.

NOTES

1. Perth Hebrew Congregation Memorial dated 28 August 1906 following death of the remaining trustee.
2. Lands and Surveys File 2996/88.
3. *Ibid.* 1608/16.
4. East Perth Cemeteries Act 23 George V No. IX.

ELIAS SOLOMON OF FREMANTLE

His Life and Letters 1839-1909*

Coralie Solomon

It is well documented that Elias Solomon was a long-serving mayor of Fremantle, MLA for South Fremantle and the first member for Fremantle in the federal House of Representatives in 1901, but little was known of his early years in the colony until, in 1951, a letter-book written by him between the years 1868 and 1872 was discovered.¹ The following extract from the *West Australian* gives an account of how the letters were found:

An interesting historical discovery was related by Mr H.R. Howard at the annual meeting of the Perth Chamber of Commerce on Monday night. Mr Howard said that recently in a lane at the rear of his home he saw some pages of what appeared to be an old-fashioned business letter copy book fluttering along the ground. He picked them up and found the book from which they had come.

It was the letter-book of a Fremantle business man, Elias Solomon, who later became Mayor (of that city) and was in the first Federal Parliament. Mr Howard said that the letters gave an interesting picture of the life in the State² of the 1860s. In a letter to the *Inquirer* in 1869, Mr Solomon had suggested the formation of some body to look after the business interests of the community. This might have been the germ of the first Chamber of Commerce in this State, formed at Fremantle in 1872.

The papers of Elias Solomon had been discarded upon the death of his eldest son and only the letter-book survived. It was eventually handed to another son, my father, the late Maurice E. Solomon, then a solicitor in Fremantle, and I have now deciphered as much as is possible of the five hundred pages. A number of the letters are of a personal nature and others contain details of business transactions but overall an impression is conveyed of conditions in a colony which had been in existence barely forty years.

* Adapted from an address given to the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society, 14 April 1991.

Elias Solomon, youngest child of Leah (nee Myers) and Moss Solomon, was born in London on 2 September 1839. The family arrived in Sydney on 19 January 1841. They paid their own way and there is no record of the number of children who accompanied the parents except a daughter, Isabella.³ The family left Sydney for Adelaide 3 March 1841 on the *Dorset*, a brig jointly owned by Emanuel and Vaiben Solomon, brothers of Moss.

Details of Moss and Leah's brief sojourn in Adelaide have been ascertained from letters written by Emanuel to his brother Vaiben.⁴ South Australia was experiencing a severe depression in 1841. Emanuel Solomon, already well established in Adelaide, managed to survive the crisis, but Moss and his family departed from the colony after but a few months. Moss Solomon died in Sydney in 1849 after which his widow, Leah, returned to Adelaide.

On completion of his schooling Elias Solomon joined his uncle's firm and at the age of eighteen was sent to Mauritius to purchase a large consignment of sugar. This mission accomplished he was appointed chief clerk and bookkeeper to the firm, Solomon and Salom of Adelaide. He later worked for a time with Falk & Company of Melbourne.

Elias Solomon, at twenty-nine years of age, arrived at the settlement of Fremantle on 20 January 1868 on the clipper brig *Eliza Blanche*. He found lodgings in Henry Street and on 16 March 1868 was joined by his two twenty-year-old nephews who arrived from Melbourne on the *Douglas*. Their partnership — Solomon and Nephews, Auctioneers and Agents — was financed jointly by Elias, his half-brother Judah Moss Solomon, then of Melbourne, and brother-in-law Isaac Solomon of Adelaide. Their sons, Elias's nephews, were both named Samuel.

Judah Moss Solomon, Elias's half-brother, may well have set the pattern the younger brother was to follow. A merchant and ardent supporter of free trade, he had been a member of the House of Assembly for the City of Adelaide in 1858-60 and a member of the Legislative Council in 1861-66. He was mayor of Adelaide in 1869-71 and represented West Adelaide in the Assembly in 1871-75. Judah Moss Solomon was the first president of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation.⁵

Another son of Judah, Benjamin Solomon, twenty-four years of age, arrived in Fremantle 19 May 1868 accompanied by his wife Louisa and infant daughter Rachel. He commenced business on his own account as a saddler and importer. Their home provided a welcome venue, as Elias wrote, 16 September 1868:

My dearest Mother

I must this mail commence by wishing you Compliments of the Season and convey a hope that you also have many happy new years. Tomorrow will usher in another new year and although we have it not in our power to visit a Synagogue, yet I intend keeping it as strictly and conscientiously as I have always done.

We intend all going to the home of Ben and Lonisa and I have no doubt we can be equally as devout and religious there as anywhere else, and no doubt our prayers will be equally acceptable to the Almighty.

The year 1868 was a precarious time to commence business in Western Australia. Red rust in the wheat and a succession of droughts and storms caused repeated crop failures and the scarcity of labour was acute, due in part to the fact that transportation of convicts had ceased in that year and free settlers were not attracted to the struggling, isolated colony.

Fremantle with a population of only about two thousands was described by Elias as "a very poor place . . . and after leaving buildings like there are in Bourke Street and being deposited as it were in the centre of a town built of nothing but white stone, the contrast was not at all a pleasant one".

On 16 September 1868 Elias Solomon wrote to Dr McHendry of Adelaide:

For the first two or three months of our arrival we did very well, but the past two months have been very dull. As business is, from all accounts, changeable like the weather, I am in hopes that shortly matters will improve . . .

Elias wrote to his mother 10 November 1868: "I have to thank you for the complimentary Valentines enclosed in your last welcome letter, one of which I gave to Mrs Samson who was much pleased with it." Fanny Samson, the wife of Lionel, was talented and well-educated. She was the colony's first Jewess and until the mid-1850s had been Western Australia's only Jewish-born woman.

Fremantle in the 1860s was a town starved of entertainment and apart from enthusiastically received local theatricals, there were few visiting entertainers. One of these was mentioned by Elias in a letter to a friend on 8 January 1869:

You heard, I dare say, of Mr Kohler, the Magician (he was in Adelaide) performing in this Colony. Unfortunately he died in Perth and would have received a Jewish Burial but owing to him not acknowledging when alive that he was a Jew, he was buried in the general church grounds . . .

To his mother, Elias wrote 4 March 1869: "We received our Passover Cakes yesterday by the Steamer from Melbourne. Let me know where you spent the first two nights". Later in the year (21 July 1869) he wrote to his friend, Edler:



Elias Solomon.

I expect before this you have the new Jewish reader in Adelaide. I can assure you I often wish that there was a Synagogue here to go to, but I am afraid that it will be many a year before anything of the kind will be established here owing to the smallness of the Jewish population.

. . . I have been asked to get a Book containing our Marriage and Burial Services with instructions how to act in cases of Death. Can you get such a Book for me?

Letters Elias Solomon wrote to his family and friends reveal his determination to maintain his Judaism even when feeling most isolated and alone. They also illustrate the social differences inherent in the small Jewish community, difference which, together with the depressed state of the colony, made the dream of a synagogue in Fremantle even more remote.

The letters to Leah Solomon and her replies, which we can but imagine, were the lifeline between the family, religion and the isolated lifestyle Elias endured during his first years in the colony. On 16 September 1869 he wrote:

My dear Mother

Yesterday was the day of Atonement. We all fasted and it was a nice cool day, rain falling from morning to night. I hope you also fasted well and had plenty of visitors during the holidays . . .

A notice inserted by Elias Solomon in the *Herald* 14 January 1871 announced that his mother, Leah, had died at her residence in Adelaide on 4 January of that year. Elias was devastated by his loss and from then on wrote fewer letters to family members and concentrated increasingly on business matters.

In mid-1871 the business partnership between Elias and his nephews was dissolved due to mounting losses. One of the nephews remained in Fremantle for a time, the other returned to Adelaide. Benjamin had left the colony in December 1869. Elias wrote to his brother-in-law, Isaac Solomon: "I shall not go into retail again but intend to continue the Auctioneering and Commission business."

Elias Solomon was the first in the colony to import *matza*, the unleavened bread eaten during the festival of Passover. In a letter to Samuel Solomon in Melbourne he wrote on 28 February 1872:

My dear Nephew

. . . I am almost forgetting again about the Matzas . . . you might send me about 30 lbs by sailing vessel only — or should there be any time to send by mail you may send, say 16 lbs by that route . . . I should like a few of the Fancy Cakes (Passover) if they are to be obtained . . .

Writing to his friend Edler, 26 March 1872, upon the engagement of his niece Lizzie to the Jewish Reverend A.T. Boas,⁶ Elias commented wryly on his own prospects: "here I have no chance — Jewesses being very scarce indeed".

Some years later, 21 July 1877, he married Agnes, the second daughter of Wallace Bickley, and after her death in 1886, Elizabeth Stokes. From these two marriages there were nine children; four girls and five boys.

Described as conscientious, hard-working and caring, Elias Solomon actively participated in many areas of public life. A town councillor and chairman from 1877-83 he served as mayor during 1889-91, 1896-98 and 1900-01. As a member of the Legislative Assembly for the South Fremantle constituency 1892-1900 he retired to enter federal politics as first member for Fremantle in the House of Representatives 1901-03. He served as a member of the Technical School Board, was chairman of the Fremantle Tramways Board, president of the Fremantle Literary Institute, consular agent for Italy, chairman of the Hospital Board and Cemetery Board and visiting justice to the Fremantle and Rottnest prisons.

Elias Solomon had a conspicuous role in the formative years of the Fremantle Hebrew Congregation, retiring as its president when he entered federal politics.

There were a number of Australian Jewish parliamentarians connected to the Solomon family. Judah Moss Solomon and Elias Solomon were nephews of Emanuel Solomon. Both Elias and his nephew Vaiben Louis Solomon (Judah's son) were members of the first federal parliament in 1901. Two South Australian parliamentarians also related were Morris Marks and Maurice Salom, brothers-in-law of Judah and Elias?

On 28 March 1890 Lot C8 was granted to Elias Solomon and William F. Samson for the purpose of a Jewish cemetery in Fremantle and in the same year they were granted a site for the Fremantle synagogue. Elias Solomon laid the memorial tablet of the synagogue on 8 January 1902.⁸ Sadly the building was used for only a short time as most of the congregation had shifted to Perth. It still stands on the corner of Norfolk Street and South Terrace, "the Star of David overlooking the building a silent reminder of the role Fremantle had once filled in pioneering Jewish life in Western Australia".⁹

There are other existing historical links with Elias Solomon to be seen in Fremantle. As mayor of the town in 1881 he applied for government approval to build a town hall.¹⁰ The town of Fremantle is now a city but the town hall remains its charming and dignified centrepiece, a reminder of the past. A plaque on what was the Fremantle Literary Institute in South Terrace (now a bank) bears his name, and the home he built in 1884 in Solomon Street, Beaconsfield, overlooks the harbour. At the now busy intersection of Queen Victoria, Parry and Adelaide Streets is the Proclamation Tree planted by the governor, Sir William Robinson, 22 October 1890, to commemorate the granting of responsible self-government. "The Mayor (E. Solomon) requested His Excellency to plant the tree in commemoration of the great boon conferred on the colony".¹¹ The Fremantle Markets opened on 17 June 1898.¹² The *West Australian* reported that the building, which cost "about £3000"

had a “wrought iron trussed roof of elegant design . . . there is nothing of its magnitude in a similar building in the colony at the present time”. The premier, Sir John Forrest, prefaced the opening ceremony by complimenting the mayor (E. Solomon MLA) upon the many good works that had been advocated and carried out by him and his contribution towards the advancement of Fremantle during his “occupation of the Mayoral Chair”.

Elias Solomon died at the age of sixty-nine on 23 May 1909. He was buried in the Jewish section of the Fremantle Cemetery and the service was conducted by the Rev. D.I. Freedman. A lengthy obituary gave tribute to this Fremantle pioneer: “closely identified as the deceased was with the commercial and municipal life of the Port and State since 1868, there was no surprise occasioned by the attendance of a vast concourse of citizens, representative of every section of the community”.¹³

Elias Solomon manifested a passionate interest and involvement in public affairs throughout his life but a letter he wrote to the *Inquirer* in 1869 mirrored the philosophy he continued to follow:

We are now at an era in the history of Western Australia, when all who have any interest in the Colony should put aside all retrograde prejudices and use their combined energies for the one object — the advancement and progress of the Land we live in.

NOTES

1. Elias Solomon, Letter Book: 1868-1872, held by Solomon family.
2. For 'State' read 'colony' — this was prior to Federation.
3. Immigration Lists AO NSW Reel No. 2134 and information from Pauline J. Myers, Castlemaine, Victoria.
4. Emanuel Solomon, Business Letter Book, South Australian Archives, SAA 1312,
5. *Jewish Herald* 10 Sept. 1880, pp. 160-1.
6. Rev. A.T. Boas visited Western Australia in July 1891 and September 1896. Both visits were outstandingly successful and did much to enhance the reputation of the Hebrew congregation in Western Australia.
7. Hilary L. Rubinstein, "Jewish Parliamentarians in Australia, 1849 to the Present: A complete listing", *AJHSJ Journal* Vol. X (1988), Part 4, pp. 295-316.
8. O. Silbert, "Elias Solomon: A Fremantle Pioneer", *The Westralian Judean* Sept. 1933.
9. D. Mossenson, *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew: The History of the Jews of Western Australia* (Nedlands: UWA, 1990), p. 69.
10. J.K. Hitchcock, *The History of Fremantle, 1829-1929* (Fremantle City Council, 1929), p. 91.
11. *Inquirer* 24 Oct. 1890.
12. *West Australian* 18 June 1898.
13. *West Australian* 26 May 1909.

THE EARLIEST JEWISH DOCTORS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

Jack Hoffman

The number of medical practitioners registered with the Medical Board in 1992 is in the vicinity of five thousand. Of this number, about one hundred and seventy may be identified as Jews. Considering there are approximately five thousand Jews in the whole of Western Australia, the proportion of those doctors who are Jewish is particularly high. It is of interest to consider who, where and when, were the first Jewish doctors to practise medicine in Western Australia.

Dr Bertram Cohen, a medical graduate of 1918, had a special interest in medical history and was the author of *A History of Medicine in Western Australia*. However this reference to the very earliest of doctors in the formative years of the colony of Western Australia gave no mention of Jewish medical practitioners.

In 1870 the colonial government proclaimed a medical board, requiring all people practising medicine to register. At that time there were seventeen registrations, none of whom was Jewish.

Dr Henry Friedman, whose registration number is 120, appears to have been the first Jewish doctor to register with the W.A. Medical Board. The register records that he graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1881 and registered with the Medical Board on 5 August 1896. His address at that time was shown to be Coolgardie.

The second Jewish doctor to be registered in Western Australia was Simon Crownson Joel, a graduate of Melbourne University in 1896. His registration number is 186 and his address was Bunbury.

The records of the Melbourne University archives show that Henry Friedman was born on 15 September 1855 at Hobart Town and that his religious denomination was Jewish. His father was Isaac Friedman, a minister of religion. He commenced his medical course in 1874 and his education prior to matriculation was with a private tutor. He was one of thirteen medical graduates to receive their degrees in 1881. At that time his home address was McKenzie Street, Melbourne.

* This paper was read at a meeting of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society held on 2nd April 1989.

Isaac Friedman, Henry's father, had a very important place in the early history of Jewish settlement in Australia. He was born in Hungary, and after receiving a Yeshiva education, left England for Australia together with his wife Rebecca and young son aboard the sailing ship *Enchantress*. After a journey of five months they arrived at Port Jackson on 24 April 1833 where he set up as a general dealer and tailor. Soon after, he lost his wife and son through illness. He married Maria Nathan on 23 December 1835, and after five years in New South Wales moved on to Hobart Town where he engaged in various businesses. During his stay in Hobart Town he became very involved in Jewish affairs and it was in his home, at a meeting of fellow Jews, that it was decided to build a synagogue in Hobart. He was one of the founding members present at the laying of the foundation stone in 1843, and his name is engraved on a tablet that remains in position at the Hobart Synagogue, the oldest extant synagogue in Australia today.

In 1858 Isaac Friedman and his family moved to the Victorian goldfields town of Sandhurst (Bendigo). He was appointed *chazan* and *shochet* to the synagogue that had been established there. With this appointment he received a remuneration and was permitted to use the title "reverend".

In 1868, at the age of sixty-three, he left Sandhurst to settle in Melbourne with his family. He spent the rest of his life collecting donations "for our unfortunate brethren in Jerusalem". He died on 13 June 1875, aged seventy years.

After spending the first seven years of his medical career in the New South Wales country town of Deniliquin, Henry Friedman in 1896 moved to Western Australia and set up practice in Coolgardie. These were depressed times in Australia and it was probably the gold rush and the success of the Coolgardie field that

were the reasons for his move. By 1895 the population of Coolgardie and surrounding districts was 13 000 and by 1902 it had reached 25 000. By 1898 there were fourteen doctors including Henry Friedman practising in Coolgardie. Frequent epidemics of typhoid, dysentery and meningitis accidents would have kept them all very busy.

Among the people flocking to Coolgardie after 1892 were quite a number of Jews who by 1895 were sufficient in number to form a congregation and build a synagogue, which was consecrated in 1896, the first synagogue to be built in Western Australia. As there are no records of the membership of the Coolgardie congregation, one can only assume Dr Henry Friedman was a member.



'Doc' Friedman.

As a doctor in either Coolgardie or Kalgoorlie he must have been quite well known, since he is mentioned in Arthur Reid's book *Those were the Days* published in 1933. Reid refers to him familiarly as "Doc" Friedman and there is a cartoon of him together with other well-known Goldfields characters.

By 1902 gold production in the Coolgardie region had peaked and began to decline. There had already been a mass movement away from Coolgardie to the newer fields at Kalgoorlie. It was also in 1902 that Dr Henry Friedman moved to Kalgoorlie where he carried on as a medical practitioner until 1907 when he left Western Australia for the Eastern States.

Dr Simon Crownson Joel, the second Jewish doctor to practise in Western Australia, was born in Melbourne on 10 December 1873. His father was Isaac Joel who emigrated from London to Melbourne at the age of twenty-one years. Isaac worked first as a hawker and later set up as a trader in the markets. He prospered to the extent he was able to provide a good education for his family. Isaac Joel married Elizabeth, a daughter of Kadish Crownson of England. They had four sons and one daughter.

Simon was educated at Carlton College and later Melbourne University graduating in medicine in 1896. After two years of training at London hospitals he returned to Melbourne. Soon after his return he accepted a position as a locum in the practice of Drs Ignatius Flynn and Richard Williams at Bunbury in Western Australia and registered with the Western Australian Medical Board on 5 April 1899. He found Bunbury and the environment so much to his liking that he decided to remain there, becoming a member of the partnership.

In 1902 Simon Joel returned to London on a visit and there married Kate Davis, aged twenty years, the daughter of Charles Davis, a silk merchant. Returning to Bunbury they subsequently had two sons, Bernard (1904), Neville Crownson (1906), and one daughter Maxine (1910). Maxine went to live in Melbourne where she married Hubert Levi. Their son John Levi is currently the rabbi of the Temple Beth Israel Congregation in Melbourne. Their son Neville went on to follow in his father's footsteps by studying medicine at Melbourne University and eventually taking over the Bunbury practice in 1933.

Dr Simon Joel spent the years 1899-1933 as a very active medical practitioner and community worker in Bunbury. During that time he became one of Bunbury's most noted citizens.

In 1904 he received a commission of justice of the peace. Among other positions he held were medical officer to the Bunbury Branch of Health, and deputy quarantine officer. He was particularly skilled as a surgeon, and consequently did most of the surgical work not only in Bunbury but also for a large surrounding area and other towns. His travelling about the district on his medical rounds was for many years by horse and sulky. It was not until 1913 that he acquired his first motor car, a Hupmobile.

During the Great War, Dr Joel was commissioned military medical officer for the region, examining recruits for the services. He held the rank of captain.

Simon Joel threw himself wholeheartedly into every movement which was of public interest. As a freemason he was master of the Wellington Lodge on more than one occasion. He was president of the Wellington Agricultural Society, a founder and later president of the South West Club. He became very interested in the promotion of agriculture, with several farming ventures. He was a director of the South West Farmers Co-operative.

Dr Simon Joel also interested himself in local politics. He was staunchly liberal, and counted amongst his friends Sir James Mitchell and Sir Newton Moore. He was also a keen sportsman, playing tennis, bowls, golf and fishing as well as shooting. Together with his wife he was responsible for founding the Sea Links Golf Club.

Although he lived and worked a considerable distance from a Jewish community, Simon Joel was always conscious of the fact that he was Jewish. He endeavoured always to maintain his own and his family's attachment to Judaism. He was a member of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, and both of his sons celebrated their *Bar Mitzvah* at the Brisbane Street Synagogue.

Rabbi D.I. Freedman was a great family friend and often stayed with the Joels when visiting Bunbury. Other Jewish friends who visited them were the Nathan, Boas, Silverstein and Lazarus families. Carl Cohen, father of Ron Cohen, a past president of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, and Carl's brother Sydney and sister Sadie, the wife of Harold Boas, the town planner and architect, were cousins of Simon Joel.

In 1935 Dr Joel, whilst in Melbourne, was involved in an accident when his car came into collision with a tram. He received serious injuries from which he never recovered, dying thirteen weeks later.

When Simon Joel retired in Bunbury in 1933, there were four doctors practising in Bunbury. In that same year, in Coolgardie there were none.



Sir John Monash Laying the Foundation Stone of the Jewish War Memorial, Kings Park, Dec. 1919.

DEFUNCT CONGREGATIONS

David Mossenson

Six congregations were established during the first thirty years of organised Jewish life in Western Australia, but only one survived and flourished. In 1887 a Fremantle group pioneered the practice of Judaism in the colony, and in 1892 the organisation which was to prove enduring was founded in Perth. The colony's gold rush produced three Hebrew congregations, the first in Coolgardie in 1894, the next in Kalgoorlie in 1896, and the third in Menzies in 1902. The sixth and last of these early congregations was created by a dissident group which broke away from the Perth Hebrew Congregation in 1907. Despite this setback the Perth Hebrew Congregation alone of the six pioneer bodies achieved a permanent and expanding role for itself.

Prior to the discovery of gold, Fremantle was the colony's leading commercial centre. By the 1880s a score of Jews were living in the vicinity of the port, and their numbers were presently augmented by a trickle of immigrants. In 1887 members of the small community combined in prayer to mark the holy days, *Rosh Hoshanah* (New Year) and *Yom Yippur* (Day of Atonement).¹ The exercise was repeated in the following years and in 1891 when the Jewish residents of the town totalled fifty persons the organisation adopted the title of Western Australian Hebrew Congregation.² The rush to the Coolgardie goldfields then intervened and reduced numbers, but the organisation obtained a government grant on the corner of South Terrace and Norfolk Street. The site contained a small building which was henceforth utilised for prayer meetings. In the meantime the Perth Hebrew Congregation became established and before long displayed the capacity to supplant Fremantle as the leader in Jewish affairs in Western Australia.

In 1894, not long after continuous prospecting had commenced in Coolgardie, there were sufficient Jews in the locality for them to conduct services during the holy days.³ The men constituted themselves into the Goldfields Hebrew Congregation, obtained a land grant and in 1896 built a house of worship. This was Western Australia's original synagogue pre-dating Brisbane Street by almost a year. Despite this progress the pioneer goldfields congregation, like the town which produced it, declined as dramatically as it had risen. In 1899 so few Jews remained in the town that the synagogue was offered for sale and the Goldfields Hebrew Congregation became Western Australia's first defunct Hebrew congregation.

Coolgardie's fall contributed to Kalgoorlie's rise, one result being the conduct of *Rosh Hoshanah* and *Yom Kippur* services in the town in the years 1896 and 1897.⁴ Depletion of numbers caused the temporary collapse of the infant organisation but the presence of newcomers enabled it to re-emerge in 1901 under the title of Kalgoorlie Hebrew Congregation. Following this revival, small scale and intermittent congregational activity occurred in the town over the next thirty years. The depression years produced a temporary upsurge but a serious drift of members then occurred and by 1940 all semblance of organisation disappeared. Louis Alman, a long term resident of the town and former President, eventually disposed of the congregation's assets. The Temple David Congregation, which obtained two Scrolls of the Law, and the Perth Jewish Aged Home Society, which received the proceeds of the sale of the erstwhile house of worship, were the beneficiaries.

For a few years early in the present century a tiny Jewish community conducted religious services in Menzies, 130km north of Kalgoorlie. Little is known of this congregation other than it came into existence in 1902, functioned for a few years and collapsed some time before 1908.⁵ Menzies therefore emulated Coolgardie and became the second Hebrew congregation to disappear.

Perth's expansion spelt the doom of the Fremantle Jewish community.⁶ Drift of members induced the Western Australian Hebrew Congregation to seek amalgamation with its lustier neighbour. When these overtures failed, Fremantle decided to replace its makeshift premises with a new house of worship. What became the State's third synagogue was erected in 1902, but the loss of members proceeded notwithstanding. Following a resumption of negotiations the Perth congregation acquired Fremantle's assets and liabilities, and subsequently recouped its outlay by selling the South Terrace property to the Defence Department.⁷ In 1908 Fremantle became the third Hebrew congregation to disappear. Some decades later, when it finally collapsed, Kalgoorlie followed as the fourth congregation of this type to become defunct.

Following dissension within the Perth Hebrew Congregation a breakaway group constituted themselves into the Perth Jewish Association in 1907 and they presently succeeded in recruiting members from among newly arrived Yiddish speaking immigrants. The association purchased land in Palmerston Street and erected a synagogue which came to be known as "the little Shule" to distinguish it from the large Brisbane Street house of worship. The organisation functioned effectively until well into the 1920s when it began to suffer an increasing loss of members to the more prestigious Perth Hebrew Congregation. In the thirties the association deteriorated sadly. From then on it existed for many years more in name than in fact, until its property was sold and the proceeds added to the Perth Hebrew Congregation's fund to build a new synagogue. The demolition of the little Shule in 1973 belatedly confirmed the disappearance of yet another congregation.

Despite this sequence of five collapsed congregations, Western Australian Jewry's attachment to their faith has remained as secure as ever. Factors such as the decline of the goldfields, drift to the metropolitan area, and the success of the Perth Hebrew



The Coolgardie Synagogue, 1896.

Congregation caused the demise of the congregations. The experience of the post-World War II period, and recent developments, including the formation of new congregations, demonstrate the continuing vitality of Judaism in this State.

NOTES

1. D. Mossenson, *Hebrew Israelite Jew* (Nedlands: UWAP, 1990), pp. 43-5.
2. *Census of Western Australia 1891*.
3. Mossenson, pp. 40-3.
4. An account of the protracted career of the Kalgoorlie Hebrew Congregation is contained in Mossenson, pp. 43, 65-6, 100-1, 161-2 and 148-9.
5. Details of the religious activities were listed in the *W.A. Statistical Register for 1904*. See also Mossenson, p. 66.
6. Mossenson, pp. 66-9.
7. The building still stands facing South Terrace but is largely obscured by a later building constructed in front of it.
8. The affairs of the Perth Jewish Association are examined in Mossenson, pp. 91-3, 97-9, 111, 115-16, 127, and 193-4.

CONTRIBUTORS

Harry Atlas is a Committee member of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society. He has been active in communal affairs over many years including Board membership of the Perth Hebrew Congregation and President of the Carmel School. He is currently a Trustee of the Seeligson Trust and the Korsunski Charitable Trust.

Ian Berryman was born in Carnarvon, Western Australia, and obtained a B.Sc. degree at the University of Western Australia. After graduating he worked in Australia and in Britain as a research scientist, and is the joint author of a number of papers published in scientific journals. He has also written one book and several papers on the founding and early history of the Swan River colony. At present he is employed in the Australian Bureau of Statistics in Perth.

Rabbi Dr. Shalom Coleman is the Emeritus Rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Biographical information is contained in the chapter of this Journal headed *Rabbinate*.

Rabbi David Freilich is the Chief Minister of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Biographical information appears in the chapter of this Journal headed *Rabbinate*.

Lita Goldflam, born in Perth in 1928, is the mother of four children; she taught mathematics for 18 years. Since her retirement she has been studying at the University of W.A. towards a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Jack Hoffman O.A.M., M.B. B.S. is a medical practitioner with a special interest in the early history of Jewish doctors in Western Australia.

Leila Hoffman is a retired, professional librarian. She established and runs the Judaica lending library for the Perth Hebrew Congregation. She has written articles for library journals, and an unpublished work "West Australian Music Makers". Her grandparents were early members of the congregation.

Louise Hoffman B.A. Grad.Dip. Library Studies, is a professional research worker with special interests in Jewish bibliography and local Jewish history on which she has lectured and written articles. She acts as Honorary Archivist for the Perth Hebrew Congregation and is a foundation member of the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society of which she is Vice Chairman.

Lloyd Masel is married with four children, two of whom live in Israel. He is Choirmaster of The Perth Hebrew Congregation Choir. He was President of The

State Zionist Council of W.A. for twelve years and currently is active in fund-raising activities for Israel. He is a regular public speaker in the Perth Jewish community.

Shush Masel is married with four children, two of whom live in Israel. She is very active in Jewish communal activities in Perth, working both for local and Israeli organisations. Currently, she is interviewing many Holocaust survivors for The Western Australian Historical Society.

David Mossenson A.O., I.S.O., PhD., is Chairman of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society. His principal publications are *State Education in Western Australia 1829-1960* and *Hebrew Israelite Jew: The History of the Jews of Western Australia*. He was formerly Director General of Education and is currently the Chairman of the Secondary Education Authority in this state.

Jeffery Pearlman is Secretary/Treasurer of the W.A. Jewish Historical Society, a position he has held since late 1987. He has a long standing interest and involvement in Jewish communal affairs. He has pursued genealogical research and he has located material relating to Jewish communal history in State and Commonwealth Archives.

Keith B. Shilkin, M.B.B.S., F.R.C.P.A., F.R.C.Path., is a Committee member of the Western Australian Jewish Historical Society and a past member and Secretary of the Board of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. He is a Clinical Professor in the Department of Pathology of the University of Western Australia and Head of the Department of Histopathology, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth.

Coralie Solomon, granddaughter of Elias, was born in Fremantle. She worked as a Careers Adviser at the University of Western Australia and, since retirement in 1985, completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Public History at Murdoch University and does voluntary work for the Adult Literacy Service of TAFE and Information Radio. Her main interest is historical research.

Dr. O.B. Tofler, born and educated in Sydney, has been practising as a consultant cardiologist at Royal Perth Hospital and in private practice in Perth for thirty-seven years. During that time he has also been active within the Jewish community as foundation president of both the Seeligson Kindergarten in 1957 and the G. Korsunski Carmel School in 1959 and held the position of president for a further period of six years. He has served on the committee of the Perth Hebrew Congregation for fifteen years and has been editor in chief of the weekly Maccabean newspaper since its inception in February 1972.

Nate Zusman was born in Perth and was very involved in communal activities — Perth Hebrew School, Zionist Association, Welfare Society and especially Maccabean Youth Club. He moved to Sydney in 1946 where he is currently Vice-President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and Secretary of the Jewish Folk Centre.

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