

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL XII 1994



PART 2

## **BENEFACCTIONS IN MEMORY OF**

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PHYLLIS BRONSTEIN (by East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation)  
HELENE JEDWAB (by parents George & Patricia Revelman)



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*Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not reflect the official position of the society.*



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

**T**his issue of the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* covers a wide range of topics relating to different parts of the Australian continent and spanning almost all of the two centuries of Australian Jewish history. It has been very rewarding to edit a journal which has had contributions from so many different parts of Australia.

The first two articles focus on the life of country Jews in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mr M. Z. Forbes's article on Jews and Jewish life during the gold rushes in New South Wales in the 1850s is based on detailed research of the period. He has covered all the different parts of New South Wales where gold was discovered and the Jewish presence in each of these gold rush towns. In this way, Mr Forbes has provided a wealth of information which helps to create a clear picture of the life of Jewish settlers in this seminal period of Australian history. While much has been written about Jews during the Victorian gold rush period, especially due to the pioneering research of Rabbi L. M. Goldman (about whom there is a contribution later in the *Journal*), this is the first detailed discussion of this period in relation to New South Wales and, as such, is a valuable contribution to the literature.

Morris Ochert's article on Sali Mendelsohn provides a different picture of country Jews, this time of a family living in Queensland. Sali Mendelsohn typified country Jews of nineteenth century Australia as a storekeeper in a small town, but his ability to write ballads and capture in song the spirit of the drovers makes his contribution interesting and worth recording.

Another focus of this issue is rabbinical leadership in three states. Bernard Hyam's article on "Ministers and Managers" deals with Rev. A.T. Boas' relationship with the lay leadership in Adelaide. A detailed biographical study of Rev (later Rabbi) Boas has been written by Louise Rosenberg and published in this *Journal*. Dr Hyams provides new insights with a very valuable analysis of lay/clerical relations, using the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation as a case study. Rabbi Apple has provided us with a history of the Sydney Beth Din, focusing on its origins and evolution. He has shown some of the early tensions between Melbourne, where the first Australian Beth Din was constituted, and the Sydney Jewish community. This was initially presented as a paper

at a meeting in Sydney of the AJHS. This study is followed by an article dealing with the life of Rabbi L.M. Goldman whose contribution to the beginnings of serious Australian Jewish historiography is so important.

The last three articles deal with important developments relating to the twentieth century. Rodney Gouttman of Adelaide has analysed the reactions of the Adelaide Jewish community to the crises of the twentieth century, with particular focus on reactions to World War I and World War II. Glenn Gordon's article deals with the origins of the first Zionist youth movement in Australia, *Shomrim*, and is part of his Master's thesis which he recently completed at the University of Sydney. Finally my article deals with the differences in the reactions of the Melbourne and Sydney Jewish leadership to postwar survivor immigration. This was part of my doctoral thesis and was presented as a paper to the First Australasian Gathering of Holocaust Descendents held in Sydney in 1993.

The article by Rodney Gouttman was initially presented as a paper to the conference of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies. This organisation encourages research in all areas of Jewish thought and culture and, through the holding of its annual conferences, has helped to foster Australian Jewish history. The leadership of this Association, both in Melbourne and in Sydney, has been closely connected to the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

Producing a journal of this nature is not without creating controversy. Historical interpretations can be subject to a great deal of debate. One aspect of Australian Jewish History which has been subject to much controversy, with many different interpretations, is the history of the Jewish Council of Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism. There have been a number of articles on the history of the Council published in the Journal, including an important series by Philip Mendes. In Volume XI, Part 6, Mr Norman Rothfield wrote about his own recollections of this period entitled "Melbourne Jewry's Cold War: My Years with the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism". This article evoked a response from Mr Paul Morawetz, another central player in Australian Jewry at this time, which was published in the last Journal.

Mr Rothfield, has responded to Mr Morawetz's letter, but from an editorial point of view it is not possible to have continuous correspondence published in the Journal. This is an academic journal; it is not a newspaper, with a correspondence page. In his letter Mr Rothfield noted that Mr Morawetz made the following statement in August 1949, as reported in the *Australian Jewish News* of 5 August 1949:

I admit that as a result of my travels overseas I came back to

Australia with new ideas. But I do not attack the Council. I value the work which it has done too highly, and the work it is still doing. I have supported the Council in the past, and would be prepared to support it in the future... But these are difficult times. Like the Jews in fascist Argentina we have to be careful, cautious. That does not mean that I have changed my political colour. I still think the way I did. I appreciate that the left and the communists show most sympathy to the Jewish point of view.

In his letter, Mr Rothfield stressed that in his article he had noted the mistakes made by the Jewish Council in failing to condemn Russian anti-Semitism. However, he felt that the Jewish Council had made many other positive contributions in fighting for Jewish rights, in challenging the restoration of Nazis to positions of power and in opposing the policy of allowing Nazis into Australia. He points out that as late as February 1951 Ben Green, President of the ECAJ (and member of the Liberal Party), said at a meeting of the Board of Deputies that differences with the Jewish Council were comparatively "trifling".

The fact that there are different interpretations in history makes its study challenging and meaningful. People who participated in the same events will often have a different perspective of those events, and their perspective of the events can also change with the passage of time. However, it is not the role of a historical journal to maintain a continuous debate on issues through correspondence. Mr Rothfield has presented his recollections of this period. His article is a further contribution to the history of the Council on which there is a significant historiography. It is now up to other scholars to continue the research and debate into this important era of Australian Jewish history.

Suzanne D. Rutland



## THE JEWS OF NSW AND THE GOLD RUSHES

M.Z. Forbes

The fourth volume of Manning Clark's *History of Australia* covers a most important period, 1851-1888, but with one irrelevancy, the index includes only one reference to the Jews, and even it proves to be of no consequence whatever. The author, having noticed the presence and the hopes of the Church, proceeds immediately to mention and to reflect upon the society's low standards by reference to a scene in Sydney's Hyde Park when, in 1866, "a mob of two to three thousand assembled round two or three Israelites or 'beardies' who were preaching about the sufferings of the Jews"<sup>1</sup> as a forerunner to their ingathering. The preachers were set upon and caused to flee the scene as a near riot developed, the police powerless to prevent the disorder. With due respect to the learned author, it may be questioned whether such an incident has much to say about the social conditions of those times. In any event, readers are misled by this item since it is virtually the only one to bring the Jews under notice during an eventful period of the colony's history. Whether Jewish or not, readers and students have to resort to the specialised data and research represented by the Society's Journal or by the works of Australian Jewish historians. Therefore, the contributions from the small Jewish community of the gold rush era to this country's growth and development need to be chronicled.

Although the present writer is well aware that this paper may not be fully comprehensive, it is hoped that it will fill a gap in a section of the history of New South Wales Jewry at a significant stage of the story of the Jewish community of the colony. It also aims to indicate the role of the Jews in the social transformation effected by the gold discoveries and by the diggers and others attracted by the rushes to venture beyond the previously recognised areas of settlement. Daring and boldness of character was required of those who were prepared to seek their fortunes in wilderness areas. Among these people was a sufficient number of Jews who shared in the vicissitudes and hardships of the diggings, often risking much, equally with others.

Published recently, Theo Barker in *A History of Bathurst*, may be said to be the first non-Jewish historian to notice the presence of a Jewish community in that district, not long before the gold rush.<sup>2</sup> He writes of the Jews, who numbered 24 in 1848, as being "the most interesting group" of all the denominations and says, correctly, that

"There is a tendency to overlook the Jewish contribution to the growth of the local community". He mentions Benjamin Isaacs of the *Bathurst Advocate*, John Davies, the Chief Constable, Joseph Simmons, shopkeeper, George Mocatta, the pastoralist, J.B. Solomon, the proprietor of the Bee Hive Store, Aaron Gainsborg, jeweller and watchmaker, Ralph Tolano, shop manager, and Joseph Aarons Jnr., storekeeper. Two others of note are referred to, J.B. Montefiore and Saul Samuel of Wellington Valley. He has very little to say about Samuel as a Bathurst leading figure. The author of the above history has no doubt made reference to *Australian Genesis*. "This book", he writes, "is a valuable source for Jewish history in Australia".<sup>3</sup>

Not long before the discovery in 1851 of payable gold in New South Wales the colony was beginning to recover from a serious economic depression in the forties, a measure of democratic self-government was being enjoyed, and the transportation of convicts had ceased. By 1850 the population of 186,000 included 70,000 assisted immigrants many of whom were poor but hoped to improve their lot by leaving the United Kingdom, the country of origin of most of these new settlers. Over a quarter of the population resided in Sydney.

By the time of the next census in 1861, and as a result of the gold rushes, the population of the colony numbered 358,000. In the newly separated colony of Victoria the numbers, during this same period, had increased to half a million. Within a decade the New South Wales goldfields had yielded 140 tons of gold valued at £15,000,000. In the case of Victoria 1,000 tons of gold had been won, worth £110,000,000.<sup>4</sup> Due to the effect of the gold discoveries the population of the mother colony doubled within a decade, while in Victoria the increase was sixfold. In both instances the number of non-British foreigners had risen from a mere 1.6% to 10%, which is referred to as being "one of the distinctive important social consequences of the gold discoveries".<sup>5</sup> By comparison with earlier immigration the foreign element had become appreciable.

During the first half of the last century in Australia the Jews, whether as convicts, emancipists or free settlers, did not differ much from other citizens as regards their British origins. It is reliably estimated that 90% of the Jewish population was then descended from Anglo-Jewry. The first decade of the gold rushes, however, resulted in an influx of Jewish immigrants, particularly from German lands, reducing the previous predominance of Jews of British stock, so that the latter were then no more than half of the total Jewish population.<sup>6</sup> Two of Australia's greatest figures, Isaac Isaacs and John Monash were the sons of foreign migrants who arrived in Melbourne at the height of the gold fever. Isaacs' father was born in Russian Poland (later migrating to London) and Monash's father was a native of Prussian Poland.



As appears from the census, the first decade following the discovery of gold produced an increase in New South Wales of the number of Jews from 979 to 1,759. In Victoria, where the discoveries were more dramatic, the increase was from 364 to 2,903.<sup>7</sup> In Melbourne it was A.H. Hart who, although he believed "that gold was one of the greatest curses", was most prominent in setting up a Gold Committee to offer a reward for the discovery of gold within 200 miles of Melbourne, one of the objects being to prevent emigration to other colonies.<sup>8</sup> The numbers of the Jewish communities were substantially increased by foreign migrants, most of them of German origins.<sup>9</sup>

The effects of the gold rushes were much more far reaching in Victoria than other parts of Australia. As Geoffrey Serle clearly points out, Victoria was remade and peopled by "the lure of gold".<sup>10</sup> In a short time the rich Victorian fields converted the colony "from a small oppressed out-district of New South Wales" to become "the first colony in the Southern Hemisphere".<sup>11</sup> Here probably lies the explanation for the greater emphasis given in general histories to facts and details which relate largely to Victoria's gold era experience rather than that of New South Wales. C.A. Price, in his study of Jewish demography in Australia, found that by 1861 about 40% of the Jewish population was living outside the capital cities.<sup>12</sup> At that time an important centre such as Goulburn had the highest Jewish rural population in the colony, a decrease of almost 30 Jews since 1856. The next highest number of rural Jews in 1861 is to be found on the Burrangong goldfields (Lambing Flat and Forbes), a total of 70. Those Jews were moved to erect a synagogue at Forbes in 1861 while the more prestigious community at Goulburn, which was not originally a gold centre, took no steps of that kind. In 1857, by comparison in Victoria, there were 290 Jews in Ballarat and surrounding goldfields, 280 at Sandhurst (Bendigo) and 99 at Geelong.<sup>13</sup> In all of these Victorian towns during the gold rushes the Jewish residents erected synagogues.

In the study of Australian Jewish history all these statistics have significance in understanding the growth and development of Jewish communal life by the time the gold rushes had reached their climax. While noting the creditable achievements of the Jewish communities after only a mere generation of congregational life, there is no doubt whatever that the substantial immigration of the golden 'fifties strengthened Jewish life in a remote environment where the Jewish settlers, as L.M. Goldman remarks in the Preface of his history, "felt almost lost and abandoned".<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, while the gold era witnessed an expansion of Jewish life in the wake of immigration, Australian Jewry is seen at that time as being in the evolutionary stage of its history.

In *The Edge of the Diaspora* Suzanne D. Rutland discusses some of the principal developments within the Jewish communities of the gold



rush era, though not all of them have direct relevance to the impact of the gold discoveries. Such a work, understandably, cannot encompass the details of the involvement and participation by Jews in the gold rush story. Indeed, the author's aim was to produce a social history which highlights "seminal events" as well as focusing on the "key period" in the mid-twentieth century, after which time Australian Jewry radically changed when it ceased to be controlled and dominated by Anglo-Jewish influences.<sup>15</sup> Again, in the recent volumes by Hilary L. and William D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History*, half the work deals with the events after 1945 when there occurred "an epochal break in Australian Jewish life in many respects".<sup>16</sup> Hilary Rubinstein concludes that the gold rush consolidated the foundations of Jewish communal life, particularly within the Victorian communities of those times.<sup>17</sup>

New South Wales Jewry has not been the subject of a specific history and it is therefore more difficult to assess the impact of the gold rushes on the Jews of the senior colony, apart from the increase of the Jewish population. This immigration must have had a beneficial effect on a community whose numbers were still small. When a Gold Anniversary Dinner was held in Sydney in 1853 the toast on that occasion was "Gold is the mainspring of commerce; commerce is the forerunner of civilization; and civilization is the handmaiden of Christianity".<sup>18</sup> An educated overseas observer of this scene, who published a book on his travels, wrote of gold as being "the magnet to which the needles of Christianity and Judaism turn with obedient veneration".<sup>19</sup> On reaching Bathurst he speaks of a Jew as the centre of attraction:

The most interesting person in the crowd was an English Jew, who spoke in the most mysterious manner of a place he had discovered, where the gold lay no more in nuggets, no, in layers of solid blocks, and the precious stones anybody could pick up around there, like bricks around a kiln! His hearers listened to him with open mouths as if they considered him a prophet; a few tolerable good-looking nuggets he had in his pockets and exhibited, completed in his triumph.<sup>20</sup>

As will be seen, there were a number of Jews trading and buying gold in and around Bathurst and the Western Goldfields but the actual identity of the person referred to by the writer is a matter for speculation.

### THE CALIFORNIA RUSH

In 1848 gold was discovered in California and when news of this discovery reached Australia, Edward Hargraves was one of many who

left Sydney in 1849 for the Californian goldfields. In 1851 Hargraves returned to Sydney, convinced that he would find gold locally, as were many others.

A number of Sydney Jews were associated with the early links with the Californian goldfields. The first vessel advertised to sail for California in January 1849 was the clipper barque *Lindsays*. J.H. Levien was associated with that venture but shortly afterwards left the colony, having appointed Edward Salamon as his attorney.<sup>21</sup> Montefiore Graham & Co. advertised that the *Courier De Tahiti* would leave for San Francisco. It was described as a first class ship, comfort guaranteed. The schooner, *Plymouth*, arrived in Sydney with a keg of Californian gold and bearing news of the American diggings for the information, as the evidence points, of the prominent mercantile firm, Montefiore Graham & Co. The same vessel left for San Francisco early in January 1849, the cargo consigned by that firm. They also consigned a cargo to that port in the *Despatch*, in which Frederick Montefiore travelled as supercargo.<sup>22</sup> The latter was a brother of Jacob Levi Montefiore and spent some time in early Brisbane.<sup>23</sup> The *Rosetta Joseph*, owned by the Sydney merchant, Moses Joseph, for whose wife the ship was named, left Sydney in May 1850 for San Francisco where she arrived after only 80 days. On the return journey the barque struck a reef near Lord Howe Island and managed to reach Port Macquarie, the passengers and crew landing destitute with barely any of their possessions.<sup>24</sup> Moses Joseph seems to have been the most prominent of a few Jewish colonial shipowners.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, in Sydney, the successful man of business, Samuel Lyons, was one of the first to offer for sale goods for the use of the overseas miners. In February 1851 L. & S. Samuel notified that interested parties should apply to them for a passage or for despatch of freight on the 500 ton *Mary Catherine* bound for San Francisco via Honolulu. L. Samuel was one of the signatories for a public meeting at Sydney's Royal Hotel to discuss the shortage of workers resulting from the California mania.

One who left his family behind in Germany in 1851 in the search for Californian gold was Abraham Abrahamson who, about a year later, arrived at the Bendigo and Ballarat diggings after a brief stay in Sydney. An account of his travels and experiences is reproduced in the *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*.<sup>26</sup> He achieved some success in prospecting for gold but also turned his energies to a bakery business, building his own oven from bricks and clay. With the lapse of a further year he decided to return to his family. "What good was all this gleaming gold," he wrote, "without those things that were worth more to me than anything on earth? ...I had enough of roughness, wilderness, and man in all his degradation. I felt the need to move again in a secure, quiet, companionable society." These were, indeed,



understandable sentiments. Abrahamsohn, unlike some others, was possessed of a strong character, wisdom and versatility. As a foreigner on the goldfields of California and Australia, he did not abandon himself to the crude conditions of the goldfields and he correctly judged that his experiences were worthy of a narrative record, particularly as his story was a personal and authentic one.

### **THE DISCOVERY AT OPHIR**

While the systematic search for gold commenced in 1851, specimens had been found in New South Wales before that time. The shepherd, Hugh McGregor, was one of the earliest fossickers who, near Wellington, found pieces of gold but kept the precise area of his discovery quiet. He made regular visits to Sydney and visited the jeweller, Edward Daniel Cohen, who purchased specimens from him and exhibited them in his shop in George Street, Sydney. I have previously written of Cohen's involvement, of which little was hitherto generally known.<sup>27</sup>

The identity of both these parties, and of others as well, was known to Edward Hargraves who succeeded in discovering gold in the Bathurst region, and this led to a rush to the first Australian goldfield at Ophir, 280 kilometres west of Sydney. This place was so named from the legendary scriptural account of King Solomon's navy which sailed from the Red Sea: "And they came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold,



*The Gold Diggings at Ophir, County of Wellington, New South Wales*



420 talents, and brought it to King Solomon" (I Kings 9:28). In Sydney, wild excitement initially prevailed with the news of the discovery of gold.

There is no indication that the goldrush disrupted the small Sydney Jewish community, whatever the role of individual Jews, whether as buyers or exporters of gold or as tradesmen serving the needs of the miners in Sydney or on the goldfields. The Minutes of the Synagogue (York Street) contain no reference to any of the turmoil then experienced by the general community. It was only a minority of Jews, some of whom became prominent on the goldfields, which ventured to the diggings, and some of them were previously established in country locations.

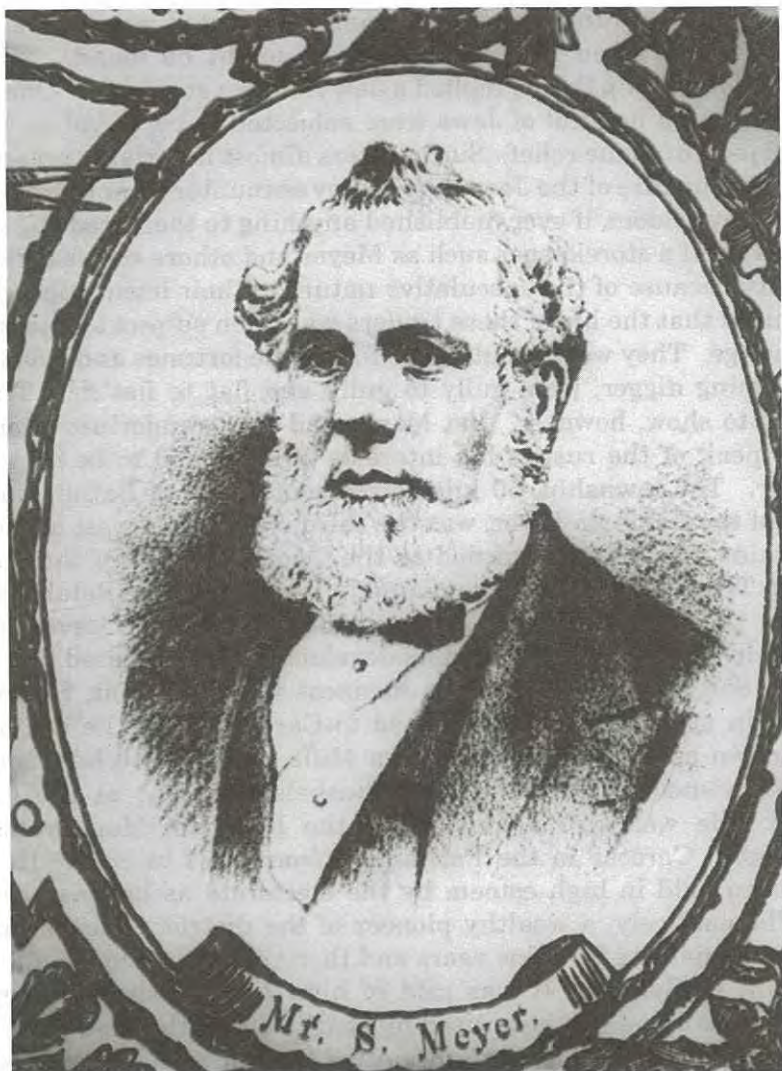
Hargraves always pressed his own claims that he was the first person to discover gold in New South Wales. In his book, *Australia and its Goldfields* (1855), Hargraves published his own account of the discoveries. On his way to Ophir, Hargraves tells that he met a Mr Brockstain who had known Cohen and later married his widow. Brockstain spoke of Cohen's dealings with McGregor, with the Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, and with the geologist, W.B. Clarke. Hargraves, however, goes on to caricature "Mishter Cohen" and Brockstain. He ridiculed the latter, whose conversation is made to run as follows: "Vell, ven you find de gold I think I get good reward. You know Isht vun very poor man, and you makes vun good report. Isht not forget you; me got goot many little poys you see."<sup>28</sup> Some of these remarks were afterwards quoted by a friend of Hargraves in the book by Simpson Davison, *The Gold Deposits in Australia* (London, 1861). Such items of information reflect on the character of Hargraves and show how inoffensive Jews were made the object of needless scorn.

### SOLOMON MEYER AT CARCOAR AND OPHIR

The gold strike at Ophir attracted about 800 diggers by August 1851, a number which dwindled to 50 by January of the following year. The road between Parramatta and Bathurst was crowded with travellers, many without the necessities of life. Solomon Meyer arrived at this first Australian goldfield and opened a store in a bark structure which is credited with his being the first general store on the diggings.

Meyer, who had at least two other brothers, Abraham and Benjamin, was born in London in 1823, the son of Jacob, a silk manufacturer. At the age of 20 he left England and in 1844 married a non-Jewish lady at Launceston. Meyer acquired the business of Joseph Simmons at Carcoar where he (Meyer) was regarded very highly.<sup>29</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* described his new enterprise as a most commodious and well stocked store catering for all the necessities and luxuries of life. "The

place was literally like a bee-hive, from the ingress and egress of customers, and the numerous calls on the worthy proprietor, "to see what this will weigh". He advertised for sale shovels, dishes, spades, picks, mining boots, fresh meat and forage. He was purchasing gold at £2/10/- per ounce. There was a great demand at this store, the newspaper said, for salts "but instead Meyer deals out Holloway's pills at 1/- a dose".<sup>30</sup> His promptness and enterprise, it was said, "appear likely to produce a golden harvest".<sup>31</sup> He was eventually paying £3 per ounce for gold, including some very choice nuggets.



*Solomon Meyer*



For fear of disorder, the sale of liquor was at first completely prohibited at the diggings. By a ruse on the part of the officers a conviction was secured against Meyer for sly-grogging and a large quantity of liquor was confiscated. This incident came under the notice of Lt. Colonel G.C. Mundy, an English traveller who, in his book, *Our Antipodes*, mentions that "the Jew speculators and others" were trading in gold. He goes on to write that sly-grog selling of liquor was a practice "on a large scale, and in the most impudent manner" by one or two of the richest storekeepers at Ophir. He tells how the officers were able "to swoop upon the peccant Israelite". When trying to locate the Gold Commissioner, Mundy chanced upon a deserted area. He found somebody and asked where the troopers might be found. "'Cutting shlabs and bark, up there', replied a Jew from his gunyah".<sup>32</sup> One might question why a handful of Jews were subjected to portrayal as villains or as objects of comic relief. Such writers almost invariably presented a prejudicial picture of the Jews whom they encountered, or of whom they heard; they seldom, if ever, published anything to their credit.

The lot of a storekeeper such as Meyer and others was fraught with difficulty because of the speculative nature of their businesses. It was recognised that the life of these traders was often subject to uncertainty and change. They were required "to follow the fortunes and footsteps of the roaming digger, from gully to gully and flat to flat".<sup>33</sup> There is nothing to show, however, that Meyer had this wanderlust after gold. At the peak of the rushes his interests still seemed to be centred on Carcoar. The township, 50 kilometres south-west of Bathurst on the banks of the Belubula River, was the third oldest town west of the Blue Mountains and it was regarded as the "Mother Town" of the Lachlan Valley. Traces of gold had been found in the rocks of the Belubula but a rush in the district did not occur until 1871. In the 'seventies the railway by-passed the town and its development then ceased.<sup>34</sup>

In 1854 Meyer embarked on business in Sydney but, having lost heavily in speculations, he returned to Carcoar where he ran a flour mill known as the Australian Steam Mills. In 1859-60 he advertised that he wished to purchase 5,000 bushels of wheat at the highest price.<sup>35</sup> He was also a member of the Bench of Magistrates and represented Carcoar in the Parliament from 1874 to 1876. He must have been held in high esteem by the electorate as he was preferred over Thomas Icely, a wealthy pioneer of the district. Meyer sat as a Sydney magistrate for a few years and then recommenced business as a merchant in Sydney. It was said of him that "by sheer energy and business qualifications has raised himself to one of the first positions in the colony".<sup>36</sup> In 1873 Meyer was elected to the Board of the Macquarie Street Synagogue. There were four vacancies on the Board and fifteen candidates contested the election.<sup>37</sup> In about 1880 Meyer settled in



Goulburn where he conducted the Australian Stores, was an alderman, President of the hospital and a prominent Freemason.

The means of travel by horse driven vehicles and the difficult state of the country roads were too frequently the cause of accident and even death. The short-lived careers of settlers such as, for example, David Hailperin and Simon Belinfante were ended by sudden accident. The family of Solomon Meyer were no exception to these misfortunes. In 1860 Benjamin Meyer of Kings Plains, Solomon's brother, was riding to Carcoar to attend court, when he was instantly killed after being thrown off as his horse bolted. Solomon was called to the scene and the funeral, held on a Saturday afternoon, was followed by the principal inhabitants of Carcoar and Blainey. It was reported that "the deceased being a member of the Jewish persuasion, he was buried in accordance with the rites of the Church, in consequence of which Mr. S. Meyer read the Burial Service, and while reading it, was so overcome, that at times he could not proceed".<sup>38</sup> Three years earlier, in 1857, another brother, Abraham Meyer, his wife and children were tragic victims of the wreck of the *Dunbar* at Sydney Heads. Abraham had been in business at Goulburn and Queanbeyan. His wife was a sister of Abraham Levy of Queanbeyan. The family was returning from a visit to England.

The sad history of the Meyers may be said to have reached its finale when Solomon Meyer died at Goulburn in 1902. A memorial service was held in the Church of England Cathedral with some 30 Freemasons in the congregation. The preacher, in eulogising the deceased, said: "Some, no doubt, would wonder that in a Christian Church a service should be held in memory of a Jew, but we rejoice that a Jew who had lived such an honourable and useful life in our midst, could be held up as an example for others to follow". He added that Meyer was a God-fearing man with a perfect horror for atheism.<sup>39</sup> These sentiments reflect creditably on the ecumenical and friendly spirit of the Church at Goulburn but, on the other hand, it is sad to notice this as an example of the inexorable process of assimilation which removed too many of these pioneers from the Jewish fold.

### **RALPH TOLANO**

When Joseph Simmons returned to Sydney early in 1850 he left his stores at Bathurst and Carcoar in charge of Ralph Tolano, a Jewish emancipist who had settled at Bathurst and established a store there and at Carcoar. As soon as the rush to Ophir occurred he opened the Bee Hive store in the "Land of Ophir", advertising that he would buy gold dust in exchange for goods. He also made it known that he was a buyer of wool and of Belubula (Carcoar) gold and later notified an "Important Intelligence for the Million" at his Bathurst business where,

as he said, he had the largest and most varied stock for every class of society. About a month after this he advertised that he was heading off for the Port Phillip diggings and was selling off regardless of cost but there is no evidence that Tolano went to the Victorian goldfields. Indeed, a few months after notifying his intention to leave, he took over the premises of John Solomon & Co. of Bathurst. Perhaps his business methods were not always beyond question but Tolano seems to have been a man of some acumen. It was reported, very soon after the discovery at Ophir, that he had purchased £500 worth of gold.<sup>40</sup> He was buying wool, sheepskins, hides, tallow and colonial produce in exchange for goods. He made advances on gold consigned to his Sydney agents. Although Tolano was prominent as a Bathurst trader he does not appear to have been as active as others in public affairs. He was on a committee formed to promote the search for gold in the more immediate vicinity of Bathurst. He publicly protested against the Union Bank of Australia, which was unpopular in the district, complaining that the local branch of the bank exacted a charge of 5/- for cashing £50 notes. The bank claimed that it wanted to discourage such notes as they had little general use and had to be sent on to Sydney. Tolano also, like many other traders, followed the rush in 1851 to the richer Turon goldfield where he bought gold.<sup>41</sup>

### SAUL SAMUEL (1820-1901)

Saul Samuel, who held large pastoral properties in the Wellington district, decided to change his interests upon the discovery of gold. He became a leading trader at Bathurst with interests in mining projects and he also began to manifest a marked involvement in public affairs. His eventual rise to eminence as a parliamentarian and politician had its genesis at the time when the colony's Western Districts were being transformed by the gold discoveries. He was of the firm of L. & S. Samuel of Pitt Street, Sydney, which was purchasing gold at Ophir and in Sydney, and a little later at the Turon diggings. While some of the Jewish traders advertised lavishly and frequently, Saul Samuel was able to conduct his business affairs more effectively without some of the puffs engaged in by others. His business at Bathurst extended more widely in its diversity and scope. In addition to the usual goods, groceries and liquor, the firm was consigning wool and gold to their friends in London and Sydney. In 1852 Samuel was a principal buyer of Tuena gold from the southern fields. He was the resident director of the Bathurst Copper Mining Co. and was a director of the Ophir Copper Mining Co. In 1853 Samuel invited tenders for the supply of 1,000 pounds. of meat weekly at his mine. When he retired from his position as the director about 30 miners assembled to pay tribute to Samuel



who was presented with a testimonial for his work in advancing the mining interests of the colony.<sup>42</sup> At Bathurst he advertised for the purchase of bullock teams and for the sale of the latest American reaping machines. He also invited tenders for the sale of an inn at the Turon. In 1852 he speculated in the draining of a waterhole at Ophir which was proving profitable and from which 150 ounces of gold had already been procured. At Sofala, in 1852, Samuel's gold buying establishment was the subject, as the press described it, of a "most daring and impudent robbery" when the culprits seized a bag with 73 ounces of gold.

In addition to his business activities, Samuel took a lead in the public affairs of the people of Bathurst and in pressing for legislative changes urgently required during the gold rushes. In Sydney he had been active in the management of the Homebush Races and he took a similar interest as a member of the Bathurst Race Committee. A more serious matter engaged his attention when, in November 1851, he moved the resolution at a meeting calling for the repair of the Western Road to Sydney. Early the next year Samuel offered a reward of £200 if gold was found at Lewis Ponds at the rate of 1 ounce per man per day. At a meeting at Bathurst he spoke on the urgent need to discover gold near Bathurst to avoid an exodus to Port Phillip and was chairman of a committee formed for that purpose. The first anniversary of the gold discovery was commemorated at Bathurst by a public dinner. Samuel was seated on the right of the chairman and on the cloth being removed he responded for the commercial interests, "in a neat and humorous speech". All departed at 11.45 p.m. with due regard "to the claims of the Sabbath for decent observance".<sup>43</sup> About this same time in 1852 Samuel supported the building of a bridge over the Macquarie River at Bathurst and was on the committee for a public ball in honour of the visit of the Governor-General, Sir Charles Fitz Roy. In a letter to the press he referred to the numerous complaints of the delay, due in part to the bad roads, in the conveyance of gold from Bathurst to Sydney. Why not, he said, use pack horses as at Port Phillip. The gold was often left with the Clerk of Petty Sessions, without any security. The latter, Samuel mentioned, was then holding £10,000 worth of gold. There was an utter absence of system or discipline and there was no proper overall control.<sup>44</sup>

Criticism of banking institutions was by no means new. In September 1852 Samuel spoke in strong terms at a meeting when he protested against the Union Bank at Bathurst for acting as a gold buyer. He referred to this as being "a most bare faced attempt to shut up the other gold buyers of the town in order that they might enjoy a monopoly of the trade". The banks, he said, were walking out of their proper track and were opposing their own customers and he threatened



to leave the district if the bank persisted in its unfair and injurious practice.<sup>45</sup>

The diggers became increasingly aggrieved by the operation of the licence system under which a monthly payment of 30/- was exacted by the government without regard to the success or failure of the individual miner. The Legislative Council set up a select committee to consider the whole question but, because of opposition led by W.C. Wentworth, the new Gold Fields Management Act of 1852 did little to satisfy the grievances of the diggers. As a result, early in 1853, a state of near riot developed on the Turon fields,<sup>46</sup> while protest meetings were called in Sydney and on the goldfields.

Samuel was the principal speaker when a remonstrance was moved at Bathurst in protest against the restrictive policy being imposed on the miners. It expressed the astonishment and indignation with which the Goldfields legislation was regarded by the public. Samuels stated that the popularly constituted parliament of the day was less liberal than an irresponsible executive in subjecting aliens to a double gold tax instead of treating them equally, regardless of their creed, country or colour. Providence, he said, had brought to the colony an enterprising spirit from all lands in joining with the local citizens on the goldfields. The aliens clause, he added, was an abominable one and contrary to free trade principles. Although he expressed himself as being opposed to the use of force by the miners, he went on to say that the legislation should be repealed as otherwise the Western gold mines would be deserted. Samuel adverted to the penal clauses of the Act as being most cruel. The Gold Commissioners lacked the useful summary jurisdiction of the ordinary magistrates and miners were exposed to oppression and arbitrary punishment. It was, therefore, resolved to prepare a petition to the Executive Council.<sup>47</sup>

Bathurst was the emporium of the Western goldfields and its leading citizens, as opposed to the squatters, would have had some influence on the government. It has been written that "one of Bathurst's respectables" supported the agitation of the Turon miners".<sup>48</sup> While it is not clear that the author had Samuel in mind, there is no doubt that Samuel was prominent amongst those who questioned the fairness of the gold mining legislation. The licence was the paramount grievance of the diggers and Saul Samuel's public views clearly supported that opposition. He was no radical or extremist but he was able to agree that the official policy, which was unsound and unjust, was not in the public interest as it harassed and discouraged the miners. Samuel had been a successful pastoralist and his new interests enabled him to lend some support to the miners' cause. The government eventually changed the legislation and rioting and bloodshed, such as that witnessed at Eureka in Victoria, was avoided. The public stance of Samuel and others contributed to

this reversal of policy. It is unfair and incorrect to describe him as "a wealthy friend of the Establishment".<sup>49</sup> The author, in this instance, so categorised Samuel in connection with a complaint lodged by Samuel against W. Johnson, the Assistant Gold Commissioner at Sofala, for neglect of duty in not giving chase to two bushrangers who had robbed a gold buyer named Carter. Samuel had already done much for the Bathurst community, and would continue to do so.

Other men of substance also opposed the unfair Gold legislation.<sup>50</sup> Thus, in Sydney, the mayor presided over a meeting called to express sympathy for the cause of the miners against the Gold legislation. John Godfrey Cohen, auctioneer, bullion broker and gold buyer, was one of the main speakers at this meeting. He said that the greatest oppression had been perpetrated on the miners, perhaps the best, most industrious, orderly and loyal class, and he referred to the double gold tax on foreigners, to the goldfields penal system, and to the licensing imposition on all but women and children, adding that if not for the regulations the Turon would have yielded 10,000 ounces of gold per week. He moved for the suspension and repeal of these regulations. It was the goldfields and the influx of population which made the colony prosperous. The mercantile interests, Cohen said, would suffer unless the regulations were reconsidered. A deputation with a petition, which included J.G. Cohen, later waited upon the Governor-General.<sup>51</sup>

In 1853 A.T. Holroyd, Member for the Western Boroughs, met his constituents, including many from the Turon. Samuel moved that, excepting the Member's actions on the goldfields question, his actions be approved. The meeting expressed its unqualified thanks even though Holroyd, who indicated that he would work for the repeal of the regulations, felt that he had been censured. A few days afterwards at a dinner for Holroyd, it was recognised that Samuel had taken an active part in opposition, particularly to the alien clause of the regulations.<sup>52</sup>

Steam engines and complex machinery were introduced to extract the gold from quartz and these operations led to the formation of mining companies with the necessary capital for such works. Samuel, it is not surprising, saw the advantages of these companies. He crossed swords with Hargraves over the Great Nugget Vein Company as Hargraves was underrating the value of these companies. Samuel pointed out that Hargraves had admitted to him that he had no experience of quartz crushing. A visit to such works would convince one, Samuel argued, that they ought not to be condemned. Hargraves replied by questioning Samuel's motives and stated that he had no favourable opinion of gold companies in general.<sup>53</sup> What weight, if any at all, should one attach to Hargraves' denigration of Samuel, a leading and respected citizen of the Bathurst community? In default of any specific evidence to support the above criticism by Hargraves, it is not inappropriate to note that



the verdict of history has tarnished the reputation of the gold discoverer who had been generously rewarded for his efforts. Long after the event, it is today agreed that Hargraves' motives were sometimes questionable. He had pursued his own claims, as a recent writer remarks, "in a thoroughly selfish and unscrupulous fashion".<sup>54</sup> As regards Samuel, on the other hand, although he and others had interests in reef mining, regarded by the alluvial miners as monopolistic and favoured by government, the evidence suggests that at Tambaroora, for example, Samuel raised no objection to the diggers trying their luck within the precincts of his quartz claim. It is recorded that 500 miners were allowed by Samuel to sink their shafts in the area of his own claim. Few of them had much success and it may be inferred that capital was required to properly exploit this field.<sup>55</sup> Whether on his own account or in partnership with others, Samuel was enterprising and was prepared to take the risks inherent in gold search ventures. His waterhole claim at Ophir, at first successful, was eventually a losing proposition. As it was reported, "the winds blew and the floods came" but the truly spirited proprietors were carrying on. His quartz claim at Tambaroora, late in 1852, was getting dull.

The lack of proper roads between Bathurst and Sydney and between Bathurst and the Western goldfields continued to be a matter of concern. In 1853 Samuel was on the committee to consider a tram road from Bathurst to the Nepean River. He urged that ample enquiries be made as to the route and the expense of such a project. He also spoke of Sir Thomas Mitchell's jealousy of others by ignoring the suggestions made to him on this question. Later in the same year, when a resolution was moved at a meeting relating to the mail procedure, and when dissatisfaction was felt on account of the mail contractor's monopoly, Samuel was again the leading speaker. He mentioned that a dangerous point in the mountains, near Mt Victoria, had been left unfenced. He said that the mail coach was dangerous and ought not to carry passengers. Referring to the failure to quicken communication with the interior, Samuel castigated this as a disgrace to the country and to the age. He went on to say that monopoly and a job had been preferred at the expense of the country. He concluded that he was no sycophant and pointed out that the government had been able to find thousands of pounds to improve communication with the Mother Country.<sup>56</sup> The tenor of these remarks would have shown, without question, that Samuel was not simply an establishment figure.

Samuel's democratic and progressive position, which was linked with the general public interest, is demonstrated by the stand he took on the constitutional question. At a public meeting at Bathurst called to consider a bill for a new constitution he occupied the chair. He told the citizens that he was not an uninterested party and that he was



opposed to Crown nomineeism in the Legislative Council. He mentioned how the House of Lords had proved to be an obstacle in England by rejecting the Reform Bill, Catholic Emancipation and the Jewish disabilities legislation. The colony, he said, must choose its own representatives, tolerating only an aristocracy of responsibility and talent. The meeting was described as being the most spirited ever held in the district.<sup>57</sup>

It is not surprising that Samuel decided to enter politics for he already had the qualifications and experience. In deference to W.H. Suttor, a local squatter and representative in the Council, Samuel waited until the latter's retirement in 1854 before standing for the counties of Roxburgh and Wellington. He was proposed for election by Suttor who said that he had known Samuel as a boy and he referred to Samuel's interests which would be found to be identical with those of the electors. He was regarded as a man of thorough business habits who would attract cordiality and approval, and as being indefatigable in his efforts. In his election campaign, Samuel said that it was highly objectionable that very large sums were spent on the metropolis. He emphasised the need for cheap and speedy transits. He was not a party man but would judge on the merits of measures. Further, he had been amongst the local people for fourteen years, described himself as a free trader, and as favouring the national system of education though he was also disposed towards the denominational system.<sup>58</sup> Samuel was elected unopposed to the NSW Legislative Council in 1854. However, by April 1855 Samuel had decided to leave the district and a farewell dinner was held in his honour.<sup>59</sup>

Solomon Meyer had moved to Sydney but, being a country man, he was to return to Carcoar. Both Meyer and Samuel were not interested in following the diggers from place to place. Samuel, however, must have felt that his future lay in the metropolis where he, together with his brother Lewis, were gold buyers. The firm advertised that they would melt gold into ingots and would assay gold if required.

In his approach to the electors after Responsible Government in 1856 Samuel stood as a non-party man, offering no pledges to the public. He was then only on the threshold of a long and effective political career which led to his appointment to a total of seven ministries over a period of two decades. He was to be described by J.L. Montefiore as "the most single-minded politician of all, ay! even in his weaknesses".<sup>60</sup> His experiences as a trader, speculator and man of affairs in the Western Districts of the colony during the early gold rushes had provided the springboard from which Samuel's subsequent career was launched. Despite this contribution, there is no reference to Samuel in C.M.H. Clark's work, *A History of Australia*, and the same curious omission occurs in such a history as *The Story of Bathurst*.<sup>61</sup>

## JEWS OF BATHURST

Until after the gold rush the town of Bathurst seems to have been regarded as a "sleepy hollow". The census of 1846 showed that only 22 Jews resided there, a smaller number than those of Goulburn and Maitland at that time. By the next census of 1856 that number had decreased to 18. In 1853 the town was referred to by the Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, as "the worst in the colony with every third shop a grog shop". Even when the initial gold rush was at its height, trade in Bathurst was rather slack, as many of the townspeople had departed for the diggings. John Solomon & Co. was a leading storekeeper of the town. In 1851 his company purchased from the Hall family 48 pounds of gold for which they paid £1,800.<sup>62</sup> John Solomon was on the committee to return A.T. Holroyd for the Legislative Council and was one of the committee formed to recognise Hargraves as the discoverer of the Great Western Goldfield. He became known as a bullion broker, smelter and assayer as well as the publisher of a "Gold Circular" with advices from the diggings together with prices of gold in Sydney and Melbourne.

In lighter vein, a Mr Solomon was the subject of a press report on a "small matter of opinion supported by a couple of bottles of champagne", decided in favour of Mr Boyle, a prominent Bathurst cricketer. In those days it was not unusual to hold a single-wicket match played for a bet between two sportsmen. Solomon said that he would bowl out his opponent before he could score two. The result "proved his [Solomon's] incapacity on this as on a former occasion, which effected a transference of a £5 note from his pocket to Boyle's who bears his blushing honours thick upon him with a philosophical moderation".<sup>63</sup>

Other Jews in Bathurst during the early 1850s included Jacob Myers, Bathurst Road, late of Yass, who took over Mr Wilson's Inn, 145 kilometres from Penrith. "The beauty of the scenery", he claimed, "and the salubrity of the climate is a most eligible spot for an invalid to recover his health". In 1853 Myers removed to the White Horse Cellar, George Street South, Sydney, where he offered accommodation to settlers, up-country gentlemen and gold diggers. He later took over the Albion Inn at Hartley. Joseph Aaron Jnr. was the proprietor of the White Horse Inn at Bathurst. In 1853 the Bathurst Emporium of Fashion notified the closure of its premises on "the Anniversary of the Jewish day of Atonement". There was otherwise little, if any, press reference to the religious persuasion of the Jews in the district. Also trading at Bathurst was Jacob Marks, buying gold, tallow, wool and hides. Another was G. Brocksteyn whom Hargraves had made an object of derision. He was a watchmaker, jeweller and optician, bought gold and conducted a bullion office. He appeared in some local court proceedings in which Mr



Tolano was a party – an unsavoury episode.<sup>64</sup> Brocksteyn was afterwards a board member of the Macquarie Street Synagogue.

At Ophir the firm of Nathan & Marks was in business at the same time as S. Meyer. Their premises were the subject of a conviction for sly-grogging when officers, ostensibly as sellers of gold, were able to buy half a pint of rum. The defence, that they were given a glass in the way of a treat, failed. A few months later they had challenged before the Supreme Court a conviction in 1850 respecting the sale at Bathurst of liquor without a licence. In 1852 one Morris Levey was the local postmaster and a storekeeper at Ophir. Other Jewish involvement included the fact that the Sofala Exchange Rooms were conducted by J.H. Asher (late of Moreton Bay) with J. Keesing as manager. Asher was a gold buyer, auctioneer and storekeeper. He had a substantial stockyard with livestock for sale and also auctioned town allotments. At a meeting at Sofala on the circus ground in 1851, R. Cohen (also of Bathurst) supported a resolution for a testimonial to Hargraves. Isaac Phillips (of Bathurst) held a licence for an inn on the lower Turon. Joseph Simmons Snr., in 1851, returned to Sydney from the Turon where he purchased from a party of young men a digging allotment at a low price as the land was subject to flooding. S. Marks of Sofala was an auctioneer selling goods at the stores of M. Davis of the same place. Nathan Joseph was auctioneering cattle and horses at premises next to his Sofala store. Jew's Creek near Sofala and Jew's Flat at Tambaroora suggest the presence of Jewish identities in this area.

In the nineteenth century in New South Wales one did not have to travel too far from the metropolis to encounter frontier-like conditions. There were some whose personality and life style seemed to be adapted to those conditions. Such characters provide scope for writers with an interest in the *midrash* of history.<sup>65</sup> Aaron Gainsborg was a person of that ilk. In 1844 he was a jeweller in Bathurst and also held a liquor licence. According to the story extracted by George Bergman from newspapers of 1844, Gainsborg was alleged to have assaulted Henry Wineberg, a publican of Clarence Street, Sydney. The said assailant, formerly of the City Inn, George Street, had quarrelled with his victim whom he attacked on the Parramatta Road. He was committed for trial but the evidence was not satisfactory. On being acquitted, Wineberg brought a perjury charge against Gainsborg but it, too, failed.<sup>66</sup> It transpires that two years earlier Wineberg inserted a letter on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in which he was highly critical of the president of the York Street Synagogue for refusing to allow Jewish burial for a child of Gainsborg who was married to a non-Jewish wife. This letter came to light when it appeared in some facsimile pages of the *Herald*, the occasion for its recent republication being the Sesquicentenary of Sydney's Municipal Council.<sup>67</sup> Gainsborg's flair for



the bizarre, adventure and publicity was evident again when the Bathurst press reported that Gainsborg, late of California, was allegedly waylaid by three bushrangers at the top of Razorback near Sofala. He is said to have shot at his attackers and was then able to gallop away to Sofala.<sup>68</sup>

Another interesting character was Hyman Joseph, a "ne'er-do-well" who had arrived at the Western diggings from Adelaide. When it was learnt that he was about to leave Sofala, various creditors inserted a newspaper warning that he should not leave until his accounts were settled. Within a month, however, Joseph was in Sydney and was charged with false pretences relating to a fraud perpetrated on a co-religionist, Edward Cantor, licensee of the Barley Mow Hotel in Park Street. When the time came to pay for his accommodation and liquor purchases Joseph said that he was about to finalise a sale of gold and showed his host some gold dust as a sign of his bona fides; it was a mere ruse on his part. The press commented: "As his name will lead you to suppose, he claims connections with the Hebrew community, but he is certainly the blackest sheep in that numerous and respectable flock that it has ever fallen to our lot to shear of his false fleece".<sup>69</sup> Although committed for trial, Joseph was ultimately found not guilty as a specific false pretence was not proved. The Chief Justice intimated that the accused was a very lucky man to be acquitted.

A rather amusing case reached the Bathurst Quarter Sessions when Captain Broomfield – not a Jew – unsuccessfully tried to appeal his conviction for sly-grogging. He was the proprietor of a fine hotel at Sofala but the sale of liquor was at first illegal. The court was told that the defendant had despatched five gallons of rum addressed to a Mr Abraham, two gallons to a Mr Isaacs and five gallons of brandy to a Mr Jacobs. None came forward to claim the liquor and Broomfield argued that the spirits were still his property. The prosecutor remarked: "Then there was the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – all ordering kegs of rum and brandy! How naturally they follow one another." It was found that there had been a flagrant violation of the law.<sup>70</sup>

An unusual Jewish occupation was that of Lewis Alexander, a coach proprietor and driver. He advertised the "Tally Ho" to and from Penrith to Parramatta and Sydney, en route to Bathurst and Turon diggings. "Gold", he advised the public, "No Humbug. To Gold Diggers Look Out ... No deception – Quicksilver, New Light, Fast Coach". He also advertised that he was the first gold digger from Sydney to look after the gold country by placing his coach on the road. Soon afterwards Alexander was charged with wounding another coach proprietor, was found guilty of assault and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.<sup>71</sup> While on the subject of coaches, it was Joseph Levy of Berrima's Victoria Inn who at this time was advertising the amenity he offered to passengers



to and from Goulburn: "The Mail, the Mail, the Royal Mail. Breakfast ready without fail".

### **GOLD BUYERS**

Amongst those in Sydney exporting gold to England were: Moses Joseph, L. & S. Spyer, P. Hart, M. Birstingl, J.G. Raphael, Isaac Levey, M. Brodziak, Hyam Davis, E. Salamon., L. & S. Samuel, Benjamin & Moses, J.G. Cohen, J. Marks, Montefiore, Graham & Co., per *Strathalen*, exported 2,469 ounces; L. & S. Spyer, per *The Kate*, 3,989 ounces. Gold was exported to Eastern ports, to Hong Kong, by A. & M. Moses, and to Manila by L. & S. Spyer. There were other Jewish buyers in Sydney too numerous to mention; Joseph Simmons Snr. was a regular buyer; J.G. Cohen published a regular Gold Circular; Benjamin Isaacs, who had formerly published the *Bathurst Advocate*, was also the publisher of *The Golden Age*, edited by F. Grant and available at Pitt Street, off the School of Arts, price 3d.<sup>72</sup> The Sydney Bullion Office was conducted by Jacob Marks. "It is highly important", he notified, "(in the present golden era) for the public to be enabled to dispose of their hard earnings at a fair and equitable price and not to be subjected to jobbers and speculators".<sup>73</sup> In January 1853 several Jews were parties to a Deed of Settlement relating to the Sydney Gold Escort Company. They were Jacob Montefiore, David Cohen, David Davis, Samuel Benjamin, Moses Joseph, S. Emanuel and J.G. Cohen. The company had a capital of £50,000 and issued 5,000 shares of £10 each. J.G. Cohen and E.M. Tobias were among the directors of the company. It was decided in 1854 that the company be dissolved as the government was to take over the Gold Escort.

### **THE SOUTHERN GOLDFIELDS**

Goulburn was undoubtedly the most important Jewish country centre in the colony. In 1846 its Jewish residents numbered 54, the highest total outside Sydney. As one of the pioneers wrote, the town owed much in its formative years "to the commercial genius of the Hebrew race".<sup>74</sup> Some of the prominent citizens were Jews engaged in commerce and it is little wonder that they were active in the steps taken to discover gold near and also to the south of Goulburn. They would have been concerned to share in the profits from the gold finds as well as to prevent the loss of trade caused by the rush to other fields. Samuel Davis of the Australian Stores fitted out a party, superintended by a senior employee, and in July 1851 they found some gold not far from Gunning. Nathan Mandelson of the Goulburn Hotel was the treasurer of a committee which offered a reward of 200 guineas for the



discovery of gold in the Police District of Goulburn (within three months) provided that the site proved to be profitable. Samuel Emanuel of the Beehive Store and David Davis of the Old Commercial Store were offering to purchase gold. The press reported that Isaac Levey had received letters from Samuel Davis speaking very sanguinely of the auriferous character of the district's discoveries. Benjamin & Moses of Goulburn, it was advised, were buying gold dust for shipment to England at 367 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, or at their stores at Goulburn and Queanbeyan. Another report stated that there was no longer doubt as to the auriferous nature of the Abercrombie River region about 80 kilometres from Goulburn. The first yield was weighed by Benjamin & Moses who paid £3/7/6 per ounce, said to have been an "extreme price".<sup>75</sup> The reward committee, it was said, was forfeiting confidence as no reward was paid for gold from that area.

Following the discoveries at the Abercrombie and at Araluen, Moss Marks was in the chair when a meeting was held at Mandelson's Hotel at which Benjamin and S. Davis were responsible for a resolution that an escort was required fortnightly from those diggings. Those same gentlemen were to draw up a memorial to the Governor for a weekly postal service between Goulburn and the Abercrombie. Excitement filled the town when S. Davis and Mandelson, referred to as "two of our spirited townsmen", arrived, each with 500 ounces from the Braidwood diggings. Benjamin & Moses brought back gold from Tuena near the Abercrombie. Joseph Collins had bought Majors Creek gold. "Goulburn will be shortly left", as the press put it, "without a male inhabitant".<sup>76</sup> Moss Marks wrote to the Sydney press to say that he had heard that the yield from Tuena Creek was beyond expectations. Benjamin & Moses styled their gold purchasing as the "Argyle Bullion & Gold Agency Office". In Sydney, Philip Hart was a large buyer of Braidwood and Araluen gold. S. Emanuel, Isaac Levey and Benjamin & Moses despatched gold from the southern diggings to Sydney. By the end of 1851 Mandelson provided a "Splendid New Four Horn Coach, 'The Shamrock'", leaving Goulburn twice weekly, a 24 hour journey. He was to be the successful tenderer for the escort from Braidwood to Sydney. (There was no night travelling.)

The press commented on the apathy of the Goulburn public, remarking that S. Davis had exhibited the only useful spirit of investigation of the district's gold potential. In July 1852 a meeting was held at Goulburn to complain of the failure of the millers to produce flour for the local storekeepers and bakers. The discoveries made it even more important that food be produced and it was hoped that those who followed the plough would become settlers, unlike the nomadic diggers. M. Marks chaired the meeting and agreed to arrange for the erection of a tower mill and he was supported by S. Emanuel. Emanuel

was the purchaser of Victorian Mt Alexander gold and displayed some 15 pounds of it in his shop. It was thought, however, that his action could induce some to leave the district. In the meanwhile, it was reported that Benjamin Isaacs intended to be the proprietor of a new journal, the *Goulburn Times*, and a comment was made that he was of newspaper notoriety, having been unsuccessful at Windsor, Parramatta, Bathurst, Sydney and even in New Zealand. "The daring canvasser for public favour", as a Sydney newspaper said, "is no other than the venerable ex-editor of some half dozen defunct hebdomadals... But no, Isaacs is girding on his armour for the fray."<sup>77</sup> The same publication contained a letter from a Yass reader who believed that Isaacs would again fail but he also used the occasion to attack the Jews of Goulburn. "On looking closer to the advertisements", he wrote, "I perceived that they nearly all emanated from storekeepers of the Jewish persuasion...but as I know that these peoples' chief object is the accumulation of wealth...will not waste money on Isaacs' paper even though the proprietor of the *Goulburn Times* is one of them."<sup>78</sup> The tone of this correspondent is to be contrasted with a pioneer such as MacAlister who wrote the expression "as solid as a Goulburn Jew", which, he said, almost threatened to pass into a proverb.<sup>79</sup> The Jewish traders advertised regularly but sometimes they tended to exaggeration. Thus, David Davis' advertisement was headed: "Great Exhibition...The Grand Exposition of Industry in London". He went on to claim that his goods were similar in kind, only more varied and unequalled in NSW. "All that is new or elegant in the Southern Hemisphere will be found here" (at the Old Commercial Stores).

In the Australian Stores Samuel Davis advised that "that most important section of society, known as 'the Gold Diggers'", including parties en route to the Ovens, Tuena, and Braidwood mines, would find his Establishment of importance to them. At their Goulburn Stores at Queanbeyan, Benjamin & Moses were selling off an extensive stock, as they said, at an "Immense Sacrifice", adding, "No Puffing This Time". Of wider significance was the news that among the prizes contributed by the Royal Commissioners to the Grand Exhibition of Industry at the Crystal Palace, London, was one by Moses Son and Davis (London), agents for Benjamin & Moses. The latter firm, at its Argyle Steam Boiling Establishment, prepared for the exhibition a cask each of beef and mutton tallow. The local press reported that this was a "proud boast for the district", having regard to the paucity of the colony's exhibits.<sup>80</sup>

The Jewish traders of Goulburn seem to have been observant of the Sabbath and other Holy Days and they let it be known, publicly, that their businesses would be closed for that reason. When Governor Fitz Roy visited the town in 1850 a reception was held on the Saturday



afternoon. Samuel Emanuel on behalf of the Jewish community asked that the Jews should be excused from attendance.<sup>81</sup> At the Supreme Court circuit, Benjamin, a special juror for the civil causes, sought exemption from service on the Saturday. In granting the application by Benjamin and Samuel Davis, the Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, most courteously stated that he would be pleased to extend a similar exemption to others.<sup>82</sup> In 1852 land was granted by the Crown for the erection of a place of Jewish worship and a schoolhouse but the community took no steps in that direction. For a relatively sizable group, enterprising, religious and public spirited such as Goulburn's Jews of that time, it is strange that no synagogue was built. No explanation of any kind is offered by S.B. Glass who researched some of the history of this Jewish community. The community held its religious services in private premises but that provides no answer for its failure to do more by using and developing the land for the purposes of its grant.

P.S. Solomon was the Reader of the Congregation and together with Solomon Cohen he traded as the Waterloo Stores. In 1853 Solomon and other Goulburn Jews were active in the move for a new bridge over the Mulwaree. Solomon was the secretary of the Goulburn Lodge of Australia. At Tuena Marks had a store at a point named after him. Tuena gold was being bought by Cohen & Solomon, as much as 43 ounces on one occasion. Many diggers were passing through Goulburn to the Ovens in northern Victoria. The quality of gold from that area reached the Bank of England price for standard gold (£3/18/- per ounce). Although Jews were to be found on these goldfields, the conditions were very rough and were considered by some to be beyond the pale. Indeed, one Abraham Marcus (formerly landlord of the Steam Engine Public House, Brickfield Hill, Sydney) fell victim to a marauding gang and was murdered at the Ovens.

From Cooma, Solomon wrote to the press on his learning of a discovery in Victoria of a rich field at Omeo, following advice that gold had been found in Maneroo (Monaro) at last. The Omeo region, below Mt Hotham in northern Victoria, was beginning in early 1854 to attract diggers who, Solomon said, would have to depend on rations from places as distant as Cooma, Bombala and Eden. "As my information", he concluded, "is sure, I have no hesitation in annexing my name for publication".<sup>83</sup> To this intelligence, "a common digger" at Omeo responded that Solomon's letter had caused a rush and pointed out that the latter was an extensive storekeeper who, by "a puff in the newspaper", hoped to get rid of some of his goods. The diggers, the writer said, had to work hard to get 10/- a day. There was gold to be had, but nothing to justify leaving for other diggings. The rivers were flooding and the nearest store was 100 miles distant.

Business in Goulburn in 1854 was generally dull and it was felt

that more should be done to find gold in the vicinity of the town. The rush to Braidwood had subsided though some gold was being found at Tuena, Adelong Creek, at a point 25 kilometres from Goulburn on the road to Gundaroo, and at Bungendore. A public meeting was then called for a discovery near Goulburn offering a reward of £1,000 if it would prove advantageous to the district and remunerative to the diggers. S. Davis took a leading role in the matter and on the committee were Marks, Collins and P.S. Solomon.<sup>84</sup> The reward had several conditions attached to it. It was later announced by S. Davis that the reward had been claimed but secrecy was being maintained about it. In 1856 Cohen and Solomon had charge of a party leading to a gold discovery between Goulburn and Gundaroo. It was rather rashly said that it would convert Goulburn into another Melbourne.

Abraham Levy, a successor in business to Benjamin & Moses (Queanbeyan), was a storekeeper of that town in the 1850s and '60s. He is credited with being one of those who was to make Queanbeyan "the commercial hub of south-eastern New South Wales".<sup>85</sup> (He also had the Queanbeyan Stores at Cooma.) Advising of a gold strike at Gundaroo, Levy, in an "unvarnished epistle", wrote that he believed that the precious metal existed there in large quantities and that it opened up unbounded wealth to any well organised set of practical men.<sup>86</sup> In Goulburn, however, Samuel Davis complained of the unaccountable apathy and asked for £25 to cover his outlay on advertisements to promote search for gold. In Tumut, Emanuel had opened a Beehive store. He bought a nugget of pure gold procured from the Tumbarumba diggings. By the end of 1855, prior to removing to Sydney, Emanuel took his son, Sydney Levy Emanuel, into partnership. The son, writing from Tumut to his father at 300 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, gave particulars of an extensive quartz reef in the Adelong, 15 kilometres from Tumut. It surpassed, he said, all he expected to see: "Bendigo is nothing to what the Adelong Quartz Reef will be". At the same time Mandelson received "glorious news" from his son at Tumut promising to send a sample of gold picked up by him, adding that every bucket of dust yielded an ounce of gold. "As soon as I see", he wrote, "that it is right, I am for a store on the diggings."<sup>87</sup>

## IRONBARK

In 1856 there began a rush, midway between Wellington and Molong, to the new Stoney Creek diggings, particularly at a place on the Mookerawa road, which was named Ironbark. According to some estimates there were as many as 4,000 persons attracted to this field, including some from Victoria. Alluvial gold, some of it in clusters, was being found. Hyam Phillips of Orange wrote in 1856 to the press to say



that he visited the diggings out of curiosity and heard some say that it would turn out the richest in the world.<sup>88</sup> In the meantime, Solomon Meyer called a meeting at Bathurst to criticise the press for not publicising the new diggings. The newspaper replied with a statement that "auro-phobia operates rather powerfully upon certain constitutions".<sup>89</sup> I.L. Isaacs was the leading storekeeper at Stoney Creek and was a regular buyer of gold. His business was under the name of Isaacs & Co. He purchased a 40 ounce nugget from a Chinese man. It was the largest seen in Bathurst for some time. On another occasion he bought a total of 433 ounces. It was despatched from the diggings to Sydney by the Western Escort. But there was much concern for law and order. A large crowd, including "many respectable storekeepers", assembled on the ground near Isaacs' store to discuss the problem of lawlessness. The Gold Commissioner pleaded that his police force was too small to cope with the situation and this resulted in the formation of a mutual protection society.<sup>90</sup> Many stores opened at Stoney Creek on the Sabbath, which resembled a fair day. "They do as much business", it was said, "on the Sabbath as in all the week besides". As late as 1858 Isaacs was still buying gold, a nugget of 38 pounds and ore of 444 ounces at the bottom of a hole supposed to be worked out.

## TUMUT AND ADELONG

At Tumut in 1858 S. Emanuel Jnr. forwarded to Goulburn 349 ounces of gold from the Adelong Quartz Reef. Mandelson had an American quartz crusher working there. At various times during that year both Mandelson and Emanuel accounted for one half of the total gold despatched by the Tumut Escort. People were again flocking to the quartz reef which had been thought to be worked out. Other Jewish businesses there included Michaelis & Co. (late of Burrowa), storekeepers at the reef. P. Michaelis ran the Post Office Stores at a place called Williamstown.

At Adelong at the time L. Levy was connected with the Amateur Dramatic Club, while S. Emanuel was treasurer of the local Gold Miners' Mutual Aid Society. The latter, writing from Tumut, commented in the press on a "most pathetic admonition" by the Bench to an employee of his, charged with larceny, saying that justice should be meted out according to measure. This elicited an anonymous reply containing an allusion to Shylock, "a vindictive Jew". Emanuel, by way of rejoinder, referred to the letter writer's "would-be playful attack on my creed" as being "too despicable for comment".<sup>91</sup>

In 1859, E. Mandelson was a member of the Committee at Adelong to secure the election of a Member for the Southern Goldfields. At the same place L. Mandelson was supporting moves for the repeal of the

Gold Tax. He, together with S. Emanuel, was on the committee of Adelong Quartz Mining Co. which issued 1,000 shares at £10 each. Emanuel advised that he had received 25 drayloads of goods at his stores at the Quartz Reef and at Tumut for the Christmas season, stating that he was determined to undersell all others.

## THE NORTHERN FIELD

Gold was also discovered to the north of the colony. In November 1851 it was reported that David Cohen & Co. had seen samples of gold from Swamp Oak Creek near Tamworth. L.W. Levy of Tamworth wrote: "Every person has found gold there – I am positive that there is a large profitable goldfield up this way".<sup>92</sup> In 1852 gold was found at Hanging Rock and also on the Peel River where the best strike was located. Messrs Cohen & Levy of Barraba advised David Cohen & Co. (Maitland) of gold at Bingera in the Gwydir district, while L.W. Levy informed the latter firm that he had some very large lumps of Bingera gold. However, he thought that these diggings would never be good and that there was a shortage of water. As to the Hanging Rock, Levy had heard that everyone could get 10/- per day but added that packhorses were required. He believed that those diggings would be quite as good as the Southern or Western goldfields. "I have sold", he said, "every tin dish, pot and kettle...I have sold them all the tea-boards I have". After a little more than a fortnight on the Peel diggings, Abraham Solomons, the resident storekeeper and gold buyer, was able to sell 681 ounces of gold to D. Cohen & Co. and he spoke of the "abundant richness" of the field.

The main northern field, however, was Rocky River where as many as 4,000 miners were to be found in 1856. At the height of the rush Abraham Cohen – presumably of the firm of Cohen & Levy – brought gold dust requiring two men to carry it from coach to store. About the same time it was reported that George Myers received a letter from Nathan Phillips at Rocky River stating that he had been on the diggings two and a half years and regarded the field as a very extensive and profitable one. He said that some came without the means for sinking shafts and then left. He pointed out that he was speaking from his own experience as a digger.<sup>93</sup> L.W. Levy and Abraham Cohen were, therefore, active in these regions during the rushes but no mention of this involvement has so far been made in the *AJHS Journal*.

Maitland would then have been the headquarters of Jewish traders in the north at that time. As the census of 1856 showed, it had the largest Jewish population of all country towns with 100 Jews in Maitland and 16 in Tamworth. In 1861, when the northern rush had declined, the census showed that there were 69 Jews in West Maitland, eight in Tamworth and three on the goldfields.



A history of the Rocky River goldfields, in addition to those mentioned above, refers to Alfred Levien, a Maitlander, who was moving frequently between Maitland and Rocky River and ran the Railway Store at Sawpit Gully. Abraham Cohen was running the "House of all Nations" at Maitland Point.<sup>94</sup> William Cohen, unrelated to David Cohen, was one of the few to whom these gold strikes were first reported. He owned the Commercial Inn at Tamworth.

### **FURTHER NOTES ON SOUTHERN FIELDS**

In 1861 there were 72 Jews at Goulburn and another 86 to the south of that town, with 24 at Shoalhaven. Places to the south of Goulburn had Jewish residents as follows: Eden, 16; S.E. Monaro, 5; Albury, 15; Wagga, 8; Queanbeyan and Bungendore, 28; Tumut, 12; Adelong Goldfield, 2. Tumut itself was the centre for the Adelong goldfield. Levi and Naphtali Mandelson came there in 1857, renting at first a slab hut which was the start of a flourishing business maintained for almost 20 years. The Emanuels and the Mandelsons were among the leading citizens of Tumut, Adelong and the district and were active in public affairs. The general affairs, however, of rural communities were not always marked by sweetness and tranquility. Thus, at Adelong, one David Benjamin was charged with assaulting a debtor of whom he had demanded payment for goods. The defendant later admitted his offence and was fined by the court. One of the Mandelsons faced a civil trial at the Goulburn Circuit Court when the proprietor of Adelong's quartz crushing machine sought compensation for slander. Levi Mandelson alleged that the plaintiff had been adding copper to gold crushed by him but the case ended in a verdict for the defendant. About the same time in 1859 a plaintiff of Gundagai claimed damages against Emanuel Mandelson of the same place for alleging that the plaintiff was insolvent. In that matter, too, the case resulted in a verdict for defendant. Both Mandelsons in 1862-3 played for the district cricket club. Other players were S. Emanuel and F. (Francis?) Cohen. L. Mandelson, who had squatting interests in the district, was also connected with the turf at Adelong as well as being an official of the Tumut Agricultural Society. In addition, he was a member of the Tumut Bench of Magistrates. One of the Mandelsons was a trustee of the Adelong cemetery which had a section reserved for Jews and Quakers.

### **THE SNOWY RIVER DIGGINGS - KIANDRA**

During its earlier rush from 1857 to 1859 an incredible amount of 60,000 ounces of gold was extracted from the quartz at Adelong. But



other fields were calling when, early in 1860, there was a rush to Kiandra in the region of Mt Kosciusko where eventually 10,000 diggers, many from Victoria, resorted to these Snowy River diggings, probably the most inaccessible, harsh and wildest of all fields. The severe weather and the snow was to prevent the men from working long at any time. At first provisions and other goods were at a premium. J.H. Myers of King Street, Sydney, reported that he had heard from Cooma that the area was the "richest ever opened in New South Wales". After a few months only about one in four found gold confined to the river beds. Drinking, thieving and gambling were prevalent and some regarded these diggings as a "perfect hell upon earth". There was even a report of a "Jew Boy" pugilist who provided entertainment when he was able to cut up his opponent.<sup>95</sup> (The same character was later on the Burrangong diggings.)

John G. Cohen wrote to the Herald to urge that immediate police protection was required at Kiandra. A. & E.A. Levy of George Street, Sydney, also advised that they had received gold from Snowy River via Twofold Bay. They said that people would not buy gold at the diggings because of the security risk.<sup>96</sup> At Twofold Bay H.M. Joseph, V.L. & H. Solomon were among the petitioners for a wharf as the point of discharge to the goldfields. At Kiandra itself many diggers were beginning to leave with the onset of wintry conditions. Those who remained were indeed hardy individuals, prepared to face the elements and the rough social conditions.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, Kiandra did attract, whether as miners, or traders, its quota of sturdy and intrepid characters, including the Jewish sector of the population. Charles Cowper Jnr., a son of the then Premier and soon to be the Member for the Tumut, had the largest store and was one of the largest gold buyers. He had one Henry Goulstone as a partner.<sup>98</sup> The latter had been a clerk in the Bank of N.S.W. at Kiandra.

At the Sydney Stock Exchange a crowded meeting decided to press the government to build roads direct to Kiandra. J.L. Montefiore was one of the principal speakers and he said that the community was concerned to see that the government attended to its first duty to make roads. In supporting the resolution, J.G. Raphael stated that the government should not wait until Victoria and Adelaide stepped in. He suggested a tax on bills and bank notes – not affecting the working classes – and taxation of absentee landholders as a source of funds for road construction. J.G. Cohen moved that Montefiore and others would wait on the government for immediate action. He pointed out that the gold was more dispersed and uncertain than was the case in Victoria. Carriage to Kiandra was costing as much as £35 per ton of goods and goods took two to three months to arrive. Many were refusing to send goods there. Other Jewish identities at the meeting were Morris Asher MLA and N. Mandelson.<sup>99</sup>



At about the same time a public meeting was held at Twofold Bay to consider measures regarding traffic to and from Kiandra in the ensuing spring. Henry Solomon was the mover of a resolution which referred to the inadequate accommodation at Eden for loading and discharging vessels and to the bad roads between Twofold Bay and Kiandra. He said that all should unite and give a long, strong pull together. Another resolution came from a Mr Moses (probably David) for telegraphic communication between Eden and Kiandra. He said that the occasion was his first public appearance and asked that allowance be made for his bashfulness.<sup>100</sup> At Tumut a meeting was called at which Mandelson moved that a road should be constructed at once between Tumut and Kiandra. S. Emanuel, who was entrusted with the transmission of the matter to Sydney, mentioned the central position of the Tumut between Kiandra and Adelong, and between the Western diggings and Victoria.<sup>101</sup> In Sydney, at the Chamber of Commerce, Montefiore proposed an extension of the rail from Campbelltown to Goulburn. From Melbourne it was reported that those who were getting the gold at Kiandra got it easily. It was added that Messrs Joseph & Phillips had started six weeks previously with two wagons of liquor for Kiandra and were returning to Melbourne until spring.<sup>102</sup> At Queanbeyan there were also moves for a road to Kiandra and Abraham Levy was appointed as one of the committee. A "Great Monster Meeting" took place at Kiandra in June 1860 to secure an improved line of traffic, increased postal communication and the establishment of a District Court. A.J. Goulstone, supported by B. Benjamin, referred to the richness of the field and its unlimited extent as requiring daily postal services between neighbouring towns. Benjamin, in a "short but emphatic speech", dealt with the question of the court.

A few miles south-east of Kiandra there was a station known as Russell's, which later became known as Denison Town. Land at this place was bringing very high prices and it was reported that several Jews had bought widely. "The Jews seem to have taken a fancy", it was said, "to this place, and have got more than half the ground among them".<sup>103</sup> S. Moses & Sons of Goulburn advertised for horse and bullock teams to load 50 tons of goods for Russell's and Kiandra. In the parliament Morris Asher asked the Minister for Lands for the provision of a good *dray* road between Tumut and Kiandra, and also that the condition of the road between Albury and Kiandra be checked. He further asked for rail extension to Goulburn, Yass, Gundagai and Albury and argued that the traffic would pay the working expenses of the line. At Bombala, too, the public demand was for roads. The question was the opening of the old line of road from Twofold Bay to Maneroo. H. Solomon, JP, came forward at a meeting and stated that a new line was necessary. He was supported by Dr Ashenheim.



The seriousness of the transport problem was mentioned in one of the *Herald's* leaders: "The journey of the few miles from Russell's to the camp represents a charge for carriage that multiplies by several times the cost of freight from London to Port Jackson..."<sup>104</sup> It is not surprising that horses, oxen and even mules were much valued on these rough and precipitous roadways. John Solomon of Chinamens' Camp, Kiandra, offered 30/- reward for recovery of his roan mare lost from the Cumberland Store, Tumut Road. In advertising his Kiandra Hotel, Benjamin Benjamin notified that the facilities included "plentiful horse feed and careful groom". At their Melbourne Store at Broadway, Kiandra, M. & C. Solomon informed the public that they had a large number of horses engaged in packing goods from their depot at Russells to Kiandra. Herman Solomon of Denison and late of the Coast was ready to offer a special service for Stock breeders of Monaro, referring to it as a duty rarely combined with pleasure relating to "two fine and promising Entire Horses. The one of the Maori breed is low set, strong, No. 2 we strongly recommend", both of them stated to be "Sure Foal getters".<sup>105</sup>

There were as many as 40 stores on the Snowy River goldfields. The Jews had some of the leading stores and were very well represented in the trade of the region. B. Benjamin's was the Old Argyle Store at Kiandra and he claimed that his place was the cheapest mart as he had a large train of pack horses continually on the road. He also had a store at Russell's and intended to open another at the Nine Mile. Davies, Alexander & Co. of Goulburn conducted the Australian Store on the diggings, while S. Moses & Sons ran the Prince of Wales Store. At the Nine Mile, M. & C. Solomon ran the Braidwood Store, had a large train of pack horses and they paid £3/13/- per ounce for gold. They had a branch, Victoria Stores, at Four Mile diggings. P. Michaelis & Co. of Adelong were also storekeepers at Kiandra – the Old Post Office Stores. Abraham Levy of Queanbeyan and Cooma was the proprietor of the Cooma Stores at Denison. Also in business at Kiandra were J.M. Emanuel & Co. (Bee Hive Store), J. Joseph & Co. (Old Commercial Store), and Messrs Green & Samuel Jacobsohn had a jewellery and photography business. J. Cohen was likewise a jeweller and claimed to be a "Photographic Artist" as well. Morris Jacobs was listed as agent for the local newspaper at Levy's Store, Denison. On the day preceding Yom Kippur the newspaper carried a notice to advise: "...to-morrow being a strict Hebrew Holyday, the places of business held by persons of that faith at Kiandra, Nine-mile, and Denison will be closed". Further, the authorities being opposed to Sunday trading, the leading men, including Benjamin, closed their establishments on the Christian sabbath.

As may be expected, there were plenty of public houses on the diggings, a total of at least 26 of them. Benjamin's Kiandra Hotel



included a spacious billiard room, the largest ballroom on the diggings and a "splendid band" every evening with "talented vocalists". Maurice Solomon held a licence for the Royal Victoria Hotel at Denison and he incurred a small fine for Sunday selling. Samuel Phillips was the licensee of the Sawyers Arms at Rocky Plains with "accommodation for revelry". There was a report of "a great row and fight in town" which began in Benjamin's inn. It was "bad liquor" which was the only excuse for a wanton outrage.

Ruffians and vagabonds were not in a minority at Kiandra. "An active zealous clergyman would be", as the *Herald* in Sydney maintained, "of the greatest service on these diggings". An accession of bad characters was attracted to Kiandra, some from Victoria. The Jewish population was not without its occasional black sheep. Thus, David Benjamin, who had previously come under adverse notice at Adelong, was charged with being in possession of jewellery suspected of being stolen from a store at Beechworth, Victoria. The police advised that this property was supposed to be in possession "of a Jew called Benjamin" who once had a quartz crushing machine. One Maurice Goulstone swore that he had given watches to the prisoner, David Benjamin, to take to a jeweller for repairs and rings to sell. At last, however, the witness was unable "to swear to anything satisfactorily".<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, Kiandra's leading Jews were generally public spirited and socially accepted. When, at a free public dinner, the Empire Hotel was enlarged, F. Cohen was chosen as the champion of the ladies in moving a toast for them. Self praise though it seemed, "none more sincerely esteemed", he said, "and respected the fair sex", describing himself as "one who had a more ardent admiration of their charm and virtues". A.J. Goulstone and B. Benjamin were on the committee for the formation of a hospital and more than £100 was collected by Goulstone to supplement a government grant of £200. Goulstone was also the secretary of the Prospecting Association.

The reputation of Kiandra as a rich field declined as quickly as it first arose. The alluvial gold was being exhausted and the conditions, including the lack of finance, made it very difficult to continue prospecting. The realisation had grown that Kiandra was "not the place for the poor man" as news was arriving of gold strikes at Lambing Flat (Young) and at the junction of the Thredbo and Crackenback Rivers. J. Joseph & Co. opened a branch at the last-mentioned new diggings. Benjamin was quick to open a general store at Crackenback but at Kiandra he was still trying to promote custom at his hotel by free entertainment and dinners over the Christmas season. The storekeepers were now selling off and within a year no more than a few hundred miners remained at Kiandra. It was estimated that Benjamin's speculation on his hotel had cost as much as £11,000, for which a bid of

£50 only was expected. It is no surprise that his name appeared in the insolvency lists of the following year. There were many insolvencies in the 1860s in the aftermath of the rushes, due largely to excessive speculation. John Godfrey Cohen of Sydney, auctioneer and entrepreneur, was declared bankrupt in 1864, his estate paying at one time as little as a penny in the pound dividend.

### NORTHERN VICTORIA

During the earlier rushes there was an appreciable movement of diggers between the New South Wales and Victorian fields. To a lesser extent this was true as well of Jews living on both sides of the Murray River. In the Alpine areas of north-eastern Victoria thousands of miners were drawn to the Beechworth and the Ovens and Buckland River fields. According to Goldman, about 100 Jews were to be found around Beechworth. Among these were Davis Levy, fruiterer; Samuel Lasker, watchmaker and jeweller; Nathan & Solomon, stationers; Aaron Pinkus, Levy & Benjamin, Herman Raphael, Israel Abraham – all storekeepers; Abraham Levy, greengrocer; Samuel Mayor, “Hit & Miss” Hotel. At El Dorado, M. Amschel & Co. and Lazarus Rosenweig were storekeepers. A.H. Lissak was a member of the Beechworth Council. By 1861, if L.M. Goldman is correct, only two Jews lived at Beechworth.<sup>107</sup> A Beechworth Congregation seems to have been formed in 1857. Its treasurer in 1862 donated some money to the local hospital.<sup>108</sup> Others mentioned in the press at that time were Goodman & Co., and C.F. Falck, jewellers.

Even if some spoke of the “free open-air life” of the diggings, risks to body and property were encountered. Notwithstanding these dangers, there were some of whom it was said that, “they will give up good opportunities for a mere chance at a distance”. Abraham Marcus, late landlord of the Steam Engine public house, Brickfield Hill, Sydney, accompanied by his wife and young son, came in 1852 to the Ovens goldfield as a hawker. When encamped near the Indigo Range, his dray having broken down, a band of four men took his best horse and rode off. Marcus foolishly pursued them. His murder on the Port Phillip side was the subject of a reward by the Victorian government for the capture of the bandits. All criminal proceedings, both in Sydney and Melbourne, were not concluded until 1854. One of the prisoners was found guilty and executed but three others were acquitted. Marcus’ wife, Anne, remarried to one Howe, failed on one occasion to appear as a Crown witness. Of Marcus a contemporary writer said: “One German Jew secured the immortality of fame by being mysteriously murdered”. George Bergman ascertained that Marcus, a convict, received a ticket of leave in 1842 at Campbelltown, NSW, where he had conducted a retail business.



## LAMBING FLAT AND FORBES

In October 1860 a rush began at Lambing Flat, which was to become known as the Burrangong goldfield and the later site of the town of Young. Many diggers, including a large contingent of Chinese, began to arrive from the Snowy River and other fields. Rich alluvial gold was to be found, much easier to mine at relatively shallow depths. When the census was taken in 1861, this field had attracted as many as 70 Jews, a number barely exceeded only by Goulburn Jews resident outside the Sydney metropolis. This relatively high concentration of country Jews has been noted by Jewish historians but otherwise the Burrangong Jewish community, short lived as it was, has not received much notice.<sup>109</sup> Members of this community were prominent in the trade and commerce of the region.

Myer David Isaacs, a young man, was the editor of the *Miner & General Advertiser* and did much, as a journalist, to help to mould public opinion with reference to goldfield issues, especially as regards the Chinese question. Between November 1860 and July 1861 resentment by the diggers against the influx of the Chinese led to agitation and rioting. In the first editorial M.D. Isaacs complained of the inadequate police protection at Burrangong to which the Government had assigned only one junior commissioner to a field with double Kiandra's population. The writer at the same time spoke of "the hated Chinese", adding that "the country has cried out against them for years past".<sup>110</sup> Subsequently, on the front page, the prospectus of the Miners' Protective League was printed as well as a petition to the government – signed by several thousand – voicing the miners' fear that they would be swamped by the Chinese. In another editorial Isaacs cautioned against "the barbarity of certain Europeans, as displayed towards the Chinese", and mentioned the rumours of a plot to destroy the premises and plant of the *Miner*. He wrote that believers in the Almighty should not resort to tyranny or oppression. The Chinese idolators, he said, prayed "to the Gods their hands have made, and it is their misfortune not to know the truth".<sup>111</sup>

In June 1861 about 3,000 men drove the Chinese from their camps. A number of rioters faced trial at Goulburn but, with one exception, they were acquitted. These acquittals caused Isaacs to write in terms more appropriate to a man of the cloth. The editor expressed thanks "to the Almighty dispenser of events", to whom, he said, "our prayers should ascend to heaven in grateful remembrance of the Divine protection extended to those accused of riot".<sup>112</sup> Government neglect contributed to these disturbances and violence which, Isaacs claimed, were somewhat exaggerated. Lambing Flat, however, was to become "the symbol of a nation's intolerance".<sup>113</sup> It was reported that Isaacs was "professionally



engaged" at the trial of the rioters. He had some knowledge of legal practice, enabling him to assist the defence lawyers. Further, he was able to furnish the *Miner* with very detailed reports of the criminal proceedings.

Myer David Isaacs was the son of Rev. D.M. Isaacs of Liverpool, England, and a nephew of Rev. Jacob Isaacs who had ministered to the Sydney, York Street Congregation for some years. Apart from journalism, he had a talent for public speaking and also was a playwright and actor. He identified himself closely with many of Lambing Flat's organisations and causes, as will be seen from the details previously published. Isaacs, despite his other interests and commitments, turned his attention to the local Jewish community and published in the newspaper full accounts of its religious affairs, including the steps taken to form a congregation and, at a later date, the erection of a synagogue at Forbes. It was reported that a Jewish burial ground was to be consecrated on a Sunday afternoon. A punctual attendance was requested. There is perhaps room to doubt that the consecration took place, seeing that the newspaper did not contain any report of the ceremony.

Comparable in some respects with those at Goulburn and Maitland, the Jews of Burrangong present as a closely knit communal group, active in trade and participants in the general life and public affairs of the goldfield. The auctioneer, Michael Levy, advertised "Horses broken to saddle and draught". Woolf Lazarus, storekeeper, claimed to supply goods "from a needle to an anchor". He also had an extensive saleyard for horses and cattle. B. Benjamin, formerly of Kiandra, opened the Old Argyle Store at Stony Creek. M. Levy of Main Street notified that he had for sale a first rate lot of cricketing goods, Clapson's best bats and Duke's balls. Barnett Phillips' new Diggers' Arms Hotel opened for business in Main Street. "Hurrah", he advertised, "for St Patrick's Day. Free Ball and Supper". Morris Asher was the proprietor of the Sydney Store next to the Camp at Stony Creek. At the same location Mandelson Bros., to make room for a large supply of goods, were selling off. They had a supply of best selected wines and spirits. Solomon Meyer's store at Stony Creek was opened for the sale of his flour. Lazarus' store was the scene of a robbery. Tent-cutting and burglaries were said to be the order of the night. At Stony Creek J. Moses & Sons conducted the Prince of Wales Store. Abraham Levy was a storekeeper at the same place and he advertised that he was a purchaser of gold. Levy was one of the very few to so advertise. L. Marcus was the publican of the Great Eastern Hotel. His coaches provided transport on the diggings.

By November 1861 a large majority of the miners were vacating Lambing Flat for the new Lachlan diggings close by the Lachlan River where deep deposits of gold were being found. The township of Forbes



sprang up though the *Miner's* editor thought that "our new city is worthy of a far more sonorous" name. At the peak in 1862 of the rush, perhaps 20,000 miners were on this field. In an editorial, M.D. Isaacs announced that his newspaper was bound for Forbes in the wake of the new rush. After the style of the Victorian era he drew upon a familiar scriptural phrase: "Whithersoever thou goest we will go". By the end of 1861 and early in the New Year a number of Jews were already in business at Forbes. At the Victoria Lead, Lazarus Cohen's Commercial Hotel was described as being one of the most comfortable houses in the town. "One trial will convince the public", Nelson & Cohen claimed in their advertisement of their Surprise Stores. From Beechworth and Chiltern, Victoria, came C. Goodman & Co., watchmakers and jewellers. As a business attraction, a quoit match was to take place at Cohen's hotel for £5 a side between E. Nelson and Lazarus Cohen. At the Prince of Wales Stores S. Moses & Son offered a great variety of goods: drapery, blankets, French prunes, dates, best plantation coffee, snowdrop sugar, black tea, James Stewart's whisky, Martell's brandy – all of which was said to be "Equal to any in the colony". The Beehive Store was run by L. Rosenweig, formerly of Rutherglen, Victoria. "Come one! Come all", he announced, having purchased the best articles in Melbourne and Sydney. Just arrived from Lambing Flat was "The Original Little Wonder" who opened a clothes store, advising, "Don't buy, boys, don't buy till A. Marks opens his store". An auction mart was conducted by A.J. Goulstone who issued a regular market report covering produce, flour, cattle, sheep and hay. Maurice Lazarus and Morris Newman were in partnership as clothiers but the latter retired from the business. L. Cohen later advertised the Commercial Stables which, he said, were unequalled in Forbes, and he issued a challenge on account of their coolness and good feed.

Apart from his many other interests, M.D. Isaacs was among those who actively supported the move for a hospital at Forbes. Having staged a dramatic performance to help in raising funds for this cause, Isaacs lost money on this project. The newspaper then notified that he should appear in one of Shakespeare's tragedies or comedies by way of a complimentary benefit to enable him to recoup his loss. He replied by accepting the kind offer and advising that he would appear on the Lachlan stage as Shylock "in Shakespeare's splendid play of *The Merchant of Venice*".<sup>114</sup>

According to the contemporary newspaper reports, the Jewish community of Forbes received a grant of land for a burial ground and for a place of worship. After some initial dispute as to the location of the synagogue land, it was finally reported that "a very neat little structure" was erected in Templar Street, Forbes, in readiness for the High Holydays in September 1862. By that time M.D. Isaacs appears



to have been no longer connected with the *Miner*. It was the *Lachlan Observer and Miners' Advocate* which carried the last reports relating to the synagogue. One notes the statement in the latter journal, quite correctly, that the new structure was "the only Synagogue out of Sydney" at that time. Enquiries have been made of historical circles at Forbes confirming the erection of this building. Nobody, however, with one exception, has so far been able to provide any official record of the synagogue. There still remains some uncertainty as to its precise location and as to what ultimately became of this building. In an article devoted to the centenary in 1963 of the Methodist Church in Forbes, the writer, W.J. Green, mentions that the church, probably in 1864 or shortly afterwards, used the synagogue premises for its religious services. Most of the Jews of the town had left the area by that time.

This synagogue came under the notice of the Australian Jewish Historical Society as a result of the paper by D.J. Benjamin on the history of the Macquarie Street (Sydney) Synagogue. The author wrote as follows:

One of the minor mysteries of our Jewish history in New South Wales is the origin and fate of the congregation at Forbes. The only time it has come to my notice was on the discovery of three short Minutes dated 1st and 10th March and 12th April 1863. Apparently the congregation then corresponded with L. Phillips, Hon. Secretary, Synagogue Chambers, Forbes. Nothing further is known about the matter.

It was this discovery by Benjamin which led to the researches and the paper of the present writer. As I have previously indicated, in 1862 the Forbes Congregation was also in touch with the Board of the York Street Synagogue.

It seems, indeed, that M.D. Isaacs was an active and irrepressible character who was attracted to the scene of the gold rushes but otherwise had not yet found his niche in society. At a "Monster Meeting" at Araluen in 1863 he was attracting too much attention to himself. "Turn Isaacs out" and "Give Isaacs another nobbler of gin, hot" were remarks shouted from the meeting. On another occasion he proceeded in the court by claiming £10 as damages for libel from the proprietor of the *Araluen Star*. It is likely that there was a Jewish presence at Araluen, Braidwood and Majors Creek, to the south of Goulburn but few details are available. M. Cohen in 1863 produced a comic item at the Criterion Theatre, Araluen, to aid the Braidwood Hospital. S. Moses was a tobacconist at Araluen but it is not possible to say whether he was the same S. Moses, the proprietor of the Doncaster Hotel, Braidwood. For about a decade from 1862 there was a Henry Jacobs – probably Jewish



– at Braidwood who carried on The Old Post Office Store. The census of 1861 indicated three Jews in Braidwood and 17 in the district.

### **GRENFELL, GULGONG, TEMORA AND PARKES**

From 1866 to 1871 Grenfell, 375 kilometres west of Sydney, became the head goldfield in New South Wales. Known at first as Weddin Mountain and as Emu Creek, large parties came there from the Lachlan diggings. It is claimed that as many as 20,000 thronged to this new region but few Jews are disclosed by the records. Michael Levy, of the “Wonder of the World” furniture shop was a leading citizen. He topped the poll for the Progress Committee when a line of road for Grenfell was the subject of much local debate and he was also the signatory to a petition in 1879 for a municipality to be formed. John Levy was a storekeeper in George Street, Grenfell, and Moses Bros. were the principal auctioneers. Nathan Phillips and also A. Cohen were butchers at the Seven Mile. An inn was conducted by Baron Cohen at the Camp Hill.

Gulgong, 296 kilometres north-west of Sydney, was the scene in 1871 of a rush which brought many thousands of persons to the Cudgong River valley. A strong sense of community developed in and around Gulgong and a number of Jews, some of whom arrived from other goldfields, were recognised as a distinct group and were prominent townsmen. It was reported that the erection of a synagogue was in contemplation – a project which did not survive the exhaustion of the gold after a brief span of years. Some items of Jewish historical interest were included in my previous paper on Simon Belinfante.

On the southern part of the Western slopes, 440 kilometres from Sydney, is the town of Temora which was established after a rush in 1880. Some thousands were attracted to it, though it all subsided after two years. Henry Margules, the first Mining Registrar at Temora, was responsible for the official site of the town. He had arrived there from Braidwood, was said to have been a German migrant, and it is likely that he was of Jewish antecedents. It may be noted, in passing, that Margules issued a mining right to Benjamin Joseph for the district of Temora. It is claimed that the latter’s father, Alfred Joseph of Sydney, was the first to assure that miners were justly paid for their gold by using calculations based on the specific gravity of pure gold. Benjamin Joseph had worked for his relatives in the firm, Myers & Solomon, when he left, then about 30 years old, for the Temora goldfield. Genealogists may wish to know that he was a cousin of Charles Collins, storekeeper at Narrabri, who became a partner of Collins & Joseph and represented Narrabri in Parliament – see the biographical note by his daughter, A. Swinburne, in the Mitchell Library.



Payable alluvial gold was discovered in 1871 at "The Bushman's", previously known as the Billabong, the site of the later town of Parkes. It was at first regarded as an extension of the Grenfell field. In the mid-1870s it led the colony's gold production. To this field came Baron Cohen after an earlier stay on the Lachlan and Grenfell diggings. He was established at the Cambridge Hotel during the early rush at Parkes. As I have previously written, Cohen was probably "Burnett, the Jew boy", who entered into boxing bouts at Lambing Flat and Forbes, perhaps a type of sport not inappropriate at that time for so rumbustious a character. He was well esteemed at Parkes as a pioneer when, a frail figure, he died in an accident.

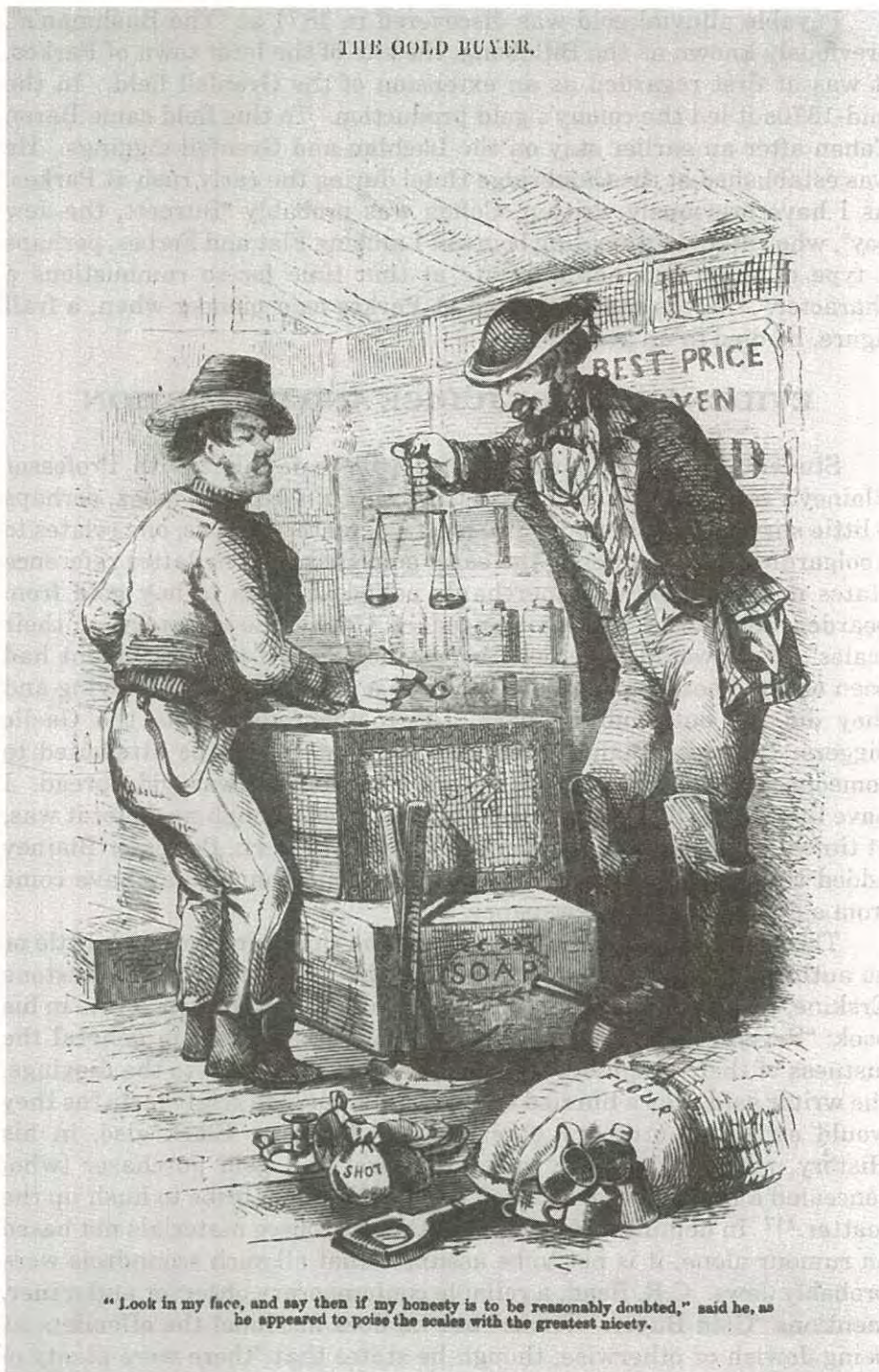
### EVIDENCE OF PREJUDICE AND DISTORTION

Students of the gold rush period will be familiar with Professor Blainey's valuable work, *The Rush that Never Ended*. The index, perhaps a little surprisingly, includes two brief references to Jews; one relates to Coolgardie and the other to the early gold strikes. The latter reference states only that "Jewish merchants called at tents to buy gold from bearded shepherds who denounced in Gaelic the accuracy of their scales".<sup>115</sup> It would have been better, however, if that statement had been omitted because Jews did not have a monopoly of gold buying and they did not outnumber others. As to the reference to the Gaelic diggers, Professor Blainey informed me that "it can be attributed to someone who knew Gaelic! Suspicion of all buyers was widespread. I have little idea of whether it was fully justified, though no doubt it was, at times". Further, while understanding my concern, Professor Blainey added that the remarks about the Jewish merchants may have come from a daily or weekly newspaper.

There is far too much generalisation on this point and with little or no authentication. Thus, speaking of Ophir in 1851, John Elphinstone Erskine, then senior officer of the Australian Naval Station, wrote in his book: "Several Jews were going about buying gold, but in general the justness of their weights were suspected."<sup>116</sup> The visit to the diggings, the writer said, was a hurried one and he claimed to relate facts "as they would strike an ordinary observer". Manning Clark also, in his *History*, notes a reference to "a scoundrel of a gold purchaser [who] concealed a magnet in his sleeve" and as offering a bribe to hush up the matter.<sup>117</sup> In default, however, of authentic source materials not based on rumour alone, it is not to be assumed that all such scoundrels were probably Jews. C.R. Read, a reliable contemporary observer and miner, mentions "Gold Buyers' Tricks" but he does not label the offenders as being Jewish or otherwise, though he states that "there were plenty of unprincipled vagabonds amongst the gold buyers".<sup>118</sup> Perhaps typical of



THE GOLD BUYER.



"Look in my face, and say then if my honesty is to be reasonably doubted," said he, as he appeared to poise the scales with the greatest nicety.



the distortion and prejudice towards Jews during this period may be cited E. Clacy relating to the Jews of Melbourne. After remarking that the southern capital "is very full of Jews", causing some of the streets to be half closed on Saturdays, this writer from overseas went on to say that "in town the Jews have a system of robbing a great deal from sellers before they purchase the gold-dust".<sup>119</sup> Comments of this kind are fairly illustrative of marked exaggeration on the topic of the gold rush Jews.

For some reason, contemporary observers greatly exaggerated the influx of foreign Jews, for their numbers were relatively small. One likely explanation is that "The foreigner's foreignness made him particularly marked and caused a pre-disposition to over-estimate his number".<sup>120</sup> Another writer even estimated that Melbourne then held 10,000 Jews, adding that "it would not be safe to fall much from that". Speaking of Bendigo in 1854, which then had a Jewish population of 200-250, another well known observer recorded that "There are swarms of German Jews among the storekeepers and publicans".<sup>121</sup> A much more acceptable and moderate statement has been made by Eric W. Dunlop in his discussion of the various foreign elements of the gold era immigration. Although he could have included many of the Jewish migrants within the general German element, he nevertheless seemed to consider that the Jews warranted separate mention: "Lastly, the ubiquitous Jew wandered across the globe in rapidly increasing numbers in the 'fifties. Seldom active miners, Jews were found in almost every goldfield, buying up gold-dust and acting as financiers. Socially they have proved a distinctive but by no means undesirable race".<sup>122</sup>

Without seeking in any way to overlook dishonesty on the part of some Jewish traders, it is necessary to caution against the prejudice in the hurried reports of observers who did little to conceal their sweeping and unfair remarks relating to the Jews. Writing in the course of his travels in 1861 Rabbi Saphir seemed to be impressed by the standard of the tolerance and freedom enjoyed by Australian Jewry: "In this land they have learnt that the Jews also possess good qualities, and hatred towards him has entirely disappeared here".<sup>123</sup> By comparison with the bad condition of the Jews in other countries at that time, the Rabbi's comments were sound enough. However, he was but a traveller and it is obvious that Australia was not free from elements of anti-Semitism.

The goldfields writers often created an impression that the Jews of the diggings lacked any good qualities, reflecting the prejudices of the period against Jews. It is remarkable, indeed, how many visitors to Australia during this period took the opportunity to denigrate the reputation of Jews. The tone of their writings often left little to the imagination. In referring to his impressions of Sydney, W. Shaw stated: "Clothiers are numerous; the method of thrusting out apparel for sale, and the gloomy aspect of the interior, reminds us of Hebrew



establishments..., we observe dark men with hooked noses and unclean hands...pronounce him to be a Jew...we should conclude that the Ten Lost Tribes have found their way hither, and are true to their calling".<sup>124</sup> Some of the writers in England had for long been accustomed to stereotype and humiliate the Jewish community in this fashion, so it is not surprising that in visiting the newly discovered Australian goldfields their attitude towards Jews was unchanged.<sup>125</sup>

## EPILOGUE

More could be researched and written on the subject of this paper. However, so far as New South Wales is concerned, enough appears to show the active role of a good number of Jews in the commerce and life of the State's goldfields over a period of some 20 years when the various rushes were at their height. Whatever success they achieved, apart from those who risked much and had little to show for it, was the result of hard effort under frontier conditions of great difficulties.

Unlike Ballarat and Bendigo in Victoria where there were prospects of a more stable society, the Jews of the New South Wales gold era were exposed, equally with others, to the rigours, socially and environmentally, whether the floods of the Turon, the icy blasts of the Kiandra, the rush from one field to another, and of course the rugged social conditions to be expected in newly discovered goldfields far removed from the centres of normal communal life. The Jewish traders, perhaps more so than the average digger, had much to lose by their speculation. They helped to provide for the needs of the miners but there is no evidence that many of them struck it rich. Further, few, if any, of the establishment Jewish leaders were lured away from the metropolis to the diggings. Nevertheless, the Jews of the goldfields made a useful and distinct contribution to the respective mining communities. Indeed, it can be said of some of them, as was the case with their contemporaries on the Californian fields, that they were involved at the beginning of the various rushes.

"One of the anti-semitic notions about Jews is they don't take part in the difficulty, but only come along afterwards to take advantage".<sup>126</sup> The small Jewish element played an important role which is seldom acknowledged and is little known by some of the historians. This role was not only in the development of the goldfields, but also in constitutional reform. In this regard, it has been seen how Saul Samuel was one of those who gave a real lead in urging changes to the harsh and restrictive mining laws. In Sydney prominent Jewish men such as J.G. Cohen supported the same position. Without the benefit of adequate research, Samuel, quite wrongly, has been labelled as an "establishment" figure. In relation to the agitation against the large influx of Chinese at



Lambing Flat, which culminated in a serious riot, it was M.D. Isaacs who was prominent in moulding public opinion, calling for appropriate government action which resulted in the Chinese Immigration Act of 1861. Isaacs, at the same time, counselled a degree of tolerance and moderation by the miners.

The Jewish community, in the metropolis as well as the rural areas, had its fair share of representatives who were active in the movement for responsible self-government. Among them were Saul Samuel at Bathurst, P.S. Solomon at Goulburn, Alfred Levien at Maitland and J.G. Raphael, J.G. Cohen and Jacob Levi Montefiore in Sydney. The latter, whose identity has been confused by Manning Clark in his *History of Australia* and described as a "Croesus", was very prominently linked with Parkes in the move for responsible government. Montefiore is deserving of far more notice and recognition than he has received.

The Jews in the gold era of New South Wales have merited consideration in greater detail and in depth. The subject has not previously been examined in detail by Australian Jewish historians. In the general histories relating to the relevant period practically nothing has appeared with respect to the Jewish involvement in the gold rushes of New South Wales while, whatever has been written, sometimes presents a distorted picture and is indicative of insufficient research. For this reason this article has attempted to fill this gap and to highlight the role played by Jews during the New South Wales gold rushes.

## NOTES

1. Manning Clark, *History of Australia*, Vol 4, p.228.
2. Theo Barker, *A History of Bathurst*, Vol 1, Bathurst: 1992, p.262.
3. Ibid., p.201.
4. John Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia*, 1987, pp.104-5.
5. Eric W. Dunlop, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.37, p.205.
6. C.A. Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol.5, p.370.
7. Ibid., Appendix 1.
8. L.M. Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century*, pp.78-9; Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p.50.
9. Price, *supra*, p.372; Rutland, *supra*, p.51.
10. G. Serle, *The Golden Age*, 1963, p.381.
11. McCombie, *History of Victoria*, 1858, p.214.
12. Price, *supra*, p.384.
13. Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986,



- p.28.
14. Goldman, *supra*, p.7.
  15. Rutland, *supra*, p.xii, pp.50-75.
  16. W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, Vol II, 1945 to the Present*, Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991, p.x.
  17. H. Rubinstein, *Chosen: The Jews in Australia*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp.15 and 124; and *The Jews in Victoria*, p.26.
  18. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1853.
  19. F. Gerstaecker, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World*, Vol.III, 1853, p.106.
  20. *Ibid.*, p.114.
  21. *SMH*, 10, 25 January 1849; Charles Bateson, *Gold Fleet for California*, p.32. Was Leven the same person as Joseph Henry Leven, later Mayor of Nelson, NZ? See L.M. Goldman, *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*, pp.115,161.
  22. Bateson, *supra*, pp.24-5.
  23. Levi and Bergman, *Australian Genesis*, p.312.
  24. Bateson, *supra*, pp.116-8.
  25. *SMH*, 12 January 1849.
  26. Abraham Abrahamson, *AJHSJ*, Vol.7, p.484 et seq.
  27. Forbes, *AJHSJ*, Vol.X, pp.61-6.
  28. Hargraves, *Australia and its Goldfields*, 1855, p.127.
  29. For biographical notes on S. Meyer, see *Illustrated Sydney News*, 18 September 1875; *Australian Genesis*, p.170; G.F. Bergman, "Turning the Stones", *The Sydney Jewish News*, 2 July & 17 December 1971.
  30. *SMH*, 16, 17 June 1851.
  31. *Bathurst Free Press*, 11 June 1851.
  32. G. C. Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, Vol.3, pp.348, 353, 381.
  33. James Bonwick, *Australian Gold Digger's Monthly Magazine*, November 1852, p.43.
  34. *SMH*, 2 April 1979, J. Glascott.
  35. *BFP*, February 1860.
  36. *Illustrated Sydney News*, *supra*.
  37. *AJHSJ*, Vol.3, pp.348, 353.
  38. *BFP*, 31 October 1860; *SMH*, 2 November 1860.
  39. *Goulburn Herald*, 5 March 1902; *Sydney Mail*, 15 March 1902.
  40. *SMH*, 7 July 1851.
  41. Bergman, *S.J. News*, *supra*, for notes on Tolano.
  42. *BFP*, 21 January 1854.
  43. *Ibid.*, 12 May 1852.
  44. *Ibid.*, 11 September 1852.
  45. *Ibid.*, 25 January 1852.
  46. B.C. Hodge, *JRAHS*, Vol.69, pp.161 et seq; Matthew Higgins, *Gold and Water*, 1990, pp.30-42; Brian Hodge, *Frontiers of Gold*, 1979, pp.19-42.
  47. *BFP*, 29 January & 5 February 1853.
  48. Higgins, *supra*, p.38.
  49. Brian Hodge, *supra*, p.70.
  50. C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol.4, p.57.
  51. *SMH*, 9 March 1853.  
*Ibid.*, 10 March 1853.  
*Ibid.*, 30 May 1853, letter by Samuel; 1 June 1853, letter in reply by Hargraves; quoted by Simpson Davison, *supra*, p.106.  
Brian Hodge, *JRAHS*, Vol.78, p.45.  
*BFP*, 9 October 1852.

52. Ibid., 2 December 1853.
53. Ibid., 13 August 1853; M.Z. Forbes, *AJHSJ*, Vol.4, pp.310-13.  
Ibid., 7 October 1854.
54. Ibid., 7 April 1855.
55. Bergman, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.6, p.84; *AJHSJ*, Vol.4,
56. pp.311-2, 317. It is interesting to note that Saul Samuel was not the only
57. Jew to support Responsible Government. Jacob Levi Montefiore also was
58. closely associated with the campaign against Wentworth's undemocratic
59. proposals, (not Jacob Barrow Montefiore as Manning Clark incorrectly states
60. in his *History of Australia*, supra, p.37. Clark refers to Montefiore as 'the  
Croesus of Sydney Town'. The description of Croesus carries overtones,  
perhaps unintended, of one whose excessive wealth is too great for the good  
of society. J.L. Montefiore did much public good and contributed to the  
growth and prosperity of the colony during this crucial stage of its  
development).
61. Greaves, *The Story of Bathurst*, 1976.
62. *BFP*, 30 July 1851.
63. Ibid., 1 October 1853; Greaves, supra, p.42.
64. Bergman, "Turning the Stones", *The Sydney Jewish News*, 23 July 1971.
65. Cf. William M. Kramer, *American Jewish History*, 1979, Vol.68, pp.574-5.
66. Bergman, "Turning the Stones", *SJN*, 7 May 1971.
67. *SMH*, 20 July 1842; *ibid.*, 20 July 1992; *AJHS Newsletter*, No.25, pp.3-4.
68. *BFP*, 17 December 1851.
69. Bergman, *Australian Jewish Times*, 7 August 1973.
70. *BFP*, 30 October 1852.
71. *SMH*, 1 November 1851; 3, 11, 13, 23 March 1852. There is a Lewis  
Alexander, father of three children, *AJHSJ*, Vol.2, p.83. He died in 1875  
and the burial is recorded in the York Street Synagogue Register.
72. *SMH*, 27 January 1851.
73. Ibid.
74. C. MacAlister, *Old Pioneering Days*, p.96.
75. *Goulburn Herald*, 16 August 1851.
76. Ibid., 14 November 1851.
77. *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 14, 21 August 1852.
78. Ibid., 4 September 1852.
79. MacAlister, supra, p.96.
80. *Goulburn Herald*, 7 February 1852.
81. Wyatt, *History of Goulburn*, p.96.
82. *Goulburn Herald*, 8 February 1851.
83. Ibid., 4 March 1854.
84. Ibid., 21, 28 October 1854.
85. Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan*, p.45.
86. *Goulburn Herald*, 13 September 1856.
87. Ibid., 20 June 1857.
88. *BFP*, 9 July 1856.
89. Ibid., 2, 9, 12 July 1856.
90. Ibid., 15 October 1856.
91. *Adelong Mining Journal and Tumut Express*, 18, 25 December 1858, 1  
January 1859.
92. *SMH*, 2 November 1851.
93. *BFP*, 13 September 1856.
94. D.F. Mackay, Thesis, ML-FM 4/52.



95. *SMH*, 20 March 1860.
96. *Ibid.*, 16 March 1860.
97. G.O. Preshaw, *Banking Under Difficulties*, 1888.
98. *SMH*, 21 May 1860.
99. *Ibid.*, 22 May 1860.
100. *Ibid.*, 5 June 1860.
101. *Ibid.*, 6 June 1860.
102. *Ibid.*, 7, 19 July 1860.
103. *Ibid.*, 19 July 1860.
104. *SMH*, 7 August 1860.
105. *Alpine Pioneer*, 21 September 1860.
106. *Ibid.*, 12 October 1860.
107. Goldman, *supra*, p.164.
108. *The Ovens & Murray Advertiser*, 7 October 1862.
109. Forbes, *AJHSJ*, Vol IV, pp.7-21; Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p.280.
110. *Miner*, 2 February 1861
111. *Ibid.*, 10 July 1861.
112. *Ibid.*, 28 September 1861.
113. D.L. Carrington, *RAHSJ*, Vol 46, p.243.
114. *Miner*, 23 August 1862.
115. G. Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended.*, 1963, p.23.
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## SAUL (SALI) MENDELSON – BALLADEER

*Morris S. Ochert*

For at least a century, Queenslanders have been hearing a bush ballad variously known as “The Drover”, “The Overlander”, “Brisbane Ladies”, “The Girls of Toowong” or “Augathella Station”. The title varies according to which version of the words is used. For instance, in Nanango (where the ballad was born and where the locals prefer the narrative to end) “The Drover” is the preferred title, but further west, as the song takes the overlanders out to Augathella, they call it “Augathella Station”. The song is a simple one, sung around the evening campfire, about a group of drovers who were leaving Brisbane a long time ago, to ride to the cattle stations west of Nanango where they will take charge of yet another great herd of cattle, to be driven to Brisbane. They will deliver them to the resting, holding and fattening yards at Toowong, now an inner-western suburb.

I became interested in this ballad because we lived in Toowong for 44 years and because Sali (Saul) Mendelsohn, who composed the words, was Jewish and is buried in the old Toowong Jewish Cemetery. The ballad recounts the stages of the trip – the places at which they will camp overnight. The melody is that of two sea shanties – “The Spanish Ladies” and “True British Sailors”.

Ron Edwards, a historian, writer and publisher of Kuranda, North Queensland, had written a monograph entitled *Brisbane Ladies*.<sup>1</sup> From this research it is clear that Mendelsohn wrote the words of other bush ballads such as “Salt Junk” and “The New Chum’s First Trip”. There were probably other ballads written by Mendelsohn, but they are not on record.

The most popular version is the A.L. Lloyd version of “Brisbane Ladies”. In this, the drovers’ destination is Augathella Station. There is doubt that they normally travelled as far as Augathella. It could be that they went only as far as Augathella Downs which, legend has it, was another holding not far west of Nanango. Nanango is 200 kilometres to the north-west of Brisbane, while Augathella is 800 kilometres west-north-west of Brisbane.

Naturally, these ballads gave rise to the belief that Mendelsohn was a drover. His son Oscar Mendelsohn was emphatic that he was not



and that in all the years he spent in Nanango he was a general storekeeper and draper. He would, however, have travelled to and from Brisbane with the drovers and learned to know and love that life.

### **SALI AND ABIGAIL**

Mendelsohn was described as "small, dark, shy, dapper and handsome". He was also "charitable and an exemplary husband and father". His wife, Abigail, as can be seen in the photo, was "a lady of great dignity and beautiful". She was also described by her family as "one with high standards and deeply held convictions".

I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the life of Sali Mendelsohn. His descendants have inherited considerable archives and they have told me that they will prepare a monograph between them. I will only provide a brief outline of his life.

He was born in Schneiderville, Prussia, in 1844. He came to Australia in the 1860s. One report says he met Abigail Rosensweig, daughter of orthodox Jewish-German migrants, in Brisbane and another report states they met in Melbourne. Mavis Mitchell, widow of a local musical historian, says she had been told that Abigail and her family left Brisbane (where she had been born) to live in Melbourne, when she was quite young. She taught Hebrew at the St Kilda Synagogue religion classes and was a member of their choir. Sali and Abigail began their married life in Esk, Queensland, where they had a general store and where two children were born. They opened a second store in Nanango where they lived over 18 years and where four more children were born.

After Sali's death in 1897, Abigail and the children moved to Sydney where Abigail died many years later in 1946 at the age of 88. She was described as a "tough lady with strong attitudes and often fiercely held opinions". Some examples of these traits will be recounted later in this story.

Both Sali and Abigail came from musical backgrounds. She had, as already mentioned, assisted the choir at St Kilda Synagogue and both of them prepared a choir to sing at the opening of the Toowoomba Synagogue in 1876.<sup>2</sup> It was in quite another field of music that Sali later excelled, that is as a balladeer of Australian folk-music.

### **"THE BALLAD OF THE DROVER"**

The origin of the melody of most ballads and folk songs is lost in antiquity. Frequently, the original lyrics have also been forgotten, or altered to suit changing circumstances or localities. For example, it is said that the melody of "Waltzing Matilda" is from a Yorkshire folk-song several centuries old, brought to Australia in the convict days, and



*Sali (Saul) Betzalel Mendelsohn and his wife Abigail, soon after their wedding.*

that the words which are now sung were written by Banjo Patterson or some other lyricist. The same applies to some Israeli songs, the melody of which originated long ago in Central Europe. So, too, with "Brisbane Ladies" or "The Girls of Toowong".

From several sources I have learned that the best known of Sali Mendelsohn's ballads, "The Drover", was printed in a broadsheet in 1890. Mrs Mavis Mitchell located it in the possession of Mr Ron Mendelsohn. (He was the son of Sali's eldest son Arthur who was born at Esk in 1889.) The original tune was somewhat different from that now used and Mr Edwards wrote that it did not fit the words very well. A copy of that sheet is appended. Subsequently, it was printed in *The Boomerang* of 28 February 1891, with variations, and a copy of a cutting from that paper is also appended.



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# THE DROVER.

COMPOSED BY S. MENDELSON, NANANGO.

After the Model of "True British Sailor's."



Fare well and A-dieu to you Brisbane Ladies Fare-well and a-



-dieu to the girls of Toowong - We have sold all our cattle



and cannot now linger But trust we shall see you once more before long.

1

5

*Mendelsohn's ballad, "The Drover", printed in a broadsheet in 1890*

"Farewell and adieu to you Brisbane ladies,  
Farewell and adieu to the girls of Toowong;  
We have sold all our cattle and cannot now  
linger,  
But hope we shall see you again before long.

CHORUS—

"For we rant and we roar like true Queensland  
natives.

We rant and we roar as onward we push,  
Until we return to the 'old cattle station.'  
What joy and delight is the life in the bush.

"The first camp we make is called the Quart-pot,  
Caboolture and Kilcoy, then Colinton hut;  
We pull up at Stonehouse, Bob Williams' pad-  
dock,  
And early next morning we cross the Black-  
butt.

"On, on! past Taromeo to Yarraman Creek,  
boys!  
It's there where we'll make a fine camp for the  
day,  
Where the water and grass are both plenty and  
good boys.  
The life of a drover is merry and gay.

"Now the camp is all snug and supper is over,  
We sit round the fire enjoying a smoo.  
And yarning of dogs and of cattle and horses  
Till all join in chorus to 'Grandfather's Clock.'

"Then it's right through Nanango, that jolly old  
township,  
'Good day to you, lads,' with a hearty shake-  
hands;  
'Come on, this is my shout!' 'Well, here's to  
our next trip,  
And we hope you'll come back, boys, to-night  
to our dance.'

"Oh, the girls look so pretty: the sight is en-  
trancing;  
Bewitching and graceful they join in the fun,  
The waltz, polka, first step and all other dancing  
To the old concertina of Jack Smith the Don.

"Now, fill up your glasses and drink to our  
lasses;  
Come, sing the loud chorus, sing farewell to all  
Until we return to the 'old cattle station,'  
Will always be pleased to give you a call."



## THE REALITY

A friend of mine – a researcher once attached to the Place Names Board – told me that about 40 years ago that a radio announcer was giving quite a “plug” to “The Girls of Toowong” before broadcasting the gramophone record. (This is now called “spinning the disc”.) He spoke along these lines:

Picture the bronzed, strapping young drovers, riding slowly past the stately homes of Toowong, set in lush grass amongst the high gum trees. Their reins lie loosely in their brown hands. They lounge in their saddles, relaxing in the clear air, puffing on their pipes. As they pass the high-set homes, they wave to the womenfolk partaking tea and sandwiches on the wide shady verandahs. As often as not, they are invited to join them to a tasty morning or afternoon tea. After refreshments and a friendly chat, they swing up on to their restless mounts and they're off on a further trip into the cattle country, to bring back another herd of beasts [etc.]

A man who knew much better wrote to the *Courier Mail*, painting what he claimed was a far more realistic picture. His letter was (my friend recalls) to the following effect:

At Toowong were the vast spelling and holding yards, where the cattle were rested and fed after their long and arduous journey to Brisbane. Here they could drink their fill of river water and recover some weight and condition. Many of the drovers were not the tall classical “John Wayne” cowboy types which the song conjures up, but were beer-bellied old farm-hands. Lush grass indeed! Hundreds of thousands of head has eaten and trampled it, and feed was a problem. Lovely homesteads! Who would build a home where the dust churned up by the hooves, the noise and smell of steers and the attendant blowflies would make life a misery? The only “dwellings” were the sheds and huts wherein the drovers “dossed down” till they set off on their next trip. The lovely ladies? These were their girl friends – good girls all but rough and tough – who camped in those humble abodes and, we can reasonably assume, were hospitable to the men on their brief stopovers. Cups of tea, serviettes, silver sugar basins, white linen embroidered tablecloths, dainty cucumber sandwiches served by the comely daughters of wealthy squatters in starched, white, lacy, flouncy muslin frocks (the girls were in the frocks, not the squatters) – it all makes a pretty picture, but it was far from the reality of those days.

## “SALT JUNK”

Another of Sali's lyrics was “Salt Junk”. It was recorded in *Hurd's Collection of Australian Bush Ballads* where it is attributed to S. Mendelsohn of Nanango. In it a roving jackaroo (unskilled cattle station labourer) sings of his preference for the various meat and poultry which they would shoot in the course of their duties, and preserve it by heavily salting it. This ballad was sung to the tune of “Champagne Charlie” which older movie-goers will recall was sung by Miriam Hopkins before she was murdered in “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde”. The reference to “my remittance” is to the often inadequate stipend which many English families paid to those of their sons who had disgraced themselves, its purpose being to encourage them to remain overseas. Hence the term “a remittance man”.

A more common expression than “Salt Junk” is “Salt Tack”. This expression was common at sea in the days before refrigeration. Though the meat was well preserved by its heavy coating of rock salt, the cook's failure to thoroughly clean it off probably killed as many sailors as the preservative saved. The generic term “an old salt” arose from this method of preserving their meat.

It is probable that this song was written “tongue in cheek” for it is unlikely that the overlander preferred the monotony and poor flavour of the crude diet on which he had to live to the dainties of the Governor's table!

## “THE NEW-CHUM'S FIRST TRIP”

The narrative of this story is in the style of “The Drover's Song”, but its approach is from the darker side of that occupation. We hear of thunder, rain, dingoes, darkness, food and tobacco shortages, lame horses, rising creeks, boggy ground, leaking tents, wet clothes, injured cattle. At the end, the Head Stockman admits it was hard going, “but it could have been worse”.

Mavis Mitchell believed that Sali wrote many other ballads but, not being recorded, they have been forgotten. For a time they would have been remembered by the overlanders, singing around their campfires, but the road trains and railways have brought about the end of the generations of cattle drovers and their songs.

## OLD NANANGO

Saul Mendelsohn was one of the first members of the Baramba Divisional Board, the forerunner of the Nanango Shire Council, being appointed to this position by the Governor-in-Council in the *Government*



*Gazette* of 12 February 1880. He was one of the early residents of Nanango, as indicated by the following extract from the recollections of Mrs T.A. Birch published in the *Nanango News* on 1 December 1938:

When Mr and Mrs Birch first came to Nanango the main street was where the railway station is now, where too, the railway gates are, there was a big hotel. The only store, the village shop, was also close to the station, and was kept by a Mr Gillespie. Next a Jew, Mr Mendelsohn, opened a store at which everything was sold. There were not a dozen houses in Nanango in those days.

Unfortunately no dates are given in Mrs Birch's history.

Another piece of evidence of the existence of Sali Mendelsohn's store is on the flyleaf of an account book of Mr and Mrs Bright, with Sali's Store, dated 1892. In keeping with such records, it lists items such as "heavy duty solid leather workman's boots for one shilling and twopence".

I had considerable correspondence with Sali's youngest son Oscar, who passed away in 1978. He stated that he was only a year old when his father Sali died in 1897 and so he did not remember him. However, his mother told him many things about their life in Nanango. "It was a home", he wrote, "of hospitality, music and jollity".

Oscar wrote to a historian, the late Bob Mitchell, that his mother, who died in her eighties (about 1947), was a person of strongly held opinions who ruled her flock with a very firm hand. She also must have been superstitious. It appears that a belief had been circulated that opals could bring bad luck. It was rumoured that de Beers had put this idea about in the hope of protecting their international diamond sales against the growing popularity of opals. "Sali had acquired a large collection of opals, all solid stones – not veneers or doublets."<sup>3</sup> Oscar wrote that "I should not be surprised if they were worth millions today". However, Abigail, with her unshakeable opinions on every subject, instructed the hired hand to dump them in a deep hole in the bed of a river. Oscar had reservations as to whether this had been done.

Oscar, it should be noted, was an example of the acorn falling close to the oak. My good friend, the researcher Ron Edwards, wrote, "Oscar's letters were a delight as he worked from the premise that he was always right and everyone who differed from him was undeniably wrong". He gives some entertaining examples of this fascinating trait in his book.

### A DONNYBROOK

Over a century ago, the Australian countryside resembled the "wild west" of early USA. Hard-working, hard-living, hard-fighting, hard-drinking men peopled the towns and highways. Violence could break out easily and quickly. The old publication, *The Queenslander*, tells the tale of:

...a group of men returning to Nanango on a dray drawn by two horses. Returning from Nanango after a weekend of imbibing and general rowdiness was a second dray, loaded with shearers and all drunk. On a narrow wooden bridge over a watercourse, the two parties met. There was not room for the two drays to pass, nor would either group give way to the other. With the dramatic inevitability of a Greek tragedy, a brawl ensued, rapidly increasing in intensity. While few seemed to be certain who was fighting whom, some protagonists suffered fractures or skull injuries. The beasts on one wagon bolted in the mêlée; one horse broke loose and went over the bridge-rail and drowned; a wagon was overturned, adding to the blockage of the carriageway; and several stout fellows finished in the water below. Amongst their number was the Nanango general storekeeper, the Jew Mendelsohn. By next day most of these embattled Nanango citizens, wet and bloodied, had limped into town. The two Police Constables decline to go out to the scene as they feel that by so doing, the town would be left without surveillance. They propose no further action as they regard the site as being beyond their bailiwick; they feel that the injuries and discomfort of the combatants would have been ample punishment; nor would they know on which cattle run or sheep station they would round up the miscreants; nor would their tiny lock-up hold the participants, variously estimated at 11, 13 or 15!

This description gives a sense of life of this period and illustrates Sali Mendelsohn's position in the town as the Jewish storekeeper.

### SALI'S PASSING

Sali Mendelsohn passed away on 19 March 1897, at the Brisbane General Hospital. He had suffered, briefly, from cancer of the stomach.

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#### FUNERAL NOTICES.

**FUNERAL NOTICE.**—The Friends of Mr. S. MENDELSON, deceased, late of Nanango, are respectfully invited to attend his Funeral, to move from the Synagogue, Margaret-street, City, TO-MORROW (Sunday) MORNING, at 10 o'clock, for the Teewong Cemetery.

JOHN HISLOP, Embalmer and Undertaker. Head Office, 16 Queen-street, opposite Town Hall.

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*Funeral Notice in the Brisbane Courier, Saturday 20 March 1897*





*Sali's Monument at the Toowong Jewish Cemetery*

The Nanango correspondent of the "Queensland Times" thus refers to the death of an old and highly respected resident of that town, who was very well known in Toowoomba:—Universal regret was expressed when it became known on Friday last that Mr. S. Mendelsohn had died in Brisbane on that morning. He had been ailing for only a short time, and but few of his friends thought his end was so near. He had been a resident of Nanango for over eighteen years, and was always foremost in any movement for the advancement of the district. In acts of charity he was ever ready and willing to assist, and the various churches and several schools in the district, besides various charitable objects, can attest to valuable aid rendered through concerts organised by the deceased gentleman.

*Obituary, The Queenslander, 8 April 1897*

The elaborate obituary above was quoted from *The Queensland Times*. It makes special reference to "his acts of charity" and this meritorious quality is borne out by a record in the minutes of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation when he donated £5 (a large sum in

those days) to the building fund for the construction of the Brisbane Synagogue in 1886, the year of its opening.

It is interesting to read that Mendelsohn, though only 53 at the time of his passing, was referred to as “old”. However, one can observe the increasing life-expectancy by reading the monuments in Brisbane’s old cemetery at Toowong, which served the community from its earliest days until the late 1960s. There, many of the monuments show ages which are consistently well below the average ages seen on the headstones in the Mt Gravatt Cemetery, which has been in use only since 1966.

Mendelsohn’s monument in the Toowong Jewish Cemetery is as interesting as his life story though in a very different way. I will first analyse each of the five lines of Hebrew lettering:

**First line:** This is the standard top line on Jewish monuments. The letters are *Pay Noon*, with a little “slash” above each letter to indicate an abbreviation. The words are *Po Nikbar*, that is, “Here is buried”. (I cannot agree with the popular translation “here rests” or “here lies”, for *Nikbar* is derived from *kever* – a grave. The most accurate translation is surely “here is entombed”.)

**Second line:** The letter *Resh* for *Reb*, a term of respect. “Betzalel” (his given Hebrew name), “ben” (son of), “Mier” (his father’s name).

**Third line:** “Died on the fifteenth day of *Adar Shani*”. (*Shani* is the suffix added to the name of the month of *Adar* when an additional *Adar* is added as a leap-month.) The date is that of *Shushun Purim*. This is regarded as an indication that the departed was a goodly person.

**Fourth line:** “A son” (that is, “a man” or “a person”) “of fifty three years”. It will be noted that the year of Sali’s death has so far not been given. This line has the fascinating wording – *B’shnat* (in the year) followed by *Ulhorat notan b-libo*. This does not immediately appear to tell us the year! It is a quotation from Exodus XXXV:26: “and He (the Almighty) put in his heart (that is, in Sali’s heart) that he may teach”. The last word can also be taken as “preach” or “give of himself”. The words are a brief extract from Moses’ words when he was introducing Betzalel, architect and artist of the Sanctuary of the Exodus, to the Israelites. Note that the Hebrew name of Sali was Betzalel and he, too, was an artist in his own small way. So the passage is a compliment to Sali, but the words “in the year” tell us there is more to it. There is a Cabbalistic esoteric numerological code (and I am not referring to Gematria<sup>4</sup>) which, when applied to the words *Ulhorat notan b’libo* gives the year, that is, *Hay, Sav* or *Thav, Resh, Noon, Vav*, and this equates (utilising the alpha-numerical method of numbering) to the Hebrew year 5657 AM (that is, *Anno Mundi* – the year of the world or of creation). The last inscription on that line is reproduced below. It is a logogram formed from the initial letters of the words *l’perek katan*. (The letters



*lamed*, *pay* and *koof* can be discerned.) Another meaning of the letters is *lifrat Katan* – “by abbreviated counting”, the word *Lifrat* being from the same root as *Sephirat Ha’Omer* (counting of the *Omer*). *Katan* is, of course, “small”.

**Fifth and final line:** The Hebrew consists of the initials of the five Hebrew words “May he/she be bound up in the bonds of eternal life”. This is invariably inscribed on all Jewish *metzaivot* (monuments). The English inscription reads: “In loving memory of Sali Mendelsohn, who departed this life at Brisbane 19 March 1897, aged 53. A loving husband and a darling father. At rest”.

A further interesting aspect arises from the English inscription. We see that his given name was “Betzael” and we know that, at some stage he acquired the name “Saul”. He must have been called “Sali”, an endearing form of Saul. Then comes the mystery. Very neatly, an area has been chiselled out, under his name. This can be seen, on the photo of the monument, as a lighter coloured strip, about 50 millimetre wide. As to why this was done, I favour the following scenario. (I stress that it is purely my opinion.) Sali’s sons nominated the wording of the inscription. Under his name “Sali” they added either “Saul” or “Betzael”, probably in brackets. When his widow saw this, I assume that she ordered that line to be excised, possibly because she may have approved of neither name. I have already mentioned that her grandson told me she was a lady of very strong-held opinions.

Therefore, the monument displays neither “Saul” nor “Betzael” in English. Perhaps it was Abigail who gave her husband the nickname “Sali” and, even on his monument, no other given name was to appear!

May our talented “Saul”, “Sali” or “Betzael” rest in eternal quietude.

## ADDENDUM

About a year after I wrote the above, Bruce Le Bransky, Editor of the Society’s Newsletter, came across the details of the wedding of Sali and Abigail, in the “Register for the District of Bourke in the Colony of Victoria”. (This is in Melbourne and is not the Bourke in western NSW.) A copy of this extract is appended at the end of this manuscript. Amazingly, although in all other places including his monument, “Sali” is the spelling used for his name, in this Register he is recorded as “Salli” and he even signed the entry in that way.

The date of the wedding is given as 6 July 1887 (5647); his birthplace appears to be Schneiderville (the handwriting is difficult to read) in Prussia; he was a Storekeeper; age 39; Present Residence: Coffee Palace, Collins Street, Melbourne; Usual Residence: Esk and Nanango, Queensland; Father: “Moulkein” [?] Mendelsohn; Mother’s maiden name: Henrietta Mosson; Father’s Occupation: Pawnbroker.

Abigail is recorded as a Spinster; born Brisbane; a teacher; aged 29; residing at Simpsons Road, Richmond, Melbourne; Father was Lazarus Rozensweig, a Pawnbroker; mother's maiden name: Louisa Cohen.

The *Chuppa* was at Abigail's home and the Wedding was conducted by the Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, Rabbi Joseph Abrahams.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Boomerang* (an old local publication).

*The Queenslander* (an old local publication).

The Hurd Collection of Australian Ballads.

The late Bob Mitchell and his widow Mavis (researchers into Queensland musical history).

The late J.S. Rouse, Nanango Shire Secretary and Research Officer.

Ron Edwards, researcher, writer and publisher of the Ram's Skull Press of Kuranda, North Queensland, who produced the monograph *Brisbane Ladies*.

Descendants and their relatives of Sali Mendelsohn.

*The Nanango News*.

Mrs J.A. Birch, Nanango historian.

The Oxley Library in Brisbane.

Dennis Cleary, formerly of the Queensland Place Names Board

## NOTES

1. Mr Edwards has authorised the use of some of his material. His co-operation is greatly appreciated.
2. See my "Toowoomba Hebrew Congregation and Darling Downs Jewry" in the archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.
3. These are artificially produced by adhering a sliver of opal onto a piece of common stone or glass. The whole is then polished and the mounting will usually hide the join.
4. Gematria is a completely non-scientific way of seeking meanings using the numerical value of Hebrew letters in a word or name. It is purely a "hobby" activity, like the telling of fortunes by Tarot cards.



## MINISTER AND MANAGERS: THE CASE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY ADELAIDE

*Bernard Hyams*

Scholars today examining the details of recorded history of the various Jewish congregations in Australia cannot but be struck with the nature of relationships between respective ministers and the lay leaders of the congregations which they served. Then, considerably more than now, synagogue managers were inclined to assert their authority over matters, not only of ritual observance, but even beyond, to concerns of general religious policy and other activities of the ministers themselves. This was certainly the case in Adelaide in the nineteenth century, for at least two reasons. One was the contemporary climate of denominational authority. In this largely Protestant, Nonconformist colony the numerous and fiercely independent and competitive denominations were characterised by lay rather than clerical leadership. In the special case of the Adelaide Jewish community the congregation had been established in 1848 and had functioned for 22 years before receiving a fully salaried and qualified minister. By the time the Reverend Abraham Tobias Boas arrived to take up his post in 1870 the lay management of the synagogue had reached a position of some confidence in the rectitude of its rules on rituals, practices and policies. These factors produced a situation of sustained tension between the lay and the religious leadership of the congregation, threading through to the end of the nineteenth century and even beyond.

Without a minister the newly formed congregation in Adelaide had speedily appointed one of its members, Abraham Solomon, for the post of reader. Apart from conducting services, the reader was required to attend all marriages, circumcisions, burials and other religious events. He was not to alter the usual form of prayers unless he had received approval from the managing committee and was expected to deliver lectures as might be directed by the president. All these duties were carried out for an annual salary of £52. Even this remuneration was temporarily abandoned due to the state of synagogue finances in 1851, when Solomon offered to serve in an honorary capacity.<sup>1</sup> Given the low salary and high expectations of the office, it is not surprising that there

was a fairly rapid turnover of incumbents, various knowledgeable members of the congregation taking their turns briefly at the post. An effort to make it a fully careered and professional post was made in 1863 when Solomon Saunders of Ballarat was appointed as reader and served additionally as *shochet* and as headmaster of the sabbath school. Unfortunately Saunders became involved in a fierce controversy in 1868 with congregational leaders over charges that he had not properly cut a supply of meat according to the laws of *kashrut*. After his consequent dismissal, a temporary replacement was charged with flirting with a maidservant and again the Adelaide community was faced with a vacancy and something of a crisis.<sup>2</sup>

By that time the congregation had already turned towards England for the answer to their most pressing need for clerical leadership. There they found Abraham Tobias Boas, aged 27 years, born and theologically trained in Holland, only four years in England with two at the fairly new congregation in Southampton.<sup>3</sup> For the sum of not more than 200 guineas per year he was expected to be a religious general factotum: he would be minister, headmaster of the sabbath school, *mohel* and *shochet*. Undaunted and with the backing of the Chief Rabbi of the Empire, Dr Nathan Adler, the young Boas survived a perilous voyage to Australia and an arrival day in Adelaide of 109° fahrenheit to take up his duties in February 1870. Other tests of survival awaited him in his dealings with the congregational leadership.

On hearing his first sermon on 19 February the Adelaide press reported with commendation:

Mr Boaz [sic] is a young man of promise, he has a clear firm voice, an impressive yet pleasing manner, and is likely to exercise a beneficial influence upon his charge.<sup>4</sup>

Louis Joseph, from the London committee which selected Boas, was somewhat more prescient, warning his Adelaide colleagues that

...from what I have seen of him I really do think he will give every satisfaction, that is if too much is not expected at first, as every allowance is to made to a young man arriving in a country quite a Stranger.<sup>5</sup>

The managing committee certainly did not hesitate to tell the new appointee what to do. He was told how he must conduct the sabbath services, to deliver a sermon of specified maximum length, and what portion of the reading should be read only in Hebrew.<sup>6</sup> Nothing could have been more specific, however, than the committee's instruction to Boas on how it wanted the *barmitzva* ceremony performed: he was to



ask the candidates a set form of questions (which were to have had the prior approval of the committee) and at the service his address was to be no longer than five minutes in duration.<sup>7</sup> The congregational managers sought to extend their authority over the minister in his professional activities outside the synagogue as well, one important issue being that of pastoral visits. After more than 20 years of office, Boas was told to make it a custom to visit Jewish families around the city and suburbs periodically and to report back to the committee on the results. When several months elapsed without any such reporting the minister was threatened with "unpleasantness" and in spite of his protests was pressed to supply the names of congregational members he had actually visited.<sup>8</sup>

Even more than telling him what he ought to do, the committee often chided the minister for what it felt he ought not to have done. He had been in the colony a little more than a year when he was reprimanded, albeit gently, for giving evidence to the Adelaide mayoral enquiry into the slaughtering of cattle without obtaining the committee's consent.<sup>9</sup> Far less gentle were the criticisms over his conduct within the synagogue. The managers remonstrated with Boas a number of times for leaving his reading desk during the service to engage in conversation with worshippers. The new minister had found it difficult not to respond on the spot to congregants who wanted to have their say on the way in which the service was being conducted; but the synagogue committee found it distasteful that discussion and arguments on religious matters should take place in the synagogue or its ante room during the course of the sabbath service.<sup>10</sup>

There was criticism not only over decorum but also on the very rules of service. This had always been a strong possibility, given that a number of congregational members were well versed in religious procedures and given that the absence of a minister for so long had developed in the leadership a strong confidence in its own knowledge. Early in 1878 such an issue produced a conflict with the president, Moss Judah Solomon, who challenged the refusal by Boas to allow two brothers to be called consecutively to read the *Torah*. Solomon was scathing in his comment to the minister, for

showing yourself in ignorance on this point, and for the future I trust before you take so determined a stand on any religious matter as you did on last Sabbath and thereby cause confusion in the Synagogue, you will make yourself thoroughly conversant with the law upon the subject at issue as continual errors on your part relating to our Ritual only tend to shake my confidence in your Knowledge and place me at a serious disadvantage in upholding your authority against those who profess to know the



Laws and who are continually raising questions relative to that correctness of your views.<sup>11</sup>

Solomon subsequently resigned as president, claiming that he could no longer hold office while Boas remained as minister. Boas himself foreshadowed resignation when his contract was due to expire early in 1879.<sup>12</sup> As it transpired he was to stay on for another 40 years.

The early period of Boas's ministry continued to be marked by castigation. Again his conduct during the sabbath service was criticised; so too his handling of burial services had met earlier with disapproval, while much later his right to handle the erection of tombstones and inscriptions on them was overruled.<sup>13</sup> Even more calculated to anger the managers was the conduct of ritual circumcisions without their sanction. Their concern was that mothers of such children might not properly be Jews and therefore their religious credentials needed first to be examined. On a number of occasions the minister was told to refrain from performing the *beris milah* without the approval of the congregational authorities, but he continued to do so during the 1890s. Reprimands might also extend beyond the question of official duties to the realm of private conduct. This occurred notably over the minister's interest in card playing as a pastime. In August 1877 the committee repeated an earlier protest and threatened that they were "determined to adopt extreme measure should it again come to their knowledge that he persist in playing cards".<sup>14</sup>

A major factor in maintaining the potential for conflict between minister and managers was the level and method of remuneration. The London agents who secured Boas for Adelaide had doubted whether just over £200 per annum was a sufficient attraction and had further warned that it would be undignified for an appointee to also act as *shochet*. Louis Joseph wrote from London that "the class of person you require are [sic] not very easily to be had, as young men who studies [sic] to become lecturers would not think in these days to become Schouchates..."<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly Boas found that aspect of his duties distasteful and in 1878 asked to be relieved of the task "so derogating in a social sense to my...position as your minister".<sup>16</sup> A separate *shochet* was subsequently employed, but in the early 1890s a budgetary crisis facing the congregation threatened Boas with the prospect of having to resume *shechita* duties. This burden did not eventuate, but Boas had in the meanwhile vowed that he would resign rather than accept it.<sup>17</sup> By that time his total salary had risen by degrees to £400, only to be reduced to £300 in the times of financial stringency.

What compounded the problem of salary was the expectation that the minister could gain additional income for some services rendered to the community. Fees earned for *beris milah* was one area and quite



clearly therefore a source of potential conflict if the minister was motivated to perform, and the managers reluctant to approve, all applications. The issue actually flowed into the next century when the committee even went so far as to refuse permission for circumcisions where the child was clearly Jewish but the father was not a financial member of the congregation. The president was asked "whether the *Mohelim* could, from a strictly Jewish point of view, refuse to perform such a ceremony" and he answered categorically, yes. But he was on less firm ground in refusing to allow the *mohel*, in this case the minister, the permission to perform on a child proven to be Jewish. His ruling was not challenged by Boas on this occasion.<sup>18</sup>

Another source of supplementary income to the minister in Adelaide was through supervising the baking of *matzos*. Every year Boas would go to Alexander Murray and Sons at Coromandel Valley outside Adelaide to superintend the baking and the proper sealing of cases prior to delivery. In 1898 the synagogue committee invited the assistant minister, the Reverend Rosenthal, to participate in the supervision, and naturally in the payment. This produced a heated argument between the management group and Boas, who protested that he was being deprived of an important part of his income. The committee subsequently concluded that it was improper for the minister to be involved in the commercial aspect of *matzo* distribution, especially when he often had to pursue customers for payment and even resort to issuing summons over non-payment of accounts, "thus bringing him into disfavour with portions of his congregants". In a dispute which lasted over a year, the result was a decision to employ two special supervisors from the community and to give Boas a bonus equivalent to the profit he had made in the last year of supervision. However, when the minister responded with a hostile letter and sent to Melbourne for his own supply of *matzos*, the committee withdrew the bonus offer.<sup>19</sup>

Disputes over services attracting supplementary payment need to be seen in context. The religious leader of the congregation had a number of unavoidable financial commitments, such as his professional library and calls for donations to charities outside the Jewish community. In the case of Abraham Boas there was also a large family (ten children) to support. The synagogue committee questioned whether, by the end of the century, a largely grown up family still needed so much support from the father, and suggested that the support should flow in a reverse direction at a time of financial difficulties for Boas.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it is likely that the minister's salary was a meagre one even given contemporary economic conditions, and that there was pressure on him to develop other sources in a way not consistent with the dignity of the post.

The earlier non-monetary issues of tension between minister and managers also served to undermine the notion of professional autonomy

and dignity. It is noticeable that in the twentieth century there were far fewer disagreements and virtually no recorded reprimands. By then, of course, Boas was no longer a ministerial novice since at the turn of the century he had already served the congregation for 30 years.

## NOTES

1. Adelaide Hebrew Congregation Committee Meetings, 31 August 1850, 1 June 1851, 22 September 1856.
2. AHC Committee Meetings, 23, 28 June, 20 October 1868.
3. For biographical details, see Rosenberg, L., "Reverend Abraham Tobias Boas: A Jewish Pioneer Minister 1870-1923", *AJHS*, VII, 2, 1972.
4. *South Australian Register*, 21 February 1870, p.5.
5. Louis Joseph to President, Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, 30 November 1869, AHC Minute Book.
6. AHC Committee Meetings, 1 September 1872, 1 October 1878; AHC Secretary to A. Boas, 11 November 1880.
7. AHC Secretary to A. Boas, 15 October 1880.
8. AHC Committee Meetings, 4 December 1892, 5 March, 4 June, 5 August 1893.
9. AHC Committee Meeting, 9 April 1871.
10. AHC Secretary to A. Boas, 9 March 1873.
11. AHC President to A. Boas, 21 February 1878.
12. AHC General Meeting, 19 May 1878.
13. AHC Acting President to A. Boas, 10 November 1873; AHC Committee Meetings, 19 May 1872, 1 March 1880, 5 June 1892.
14. AHC Secretary to A. Boas, 8 August 1877.
15. Louis Joseph to AHC President, 1 January 1869.
16. AHC Committee Meeting, 4 August 1878.
17. AHC Committee Meetings, 3 December 1893, 1 July, 23 August 1894.
18. AHC Committee Meeting, 5 May 1910.
19. AHC Committee Meetings, 6 March, 7 August, 4 September, 6 November, 4 December 1898; 5 February, 12 March 1899.
20. AHC Secretary to A. Boas, 7 May 1899; AHC Committee Meeting, 13 May 1899.



## A CHAPTER IN RABBINIC HISTORY: ORIGINS OF THE SYDNEY *BETH DIN*

*Rabbi Raymond Apple*

Every Jewish community of any standing has always had its *Beth Din*. Indeed the existence of authoritative *dayanim* has often been the factor that lent stature to a community. No wonder then that the Jewish city fathers of late nineteenth-century Sydney fought so hard to gain the right to have a *Beth Din*, and that they felt highly insulted to be informed that matters requiring rabbinic decision could and had to be referred to Melbourne. Sydney's self-respect and its status as a viable Jewish community were at stake.

Both the genesis of mankind, through the Seven Laws of the Sons of Noah, and the historical origins of Judaism, in the Revelation at Sinai, established the principle that courts of law were indispensable to the functioning of a society. Beginning with Moses, the great biblical personages are said to have had their *Batei Din*. Moses himself was backed by the seventy elders of Israel when he gained the people's acceptance of the Torah constitution; and before long he was supported on an on-going basis by a permanent council of elders. Moses' precedent became the rule in Judaism with the command that a judicial authority be instituted in every community: "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates". At first there was probably no co-ordination between the courts; the systematisation came with the period of the Second Temple when the judicial hierarchy spelt out in the Mishnah Sanhedrin became established, with courts of three, twenty-three and seventy-one judges respectively making up what appears to be an effective and comprehensive court system. The law it administered was *halachah*, the written and oral legal system co-extensive with life.

After the destruction of the Temple and the end of Jewish independence, Jews continued to exercise a considerable measure of internal self-government. Indeed throughout the Diaspora period, until the Emancipation, the regimes under which Jewish communities lived generally granted the Jews wide measures of judicial autonomy. *Mishpat Ivri*, the Jewish civil law, continued to regulate Jewish affairs and the Jewish law of contracts, torts, property, partnership, trusts, inheritance and to a greater or lesser extent even criminal law continued to operate



and develop. No longer, however, was there a Sanhedrin with a subservient system of lower courts; there was no world Jewish authority, and each local community was autonomous, though bound others by their common loyalty to the *halachic* tradition.

In medieval England there was already, prior to the expulsion of 1290, a *Curia Judaica* with three *Episcopi* (*dayanim*) headed by the Presbyter of the Jews. The Jewish community was accorded judicial autonomy; Richard I declared that "All difference which did not concern pleas of the crown should be heard and decided by themselves according to their own law".

Thus an extensive scope of operations characterised the judicial bodies that represent the prehistory of the London Chief Rabbinate and *Beth Din*, under whose auspices the Melbourne and Sydney *Batei Din* eventually came into being. But in the meantime, the Emancipation drastically transformed Jewish life in Western countries and curtailed the range and powers of the traditional *Beth Din*. Despite the adamant rabbinic rule against Jews taking their disputes to gentile courts, Jewish litigants (with some exceptions) resorted to the secular judiciary, and the jurisdiction of the *Beth Din* now shrank to mainly ritual functions and voluntary arbitrations.

In England both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi congregations had their *Batei Din*, but these were not always permanent; until about the end of the eighteenth century a *Beth Din* was constituted only as and when necessary. As the office of the Chief Rabbi, emerging out of the rabbinate of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place, gained recognition amongst the Ashkenazi communities of Britain, it became necessary for the Chief Rabbi to be supported by "ecclesiastical assessors", whom he generally paid out of his own pocket. It was one of those assessors, Aaron Levy, who was the first rabbi ever to set foot on Australian soil.

For early Australian Jewry the authority of the Chief Rabbi was axiomatic. The Australian colonies were offshoots and outposts of England; and Australian Jews paid automatic obeisance to the Chief Rabbi of London despite his lack of concern for these often embarrassing co-religionists. The first spiritual leadership enjoyed by some at least of the Jews of Sydney came not because of but despite the Chief Rabbi. It was provided by Jacob Marcus though, as I have suggested in a recent paper, his efforts were deliberately ignored and omitted by the compilers of the landmark 1845 Report of the Sydney Synagogue. Little interest was taken by the Chief Rabbi, though we know that on a few occasions Solomon Hirschel's *Beth Din* administered religious divorces on board convict ships for Jewish husbands about to be transported to New South Wales.

The London rabbinate's first official connection with Australian Jewry came with the grant of credentials to Philip Joseph Cohen who



arrived in Sydney in May 1828 bearing Hirschel's permission to conduct Jewish marriages. Very brave and very poetic, but did Cohen or Hirschel really think there would be an immediate queue of Jewish men and women piously anxious to be united according to the laws of Moses and Israel? And how really competent was Cohen himself in any case, bearing in mind the inexperienced way in which the Moses-Connolly *ketubah* was filled in, presumably by him? But in 1830 there came the trailblazing antipodean visit by Rabbi Aaron Levy, who organised a *gett*, regularised Jewish worship, supplied a Torah scroll, brought a measure of peace to a fractious community, and converted Mary Connolly.

1835 saw the arrival of the first Jewish minister, Rev. Michael E. Rose. Like most of the early ministers he was neither rabbi nor rabbinic scholar but merely a religious functionary. Only for a brief period in the 1850s was there a religious leader with rabbinic learning. Rev. Dr. Herman Hoelzel came from a community (now part of Budapest) with a tradition of rabbinic scholarship, but he was not a fully fledged rabbi (nor indeed is it certain that he had a doctorate); yet he certainly had a degree of rabbinic competence.

The synagogue board had, however, no apparent qualms about itself dealing with a number of the areas that would normally and properly require a rabbi. The York Street minutes record the acceptance of a number of converts by the board, but not without congregational protest (throughout the early period of Australian Jewry the issue of conversion was always bound to cause controversy: Rabbi Goldman's history of the Jews in Victoria in the nineteenth century traces the controversies in exhaustive, and exhausting, detail). Despite the strong feeling that no more proselytes be accepted, the board appointed in 1847 an "Ecclesiastical Board", as they called it, comprising Rev. Jacob Isaacs, Mordecai Moses and Mosel Rintel, to deal with an application – presumably for conversion – from a Mrs Shannon, but in the end the matter was referred to London. It must be said that the three members of the Ecclesiastical Board – though not ordained rabbis – were men of some learning, but Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler would not have approved their assuming rabbinical functions in view of his firm policy of centralised religious authority, known by its later detractors as Adlerism. On 7 January 1849 the synagogue board resolved, "That this Committee not have the power to form or appoint a *Beth Din* without the sanction of the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Adler".

Now which were the areas of religious concern that required competent rabbinic involvement? *Shechitah* was presumably carried out correctly, but when there was no *shohet* (and often when there was one) people got used to buying non-kosher meat. *Chevre Kadisha* work was also presumably carried out properly. The same probably applied to circumcision, but there were repeated controversies over the circumcision

of the sons of Jewish fathers married to gentile mothers, and one such controversy was a leading factor in the great split of 1859 which brought the Macquarie Street Synagogue into existence in opposition to the York Street establishment. *Gittin* (religious divorces) were very rare; probably none took place in Sydney before 1905, and in the meantime, at least after a *Beth Din* was founded in Melbourne in 1864, any *gett* had to take place there. Proselytisation was the most controversial issue, as we have seen, and with or without a *Beth Din* there was a steady trickle of applications which the local board resented having to refer elsewhere.

The first stable, long-lasting ministry in Sydney was that of Rev. Alexander Barnard Davis, minister at York Street and then the Great Synagogue for a total period of forty-one years from 1862-1903. Though popularly known as Rabbi Davis, he had no formal rabbinic qualifications and his Talmudic learning was probably scanty. His rabbinic deficiencies were mocked by Rabbi Isidor Bramson, the so-called "foreign" rabbi who spent the years 1897-1901 in Sydney, though Bramson's criticisms of Davis were clearly coloured by personal rancour.

The synagogue board passed applications for conversion to Davis, who, at least at first, declined to act on them himself because the Chief Rabbi had instructed him to send such applications to Melbourne. After a few years, in 1870, Davis agreed to write to the Chief Rabbi asking for a *Beth Din* to be set up in Sydney. He argued that sending applicants to Melbourne caused inconvenience and expense; that Sydney had a right to have a *Beth Din* of its own; and that Sydney had "men of equal learning and religious zeal" to Melbourne. This third assertion was an exaggeration, since the Melbourne *Beth Din* was headed from 1861 by Rev. Samuel Herman (minister at various periods in Ballarat and Geelong), who was an acknowledged Talmudical scholar, and from 1883 by Rabbi Dr Joseph Abrahams, minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, who was the son of a *dayan* and a rabbi in his own right. Melbourne was the first community outside London to have a *Beth Din* sanctioned by the Chief Rabbi.

The Chief Rabbi opposed both the principle of a Sydney *Beth Din* and what he feared would be a flood of prospective proselytes. It should be noted that even in England there was a general policy not to accept converts; this was based on the erroneous perception that Oliver Cromwell's permission for Jews to return in 1656 was subject to a condition that no Christian ever be converted to Judaism. (The background and history of this policy is traced in a paper contributed by me to the *Festschrift* issued in honour of the late Rabbi Porush.) It was not until 1875 that converts were regularly accepted into Judaism by the English rabbinic authorities. The Chief Rabbi was clearly concerned that Sydney should not become a centre for conversion. He was also



adamant that Sydney had no-one with full rabbinic qualifications – *Hattarat Hora'ah*.

The board of the York Street Synagogue now, in 1873, decided to bypass the Chief Rabbi and to “act upon its own responsibility”. They appointed Davis, with Rev. Solomon Phillips of Macquarie Street and Lewis Goldring, the *shohet*, as a *Beth Din*, and one and possibly several converts were subsequently accepted by these three. The Chief Rabbi bitterly protested, and the *Beth Din* had to be disbanded. Adler told them that he had rejected applications for *Batei Din* from Adelaide and Auckland, and he regretted allowing a *Beth Din* in Melbourne because of the “unpleasantness” it was giving him on the issue of proselytes.

Repeated attempts were made by the Sydney community to secure the Chief Rabbi's approval. Finally, in 1885, Adler agreed, provided that in any *Beth Din* set up in Sydney Dr Abrahams participated (Abrahams was in fact Davis' son-in-law). Abrahams was willing but the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation objected to an arrangement which could have meant that their minister would be away from Melbourne more often than they felt appropriate. Faced with this deadlock, Adler gave way and allowed a local *Beth Din* of limited powers in Sydney. Its members were to be Davis; the *shohet*, Rev. P. Philippstein; and a board nominee, Rev. Abraham David Wolinski – probably the most learned of them all. It was to deal with one issue only, namely proselytisation, but all cases had to be referred to the Chief Rabbi for approval (despite, or possibly because of, the resultant delays). It was to carry out no other functions; *gittin* were to be referred to Melbourne.

There was a further limitation. The *Beth Din* was not free to act on its own, making its own independent judgments, even in the narrow area of activity allowed by the Chief Rabbi. It was the *Beth Din* of the Great Synagogue, acting under the authority of the board. Applications had to be made to the board, cases were referred to the *Beth Din* by the board, and any action was to be reported to the board. Even when the *Beth Din* was reconstituted in 1905 with the arrival of Rabbi Cohen, this general procedure continued. Not until the early 1940s, after Rabbi Porush took up office, did the *Beth Din* finally free itself of board involvement and act autonomously.

From 1880-1915, a period of thirty-five years, 68 proselytes were accepted, plus some small children whose details are not fully recorded. The statistics and much of the relevant paper-work are available to us in the now brittle pages of the *Beth Din* letter book of the time, though sometimes the copies of the letters sent by the *Beth Din* are in such a poor state that the researcher has to try to reconstruct them on the basis of the replies that were received, which are also preserved in the letter book.

In every case there is a report to the Chief Rabbi and a reply which either approves or specifies conditions for approval of the conversion

concerned. The time that elapsed between the initial report to London and the final ceremony of acceptance in Sydney varied. In one case where things went quite quickly the letter to the Chief Rabbi is dated 6 December 1887, the Chief Rabbi's reply 31 January 1888, and the candidate's immersion 21 May 1888. The policies of Nathan Marcus Adler were more or less completely followed in these matters by his son and successor, Hermann. Both were anxious that there not be too many conversions; thus on 5 February 1900 Hermann Adler told the Sydney *Beth Din* they were sending him "too many applications". In a couple of cases, in order to avoid delay, the Chief Rabbi was asked to cable his reply, but he objected, believing that in conversion cases delay was good.

The procedure was that once London had approved an application, the candidate underwent immersion and acceptance into Judaism in Sydney. This requires a *mikvah*, but though one existed at the Astra Hotel in Bondi from the 1930s or possibly a little earlier, the likelihood was that at the period we are looking at Sydney had no *mikvah*. It is of course possible that some pious families had their own *mikvah* at home, but this is not certain. The likelihood is that the immersions took place in the sea, in one or other of the sea-bathing facilities that were available at the time. The records mention some immersions taking place at Covill's Bath, Farm Cove. An immersion in early 1900 was at Bondi Bath, and a *Beth Din* letter to the synagogue board reports, presumably with some relief, that the occasion "did not excite any attention from onlookers". In the papers relating to a conversion in 1892 there is a receipt for ten shillings and sixpence from the Sydney Bathing Co., though it is not certain whether this company operated yet another sea-bath. An immersion took place at the Potts Point premises of Mr Eliot Meyer in 1900 and another at "Clifford", the residence of Mrs M. Cohen in 1905. In Rabbi Cohen's time the immersions were sometimes postponed until the weather was warmer.

The local *Beth Din* and also the board and the community felt keenly the constraint of having to refer each case to London. A letter in 1891 referred to this as an ordeal. In another letter of the same year, Dr Abrahams (signing himself "Yours affectionately") advises Davis that the Melbourne *Beth Din* do not make proselytes without the Chief Rabbi's sanction "except in urgent cases", and they require a recommendation from the board of a congregation because "every case...includes a social as well as a religious aspect".

As to who instructed the proselytes, the information is not always given, but in a case in 1898 the teacher was M.A. Cohen, headmaster of the N.S.W. Board of Jewish Education, together with "a lady member of our faith in matters connected with *niddah* etc." This latter fact indicates that the course of instruction covered the appropriate range of laws.



What appears surprising is that in all the years previous to Rabbi Cohen's arrival there is reference to only one case of religious divorce, though there could have been others which were referred directly to Melbourne. The one case found in the *Beth Din* records concerned a couple named Baumberg. There were two years of correspondence between Sydney and the Chief Rabbi on the Baumberg case, from 5 October 1887 to 31 October 1889. Immense pressure was exerted on the Chief Rabbi to allow the *gett* to take place in Sydney. One suggestion the Sydney *Beth Din* made was that Dr Abrahams write a specimen *gett* for the *sofer* (scribe) – presumably Wolinski – to copy, and would supply the *Seder haGett*, the order of procedure. Adler replied that as Davis was not a rabbi, Abrahams had to be the *Mesadder haGett*, the presiding rabbi. Later on Adler made another suggestion, that Abrahams conduct the *gett* in Melbourne, which could be done even without the wife's presence, and Adler would send Abrahams the full instructions. The fact that Davis felt competent to carry out *gett* procedures is a tribute to his devotion but not to his learning.

In 1903 Davis retired. The board and congregation were determined that the next chief minister be a qualified rabbi. This was not only desirable in the interests of the standing of the Great Synagogue and of Sydney Jewry, but also to avoid the embarrassment of "foreign" rabbis such as Isidor Bramson and to a lesser extent Abraham Eber Hirschowitz impugning the credibility of the official spiritual head of the community. (Hirschowitz, who was briefly in Sydney in 1891, was a rabbi of acknowledged authority and the author of significant rabbinic *responsa*, which mention Wolinski as having consulted him on matters of rabbinic law.) The congregation selected as Davis' successor Rev. Francis Lyon Cohen, a minister of the United Synagogue, London, who was also the first Jewish chaplain in British military history and an expert on Jewish music. But Cohen was not an ordained rabbi. The Chief Rabbi agreed to Cohen studying for *Semichah*, but Cohen himself wrote to Sydney that obstacles had been put in his way by "conspirators". It is true that there was some apprehension in the London *Beth Din* about alleged deficiencies in Cohen's orthodoxy, but the "conspirators" may have been anti-Adler, not just anti-Cohen, and suspicious of what some thought would be a "make-believe degree".

In June 1905 Cohen arrived in Sydney as a rabbi. On 16 July Davis convened a *Beth Din* meeting with himself, Wolinski and Philippstein present. Cohen now took the chair, dissolved the previous *Beth Din*, and then formally constituted the "*Beth Din* of the Great Synagogue, Sydney" with himself as president and Wolinski and Philippstein as "assessors".

In the ensuing year the revamped *Beth Din* began a dynamic programme of activity. Illustrations of its broad scope are provided by the following summaries of meetings:



1. 16 July 1905: an unauthorised butchery was discussed and an announcement made that the only butcheries supervised by the *Beth Din* were at 101-103 Castlereagh Street and 257 King Street, Newtown.
2. 13 August 1905: an application for a *gett* was postponed pending arrangements for the wife's future maintenance; an application for conversion was approved and the candidate having been circumcised in Melbourne the immersion was carried out at Covill's Bath.
3. 3 September 1905: an application for a *gett* for a woman in Calcutta and her husband in Newcastle was postponed for further consideration; the *gett* considered at the previous meeting was carried out.
4. 29 October 1905: the arbitration of a financial dispute could not proceed as one party declined to present his case; it was decided to go ahead with the *gett* for the woman in Calcutta provided the husband deposited "at l[e]ast ten pounds as a gift to his wife".
5. 21 November 1905: the Calcutta *gett* was administered, the scribe being Hirsch Weinstein, and sent to India for handing over to the wife (the husband had deposited the ten pounds and promised "to continue to act as a Father to his son" who was with the wife in Calcutta).
6. 28 November 1905: Meyer Levy's application to act as a poultry *shohet* in Newtown, for which Rev. I. Morris had trained him, was postponed until he gained more practice in preparing the *shehitah* knives; subsequently he gained the necessary practice with Philippstein and was granted authorisation.
7. 29 January 1906: H. Solomon of Newtown's application to make *matzah* and other *Pesach* products was approved subject to inspection of his premises; he was later given permission. At the same meeting an applicant for conversion, taught by Miss Celia Harris, was accepted and the immersion took place at Covill's Bath.

The first year of Rabbi Cohen's *Beth Din* indicates the range of problems that now became characteristic of *Beth Din* activity. It was a busy period because of the backlog that required attention, though in some other years meetings took place much less frequently. A feature of the Cohen rabbinate was the rabbi's determination, in a growing and diversifying community, to retain central control. He did not entirely succeed, but he gave the Sydney *Beth Din* the stability that enabled Rabbi Porush, Rabbi Abramson and later *dayanim* to give the Beth Din a deeper *halachic* foundation and to serve a community that increasingly recognised the importance of *halachah*.



## RABBI LAZARUS MORRIS GOLDMAN: AN APPRECIATION

*Isidor Solomon*

**R**abbi Lazarus Morris Goldman was a noted personality in Australian Jewry for thirty years. As a synagogue official, chaplain to the forces, Rabbi, teacher and author he played a unique role in Australian life and indeed Jewish life. He was born in the East End of London in 1908. I believe he came of a Polish Jewish background, family members having come from Olstralenska in Poland. He was one of a large family and received his encompassing Jewish education in the *Yeshivah Etz Chaim* in London. As a student and later as an Army chaplain he had a close association with the late revered Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Louis I. Rabinowitz.

In 1929 Lazarus Goldman accepted the call to be headmaster of the St Kilda Hebrew School (attached to the congregation) and he was to occupy this position for the following three years. In September 1932 the position of assistant minister and secretary of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation became available through the retirement of the then incumbent of 50 years. There were a number of applicants and the President of the Congregation, Phillip Cohen, chose Goldman because of his deep interest in Jewish religious education and his aptitude as a teacher. In 1933 the Chief Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, Rabbi Israel Brodie, visited England and Lazarus Goldman had the opportunity to act in that capacity. In these years he improved his secretarial skills by attending Stotts Business College and he and his family lived at 76 Leopold Street, South Yarra.

It was in the years that followed that I came to know and understand Lazarus Goldman very well. He was assistant minister and secretary at the synagogue I attended – the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation – and he was active in the religious school attached to the synagogue. In 1938 my parents decided that he should become my tutor and each week he gave me lessons in all the aspects of Judaism. I still remember him teaching me in the earliest lessons to recite the Jewish months which, across my lifetime, I have found invaluable and it was from his dedication that I have been inspired by Jewish values all my life.



In January 1940 our family holiday was being spent at Cowes on Phillip Island, a popular Victorian holiday resort. On Sunday, 14 January 1940, the President of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, Jacob Jona, his wife Lily and their family, together with Rabbi Dr Harry and Mrs Freedman, spent the afternoon with us. My father went for a beach walk with Jacob and the Rabbi and Jacob Jona told him that he had received a request from Major-General Steele for a suitable Jewish Chaplain to the A.I.F. (6th Division) and that he had, with Goldman's agreement, recommended him.

A new chapter was about to begin in Goldman's life. He was appointed Chaplain to the A.I.F. on 2 February 1940 (Army number VX345) and was given a *Kiddush* on Saturday, 17 February 1940 and on the following Tuesday went into camp at Puckapunyal in Victoria. A farewell reception was held at the synagogue on Sunday, 3 March 1940.

The 6th Division, A.I.F., sailed on *HMT Strathaird* from Port Melbourne on Monday, 15 April 1940. There was an emotional silence after the boat left the pier; outside the Port Phillip Heads the battleships *HMS Ramilles* and *HMS Liverpool* waited as a convoy escort to the Middle East. When they reached Fremantle Rabbi L. Rubin-Zacks and the President of the Perth Congregation, Mayer Breckler, came aboard and welcomed him and together they visited the homes of Mrs Harry Boas and Mrs Fanny Breckler. Chaplain Goldman was very popular on board the troopship and won the admiration of all the men; he acquired a number of Australian nicknames, perhaps the best – "Foreskin Ned".

In mid-May the convoy arrived in the Middle East and Chaplain Goldman went about his serious duties and continued his Judaic studies. He spent some time with David Slutzkin, a Melbourne-born member of a noted Jewish family living in Israel. Continuing his religious studies, he visited Egypt and spent some time with Sir Victor and Lady Harrari. He discussed Jewish religious problems relating to the armed services with General Vasey, A.I.F. On Thursday, 28 November 1940, in Jerusalem at the hands of Rabbis Schorr, Rabinowitz and Weingart, he received the Rabbinical Diploma – "*Semicha*". He served as an active chaplain during the North African Campaign at Mersa Matruha, El Alamein and Tobruk, and received the 8th Army Clasp. During his years of service in the Middle East, 1940-43, he won great distinction and admiration as a chaplain taking a keen, active interest in the spiritual needs of his troops.

On Goldman's return to Australia in 1944 he was asked by the Senior Hebrew Chaplain, Chaplain-Colonel Jacob Danglow, if he would again be prepared to go on active service in the Pacific War region and this he accepted with deep understanding. He was finally discharged from the A.I.F. in May 1946 and returned to the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation where he became acting minister. At the same time he



took an honours degree in Semitic and comparative languages and later a Master of Arts degree in history at the University of Melbourne. At the time of his return to the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation he additionally became Principal of the United Jewish Education Board.

During his six years of active service Goldman's leadership qualities and personality had developed very considerably and he had a keen ambition to become Chief Minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation where he had been appointed firstly, almost fifteen years before. His responsibilities during 1940-46 had moved him away from his former secretarial qualities. In August 1947 a London applicant was appointed Chief Minister to take up his duties upon arrival in Australia.

Rabbi Goldman was bitterly disappointed that he had been overlooked for the position. Besides this personal disappointment his health had suffered very considerably due to the personal tensions he endured on the battlefield, especially during the North African campaign. The Melbourne Hebrew Congregation lacked the initiative to sort out the problem developing with Rabbi Goldman and for over a decade much bitterness existed between the Congregation's board of management and the Rabbi. After 27 years' association with the Congregation he retired in 1959.

Looking back 40 years, because of personality problems within the Congregation, it was unlikely that Rabbi Goldman would have been promoted and there is little doubt that the board of management of the Congregation of that period erred in that rather than developing increased animosity to the Rabbi they should have assisted him in finding a suitable career where his great abilities, dedication, understanding and inspiration would have been pleasantly utilised to the full. In 1954 Rabbi Goldman published his great work, *The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century* and later, in 1958, his book *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*. Each book has played a very important role in relating Jewish history in Australasia.

Rabbi Goldman always had a deep interest in Anglo-Jewry and this no doubt inspired his literary works. In 1932 he married Sarah (Sally) Cohen of London and over many years they showed great hospitality in their home. They had two children, now resident in London, David and Nina (Krauss). Rabbi Goldman died in September 1960 and is buried in the Fawkner Cemetery, Melbourne, and his widow died in London in April 1988.

Rabbi Goldman rendered very great service as Chaplain to the Australian Forces and as a teacher. He had a great appreciation of his role in each task and for this he should be placed in an honoured position in Australian Jewish communal life. His work in Australasian Jewish history is quite considerable. In the 40 years since the publication

of his history of nineteenth century Victorian Jewry an enormous amount has been written about Australian Jewish values. There have been many active writers, both professional and amateur, but much of the opening of the gates of history must be acknowledged to Rabbi Goldman.

Melbourne Jewry has a number of aspects to its early beginnings – some early settlers linked to the convict era – then the 1840 entrepreneurs and later 300 families that came to Melbourne during the gold rush era of 1852-53. Each group of migrants played a significant role in the early history of Melbourne and indeed Victoria. When Rabbi Goldman wrote his book it was far easier to make contact with the descendants of these founders. In the 40 years since Australian Jewry is a post-Holocaust community, and the achievements within the larger community can be directed or identified with these people but carefully through 28 chapters, Rabbi Goldman depicts the developments of a community through the original settlers.

His work has a clear definition in that he has carefully scanned the pages of the general press looking for items of Jewish connection or interest. In the later years when Jewish weeklies were published these too have been carefully researched. Many of the earlier families no longer seem linked to Jewry but it was easier to contact them when this book was written, so those names form an essential part of the work. There were the interesting personalities that rose and “fell” in Jewish life – what happened to the descendants of Rabbi Dr Dattner Jacobson, of Dr Solomon Iffla, Rev. Emanuel Myer Myers, Edward Isaacs, or that wonderful personality of Melbourne (“marvellous Melbourne of the 1880s”) – Ephraim L. Zox? Even at the time of his death in 1899 there was little contact with his relatives in England. But the work shows the wonderful role those personalities played in a developing community.

In fact, on 1 January 1901, colonial Australia ended and the factors that had put together the new nation were many of the activities related in this book; whether it was in prayer, religion, education or requirement, the Jewish colonist and settler developed his important status – Benjamin Benjamin at Melbourne, Charles Dyte at Ballarat, David B. Lazarus at Bendigo and Samuel Herman at Geelong all played an important part in the developing nation. In local government or public benefaction the Jewish settler was always very active. In commerce and industry and, in the latter period of the book, in medicine and law the Jew became a proud member of the community.

Rabbi Goldman has picked out that there was then and there still is in aspects of Australian life a prejudice against Jews. We today are likely to look upon this as anti-Semitism but it is a deep-seated prejudice somehow ingrained at each end of the social scale, but notwithstanding this in the nineteenth century the Jew became not only a respected but responsible member of society. Those Jews born in Australia in the era



1860-90 proudly saw the new nation come into being – they were part of that nation and as Jews the first time they had played that role since Biblical times. Most of the chapters of the book relate this coming together. In fact Rabbi Goldman has clearly put together a wonderful resource.

The book was published largely through the benefaction of the late Abraham H. Sicree and no doubt some emphasis on cost made a more elaborate volume being compiled from the wonderful resource material related in the 28 chapters. Photos could have been obtained of countless early pioneers, their families, their homes and in many cases their places of business – these are missing. What is there is the enormous resource of names and of happenings – one perhaps should add good and bad. No doubt the general press in the nineteenth century contained much emphasis on police and magistrates' court activities and in many of the cases Jews wronged and were wronged. A modern historian should be careful of relating these cases because they may well clash with the sensibilities of the present-day descendants – some names are mentioned and great care needs to be exercised in this area.

This volume opened "the gates" to Jewish history in Victoria. It is very encompassing and really sets the course for the way of life that existed in Jewry in Victoria during the period 1840-1960. In the society in which they then lived Jews were very proud of public service and social welfare and this book amply portrays those values. Rabbi Goldman was a very proud London-born Jew and he saw within and fostered that pride in Australian Jewry in the nineteenth century. This great volume of research does not merit criticism but it introduces respect for what must have been painstaking research as to both time and intellectual demand. Just over 40 years ago this was achieved and Goldman's research laid solid foundations for historians of the present and the future.

## **BROTHER AND SISTERS? THE RESPONSE OF ADELAIDE JEWRY TO ANTI-JEWISH ATROCITIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

*Rodney Gouttman*

**H**istories of Australian Jewry published in recent years have generally tended to dwell on the formal aspects of Jewish communal life and feature the achievements of individuals and groups who have influenced its structure, organisational, and social ethos. With rare exceptions, they have not engaged the existential nature of the Australian Jewish domicile in a coherent manner. Certainly the attitude and behaviour of governments and their appurtenances to the question of Jewish immigration continues to be examined and has become the focus of some controversy among scholars. Nevertheless, there has been a dearth of research into the overarching and pivotal matter of Australia's version of the Jewish/Gentile confrontation. When mentioned, it is usually in passing, based on gut feelings, or commented on in terms of rudimentary comparisons with other countries. A detailed analysis of this interactive landscape, its internalisation, and its behavioural and societal consequences are missing. An example of this is in the issue of anti-semitism in Australia. In concert with many others, Serge Liberman<sup>1</sup> points to the unassailable truth that in Australia anti-semitism has not manifested the virulent strains that have been all too common elsewhere. However, such a cursory dismissal leads to at least three consequences. The first has been a distinct reluctance to define what constitutes anti-semitism Australian style. Secondly, there is a tendency to discount the phenomena of anti-semitism in Australia. Finally, there has been little examination of the way in which anti-semitism, whether officially inspired, socially conveyed, or simply feared, has affected the social, political, communal, and even religious behaviour of Australian Jews.

If the existential components of Australian Jewish domicile have been considered, the focus has been the larger cities of Sydney and Melbourne. This has given the impression that the smaller populated Jewish communities have been, and perhaps still are, a somewhat paler version of their larger counterparts. The establishment of an Executive



Council of Australian Jewry in 1944, made little difference to the inorganic, unstructured, and unconnected face of Australian Jewry. Indeed, at the time when this body was formed, not all constituent State Boards of Deputies had been established. For example, the South Australian Board of Deputies only came into existence in November 1949. The "tyranny of distance", with its concomitant isolation of Jewish collectives, determined that there would be differences in the social experiences of these groups, even when faced by similar problems. If Jewish communal life were to be viable, meaning that it existed at least beyond the level of subsistence, it required not only human numbers, but a population knowledgeable in Jewish matters, certain of a lengthy sojourn in the one place, and actively committed to a Jewish future. Emigration from the smaller to the larger communities, often for Jewish reasons, bled smaller communities of their intra-generational continuity leaving their future problematic. In effect, Australian Jewry has always consisted of a number of Australian Jewish communities, each loosely organised, and forced to cope on their own with little help from outside sources.

A common problem which all communities were forced to confront in the first half of the twentieth century was how to react to the horrible cruelties inflicted upon their Jewish brethren overseas. The hoary-headed concern of what the non-Jews might think of any selective action that might be undertaken weighed heavily on the nature of their individual response. In its own way, the response was a consequence of a deeper issue. And that was the extent to which the community itself was committed to that most basic Judaic social value, *kol Yisrael Arevim zeh b'zeh* - that is, that the destiny of the Jewish people is one, and hence that each Jew is responsible for his coreligionist, no matter where he might reside. Bereft of this precept, there was little reason why Jews in Australia should concern themselves with the fate of their religious brothers and sisters in other lands, save for a universalist concern for the dignity of all human beings summed up in the phrase that we are all our brother's keeper. Nonetheless, in the diasporan state, Jewish compliance with this precept has never been easy. At best, the precept has been a priority that has needed to be juggled with the political and social obligations demanded of Jews in their non-Jewish environment. Even for those Australian Jews for whom this religious principle was a guiding light, this principle had to be balanced against another Jewish concept: *dina dmalkuta dina* - that Jews were expected to adhere to the laws in the land of their domicile so long as they in no way violated the teachings of the Torah. In practice that meant being subject to the political and social imperatives which being a citizen of Australia ascribed and implied. Of course, the tension between these Jewish mores was not just a simple two-dimensional relationship, but was affected by the

personal, social, and economic factors that impinged on the lives of individual Jews.

The purpose of this paper is to relay how this tension was manifest in the South Australian Jewish community's response to the heinous crimes inflicted on Jews across the breadth of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation was almost a synonym for the South Australian Jewish community, as it was the engine of Jewish life in all aspects in Adelaide, where the vast majority of South Australian Jews lived.

It will be argued that Jewish communal behaviour in this most Protestant of Australian capitals, was ever haunted by 'what the Gentiles might think'. However, this was camouflaged by oft repeated statements about how lucky Jews in Australia were to live in a land which was generally free from the anti-Jewish antipathies all too common elsewhere. It begs the question as to why there was a need for local Jews to be constantly reminded of this fact, especially in a nation which claimed liberal democracy as its ethos. Was it a cry which resonated the traditional unease of the Jew in exile, or did the Jew in South Australia, or Australia, for that matter, have something real to worry about? Was the price to pay for caring for one's coreligionist overseas to behave in a manner that could in no way be interpreted as diminishing or compromising loyalty to the Australian state, its people, or both?

The histories of organised Jewish communities lean heavily on the recorded views of their leaders. It is often assumed, perhaps quite erroneously, that what the leaders have articulated, was the current communal consensus. Daniel Elazar has pointed out that Diasporan Jews tend to be bound to each other "in a formal, not a corporate sense", or put in another way, on the voluntary enjoinder of Jews on the basis of their religion or other sentiment. However, even in Adelaide, a distinction could perhaps be made between the Congregation and the Community, especially as the religious commitment waned. On the other hand, communal life, or some organisational aspect of it, was maintained in the face of growing apathy, disinterest and corporate disintegration. The degree to which the leaders of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and the interest groups it spawned, reflected the broad communal view, will always remain a matter of conjecture. How many Jews were unaffiliated, for whatever reason, will never be known.

Suzanne Rutland has written that by World War I, Australian Jewry was well respected, entrenched, and though a tiny minority was quite active in mainstream Australian life.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish community of South Australia was an excellent exemplar of this. Its numbers were indeed small and falling,<sup>3</sup> it was dominantly Anglo-Jewish in composition, strongly Anglophile, and culturally well assimilated. The



Jews of Adelaide were increasingly communally apathetic,<sup>4</sup> and concomitantly, exhibited a diminishing interest in religious observance.

The Adelaide Hebrew Congregation held that the British Empire, and all that was enacted in its name, in supreme regard. It was a sentiment that laced the Congregation's utterances throughout the years of World War I. Clearly, this was in congruence with the vast majority of the Australian population. Loyalty to the British Empire meant being a patriotic Australian. But even more than this, being loyal to the British Empire was the stamp of a patriotic Australian Jew. The general call to arms to defend the Empire no less impinged on Jews as it did on non-Jews. Nevertheless, though such a sentiment was undoubtedly genuinely felt, the Adelaide community felt obligated to consistently re-assure itself, and others, of its bona fides. Not to have done so would be to have meant to court anti-semitism and to have undermined a comfortable existence in Australia. The fear of being branded disloyal, or of being accused of dual loyalties, was never far below the surface. Hence, any overt concern for hapless Jews abroad had always to be tempered with the knowledge that the community's prime political allegiance lay with 'the Empire' and 'the Nation'.

The Adelaide Jewish community was proud of the high proportion of its male members who had enlisted to fight in the "war to end all wars".<sup>5</sup> Jewish concern was twin tracked. Understandably, the community was ever worried about the state of the war, and the welfare of Australians on duty overseas, especially those from their own or friends' families. Nevertheless, as the bloodshed continued to streak across the vast map of Europe, particularly in its central and eastern domains, a few of its members kept an extremely anxious eye on the Jewish victims left in its wake.

In 1914 the president of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation was of the opinion that, with the onslaught of World War I, "Jews would not be found apart but would help in the general patriotic movement".<sup>6</sup> As the conflagration progressed, increasing frustration was felt over the escalating loss of life, limb, and property. From the beginning of the war, the South Australian Jewish community swung fully behind the local civilian war effort, vigorously supporting and providing facilities for such bodies as the Red Cross. News of congregants killed in action fuelled community anguish. The Annual Report of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation for 1916 noted:

That we, the Executive of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, desire to place on record a reverent tribute to the memory of our Australian heroes fallen at the Dardennelles, and particularly Morris Haines and Elias Judell, both sons of respected members of the congregation and to express profound admiration and pride for



those who fought so valiantly and fell so gloriously for King and Country.<sup>7</sup>

The names of all those enlisted for service were set in a Roll of Honour and placed in the vestry of the Synagogue. Special prayers were offered in Synagogue services hoping that the terrible struggle would soon end and peace be "established to the satisfaction of our Empire".<sup>8</sup>

Despite this local pain, the Congregation was also depressed by the abject and hapless plight of their Jewish brethren in the central and eastern Europe imbroglio. It called a special meeting in October 1915 to consider an urgent cable under the collective authorship of Lord Swaything, the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, and Leopold de Rothschild, which sought funds to help assuage the dire conditions being suffered by one and a half million Jews in the Russian war zone. The cable reported that their hunger, deprivation, and destitution had reached breaking point. It was decided that as the Australian people were already fully committed to the war effort both at home and abroad, it would not be desirable, and could even prove counterproductive, to seek funds outside the Jewish community. Nevertheless, after undoubtedly sniffing the communal wind, it was felt that the provision of funds to relieve Jewish distress in the Russian theatre was acceptable, so long as this did not diminish the amount subscribed, or intended to be subscribed, for the "relief of all without regard for their religious belief". It was noted, however, that the six hundred odd Jews - men, women and children - who comprised the South Australian community, "notwithstanding the drought and terrible times" had already sent three hundred pounds for this purpose.<sup>9</sup>

M.J. Solomon, the president of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation in 1917, reacted to two other exogenous happenings that were to have a profound consequence for world Jewry. The first was the Russian Revolution, which he cast aside in a rather perfunctory and enigmatic way with the response that "in consequence of the Revolution in Russia, the Jews will occupy a very different position in that country".<sup>10</sup> The second, was the distinct possibility that Great Britain would hold onto Palestine, and he commented that "our co-religionists may be thankful if they are able to live there under the Union Jack".<sup>11</sup> For Solomon, the recovery of Jerusalem by the British forces led by General Allenby - which included the Australian Light Horse - was a manifestation of "the finger of God". He stated that he felt that all this was even more miraculous because Jewish battalions were also involved. Solomon considered the recovery of Jerusalem to be one of the most profound moments in modern Jewish history. He stressed that the Jews of Great Britain were not only rejoicing, but they had held a special thanksgiving meeting after receiving the news that the British government had



informed Lord Rothschild that, at the war's end, it intended to "put the Jewish people in possession" of Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

The reaction of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation to the end of World War I, was clearly summed up in the words of its president:

The Adelaide Hebrew Congregation expressed its relief that World War I was at an end: Your committee feels that the prayer of our co-religionists all over the British Empire should be offered up to our Almighty that the terrible war which has been raging over the past four years has ended in victory to the allies - it is our humble duty to acknowledge the Great Architect of the Universe that owing to His benign influence, He has called justice to prevail, and once again He has manifested in the World that right shall conquer might. Your Committee feels that it is expressing the loyal sentiments of the members when it places on record its devotion to the "Throne and Person of His Majesty King George, and the fervent hope that he may long reign over the people of the British Empire."<sup>13</sup>

These impressions were conveyed to the Governor of South Australia and a thanksgiving service was held in the synagogue to celebrate the moment.<sup>14</sup>

The degree to which the horrors that continued to be suffered by Jews in Europe during the war fully penetrated the consciousness of the South Australian Jewish community is unclear. Certainly, with the war over, there seems to have been a disregard by many of the catastrophe that was still extant in Europe and Palestine. Indeed, the situation was such that the executive of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation felt the need to remind its members to consider what had been the ultimate purpose of the World War I, that was freedom for all peoples. The executive stated that his goal seemed to have been lost sight of by some congregants, despite the fact that many had sent their sons to fight and some had sustained great personal loss. They stressed the point that Jews living in Australia - a country free from terrible troubles - should think deeply about, and help those innocent Jewish men, women, and children, in such places as the Ukraine, where dire atrocities were inflicted on them.<sup>15</sup>

Not all congregants were so disregarding, and no one seemed more aware of the burgeoning anti-Jewish horrors developing in post World War I Europe than Gustav Isaacs. When he died in 1941, Isaacs was the oldest subscribing member of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation. Among his many communal duties, was a forty-year association with the Adelaide Hebrew Philanthropic Society, at first as secretary, then as president. Along with others, he rejoiced that World War I hostilities

had concluded, referring with pride to the participation of local Jewish soldiers in the conflict, and pointing out that one of the consequences of the Allies' victory was "the restoration of the Holy Land to the Jewish people".<sup>16</sup> However, he acknowledged that war had inflicted profoundly negative outcomes and gross suffering for Jews in central and eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> The Adelaide Hebrew Philanthropic Society sought to help financially Jews who had come to Adelaide from Europe who had been denied entry into the United States of America by that nation's restrictive immigration policies.<sup>18</sup> Of the few of these immigrants, exclusively young men, who reached Adelaide, Isaacs commented that they would be a positive acquisition to the local Jewish community and to the state.<sup>19</sup>

The assumption of Nazi power and the beginning of the oppression of the Jews of Germany in the early 1930s, caused great angst to Isaacs and the small band who comprised the Philanthropic Society. Even then, with unfortunate prescience, he understood that the object of all this terror would be the eventual complete annihilation of German Jewry.<sup>20</sup> The Society reported in 1937, that Jewish existence in Europe had become increasingly problematic, and that the Nazi bacterium had spread to other countries, even to Great Britain, where the government had been forced to legislate to contain rising anti-semitism.<sup>21</sup> In the months just prior to the outbreak of World War II, Isaacs castigated the Jewish community:

It is unthinkable that any body of Jews should forgather anywhere and not discuss the terrible plight of our co-religionists today in Europe. It is unthinkable that Jews living in free countries, in a state of complacent prosperity should not be touched by this calamity - touched to the point of helping, of doing their utmost best to assuage their agony, to relieve the distress of these men, women, and little children. May the day of redemption be near at hand: may it please the Almighty to speedily 'turn their darkness into great light'.<sup>22</sup>

He saw the outbreak of World War II as not only terrible for mankind, but particularly horrendous for the Jews of Europe and stated that, "never before were such numbers of our co-religionists involved". In March 1941, poignantly, the year of his own death, he was never more clear as to the Holocaust which was about to descend upon European Jewry:

Today, not six hundred thousand as in 1933, but about five million are suffering untold misery under the heel of the greatest Tyrant of all times.<sup>23</sup>



Even the Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide in 1933 wrote to the acting Minister of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, Rev. E. Belfer, loudly protesting the Nazi persecution of Jews.<sup>24</sup> The congregation was repelled by the growing Nazi terror and its views were conveyed to the German government.<sup>25</sup> However, a public protest meeting mooted for the Adelaide Town Hall in conjunction with the clergy of other faiths and civic bodies was dropped after the arrangements had been completed on advice "from an influential quarter". The Premier of South Australia was to have moved the major motion of protest, but he desisted after pressure was brought to bear through the intercession of Australia's Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons. It was suggested that the holding of such a protest meeting might embarrass the British Government in its relations with Germany. In place of the meeting, a large donation from the congregation was sent to London to provide some help to the victims of Nazi criminality.<sup>26</sup> The congregation's leaders felt that all they could do was to condemn the persecution and exhort fellow members to ensure that any emissary passing through Adelaide collecting monies for the relief of those Jews in great distress in Europe would leave the South Australian precinct financially satisfied. They were certain that this would be accomplished, as the growing awareness of Nazi oppression had stirred Jews in Australia to reconsider their brothers' and sisters' "misfortune".<sup>27</sup>

In the vestibule of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, the long-mooted Memorial Hall to commemorate the military service of all South Australian Jews who enlisted for active service during World War I, finally gained authorisation in 1938.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, it was not long before the world would be again drawn into a conflict and an epoch that was to see the Jewish people experience one of the greatest tragedies in their long history.

With Hitlerian anti-semitism on the rise throughout the 1930s, many Jews of Germany and Austria sought haven elsewhere. The American-inspired Evian Conference of 6 July 1938, failed to address the problem for which it was called - what to do about the growing hordes of refugees, mainly Jewish, fleeing the Nazi terror. Subsequent to this debacle in December 1938, as a consequence of Crystal Night and under pressure from Britain and the United States of America, the Lyons United Australia Party Government, grudgingly agreed to accept 15,000 refugees, not all of them Jewish.<sup>29</sup> Of the estimated seven to eight thousand refugees who reached Australia just prior to the outbreak of World War II, only a handful arrived in South Australia. Though the newcomers were somewhat culturally alien in the Anglo-Jewish context in which they found themselves, they were a crucial addition to the local community.<sup>30</sup>

Once world war re-ignited, the Adelaide Jewish community's immediate focus was on matters closer to home. An urgent appeal for

funds to help Jewish victims of "racial persecution , greed, and hatred" failed to raise the expected amount.<sup>31</sup> The local war effort became the main concern, though Jewish distress in Europe was still acknowledged:

... no one has suffered more than our co-religionists in those countries invaded by the enemies of Great Britain...<sup>32</sup>

South Australian Jews were pressed to help domestic organisations, such as the congregation's Women's Guild and the National Council of Jewish Women , who were making garments and comforts for the Red Cross. Those who were considered not pulling their weight were chided with failing in their obligation to help those "fighting for King and Country".<sup>33</sup> Not only did local Jews enlist in the fighting services, <sup>34</sup> but so did a number of new immigrant refugees from Germany and Austria .

As in World War I, the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation's patriotic rhetoric referred to the defence of the British Empire. The Japanese coalition with Nazi Germany intensified its patriotism :

...A new enemy has arisen close to our shores and has already made attack on part of our territory and Australia itself. Australian soldiers have been everywhere in the thick of fighting and have lived up to the great traditions of their fathers. Among them we know of our fellow Jews, and also numerous members of our community who are playing their part in the heroic struggle against the aggressor nation.<sup>35</sup>

Given the atmospherics of war, it does seem odd that the leadership of the congregation felt compelled to remind the Jewish community that only through a total and combined effort from all the democracies would the advance of totalitarianism be stopped. Just why this had to be stated is unclear. Perhaps Great Britain's decisive attempts to prevent desperate Jews fleeing the enveloping Holocaust from reaching Palestine had caused some to be somewhat cynical. On the other hand, it might have been the case of an Anglo-Jewish leadership feeling that the immigrant newcomers needed to be advised of their duty, which was that the quid pro quo of Australian citizenship or residency, was the defence of the nation and the Empire .<sup>36</sup>

Following the declaration of war recently arrived Jewish refugees were classified as "enemy aliens" and often interned.<sup>37</sup> The "enemy aliens" were imprisoned at Hay in New South Wales, Tatura in Victoria, and at Loveday on the Murray River in South Australia. On 26 February 1941, copying the example of the eastern states, a sub-group of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, the Migrant Consultative Council,



was formed in Adelaide. Its purpose was to look after the general welfare of the refugee newcomers, to help them in legal matters, especially when dealing with governments, to form a bridge between them and the Jewish community, and to help them find employment should this need arise.<sup>38</sup> Initially, this small band organised communal collections for refugees interned in Hay and needy local cases, sought the reclassification of those deemed "enemy aliens", and lobbied for the release of these internees from Hay.<sup>39</sup> Its attempt to establish English classes for Jewish refugees domiciled in Adelaide proved unsuccessful through lack of demand.<sup>40</sup> Monetary and material help was forwarded to the needy in both Hay and Tatura.<sup>41</sup> Permission was sought from the military authorities at Keswick in Adelaide, to visit internees at Loveday.<sup>42</sup> Members of the executive of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and their spiritual head, Rabbi Alfred Fabian, travelled to the camp, taking religious artefacts such as a *Sefer Torah*, *Siddurim*, *Tallitim*, and *Tfillim*. On one occasion at least, kosher meat was sent from Adelaide.<sup>43</sup> On the second of his three camp visits, Rabbi Fabian conducted a *Chunukah* service. Despite these efforts, the general communal concern for the internees seems to have been far from enthusiastic.

With the entry of Japan into the war the Migrant Consultative Council sought to capitalise on Australia's need for manpower<sup>44</sup> and called for the right of Jewish refugees from Nazism to be able to enlist in the armed forces both for overseas and home service. It promoted such service as evidence of the refugees' willingness to prove their loyalty to Australia. Lists of those willing to join the armed services were supplied to the authorities.<sup>45</sup> An initial survey sent to the Deputy Director of Recruiting in Adelaide included the names of 23 refugees between 19 and 40 years of age who had indicated their willingness to join: 21 volunteered for overseas duty and two for home defence. It was hoped that they would be accepted, even though many of them held occupations typified as being reserved, that is they were vital for the nation's war economy.<sup>46</sup> Such advocacy was at first rejected, but the lobbying did not stop.

A small delegation met with the premier of South Australia, Thomas Playford, to impress on him the role these Jewish refugees could play in civil defence.<sup>47</sup> Relief was also sought from the rigid social encumbrances placed on non-interned aliens such as the strict policing of their social intercourse. The initial plea was that they be allowed to visit their friends at least once per week - afternoon or evening - as long as they returned to their own abode by 10.30 p.m.<sup>48</sup> Numerous detailed applications for such visits were supplied to the military authorities replete with the requisite names, addresses and times. In August 1942, the premier of South Australia personally passed on the request of the Migrant Consultative Council to the Minister for the Army, F.M. Forde,

that for the German and Austrian Jewish refugees, the rubric of "enemy alien" be replaced by the less sinister title of "refugee alien". The minister regretted that while this was impossible, a more generous treatment may be afforded the victims of Nazi persecution. But he added that there was difficulty in obtaining information about the refugees' political genuineness. Nevertheless, individual cases could be reviewed by the Office of the Australian Attorney General that administered the National Security ( Alien Control ) Regulation.<sup>49</sup> However, as late as May 1943, the Migrant Consultative Committee, was still regretting that legal reclassification had not turned in its favour.<sup>50</sup> That had to wait until 1944.<sup>51</sup>

The Adelaide Hebrew Congregation's Annual Report of 1943 commented that the resistance of the Russian Army to the Nazi eastern push had increased Allied confidence. The tenacity of the British forces in North Africa, especially the dauntless courage of the Australians there - as on other battlefields - was acknowledged. However, any hint of euphoria was severely dampened by what was happening to the Jews in Europe:

During the year the troubled plight of our Jewish brethren and sisters in Nazi-dominated Europe has assumed unheard of depths of agony. Millions of innocent men, women, and children have been exterminated under the yoke of the barbarian oppressor. We Jews in the free countries of the world have not only to express our sympathies with these unhappy victims. We have to pledge ourselves to the salvation of our brethren and have to struggle for their redemption with everything that is in our power, so that at least as many of them as possible shall escape destruction <sup>52</sup>

Only early in 1945 did the synagogue leadership permit itself some optimism over the progress of the war. The perception was that both the European and Pacific theatres were turning in the Allies' favour, and the part played by men from the local Jewish community in achieving this was stressed. Nevertheless, this positive turn of events could not cloud the fact that:

The Jewish people in Europe, as we state with profound grief, are in the process of merciless destruction. All the help that can be given from here to assist them in their escape and to provide for their rehabilitation must be pledged by our community now.<sup>53</sup>

With the end of World War II, the concerns of the Adelaide Jewish community turned mainly to domestic issues as it had in the immediate post-World War I years. Those who returned home were welcomed with



joy and their names, together with those who had paid the supreme sacrifice, were added to the congregation's Memorial Board.

The community was awakened to the possibility that a Jewish state in Palestine might result from the utter despair in Europe. It reacted with restrained delight over the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on 29 November 1947, to seek the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an internationalised Jerusalem:

With the help of Almighty God we have been brought nearer to that great dream of ours - our own Jewish state in Palestine, and may it not be far distant than before that dream comes a reality, and then we will not only have our own State, but our own flag, and then all the other nations will be most eager to greet us, and receive us with open arms. The great events of the Partition of Palestine, brought about by the voting of the United Nations, has given us that hope, and now we must await patiently for the fulfilment of that Great Promise.

At the present time there are many thousands of our Brothers and Sisters who are still in great need of our assistance to enable them to again be free men and women; and there are also thousands of Jewish children who must look to us to help them re-establish themselves in our so called modern world - so they can enjoy the freedom that is so dear to all of our hearts. As we celebrate the 100th year of the Congregation in this year, what could be more fitting than to be able to celebrate the great event of our new home in Palestine - with the help of Almighty God may this be accomplished soon.<sup>54</sup>

Despite this rhetoric, the restraint shown was undoubtedly the consequence of the realisation that this situation had been won at the expense of Great Britain and her Empire. It was undoubtedly for this reason that, late in 1949, the editor of *Yarchon*, the re-established monthly of the Adelaide Jewish community, was intent on emphasising that :

...We have always exhibited patriotism of the highest order, and combined allegiance to our religious group with love of our land and the country of our birth and habitation. The latter is part of the former, and together they form a natural union...<sup>55</sup>

However, Adelaide's basically Anglo-Jewish community would soon have to face changes for which it was ill-prepared and which would prove a watershed in its history. It was challenged from within by the refugees who had arrived before and after the war from Europe, by the

advent of a dynamic Zionism which centred on the establishment of the Jewish State, and by an ever widening pluralism in Jewish communal life.<sup>56</sup> The old guard who clung tenaciously to a desiccating Anglo-Jewish culture, was now confronted by people with often a quite different attitude to matters both religious and communal.

The effects on the attitudes and behaviour of the South Australian Jewish community of the interplay between *Kol Yisrael Arevim zeh b'zeh* and *dina dmalkuta dina*, with regards to the atrocities perpetrated on Jews in the first half of the twentieth century, is far from clear. The evidence does suggest that on several occasions the communal leadership was able to garner much sympathy and financial support for their oppressed Jewish brethren overseas. Nevertheless the proviso was that at all times Jewish living in Australia was not to be compromised. However, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, had the potential to make this trade-off even more complex.

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## THE ORIGINS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SHOMRIM ZIONIST YOUTH ORGANISATION

*Glenn Gordon*

**T**he Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation came into existence following a public meeting which was announced in the Sydney Jewish press, on Sunday, 22 October 1939.<sup>1</sup> It ceased to exist as a separate entity following a "General Meeting" of its membership held on 11 June 1944<sup>2</sup> when it amalgamated with the emerging national Habonim Movement.

During the almost five years of its existence, Shomrim played an active role in spreading the Zionist message to the Jewish youth of Sydney. During this period, Shomrim members and the organisation itself actively engaged in all manner of Zionist and youth group orientated activities including, whenever possible:

1. the holding of fortnightly meetings, often with leading Zionists as guest speakers;<sup>3</sup>
2. the gathering for the celebration of the Sabbath (*Oneg Shabbat*);<sup>4</sup>
3. the holding of sporting and physical activities such as camps and hikes;<sup>5</sup>
4. the organisation of social activities such as parties and dances for Jewish festivals such as *Channukah* or *Purim*;<sup>6</sup>
5. the holding of Hebrew classes;<sup>7</sup>
6. the formation of local discussion groups;<sup>8</sup>
7. and the publication of periodicals for the benefit of their membership and the spreading of their message to others.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these activities, Shomrim leadership was also involved in Zionist affairs in New South Wales. This included representation on the Zionist State Council of NSW, taking part in the formation of the Zionist Youth Council<sup>10</sup> and nominating members to attend as delegates of the Annual Conferences of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand held during the years of the Second World War.<sup>11</sup>

The Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation had its origins in the European Zionist youth movements. Its early membership consisted, in large measure, of young men and women who were recent migrants to Australia, many being refugees who were unable to return to their



homelands. In addition, a number of Australian and British-born Jewish youth appear to have been attracted to this new organisation.

Some, however, saw this European origin as a disadvantage. One unidentified writer in the journal, *The Zionist*, commented that:

One of the greatest problems that has faced Australian Zionist Youth, has been the fact that it has had no suitable pattern on which to model its activities. Too small in numbers, and too weak in intellectual and spiritual forces, Australian Jewish youth has been unable to develop a vigorous native form of Zionist Youth Organisation. It has had to borrow, and in almost all cases it has borrowed from environments that have not been appropriate....The Shomrim in Sydney, inspired by the example of Central European Zionist Youth found the greatest difficulty in transplanting those ideas into the cultural climate of Sydney Jewish Youth.<sup>12</sup>

### THE ARRIVAL OF RABBI MAX SCHENK

One of the factors which facilitated the formation of Shomrim in 1939 was the appointment of Rabbi Max Schenk as the founding Rabbi of the newly created Temple Emanuel, a liberal Jewish congregation and the first in Sydney. Rabbi Schenk's arrival from the United States was noted in the *Sydney Jewish News*.<sup>13</sup> He was well qualified for the assignment and his appointment to Temple Emanuel followed periods as a Rabbi in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1928-32) and as the Rabbi and Educational Director of the YM&WHA in New York City (1933-39).<sup>14</sup>

Rabbi Schenk brought with him something which was largely unknown to the local Jewish leadership of the time, namely "hands on" experience with the American Zionist movement. In America, this movement in the 1930s had been galvanised by the events in Europe and had burgeoned to a total membership of nearly six hundred thousand - almost one out of every eight American Jews - on the eve of the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> American Zionism was an active and vibrant, independently-minded Jewry with some prominent, outspoken leadership, a number of Jews in public office and the ear of a sympathetic President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. American Jewry also had much closer ties to Germany, Russia and Eastern Europe because of the large waves of Jewish migration to the United States from these countries since the nineteenth century. There were few specifically British ties within most American Jewish families.

Swiss-born Schenk came to Australia with his wife Faye and their two children. Both Rabbi and Mrs Schenk were ardent Zionists and it was not long before Rabbi Schenk became involved with local Zionist causes, including the NSW Zionist State Council and other bodies.<sup>16</sup>

One of Sydney's Zionist leaders, Max Freilich, wrote of the Schenks that:

Max and Faye (Schenk) were confirmed Zionists and possessed a very deeply ingrained Jewish national consciousness. Rabbi Schenk made this fact known early to the leaders of Temple Emanuel and in sermons from the pulpit to his congregation. Throughout their stay in Australia their association with Australian Zionist Leadership and in particular the Zionists of Sydney was most cordial and their services to the movement invaluable.<sup>17</sup>

As Rabbi Schenk, himself, was to write concerning his Zionist convictions.

My prayer is that I may live to see a reborn Israel, a people living in self-respect and dignity, unswerving in its fearless loyalty to and faith in the high ideals of justice, truth, humanity and peace. That is its mission and destiny!<sup>18</sup>

Following Rabbi Schenk's arrival, a small group of interested individuals met with him to discuss the formation of a Zionist group for young people from 17 years of age. Participants in this meeting included Dr & Mrs Wolmuth (a local dentist), Mr & Mrs Gerhard Lichtenstein (later Lightstone) and Mr John Moser.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that Shomrim, at its inception at least, was not solely aimed at single youth and that a number of married couples were actively involved in its founding and operation. Both Dr Wolmuth (in 1940-1)<sup>20</sup> and Gerhard Lichtenstein (1941-2)<sup>21</sup> were elected and served terms as president of the Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation.

Rabbi Schenk was apparently very supportive and encouraging of their plans<sup>22</sup> and, following the official founding of Shomrim, he and Mrs Schenk regularly made themselves available to Shomrim to speak and advise its membership.<sup>23</sup> His attitude to life would seem to be reflected in his 1941 Jewish New Year Message to Shomrim, published in the *Shomrim News*, where he states that:

There is one road to salvation. It is the way of a sweet reasonableness based not upon co-ercion(sic), hatred and prejudice; but upon the principle of mutual co-operation, trust and faith in our ability to solve our own problems not by running away from them but by meeting them squarely.<sup>24</sup>



## THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SHOMRIM

The first meeting of the Shomrim was announced in the *Sydney Jewish News* of 20 October 1939, when an invitation was extended "to those people of both sexes between 17 and 32 to attend this first important meeting"<sup>25</sup> which was to be held at the rooms of the National Council of Jewish Women and Young Men's Hebrew Association (known as the C&Y Rooms)<sup>26</sup>, 374 George St, Sydney on Sunday, 22 October 1939. This announcement went on to state that:

The Shomrim is not connected with any other organization except The National Council of Jewish Women, Juniors, and its objects are purely for Zionism. Some permanent(sic) people are on the committee and the organization is expected to make considerable strides, so it is hoped that all who can make it convenient to attend the meeting on Sunday will do so, if only to listen to the proposals and proceedings. With Zionist regards. *Shalom!*<sup>27</sup>

The National Council of Jewish Women and its founder and president, Dr Fanny Reading, were active supporters of the Zionist cause. From its inception, at the suggestion of Madame Bella Pevsner, in the early 1920s, the Council had always had an active Zionist agenda, partly in fulfilment of a promise made to Madame Pevsner that the restoration of Palestine would be one of the Council's foremost aims.<sup>28</sup>

This initial meeting was "well attended", although specific details as to numbers present were not given, and the *Sydney Jewish News* of 3 November 1939 carried an extensive report of the proceedings.

A well attended meeting was held on Sunday 22 October at 8 pm to establish a Zionist Youth Organization, to enable many young Australians and newcomers to form a study group, working to educate themselves in Zionist and cultural ideals and give service as a Youth Organization for Zionism in this country. Mr E. Heller<sup>29</sup> presided.

Discussion took place as to the work of such a group, in which the following took part: Mr M. Isaacs<sup>30</sup>, Mrs Marcus Marks<sup>31</sup>, Miss Queenie Slutzkin (Palestine) Mr M. Freilich<sup>32</sup>, Mr Harry Price, Dr Fanny Reading and Dr Wohlmüt. Mr H. Price suggested that the name of the Organization should be "Shomrim" which signified "Watchman or Guardian" of the highest tradition of the Jewish race. He also explained the necessity of such an organization at the present time. The Study of the Hebrew language should also be a ...feature of the group. Dr Lowy<sup>33</sup> of Palestine, representing the J.N.F. in Australia, read a paper on "The Principles of Zionism".



The provisional committee was formed with Mr E. Heller, President; Mr Hans Curtis, Treasurer; Mr Henry Price & Mr Evan Altshuler<sup>34</sup>, Joint Hon. Secretaries and Miss Queenie Slutzkin, the Organizing Secretary; Mrs Gertie Indyk, Mr & Mrs Lichtenstein, Mr I Curtis and Dr Fanny Reading will form the committee, with power to co-opt other members. The annual subscription should be 5/- payable half-yearly if desired.

It was arranged that the first Study Class will meet on Sunday 5 November at 8 pm at the C & Y Centre when Mr Lichtenstein would be responsible for the "News Review" giving items of up to date interest concerning Palestine. Mr H. Curtis would give an outline of the "History of Palestine from the Earliest Beginnings" and Mr E. Altshuler "The Aims and Achievements of Zionism". Fifteen minutes would be devoted to Hebrew speaking each meeting. Meetings will be held fortnightly on Sunday evenings at the C & Y Centre.<sup>35</sup>

It is of interest to note that several of Sydney's leading figures in the Zionist Movement were present at this initial meeting. These included Max Freilich and Dr Fanny Reading. It was the NCJW, Juniors who were listed as an affiliate organisation with the newly created "Shomrim".<sup>36</sup> Dr Reading even involved herself on the Committee.<sup>37</sup>

There must have been considerable support for the establishment of Shomrim for such a successful initial meeting to have been held. Obviously, discussions would have been held with Fanny Reading in order to gain the support of the NCJW and the affiliation with its Juniors (although this affiliation was never to be mentioned again in any publicity for Shomrim or in any of its publications). Individuals such as Max Freilich, a leader of the local Zionist movement and an immigrant from Poland himself, may have had sympathy for this particular group which was, as far as may be ascertained, the very first immigrant-based Zionist organisation in Sydney.

Shomrim would seem to have filled a need within the local Jewish community and it was evidently able to draw together many different individuals under the umbrella of Zionism.

### **DR FANNY READING**

Fanny Reading was born in Russia in 1884 and migrated with her family to Victoria at an early age. Following a study of music, she followed in the footsteps of her brother (Dr. A.S. Reading) by studying medicine where she became one of the early female medical graduates of the University of Melbourne Faculty of Medicine.



Following a visit to Australia by the well-known Zionist leader, Madame Bella Pevsner in 1923, Dr Fanny Reading decided to form a National Council of Jewish Women along the lines of the organisation which existed in America.<sup>38</sup> The role of such a Council was very broad:

The Council aimed to attract a large membership, raise the status of Jewish women and girls, offer a comprehensive program with opportunities for social contact, with discussions, efforts to improve Jewish education, hospital visits, assistance to the reconstruction of Palestine and helping Jews in less fortunate places.<sup>39</sup>

Freilich noted that: "In August 1929 the Council of Jewish Women formed a Zionist Committee within the framework of its organization and Zionist fundraising became an important plank in its aims and objectives".<sup>40</sup>

While this support for Palestine was not always viewed favourably by those within the Jewish community, Dr Reading had made a promise to Bella Pevsner that she would make the restoration of Palestine one of the Council's foremost aims.<sup>41</sup> It is not uncharacteristic, therefore, for Dr Reading to have become involved in the sponsoring of Shomrim and in her participation on the committee in those early stages.

The tie with Dr Reading may, in fact, have been a tenuous one for, aside from her initial involvement, she is not mentioned in conjunction with Shomrim again, and her tenure on the committee would seem to have been a brief one. It may be that, in her role with the NCJW, which was involved with the support of Jewish refugees, she felt obliged to assist this new, largely 'newcomer-based', Zionist organisation to become established and, once having assisted in the initial establishment phase and having gained confidence in the available leadership, she may have left the Shomrim to run their own organisation. Indeed, it was the youth, themselves who, from a very early stage in Shomrim's development, successfully assumed all responsibility for its affairs.

### MAX FREILICH

Freilich was one of the leaders of the New South Wales Zionist movement from his arrival in Sydney in 1929. He held a variety of positions in Zionist organisations such as the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, where he served on the executive.<sup>42</sup> He was also actively involved with the Union of Sydney Zionists, *Keren Hayasod* and the Jewish National Fund (JNF) as a Commissioner,<sup>43</sup> as well as serving as a Vice-Chairman of the first State Zionist Council of NSW (which had been formed on 26 April 1939).<sup>44</sup>

In many ways, Polish-born Freilich represented the break from the Anglo-Jewish leadership which had existed until the 1930s in Sydney Jewish affairs.<sup>45</sup> As he noted in his biography: "I had been in Australia only a few years and I was regarded as a newcomer. With the advent to the Zionist leadership of British- and Australian-born Jews...I felt my presence was something of an embarrassment."<sup>46</sup>

It would not be difficult to understand Max Freilich's affinity for the Shomrim, most of whom were newcomers from Europe who brought with them a Zionist heritage and passion, together with an understanding of the prevailing situation in Europe which was unfamiliar to Australian Jewish Youth.

### THE SHOMRIM PLEDGE

Shomrim had encapsulated their philosophy into a pledge which stated:

Because I am a Shomer:

1. I am loyal to the British Empire and devoted to the Jewish People.
2. I will learn all I can about my people, its history, the Hebrew language and literature, its customs and traditions, its hopes and aspirations for the future.
3. I pledge myself to work for the regeneration - both physical and spiritual - of the Jewish people throughout the world.
4. I will work for the creation of a Jewish State in *Eretz Israel*, within the British Commonwealth of Nations, and pledge myself to strive for this aim.
5. I am proud of my heritage and traditions. I will always act in a manner that will reflect honour on the Jewish name.
6. I stand ready to serve the Shomrim, our community, the Jewish people and *Eretz Israel*.

No doubt being in Australia during a World War in an assimilated Anglo-Jewish community, the declaration of loyalty to Britain was an important inclusion. Today, it is difficult to conceive of Israel being a part of the "British Commonwealth of Nations". However, under the British Mandate of Palestine which existed at the time, this could have been a likely scenario.

Other elements of the Pledge include a determination to learn about the Jewish people, its history, language and literature. This was certainly an area which was given priority in the educational activities of Shomrim, both through their regular lecture series and their small discussion groups (*Kevutzot*).



Zionism has been seen as a demonstration of the "Jewish collective will-to-live" <sup>47</sup> and the members of Shomrim demonstrated that collective will by transcending their individual differences in background, levels of religious involvement and political ideologies in order to pledge their commitment to the broader issues relating to "the regeneration of the Jewish people" and "to reflect pride in their Jewish heritage". Shomrim, while primarily about Zionism, was also very much about being Jewish; a stand which was actively supported by people like Rabbi Falk when he advocated that "Shomrim can contribute...by leading such a Jewish life which will reflect honour to this community".<sup>48</sup>

With this Pledge, Shomrim indicated a serious concern for the physical and spiritual fate of the Jewish people, as well as the future of a Jewish State in *Eretz Israel*. These broad aims indicated a philosophy which was not so narrowly focused as to be restrictive and could adequately reflect the various degrees and areas of interest of the members of Shomrim.

### THE FIRST YEAR OF SHOMRIM IN REVIEW

In seeking to better understand the aims and objectives of Shomrim, it is possible to refer to their own publications. In November 1940, after one year of operation, Shomrim was seeking to review the activities of the year and to clarify its aims. In this document, three principle aims which reflected, in a more concise form, the Shomrim Pledge, were outlined. These were:

1. To further united efforts on behalf of Zionism in Australia and abroad.
2. To further the work of upbuilding the Jewish National Home and support the movements concerned therein, and,
3. To bring about a closer fellowship among all young Jewish people to create a more intimate understanding of life in the *Yishuv* and to give special attention to the study of the Hebrew language.<sup>49</sup>

It was also stated that The Shomrim was founded as:

a Zionist Youth Group desirous of forming a centre amongst the Jewish Youth of Australia for the purpose of educating themselves in Zionist and Palestinian matters and cultural ideas and to give service as a Youth Organization for Zionism in Australia. <sup>50</sup>

The activities undertaken by the organisation in their first year covered a very broad spectrum, in line with their aims, serving both as

an organisation with a strong propaganda base and broadly defined agenda, to a social association of like-minded young people who felt comfortable together. Activities included informational gatherings such as their fortnightly public meetings in the Maccabean Hall and the celebration of a monthly *Oneg Shabbat* which could serve as both an educational and social occasion; the celebration of Jewish Festivals such as *Channuka*, *Purim* and *Pessach*; physical activities of a social nature such as regular hikes which "helped the bands of friendship between members" and the organisation of larger functions, such as the celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Herzl.<sup>51</sup>

The first Annual Meeting of Shomrim, held on Saturday, 9 November 1940 at the Maccabean Hall, was well-attended. Guests included Rabbi Falk, Rabbi & Mrs Schenk, Mr N. Schureck<sup>52</sup> and Mr Steigrad<sup>53</sup> "who proved by their presence the important role the Shomrim after one year's work, already has attained".<sup>54</sup>

Following the review and passing of the minutes of the initial meeting and the Treasurer's report from Hans Curtis, Dr Wohlmüt (sic) reviewed the work of the past year and a discussion ensued. Dr Wohlmüt was then re-elected President. After the formal proceedings "the guests showed their keen interest in the Shomrim's work by giving addresses, amongst which much praise was given for the previous year's work and many constructive suggestions for the coming year put forward."<sup>55</sup>

It is apparent from the comments noted above that Shomrim had made significant strides towards finding a niche in the Jewish community and among the leading Zionists of the period. It would appear to have gained a certain "respectability" in Zionist circles. Indeed, most prominent Zionists in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as those visiting from overseas, were to become actively involved with Shomrim through attendance at or participation in Shomrim meetings or the lending of their support on special occasions. Shomrim enjoyed a status which could be described as almost unique among Zionist and/or Youth groups in that it was able to attract support from such a range of significant individuals. The list of guest speakers at Shomrim's regular meetings reads like a "who's who" of prominent Jewry, including lectures from several distinguished visitors and many local Zionist leaders.

## OTHER JEWISH YOUTH GROUPS

It would be incorrect to give the impression that Shomrim was the only Jewish youth group existing in Sydney in 1939 or, indeed, that it was the only Zionist youth group. At the time of the founding of Shomrim and shortly thereafter several youth groups were in existence, operating with varying degrees of success.



These organisations included *The Union of Sydney Zionists*, *Younger Set* who were active in 1939, when they were organising regular social and informational functions. There seems to have been some dispute within local Zionist ranks as to the value of such "social" functions, with as prominent a Zionist leader as Max Freilich offering objections to this "gentle" approach to Zionism. The *Sydney Jewish News* reported on a function held by the "Younger Set" to honour the president of the Junior Zionists of Vienna who was visiting the Sydney. He (the visitor from Vienna) had commented that:

The Young Zionists (in Vienna) entertained (sic) their members weekly and sometimes twice a week at different functions. Mr Schureck thought we should study their methods of keeping their people together. Mr Freilich was opposed to any kind of function at first. He said that it's not Zionism. Zionism is first to get members and then explain to them what Zionism really is.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, this group appears to have continued with social functions and, in September of 1939 the *SJN* noted that:

...good progress is being made by this organisation, and the ground is now well set for the future. Some excellent workers from among the new arrivals are adding their zest to make this set a feature of the many good Jewish bodies in this State.<sup>57</sup>

Other Zionist youth groups included the *Young Zionist League*. This organisation was apparently formed in the mid-1930s. "For a number of years its executive was very active arranging fortnightly social and cultural meetings with lectures on Zionist and general Jewish topics which attracted young people from a broad cross-section of the community".<sup>58</sup>

By 1939, however, the Young Zionist League had ceased to function. In early 1940, under the heading of the ZFANZ (Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand) the *Sydney Jewish News* was to report that:

The Young Zionist League has not been heard in our community for the last 12 months. Meanwhile the Jewish situation had deteriorated and the younger Jewish generation is confronted with serious problems concerning the future development of Jewish life. As a result of preliminary meetings which have been held in the last few weeks with a view to reviving the activities of the Young Zionist League have shown there is a definite necessity for the establishment of a platform where all the aspects of the welfare of Australian Jewry as well as the upbuilding of Palestine could be

studied and freely discussed.

It was therefore decided to call a public meeting of all young Jewish people who are willing to join a society which would continue the traditions of the Young Zionist League and broaden the scope of its activities.<sup>59</sup>

Other groups included the *Young People's League of Temple Emanuel* whose formation was announced in the *Hebrew Standard* on 16 November 1939. The aims and objectives of this group were outlined as follows:

The Aim of the League is to provide a medium for Jewish young men and women to meet together for the promotion of their cultural, spiritual and social development.

The Jewish Study Group will be under the personal guidance of Rabbi Schenk. Its field is extremely wide. Classes in modern Hebrew are to be established which will be open to all members of the League. Jewish history and Zionism will also be the objects of study. Indeed, the group may study the whole field of Jewish life, depending upon the interests of the members.<sup>60</sup>

The League was to carry on successfully throughout the war years under the guidance of Rabbi Schenk and a variety of elected presidents, ultimately having in excess of 200 members.<sup>61</sup>

Also active were *The Young WIZO*, which was described in *Shomrim News* as "an active group which undertakes work mainly connected with fund-raising for the Red Magen David. A certain amount of cultural work is also carried out and their membership on the whole seems to be quite keen", and *Habonim* which was described as "a youth movement dealing with the age-range from 11-17. The membership is about 50, and the movement is divided into three main age groups. The oldest age group accepts the responsibility for running the other groups. All the groups come together once a week".<sup>62</sup>

John Moser, in an article on "The Jewish Youth"<sup>63</sup> which was published in *Australian Jewish Forum* used this opportunity to promote Shomrim as "a promising Zionist youth club"<sup>64</sup> and to explain the ways in which Shomrim differed, in his view, from other Zionist youth groups of the day. These other groups were characterised as having a capricious existence for, "as a child likes a toy only for a short time, and then throws it away, so also the youth of this city has given up its Zionist activities". Shomrim, on the other hand is described as having "the Jewish essence".

Moser goes on to note that: "the peculiar fact is that this club has a limited number of Australians. It would be wrong to attribute this only



to a certain strangeness and shyness between the newcomers and Australian-born young people...It seems to be the lack of social functions, not the aims of the club, which keep the Australian youth away".<sup>65</sup> "So," Moser concludes, "out of a score of clubs, with often high-sounding names, we only find one or two groups which really concentrate on Jewish cultural work. The others only do this work in theory in their annual reports. As to Zionism, they mostly regard it as a philanthropical affair, and not as a vital question of the Jewish people".<sup>66</sup>

It should be remembered that Shomrim catered for a membership aged from 17 to 32 and so, while calling itself a youth organisation, Shomrim actually focussed on young adults. While each of the organisations noted above must have made some impact upon the life of Jewish young people in Sydney during the years of the Second World War, it was the Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation which was to have the greatest lasting benefit. It impacted on the personalities in the local Zionist Movement and expanded relationships between the young people of this period and the adult members of the Zionist community. Its members were to provide leadership for the local and, indeed national Zionist movement for many years ahead. Shomrim was to leave a legacy disproportionately greater than any other Zionist Youth group which was active in Sydney during this period.

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE JEWISH PRESS

During the initial eighteen months of its existence, Shomrim received consistent support from the Jewish press including the *Sydney Jewish News* (initially) and, later, the *Hebrew Standard* which carried notices for and reports of most Shomrim activities. It is not possible to determine at this point in time whether this support was due to some editorial policy of the newspapers involved or whether Shomrim, itself, had an active "press officer" who fed information to the papers on a regular basis. Suffice it to say that, by the middle of 1941, Shomrim's activities were no longer reported in the *Hebrew Standard* (the *Sydney Jewish News* having ceased reporting on its activities in April 1940 but resuming in 1942).<sup>67</sup>

For the first year and a half of its existence, however, Shomrim received coverage of both its social and informational activities. On a social level it was noted, for example, that more than sixty people came to the *Chanukah Party*<sup>68</sup> (the first listed social event arranged by the young Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation). Later, the Purim Cabaret Dance, which was being "arranged by Mr H. Price and Mrs Wolmuth, promises to be an outstanding attraction".<sup>69</sup> After the event, it was noted that there was a "full hall" and the evening was described as being "excellent".<sup>70</sup>



While social events may have been promoted in greater detail, the informational evenings were also mentioned, including the talk given to Shomrim by Rabbi Schenk on "Australian Enemy Aliens, Migrants and the War" <sup>71</sup> or his discussion of "Palestine".<sup>72</sup> Other speakers at the fortnightly meetings included Mrs Harris Cohen who was president of the NSW branch of the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO).<sup>73</sup> She addressed the gathering on "the true meaning of Zionism and the future of the movement".<sup>74</sup> Among others, Dr Shallit spoke on the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.<sup>75</sup>

Also noted in the Jewish Press was the monthly Oneg Shabbat where guest speakers, at various times, included the president of Shomrim, Dr H. Wolmuth as well as Rabbi L.A.Falk ( Assistant Minister of the Great Synagogue, Sydney), Mrs Faye Schenk (wife of Rabbi Schenk) and Dr I. Porush (Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue).<sup>76</sup> These gatherings appear to have been well-attended and popular with Shomrim membership.<sup>77</sup>

One coup scored by the young organisation was their introduction of Dr I.N. Steinberg to the Sydney Jewish community. Dr Steinberg was the proponent of the Kimberley Scheme for Jewish resettlement and his influence on some of the Jewish leaders of the day, as well as several members of the Shomrim, was considerable. On Sunday 29 February 1940 (just three days before he made his first "official", public address in Sydney) <sup>78</sup> he spoke to more than 100 people at a meeting arranged by Shomrim. At this meeting Steinberg was introduced by Dr Wolmuth and he "explained the Kimberley Scheme".<sup>79</sup>

It is of interest to note that, while, in 1939-40 Shomrim had received a considerable amount of support from the *Hebrew Standard*, by 1941 this goodwill was apparently destroyed due to the ongoing anti-Zionist philosophy adopted by the Editor of the *Standard* and the decision taken by the editors of *Shomrim News* to take issue with the editorial policy of the *Standard*. In its September 1941 issue, *Shomrim News* was used as a vehicle to attack the *Hebrew Standard* for its "Jewish Anti-Semitism", where it was criticised for "supporting without question all decisions of a British Government" which was considered "absurd".<sup>80</sup>

The December 1941 issue of *Shomrim News* carried a much more detailed article attacking the *Hebrew Standard* in response to a letter from "The Editor of this publication (who) instructed his solicitors to demand an immediate apology from our printer". The editors of *Shomrim News* felt that their "criticism was justified" and "refused an apology"<sup>81</sup>. The thrust of their argument was that the *Hebrew Standard* was recognised as a communal paper:

...we believe that the duty of such a communal paper is to uphold Jewish traditions; to foster Jewish culture and Jewish



education; to truthfully describe the tragic plight of our people today; to support Zionism, the historical movement of our people; to examine and support every movement which aims to ameliorate our position and finally to revive the Jewish consciousness.

It was perhaps a little naive to boldly state that a "communal paper" should "support Zionism" and "every (other) movement which aims to ameliorate our position" (an obvious reference to the Kimberley Scheme) when it is apparent that many Jews within the Jewish community of Sydney and others, such as Sir Isaac Isaacs in Melbourne, were not in the least supportive of Zionism or any "other movement".<sup>82</sup>

The editors of *Shomrim News* went on to criticise the *Hebrew Standard's* attacks on The World Jewish Congress, The Zionist Movement and The Kimberley Plan. "The Hebrew Standard's arguments against these movements are seldom based on Jewish ideological grounds but generally on the premise that we "British" Jews must not raise our individual voice on behalf of our Jewish brethren. We should leave Britain to solve our problems and be satisfied with her solution. What nonsense!" They also quote from the *Melbourne Jewish Herald*, which wrote of the *Hebrew Standard* that :

it seems a very great pity that in these days, arguments that were exhaustively examined fifty years ago and completely annihilated, should have been resurrected ...merely because someone with a myopic outlook should have suddenly encountered them for the first time.

The article concludes with the admonition to the *Standard* to "adopt a realistic and objective approach to all problems affecting Jewry" and the threat that "Until it does so, 'Shomrim News' will continue to attack the *Hebrew Standard*".<sup>83</sup>

Shomrim's stand was a bold one, when the age and status of the *Hebrew Standard* within the Sydney Jewish community as their "communal newspaper" is taken into account. It is interesting that Harris, the editor of the *Hebrew Standard*, took the comments in the *Shomrim News* (which amounted to less than half a page) so seriously that he took the time and effort to instruct his solicitor to send a letter threatening the editors of *Shomrim News* and demanding an apology. Could it be that this small (although increasingly professional) publication was becoming so widely read within the Jewish community that it posed a real threat to the rather one-sided views expressed in the *Hebrew Standard* which were actively supported by many within the hierarchy of The Great Synagogue?<sup>84</sup>

Following the souring of relations with the *Hebrew Standard*, Shomrim resumed its relationship with the *Sydney Jewish News*. From January 1942, a small column appeared almost weekly submitted by Shomrim discussing their activities and the themes of their fortnightly meetings, encouraging members to participate in the meetings of the *Kevutzot*<sup>85</sup> and inviting others to join them. They were also active in promoting their philanthropic efforts, which they informed their readers "will have to take a much bigger part in our activities than has so far been the case".<sup>86</sup> This column was also a way of reaching Shomrim members, alerting them the changes taking place in the organisation and informing them of Shomrim activities. This publicity alleviated, to some extent, the necessity of frequent circulars being sent to all members with the attendant mailing costs.

### AUSTRALIAN JEWISH FORUM

The one Jewish publication with which members of Shomrim were to have a unique relationship was *Australian Jewish Forum*. This periodical, which appeared on a monthly basis, was established by Dr I.N. Steinberg in 1941 largely as a vehicle for the promotion of the Kimberley Scheme, and operated for the first two years under his editorship. The paper attracted a number of leading Jewish intellectuals as contributors and on the editorial committee, including Rabbi L.A. Falk. It continued publication until 1949, when the formation of the State of Israel rendered any plan for Jewish settlement in the Kimberleys unnecessary thus removing the very basis for the paper's existence.<sup>87</sup>

Dissatisfaction with existing coverage of the Kimberley Scheme in the Jewish media, and the perceived need for an alternative voice which could cater for a wider variety of Jewish public opinion would seem to be the elements which brought *Australian Jewish Forum* into being. By offering a broad range of opinions and contributions from some respected members of the Australian Jewish community, the publication sought to establish its credibility, and the fact that it continued to exist for eight years pays tribute to the determination of its editorial committee. It would also seem to have established a readership and succeeded in achieving its aim of providing a "voice" for progressive members of the Australian Jewish community.

The *Australian Jewish Forum* apparently saw itself as a unique sounding-board for a wide range of Jewish opinion, for it:

...recognises that ALL Jews, no matter what their ideological sympathies or political creed, are bound together by an historical background and tradition that is common to them all...It is for this



reason that the necessity has arisen for evoking a feeling of awareness of a Jewish spirit, in the hearts and minds of our brethren in Australia, so that their tongues, hitherto voiceless, may be heard in the future counsels and direction of our communal affairs.<sup>88</sup>

In its very first issue (February 1941) the *Forum* editorial<sup>89</sup> especially directed its message to Australian Jewish youth with a "broad Jewish outlook and a warm Jewish heart" who were "called upon to help in this tremendous task" of finding solutions to assist world Jewry. It is evident that the Freeland League, Steinberg and others who supported the Kimberley Scheme hoped to strike a responsive chord in the youth, whom they hoped to find imbued with "the ideas of freedom and social justice, conscious of their moral obligations towards their brethren in the world",<sup>90</sup> who would assist in the task. Among the Shomrim membership, there were a number of individuals who had just such a strong moral conscience and who responded positively to this call.

Shomrim members were active contributors to *Australian Jewish Forum* and several of its issues were reviewed and recommended within *Shomrim News*,<sup>91</sup> where selected articles were described as being "passionate" or "brilliant". John Moser was a distributor for this publication and also a regular contributor. Subscription to the *Forum* was actively encouraged by David Falk who believed it would give readers a "broad Jewish outlook".<sup>92</sup> Falk<sup>93</sup> was listed as an active contributor to the *Forum*, alongside other Shomrim members; David Wells, John Moser and Ben Haneman.<sup>94</sup> Other contributors who were to have an active involvement with Shomrim included David Tabor, who founded the Habonim Movement in Melbourne and worked closely with Shomrim leadership in order to establish a national Habonim Movement in Australia.<sup>95</sup>

There was a strong cross-fertilisation taking place between these two publications, for articles from the *Forum* were reproduced in *Shomrim News*<sup>96</sup> and Shomrim was mentioned within *Australian Jewish Forum*.<sup>97</sup> Given the involvement of David Falk's father, Rabbi LA Falk, with the *Forum*, it is perhaps to be expected that this new, "progressive" publication would be presented in a very favourable light and actively recommended to the Shomrim membership.

From the evidence available, Shomrim would appear to have enjoyed an uneven relationship with the Jewish press, sometimes having their press releases printed and their forthcoming activities promoted, while at other times being "out of favour" and receiving little or no media coverage. Considerations regarding this need for the promotion of their activities would appear not to have hindered their criticism of the



mainstream Jewish press. Such criticism cost them the support of the *Hebrew Standard*, but Shomrim continued to promote its programme through its own publications including *Shomrim News* (in 1941) and *The Young Zionist* (in 1942).

The organisation's relationship with the alternate Jewish press, such as *Australian Jewish Forum* and the self-perception that Shomrim was different from other Zionist youth organisations in the uniqueness of its focus and the dedication of its members, set them apart from other Jewish youth organisations of the period and placed them firmly outside the "mainstream" of youth activity within the Sydney Jewish community during the Second World War.

## NOTES

1. *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)*, (20 October 1939) p.10. This meeting was to be held at 8 pm at the Council Rooms of the National Council of Jewish Women, 374 George St, Sydney.
2. This meeting was announced in a *Circular* from the *Habonim Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation* dated June 5, 1944 where it was termed a "General Meeting to decide important matters of our organisation".
3. For the first year of its existence these were regularly listed in the Jewish press, such as the *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)* or, more frequently, the *Hebrew Standard (HS)* (See *SJN* January 7, 1940; March 10, 1940 or *HS* August 29, 1940; September 26, 1940 etc.)
4. See *HS* Sept 12, 1940; October 19, 1940 etc.
5. See *SJN* February 18, 1940; *HS* October 20, 1940
6. See *SJN* December 22, 1939; March 15, 1940 etc.
7. See *Shomrim News (SN)* Vol.1. No.2. (July 1941) p.3 where, in the Hebrew Section of the magazine, Shomrim members are encouraged to attend Hebrew classes "held regularly at the Rabbi (Falk)'s home each Sunday night". R.Falk's willingness to teach Hebrew classes and Shomrim's acceptance of this offer was mentioned in its report of activities which appeared in the *Hebrew Standard* of 19 June 1941. Later, in the *Habonim Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation Review* May 1943, the commencement of Hebrew classes with a Dr Horowitz is noted.
8. First announced in the Shomrim's own publication, *Shomrim News (SN)* Vol 1 No 3 of August 1941.
9. These included the *Shomrim News (SN)* which ran for six issues in 1941, the *Young Zionist (YZ)* of 1942 and the *Habonim Shomrim Bulletin (HSB)* and *Halapid* of 1943.
10. *SN* Vol.1. No.6. (Dec. 1941) p. 24
11. Shomrim was announced as a "new Zionist group" in the Minutes of the 9th *Annual Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand*, held at the Maccabean Hall (Sydney) Wednesday, 17th April 1941 p.3. Dr Wolmuth and Mr H Price were listed as being present at that meeting.
12. *The Zionist* Vol.1 No. 2 (29 October 1943) p. 19 published by Zionist Federation of Australia & New Zealand.
13. *SJN*, 21 July 1939.



14. *Temple Emanuel Annual Report*, December 1944.
15. See Urofsky, M.I. (1976) op.cit. p. 350 ff.
16. *Temple Emanuel Annual Report*, December 1944 op. cit.
17. Freilich, M. *Zion in Our Time: memoirs of an Australian Zionist* Sydney: Morgan Publications (1967) p. 80.
18. Rabbi's Message in the *Temple Emanuel Annual Report* 1940
19. Conversation with Mrs Hilde Lightstone (8 April 1987)
20. Mentioned as President of Shomrim in *HS* (23 May 1940)
21. Gerhardt Lichtenstein was elected President at the 1941 Annual Meeting (*Report of the Activities of the Shomrim for the Year 1942* lists the date of the meeting as 29 November 1941). His enthusiasm for the position was mentioned in a *SHOMRIM Zionist Youth Organisation Circular* dated 26 February 1942.
22. Conversation with Hilde Lightstone op cit.
23. Among other things, their involvements included Rabbi Schenk talking to a Shomrim meeting on "Australian Enemy Aliens, Migrants and the War" (*SJN* 5 January 1940 p.6) and "Palestine" (*SJN* 5 April 1940) and Mrs Schenk being guest speaker at an *Oneg Shabbat* (*HS* 28 November 1940) and both R. & Mrs Schenk being present at Shomrim's first Annual Meeting (*HS* 28 November 1940) and , no doubt, on many other occasions.
24. *SN* Vol.1. No.4. (September-October 1941) p.2
25. *SJN* (20 October 1939) p.10
26. See Rutland, S. (1985b) "A Changing Community - the Impact of the Refugees on Australian Jewry: New South Wales - a case study" in Konrad Kweit/ John A Moses (Eds) "On Being a German-Jewish Refugee in Australia" *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* Vol. 31 No.1 pp. 90-108, wherein she notes that "(The YMHA) in June 1938 in conjunction with the Council of Jewish Women new rooms were rented at 374 George Street. They became an important social centre for both the established community and the newcomers, as well as providing kosher restaurant facilities".
27. *ibid.*
28. Rutland, S. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Pub. Sydney: Collins Australia) p.159
29. Edward Heller a newcomer from Europe was elected President of the Provisional Committee. He was later to involve himself in the Labour Zionist organisation *Haoved* where he was described as "it's mentor and guiding spirit". (see Freilich, M. op. cit. p.99) He later settled in Israel.
30. Maurice Isaacs was a well-known Jewish intellectual who was actively involved in the *Australian Jewish Forum (AJF)* magazine established by Dr I. N. Steinberg in 1941 (see the book review in *AJF* No. 10 (Dec. 1941) pp. 16-18). He later went to become President of the Young Men's' Hebrew Association (YMHA) (noted in Rutland, S. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora* p. 353)
31. The wife of Marcus Marks, a prominent Jewish personality of the period. They were the subject of rather uncomplimentary remarks in Max Freilich's biography. See Freilich, M. (1967) *Zion in Our Time* (Pub. Sydney: Morgan Publishers) p.35
32. Freilich's position in the Sydney Zionist scene will be noted later in this chapter.
33. Dr Shlomo Lowy arrived in Australia from Palestine in September 1939 to establish a permanent Jewish National Fund (J.N.F.) organisation in Australia. He was extremely supportive of Shomrim during his stay.
34. Evan Altschuler was to join the AIF and become a Corporal serving in

Malaya prior to the Japanese invasion. He is believed to have died while in captivity in Malaya. *Australian Archives* Series No. SP17141/1 Item No. N38652

35. *SJN* (3 November 1939) p.5
36. *SJN* (20 October 1939) p.10
37. *SJN* (3 November 1939) p.5
38. Rutland, Suzanne D. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora* p.157.
39. *ibid.* p.158.
40. Freilich, M (1967) *Zion* p.9.
41. Rutland, S (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora* p.159.
42. Freilich, M.(1967) *Zion* p. 49.
43. *ibid.* p.57.
44. *ibid.* p.66.
45. see Rutland, S. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora*. pp.302-303.
46. Freilich, M. (1967) *Zion*. p.49.
47. See Kaplan, M.(1970) *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood* ( NY: Macmillan) p.11.
48. *SN* Vol.1.No.4. (Sept. 1941) p.1
49. *The Shomrim, Annual Report*, November 1940 p.1
50. *ibid.*
51. *ibid.*
52. Norman Schureck, an assimilated Australian Jew, was a close friend of Max Freilich who interested him in Zionism. He went on to become actively involved in Zionist activities for many years. (See Freilich,M.(1967) *Zion*. pp.61-63)
53. Silva Steigrad was born in Palestine and came to Australia early in the century with his parents and family. He was an active and well-known speaker on Zionism and served in many capacities of leadership in Zionist organisations including as President of the Union of Sydney Zionists prior to W.W.II (see Freilich, M. *Zion*. p.49).
54. *HS* November 28, 1940 p.3
55. *ibid.*
56. *SJN* (23 July 1939).
57. *SJN* (8 September 1939).
58. Freilich, M. (1967) *Zion*. p.36.
59. *SJN* (9 February 1940) p.10.
60. *HS* (21 December 1939).
61. *Temple Emanuel Annual Reports 1940-1947* each contained a report on the progress of the Temple Emanuel Youth League for the preceding year and significant progress would appear to have been made during each of these years.
62. *SN* Vol.1. No.6. (Dec, 1941) p.23
63. Moser, John H.(1941a) "The Jewish Youth" in *Australian Jewish Forum (AJF)* Vol.1. No.2. pp.25-29
64. *ibid.* p.27
65. *ibid.*
66. *ibid.*
67. This support, or lack thereof, is somewhat ironic when it is considered that the *Sydney Jewish News* was established as the voice of the "newcomers" (see Rutland, S. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora* p.212) while *The Hebrew Standard*, under the editorship of Alfred Harris was distinctly anti-Zionist in tone and content (*ibid.* pp 161-2, 172, 186). It is possible to speculate that



the early leaders of Shomrim made a deliberate decision to liaise with the *Hebrew Standard*, despite the *SJN* giving it excellent initial coverage, in the hope that a wider Jewish readership could be reached and informed about its activities.

68. *SJN* (22 January 1940) p.10.
69. *SJN* (15 March 1940) p.10.
70. *SJN* (29 March 1940).
71. *SJN* (5 January 1940) p.6.
72. *SJN* (5 April 1940).
73. Mrs Harris (Rieke) Cohen was the founder of Ivriah, originally a Journal launched in 1935 following a split with Dr Fanny Reading. Ivriah was to become a Zionist women's movement and ultimately the NSW Branch of the WIZO which Mrs Cohen was to lead for many years. (See Rutland, S. (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora*. p. 305).
74. *HS* (29 August 1940) p.8.
75. *HS* (26 September 1940).
76. See *HS* (12 September 1940); (17 October 1940); (28 November 1940) p.3 & (9 January 1940).
77. The *HS* of 12 September 1940 reported that the " *Oneg Shabbat* was attended by more than 50 people. The *Havdalah* was recited by Harry Price". Following a talk by Dr Wolmuth and a discussion of life in Palestine, "Hebrew songs were sung and recordings of some of these were greatly enjoyed as was also a story by an American journalist - a true story with its setting in Palestine". As was customary *Hatikvah* and "God Save the King" concluded the evening. The *HS* of 10 October 1940 also reported on an *Oneg Shabbat* where the discussion "was followed by singing and games. Dr Lowy, who was present with Mrs Lowy, accompanied the singing with his guitar".
78. Announced in *HS* (29 February 1940) and reported in some detail in *HS* (7 March 1940) p.7 where "Dr Steinberg emphasised he had not come to Australia to ask for money, but to confront the Jews of this Continent with a problem that the Jews of Europe have had to grapple with since the advent of Nazism in 1933." At this meeting Dr Steinberg enjoyed the support of R. Falk (of the Great Synagogue) who "followed with an appeal for support for Dr Steinberg's mission. R. Schenk then moved and Dr F. Reading seconded a resolution in support of Dr Steinberg's mission".
79. *SJN* (1 March 1940) p.10.
80. *SN* Vol.1. No.4 (September 1941) p.10.
81. *SN* Vol.1. No.6. (December 1941) p.13.
82. See the section "In Defence of the Zionist Ideal" in the chapter *Shomrim and Zionism*, later in this thesis.
83. *SN* Vol.1 No.6 (December 1941). pp.13-14 This attack was included in what was to be the last issue of *Shomrim News* whose publication was officially terminated when permission to continue publishing was refused with the reason officially given as "paper rationing" (Letter from *Shomrim Zionist Youth Organisation* to supporters - March 1942). It is interesting to speculate as to other possible reasons for this repealing of permission for publication, coming so speedily after its attack on the *Hebrew Standard*. Such speculation has been discounted by Yehuda Feher, one of the editors of *Shomrim News* and someone actively involved in its production and Shomrim affairs. He has stated that the "paper shortage" was the sole reason for the forced termination of the printing of *Shomrim News*. As will be discussed in the Chapter on "Shomrim Publications", it did not take long before the Shomrim

were able to contribute to another publication, *The Young Zionist* in order to spread their message to Shomrim members and other Jewish youth.

84. For a discussion of the role and attitude of Alfred Harris and his use of the *Hebrew Standard* see Rutland, S.(1988) *Edge of the Diaspora*. pp.297-299
85. In their column in *SJN* (2 April 1942) p.8 Shomrim were "urg(ing) all Shomrim to attend their *Kevutzot* meetings regularly and to take an active part in all *Kevutzot* activities".
86. *SJN* (31 July 1942) p.8.
87. See Rutland, Suzanne (1988) *Edge of the Diaspora*. p.212.
88. *AJF* Vol.2. No.1 (January-February 1942) p.1 emphasis in original.
89. *AJF* Vol.1. No.1.(February 1941) pp.1-3 editorial "Our Way".
90. *ibid*.
91. *SN* Vol.1. No.1. (June 1941) p.3 gave a glowing review of the June-July (1941) Issue of *Australian Jewish Forum* which contained "a passionate appeal by the Editor for a united Jewish Communal day of sacrifice; a stirring article, fiery with emotion by the noted writer Ben Adir (New York) written for the Forum and translated by our friend David Wells [A member of Shomrim], Dr A. Patkin (Melbourne) contributes a brilliant essay remarkable for style and content, on 'Melech Ravisch and his Poetry' "etc.
92. *SN* Vol.1.No.3. (August 1941) p.16 where Falk writes that "I have just finished reading the August issue of the *AJF* from cover to cover and found it to be the most thought-provoking issue yet published".
93. David Falk "Jewish War Front" in *Australian Jewish Forum* Vol.1. No.3 (April 1941) pp.22-25.
94. B.H.(Ben Haneman) "The Australian Jewish Youth" in *AJF* Vol.1. No.1. (February 1941) pp.27-29.
95. David Tabor "Jewish Youth in Australia" in *AJF* Vol.1. No.8. (October 1941) pp.17-20 where Tabor discusses the background to the establishment of the Habonim Movement in England which achieved much "lacking both the funds and the approval of the influential sections of the (Jewish) community. It succeeded because it possessed something dynamic that the other movements lacked; because it started with young children and offered a happy synthesis of games and cultural activities conceived on a broad Zionist base".
96. An article by Lieut. E.J. Holloway, "Communal Settlement in Palestine" in *SN* Vol.1. No.3. *ibid*. pp.2-3 was reproduced from *Australian Jewish Forum* with "special permission".
97. Moser, J. H. "The Jewish Youth"*AJF* Vol.1. No.2. (March 1941) pp.25-29.



## “I NEVER KNEW A MAN WHO HAD SO MANY COUSINS”: DIFFERING ATTITUDES TO POSTWAR SURVIVOR MIGRATION: MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY.

*Suzanne D. Rutland*

**D**uring World War II it was almost impossible for immigrants to enter Australia. The European refugees who entered Australia during the war years were largely British internees, the majority arriving on the boat, the *Dunera*. In the immediate postwar years, the Jewish Welfare Societies in Sydney and Melbourne played a crucial role in the reception of survivors of the Holocaust. It was the significant difference in the leadership of Jewish Welfare in these two cities which resulted in the differing patterns of postwar immigration to Sydney and Melbourne, with resultant differences in the evolution of the two communities.

Following the cessation of hostilities in 1945, the Jewish Welfare Societies in Melbourne and Sydney resumed their pre-war activities of sponsoring immigrants from Europe, assisting private sponsors, meeting boats and providing help with accommodation and employment. The Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) in Sydney continued to be housed in the Jewish War Memorial, Darlinghurst, while the Melbourne Welfare Society was located in city premises at 443 Little Collins Street, shared with the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. The structure of the Welfare Societies in Melbourne and Sydney developed along different lines in this period.

In 1945 Melbourne Jewry had three different organisations concerned with immigration. These were the AJWS, the Association of Jewish Immigrants and the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund (UJORF). The AJWS, Melbourne, was controlled largely by Australian Jews, with Isaac Herbert Boas as its president from its establishment in 1937, Samuel Wynn being the only foreign-born Board member.<sup>1</sup> In comparison, the Association of Jewish Immigrants, led by Rabbi Herman Sanger, represented the pre-war refugee community from Central Europe while UJORF represented the Eastern European element.

In 1945 the Association of Jewish Immigrants continued to be critical of the Welfare Society's conservative policies.<sup>2</sup> At the November 1945

meeting of the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board (VJAB), Sanger proposed a motion that the VJAB should handle all matters pertaining to immigration by creating a sub-committee with its own, independent office. In support of the motion, Morawetz argued that the AJWS did not enjoy the confidence of the newcomers. It was reported that:

When Mr Morawetz said that the immigrants had a grudge against the Welfare Society because of its failure in the past, there were interjections to the effect that not only recent immigrants but others had no confidence in the Welfare Society.<sup>3</sup>

Masel attempted to rule this motion out of order, defending the AJWS on the grounds that it was only concerned with assisting newcomers, not with immigration policy. When the motion was put to the vote it was narrowly defeated (eight votes were in favour and nine were against).<sup>4</sup> The close vote reflected the general dissatisfaction with the AJWS.

UJORF, the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund, was established to raise funds and collect material to assist European Jewry. During the war years it had become a very active movement in Melbourne, collecting money, used clothing and other material goods which, in conjunction with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), were sent to possible distribution points in Europe. As a result of these activities it came to represent the full spectrum of Eastern European Jews in Melbourne, including Zionists, *Bundists* and the *Kadimah*. In 1945 its president was Leo Fink, whose parents and three brothers had settled in Melbourne in the late 1920s. The family originated from Bialystock in Poland and, in 1931, Leo Fink returned to visit his home town where he met and married Mina Waks who was to become his life partner in all his endeavours. The Fink family established the United Woollen Mills which provided employment for many of the Polish Jews who arrived in Melbourne both before and after the war.

After the war, UJORF continued as a Yiddish speaking, mass movement for the rehabilitation of survivors. Fink believed that it was not sufficient to send relief to Europe and that emigration was necessary for full rehabilitation.<sup>5</sup> UJORF members also believed that the AJWS lacked drive and carried out its activities. They saw Jewish welfare as merely a philanthropic concern while their organisation, because it represented Polish Jews most of whom had lost immediate family in Europe, saw the immigration question as 'a matter of life and death'.<sup>6</sup> Through UJORF, Melbourne's Polish Jews who had already formed townsfolk organisations (*landsmannschaften*) wished to bring out as many family members and townsfolk (*landslajt*) as possible to a new life in Australia.



The tensions which existed between these three different organisations in Melbourne were gradually resolved through amalgamation. In March 1946 the AJWS agreed that UJORF should deal with the deposits for transport money for close relatives as it was in a better position to remit money to Europe.<sup>7</sup> At the same time negotiations with the Association of Jewish Immigrants commenced and a basis for co-operation was found when Sanger and Benfey were invited to join the Board of Directors of the AJWS.<sup>8</sup> Concurrently, UJORF approached the AJWS offering co-operation with the reception of migrants, housing and employment. During these discussions Morawetz pointed out that UJORF had an active membership of 2000 and so 'could give the AJWS great support'<sup>9</sup> and the AJWS decided to invite UJORF to appoint two representatives to join its Board.

In August 1946 Boas resigned as chairman of the AJWS and Masel took over the position on a temporary basis with the assistance of Fink.<sup>10</sup> Harold Boas' leadership of the Welfare Society had been controversial since 1938. In April 1938 it was announced in the *Melbourne Herald* that 2,000 Austrian Jews wished to migrate to Australia. The following day Boas, then president of the VJAB, claimed that the Australian Jewish community was opposed to a large influx of refugees and that only 'carefully selected Jews' who were assured of employment, should be assisted. A few days later the Australian Jewish Herald regretted the publicity given to Boas' statement and then went on to stress that the 'Australian Jewish community does not consider that any sudden large influx is in the interests of the immigrants themselves' and that the 'stream should be regulated so as to give them a chance to be absorbed by the Australian people'. Before World War II Australian Jewry was prepared to assist the few refugees who would be absorbed easily but, because they feared the development of antisemitism, they were not prepared to fight for Australian assistance on a larger scale. These attitudes were to change radically in Melbourne following the dramatic leadership change of Victorian Jewish Welfare, while Sydney continued to be dominated by the previous conservative philosophy, at least until Saul Symonds' premature death in 1952.

Negotiations between the AJWS and UJORF for a total merger continued until May 1947 when terms were finalised. The new body was to be called the Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society of Victoria (AJW&RS). The president of UJORF was to be its president and the executive was to consist of two delegates from the AJWS, four delegates from UJORF and two delegates from the Association of Jewish Immigrants. After one and a half years the executive was to face new elections by the members of the new organisation which officially came into existence in July 1947.<sup>11</sup> With this merger, UJORF assumed control

of the AJWS. In many ways, it could be seen as a coup d'état carried out by UJORF which had the numerical and financial support required to dictate its own terms. Previously, the AJWS had been dominated by assimilated, Australian-born Jews and run as a charitable organisation, very orderly and Anglicised in its approach; after the merger the Welfare Society assumed a more humane approach and was much more active in every aspect of its migrant work.<sup>12</sup> Its executive were almost all Yiddish speaking and annual reports were always published with both English and Yiddish sections. It also understood the needs of the Melbourne *landsmannschaften* with which it co-operated in pursuing its immigration programme.

The Welfare Society in Sydney did not experience a similar revolution, continuing to be dominated by the Anglo-Jewish establishment. The Association of New Citizens (ANC), the Sydney equivalent of the Association of Jewish Immigrants, was a non-denominational organisation even though 90 per cent of its members were Jewish.<sup>13</sup> As such it could not develop close ties with the AJWS. Walter Brand, its general secretary from 1940 until his death in 1964, opposed the movement and wrote to the Department of Internal Security (the forerunner of ASIO) in 1945 warning against the ANC's activities. An English Jew, Brand reflected the Anglicised approach in his dealing with newcomers and his inability to speak either German or Yiddish created a gulf between himself and his clientele.<sup>14</sup>

UJORF in Sydney failed to develop into a mass movement because of the smaller percentage of East European Jews living there.<sup>15</sup> At a poorly attended UJORF fund raising meeting at the Sydney Town Hall in June 1946, the guest speaker, Rabbi Max Schenk, stated:

Sometimes I am ashamed to be a Jew among the Jews in Australia.. I am ashamed of their lack of response and their lack of feeling for the tragic plight of our brothers and sisters in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

In Sydney, UJORF continued to function as a fund-raising organisation for overseas relief until 1952 when it started to peter out and was incorporated with the Welfare Society in Sydney. The AJWS, however, did not change its name.

Symonds, president of the AJWS from 1944 until his early death in 1952, was strongly opposed to the new developments in Melbourne. When he became aware of UJORF's assumption of responsibility for fares, transport and other immigration matters he wrote to Masel:

I trust that the attempt by the Overseas Relief Fund to usurp the functions of both the Executive Council and the Victorian Welfare Society will be taken care of by your Advisory Board, as I think



that the matter should be straightened out, otherwise there will be a great deal of confusion and certainly unpleasantness.<sup>17</sup>

He was critical of Fink for 'taking action which was unauthorised by the ECAJ on immigration matters'<sup>18</sup> and for the overlapping of work between the AJWS and UJORF. He also opposed Melbourne UJORF collecting money to assist relatives by paying 50 per cent of the fares since, in Sydney, no such assistance was given.<sup>19</sup>

Symonds' hostility to various members of the AJW&RS led to disharmony in Sydney / Melbourne relations. He mirrored the more patronising Anglo-Jewish approach and was concerned with following the letter of the law as laid down by Calwell. After the UJORF takeover, the Melbourne approach was very different and every effort was made to ensure that the interpretation of the law was as flexible as possible. In 1946 Wynn approached Calwell in an effort to obtain landing permits for more distant members of his family. Symonds reproached him severely, stressing that in Sydney nephews and nieces were not included on lists as '(we) are very punctilious in not placing on our schedules any person who does not come within the prescribed categories'.<sup>20</sup> Wynn, in his reply, claimed that:

However, it appears that Sydney officialdom is as inflexible as hardened steel and even if it is a matter of life and death, the red tape must take its full course.<sup>21</sup>

The tensions between Melbourne and Sydney can be most clearly illustrated by the story of the *Johan de Witt* which was closely related to the imposition of quotas on Jewish survivors travelling to Australia.

When Calwell first announced the granting of landing permits to Jewish refugees on humanitarian grounds in August 1945, it was presumed that a considerable time would elapse before transportation to Australia became available. This was due to the severe shipping shortage which existed after the war and for this reason permits were made valid for two years instead of the customary one year period. The government emphasised that refugees would not receive priority with shipping and would have to travel on non-British ships since British ships were reserved for returning Australians, wives, families and fiancés of ex-servicemen and for British migrants.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the Jewish relief organisations were anxious for emigration to begin as soon as possible and they chartered ships regardless of age or comfort and wished to fill entire ships with Jewish refugees. In May 1946 the JDC approached the ECAJ with this proposal but Calwell vetoed the idea. In June 1946 Masel cabled Europe that no

boat was to be chartered for 'any special racial group'<sup>23</sup> and in mid 1946 Calwell imposed a limit on the number of Jewish refugees permitted to travel on any one ship from either Europe or Shanghai to 25 per cent of the total number of passengers. This quota was called *numerus clausus* as it was reminiscent of restrictions placed on Jews in Eastern Europe. It made travel from Europe to Australia for Jewish refugees very difficult, as few non-Jewish refugees were in the position to travel to Australia from the continent. Jewish refugees were assisted by their families in Australia and by the American Jewish refugee agencies, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), support which was not available to gentile refugees, as there were no parallel Christian organisations. In addition, continentals who were in the position to finance a trip to Australia were not interested in travelling on the refugee boats, since conditions on the troopships hired by the JDC and HIAS were so appalling that they were referred to as 'hell ships'. As a result, the Jewish refugee organisations which sought to book passages for their clientele who had received landing permits for Australia found that it was most difficult to fill the remaining 75 per cent of the quota.

The Australian Jewish leaders mistakenly believed that the 25 per cent quota had been imposed because of Calwell's fear of the effect of a negative reaction to his migration policies before the federal elections of September 1946. When the quota restrictions were not lifted after the election Charles Jordan, the JDC representative in Shanghai, wrote to the AJWS, Sydney, stressing that:

Your repeated hints on the undesirability of sending shiploads of refugees seemed to make sense before the election ...But since the Labor government and Mr Calwell have won the election we are at a loss to understand why people holding valid landing permits for Australia should be discouraged from making use of these permits...<sup>24</sup>

Jewish leaders in Melbourne also believed that after the September election the quota would be lifted and on 9 October 1946 Melbourne UJORF cabled JDC and HIAS giving them the 'go-ahead' to book as many Jewish migrants onto each ship as they could. On 19 October 1946, however, another cable was received in Paris stressing that the 'maximum any vessel twenty-five per cent' must still be observed.<sup>25</sup>

The continuation of the quota system after September 1946 created problems for the *Ville d'Amiens* and the *Monkay*, the first refugee ships to leave Europe for Australia as both had booked a higher percentage of Jewish refugees some of whom had to delay their passages. Further difficulties developed when the next French ship bound for the Pacific



was cancelled at the last moment because of the Indo-China war. A large number of Jewish refugees, who were admitted to France on short-stay visas only, were left stranded and so 600 of them were booked onto the next boat, a Dutch ship, the *Johan de Witt*.<sup>26</sup> The HIAS Paris office telephoned Leo Fink and asked him to speak to Calwell in person to request him to waive the quota for this voyage. Fink travelled immediately to Canberra and saw Calwell who agreed to this request.<sup>27</sup> Calwell later explained that he made this decision because he was advised that 'considerable hardship would be caused if the original embarkation plans were not followed' and that 'conditions on the vessel would not be suitable for British migrants'.<sup>28</sup> Symonds later reprimanded both Fink and Calwell because, as President of the ECAJ, he had been bypassed.<sup>29</sup> In response to Symonds letter, Calwell wrote a strong letter of protest to Leo Fink complaining that Fink had misled him.

Mina Fink later explained that Calwell had been obliged to take this stance publicly, but in private he had great admiration for Leo Fink whom he later called 'The Jewish Minister for Migration'. Given Melbourne's broader definition of family, Calwell also said of Leo Fink that "he never knew a man who had so many cousins" because Fink, and his other close associates such as Jacob Waks and Abram Sokol, believed that "all Jews are family" and that they would be prepared to guarantee any Jewish survivor and sponsor their migration to Australia as part of the family reunion programme. As noted above, Sydney's definition of family was much narrower, in keeping with the prevailing view of the government of the time.

Apart from the *Johan de Witt*, the *Hwa Lien* from Shanghai was the only other boat where more than the 25 per cent quota was permitted. This latter concession was negotiated with the help of Donald S. Kilpatrick of the Australian legation, Nanking.<sup>30</sup>

Hostels were another subject of tension and debate between Sydney and Melbourne. The importance of hostels was summed up in the annual report of the AJW&RS, Melbourne when it was stated:

It is needless to dwell lengthily on the importance of having hostels for immigration. Without any exaggeration we state that if it was not for the existence of these hostels, we would not be able to receive such a great number of immigrants.<sup>31</sup>

The first Jewish hostel to be established in Australia in the post-war period was opened by the Bialystoker *landsmannschaft* in Melbourne. In 1945 there were in Melbourne about one hundred families who originated from Bialystock and its surrounding district in Poland and had settled in Melbourne in the late 1920s and 1930s through the process of chain

migration, the most influential of these families being the Fink family. The Bialystoker *landsmannschaft* was formed with the aim of extending relief to their *landslajt* in Europe and to encourage and assist them to immigrate to Melbourne.<sup>32</sup> In order to further this aim, a company entitled 'Shelter and Aid Pty Ltd' was created in December 1945 to purchase a property, part of the deceased estate of Archie Michaelis's father, in St Kilda.<sup>33</sup> The property was later described as 'a two storeyed brick villa containing nineteen rooms and conveniences, also a four roomed cottage... at the rear of the building which had spacious grounds and lawns'.<sup>34</sup> The property was bought for £12,000, £6,000 of which was raised by Abram Sokol in Shanghai.<sup>35</sup> Sokol was one of the group who had escaped from Lithuania via Russia and Kobe, Japan, and he arrived in Australia during the war.<sup>36</sup>

The establishment of the Bialystoker Centre created a series of problems in relation to both the government and the ECAJ led by Saul Symonds. After its purchase in December 1946 a misunderstanding arose with Calwell who made a press statement criticising the new hostel. Masel, then president of the AJWS in Melbourne, immediately contacted Calwell to clarify the situation.<sup>37</sup> Then, in 1947 the Bialystoker Centre appealed to their confreres in Canada for financial assistance. The Bialystoker Centre, Montreal, wrote to Saul Hayes of the Canadian Jewish Congress asking for information on the Melbourne branch. Hayes wrote to Saul Symonds because he was the incumbent president of the ECAJ and Symonds replied, criticising the work of the Melbourne Bialystoker Centre.<sup>38</sup> Symonds was questioned on this action by Reubin Havin, editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald*, and he replied that he believed that the Centre was doing excellent work regarding the reception of newcomers but 'this did not apply to the group itself... [there are] aspects of the group which I did not approve, one of which is the methods by which certain permits had been obtained'.<sup>39</sup>

The need for additional transit facilities in Melbourne became more pressing in 1947 with the larger number of immigrants arriving from Europe. In December 1947 the Melbourne Welfare House, known as Camberwell House or HIAS House was purchased. The property was a two-storeyed big villa with 17 rooms, balconies and conveniences and was able to accommodate between 70-80 people.<sup>40</sup> Mina Fink became chairperson of the House Committee which ran the large house on an efficient basis.

In 1949, following the government's policy decision of October 1948 to strictly enforce the accommodation guarantee, four smaller hostels were acquired by the Welfare Society in Melbourne and in 1950 a two further hostels were acquired.<sup>41</sup> In addition, accommodation was provided by two other *landsmannschaften*, the Radomer Centre and the Warsaw Jewish Centre. The latter was established in June 1947 with



the aims of fund-raising, sponsoring landing permits, financial assistance to Warsaw *landslajt* and the provision of accommodation.<sup>42</sup> The Warsaw Committee initially rented a house which could provide accommodation for up to 100 people.<sup>43</sup> In February 1951 it acquired a property in Punt Road, South Yarra, with a £10,000 loan from the AJW&RS.<sup>44</sup> In 1956 the AJW&RS had to move from its central offices in Little Collins Street, Melbourne, and after a period of negotiation the Punt Road property became its central offices in 1957.<sup>45</sup> As a result of these activities in acquiring hostels in Melbourne (for a detailed list see Appendix I) over 400 people were accommodated in 1949-1950, over 1,000 were housed in 1950-1951 and 1,400 in the period 1951-1952.<sup>46</sup> After that, as immigration numbers dropped, so did the numbers of hostels so that a few were either sold or used for other communal purposes.<sup>47</sup> The remaining hostels continued to be full because of the more difficult cases who tended to be long stayers.

The tensions between Sydney and Melbourne Welfare Societies continued until Symonds' death in 1952. His successor, Sydney David Einfeld, who was president of the AJWS, Sydney, 1952-1977, introduced a completely different approach as he would not tolerate a rigid or superior attitude to newcomers. Einfeld's assumption of the presidency in 1952 led to a new period of co-operation between Sydney and Melbourne on immigration matters. This functioned on both an official level and also on a personal level where a close understanding emerged between Einfeld and Fink.<sup>48</sup>

There are a number of reasons why there was such strong East European Jewish migration to Melbourne, rather than Sydney, after the war. The differences can be traced back to migration patterns of the 1920s when Carlton in the North of Melbourne became the focus of East European Jewish immigrants. During the 1920s and 1930s Carlton developed an intensity of Jewish life and Yiddish culture which was unknown in Sydney. As a result of chain migration through the *landsmannschaften*, more Polish Jews settled in Melbourne immediately before World War II than in Sydney. It was these newcomers who contributed to the changes in Melbourne, building on the basis already created by the earlier wave of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. They also contributed to the emergence of UJORF during the war years as such a significant organisation in Melbourne. Leo Fink's leadership abilities at the helm of UJORF and his team work with his wife, Mina, were also extremely important.

After the war 60% of Holocaust survivors settled in Melbourne and only 40% in Sydney. The Sydney Jewish community, which from the time of federation until 1945 had been the largest Jewish community in Australia, was overshadowed by Melbourne Jewry after 1945. These changes were a direct result of the differences in leadership origins and

style between Sydney and Melbourne. As Calwell had said of Leo Fink "I never knew a man who had so many cousins". It was the broader concept of family among the East European Jews which led to Melbourne having the largest percentage of Holocaust survivors on a proportionate basis of any city outside of Israel. This was in spite of the discriminatory policy practised by the Australian government towards Jewish survivors through the imposition of quotas and other measures, a policy which definitely reduced the number of Holocaust survivors who were able to settle in Australia.

## NOTES

1. Other prominent members associated with Melbourne Jewish Welfare were Dr J. Leon Jona, Alec Masel, Frances Barkman and Archie Michaelis. Minutes of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS), Melbourne Branch, 5 July 1939 and 18 April 1945. See also Peter Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community*, Melbourne, 1969, pp.164-165.
2. Australian Jewish Welfare Society Minutes, Melbourne, 7 December 1945.
3. *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)*, 23 November 1945.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Interview with Mina Fink, Melbourne, October 1984.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Minutes of the AJWS, Melbourne, 11 March 1946.
8. *Ibid.*, 26 April 1946.
9. *Ibid.*, 8 July 1946.
10. *Ibid.*, 5 August 1946.
11. *Ibid.*, 11 May 1947.
12. Interview with Mina Fink, Melbourne, October 1984.
13. See the Dr Max Joseph collection, Archive of Australian Judaica, Rare Books section, Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
14. Walter Levi Brand, born 3 June 1893 in London, visited Australia in 1911 on a business trip. He decided he would like to return to Australia but with the outbreak of World War I he enlisted, serving with distinction and receiving a 'Mons' medal. In 1920 he emigrated to Australia where he was involved in business until he accepted the position of General Secretary of the AJWS in 1940. He was active in a number of communal organisations including the Montefiore Home, the Sydney Jewish Aid Society, the Jewish Ex-Servicemen's Association and the NSW War Memorial, serving as president of the last institution.
15. *Australian Jewish Forum*, March 1945. The article commented that 'unlike the Relief Fund in Melbourne, the Sydney organisation has not yet become a people's movement'. Similar comments were made in *Ibid.*, June 1946.
16. *YMHA News*, 11 July 1946.
17. Symonds to Masel, 5 November 1946, Box E18, ECAJ Corres. Files Feb.-Oct. 1946, Archive of Australian Judaica.
18. Symonds to Fink, 27 March 1947, Box E7, ECAJ Corres. Files Nov.1946-April 1947, Archive of Australian Judaica.
19. *Ibid.*, Symonds to Ashkanasy, 8 January 1947.
20. Symonds to Wynn, 9 July 1946, in Corres. with Sydney office in which file



- Symonds included some of the acrimonious letters he had received from Melbourne in 1946, 20/1/48-7/5/49, Box E18, ECAJ Corres. Files, Archive of Australian Judaica.
21. Ibid., Wynn to Symonds, 15 July 1946.
  22. Imm: Entry into Australia. LPs for Refugees', Cable 28 June 1946, Corres. Files, Department of Ext. Affairs, Australian Archives Office, CRS A1067, Item, 1C/46/31/1/14.
  23. Minutes AJWS, Melbourne, 3 June 1946.
  24. Charles Jordan to Brand, 8 October 1947, Box E18, ECAJ Corres. Files, Archive of Australian Judaica. The Jewish community assessed the political situation incorrectly. The ALP was confident of winning the 1946 election, unlike the situation in 1949.
  25. Jointfund — Emigration Paris — 'Australian Immigration Possibilities: Information Manual Memo on Australia', 19 October 1946; and Symonds to Jordan, 14 October 1946, Box E18, ECAJ Corres. Files, Archive of Australian Judaica.
  26. Symonds to Masel, 23 January 1947, Box E7, ECAJ Corres. Files, Archive of Australian Judaica.
  27. Interview with Mina Fink, Sydney, January 1985.
  28. Ministerial statement published in *Courier Mail*, 11 February 1947.
  29. Symonds to Fink, 31 January 1947 and Symonds to Calwell, 12 February 1947, Box E7, ECAJ Corres. Files, Archive of Australian Judaica. In response to Symonds' letter, Calwell wrote to Fink reprimanding him for bypassing the correct channels of communication through the ECAJ in regard to the *Johan de Witt*.
  30. Ibid., Jordan to Symonds, 7 December 1946.
  31. Annual report, AJW&RS, Melbourne, 1950-1951.
  32. A. Junowicz to L. Fink, 23 June 1940 and M. Heller, acting president, to L. Fink, 27 June 1950, AJW&RS, Melbourne. Heller pointed out that 'this action was only taken when I brought up this matter while in Sydney'.
  33. Masel to Bloom, Box E7, ECAJ Corres. Files, 1946-1947, Archive of Australian Judaica.
  34. Report by S.G. Collis, 24 September 1948, Australian Archive Office, CRS A434, Item 50/3/4844.
  35. Fink to Symonds, 29 July 1947, Box E7, ECAJ Corres Files, 1946-1947, Archive of Australian Judaica.
  36. Interview with Chaskal Davis who arrived in Australia from Bialystok, Sydney, 1985.
  37. B. Wall (Australian Immigration officer) to Bloom, 10 December 1946, Box E7, ECAJ Corres. Files 1946-1947, Archive of Australian Judaica.
  38. Symonds to Saul Hayes, national executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress, 22 August 1947, Box E5, ECAJ Corres. Files, August-December 1947.
  39. Ibid., Symonds to Reubin Havin, 21 October 1947.
  40. Ibid., Report of S.G. Collis, 3 December 1948.
  41. See Appendix I.
  42. Minutes of the Warsaw Jewish Committee, AJW&RS, Melbourne.
  43. Report of S.G. Collis, 5 April 1949, cit. sup.
  44. AJW&RS Minutes, Melbourne, 5 February 1951.
  45. Ibid., 2 February 1956.
  46. Annual Reports, AJW&RS, 1949-1952.
  47. See Appendix I.
  48. Interviews with Mina Fink, Melbourne, October 1984, and Billie Einfeld, Sydney, October 1988.

## APPENDIX I

### HOSTELS ESTABLISHED IN MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY, 1945-1960

#### MELBOURNE HOSTELS

Hostel	Address	Date of Purchase	Type of Accommodation	Date of Sale/Reuse
1. Bialystoker Centre	19 Robe St. St Kilda	July 1947	Large house, bed and breakfast	--
2. Camberwell House	818 Bourke Rd. Camberwell	December 1947	Reception house. Accommodate up to 80 people. July 1955 renovated	--
3. A.S. Rose House	29 Herbert St. St Kilda	March 1949	Could accommodate over 30 people in 12 rooms. Bought with the assistance of the American Jewish Labor com.	Later self-contained flats for the elderly
4. Ziegelbaum House	885 Drummond St. North Carlton	September 1949	Purchased by Northern Suburbs com. converted into medical centre, 1951	Sold 1954
5. David Abzacs House	912 Drummond St North Drummond	December 1949	Small House, bed and breakfast	1954 rented by the Peretz School
6. Coburg House	1 The Grove Coburg	October 1949	Small House bought in the name of Mutual Enterprises	1956 registered as apartments for elderly
7. E.H. Komlos	238 McKeen St. North Fitzroy	May 1950	10 roomed house	sold July 1955
8. Kew House	73 High St. Kew	1950	Small house	March 1953 cleared to be sold
9. Warsaw Jewish Centre	466 Punt Rd, South Yarra	February 1951	Previously rented property at 192 Tooranga Rd, Tooranga. Large two-storey house	Mid 1955 - AJW & RS October 1957 society headquarters
10. Radomer Centre	--	--	Operated by the Radomer landsmannschaften	--
11. Frances Barkman Home	Maleela Ave, Balwyn	1947	Previously Larino children's home	sold 1958



## SYDNEY HOSTELS

Hostel	Address	Date of Purchase	Type of Accommodation	Date of Sale/Reuse
1. Chelsea Park	Baulkham Hills	1939	Bought as an agricultural training farm. Later used for temporary accommodation	sold 1952
2. Chip-Chase; later Komlos	34 Greenwich Rd, Greenwich	March 1949	Large two-storey home. Full board provided	sold 1965
3. Chatswood	32 Albert St, Chatswood	August 1950	Small house, bed and breakfast	sold 1954
4. Waverley	29 Ashton St, Waverley	August 1950	Small house, bed and breakfast	sold 1959
5. Greenwich	Greenwich Rd, Greenwich	March 1951	House with eight rooms to accommodate eight families, b&b	--

## BRISBANE HOSTEL

Hostel	Address	Date of Purchase	Type of Accommodation	Date of Sale/Reuse
1. Welfare House	41 Lindon St, Dutton Park	November 1948	Could house up to 20 people	sold 1952

## BOOK REVIEWS

### CHILD SURVIVORS: ADULTS LIVING WITH CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

by Paul Valent, Melbourne, William Heineman, 1994, pp.xii, 288.

Not too long ago I participated in an academic conference on children's literature. I am not an expert on children's literature, but in response to the cajoling of some of my colleagues who were organising the conference I had agreed to present a paper on children's literature of the Holocaust. I will not look back on this experience as having been a mistake, but I must admit to having had a number of misgivings about agreeing to do the paper once I began. It wasn't that I found myself out of my depth so far as the Holocaust was concerned – far from it – nor was I unfamiliar with survivor literature, a genre on which I had based at least one thesis and several published works. My major problem was that, for the very first time, I was looking in depth at the experiences of a group of Jews whose martyrdom (though not their memory) is often overlooked in discussions of the Holocaust: the children.

Nazism targeted Jewish children with a dedication and persistence unmatched for other categories of victims. Elie Wiesel, a Jewish child who suffered but survived, recently wrote that, of all the crimes of the Nazis, "the war against the Jewish children will remain the worst, the most vicious, and the most implacable in recorded history".<sup>1</sup> The reason for the Nazis seeking to target Jewish children was, however despicable, relatively simple: by wiping out all Jewish children the Nazis would be able to deprive the Jewish people of a future. Heinrich Himmler, head of the Gestapo, said as much in a speech on 6 October 1943 when he announced that it would not be wise to only kill adult Jews, as their children would grow into avengers against the next generation of Germans. "The decision had to be made," he said, "to annihilate as well every Jewish child and to make this people disappear from the earth...This is being accomplished."<sup>2</sup>

Children who managed to survive the experience of the Holocaust could never be like other children. As adults they have been shaped by early developmental processes of an unprecedented kind. *Child*



*Survivors*, by Paul Valent, examines the experience of child survivorship from the perspective of adults looking back, and I unhesitatingly recommend it to those who seek to explore further the traumatic impact of the Holocaust on children who survived into adulthood.

How did children perceive what was happening to them? Just as importantly, how have these events been remembered, and for what purpose? It must be recalled that many children seemed to adapt extremely quickly to the circumstances into which the Nazis had cast them, and this book goes a long way to explaining just how far the experience of the Holocaust penetrated young minds – even of those who lived relatively secure from its most destructive effects.

Through the case studies of ten adults who as children lived through the Holocaust, Dr Valent has woven a rich tapestry of variegated shapes and colours. The methodology he has adopted is on the surface a simple one, yet the technique of interviewing people who have undergone massive psychic trauma as children requires particular professional skills as well as such indefinable personal qualities as empathy and tact. Dr Valent would appear from this book to possess these qualities in large measure. Each story is presented in the first person, as related by the individual to the author, and topped off by a short analytical discussion by Dr Valent. At the very end of the book a longer general discussion of the trends and comparisons is made. The book is thus both simple and complex at the same time, fully justifying Dr Valent's claim that it can be read on a number of levels and appreciated by a variety of different audiences.

Those interviewed in this book are all Australian Jews. Almost all are from Melbourne, a world centre among Holocaust survivor communities. As children, they came from a variety of European countries: we meet children from France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Holland, Germany and Austria. They lived through an equally diverse range of experiences, whether as partisans in the forest or hiding with their parents, being "farmed out" to relatives or non-Jews (some kind, others not, and often for a price), or in places such as the Theresienstadt ghetto. We read of a multitude of traumatic incidents: of exposure to bombing; of separation from loved ones; of witnessing the debasement of parents at the hands of the Nazis; of the ever-present fear of being turned in; of living in permanent darkness, in cramped conditions, or in utter silence; of physical and sexual abuse of the worst kind. We learn from this book that a Nazi mentality is not limited only to card-carrying Nazis, and that some of those who claimed to be saving Jewish children's lives – for whatever reason – were far from saintly figures acting altruistically.

Finally, through Dr Valent's use of the skills of psychotherapy, we are taken on a journey the likes of which we might never again be able

to make: that is, nothing less than into the minds of Jewish children living through the Holocaust. This book is, in my view, as close as we can ever come to understanding what that experience was like for children at the time. Dr Valent then takes the themes recounted one step further by also asking questions as to what impact these experiences have had on the formation of the adults into whom these children grew.

I recommend this book very highly. The stories told here range through the poignant, tragic, heroic and pathetic. At no time are they uninteresting, and with Dr Valent's commentaries at the end of each interview we are apprised of the broader significance of the stories we are reading. The individual parts make up a powerful whole, which should achieve a wide readership. The title of this book might lead to some people missing its universal appeal, and that is unfortunate: I would encourage as many people as possible to avail themselves of *Child Survivors*, as it is ultimately a work which touches on the common humanity of us all, and is a testament to courage, perseverance against the odds, and the child's optimistic belief in ultimate survival which cannot be completely destroyed. In this optimism there is a lesson for us all.

I do not think that this is the major point of Dr Valent's book, but it is certainly the one which has had the most powerful impact on me. I urge everyone to read this work. You will be moved, and you may be shocked; but while you will not be entertained – this is hardly an entertaining topic – neither will your understanding of what it is to be human be diminished.

## NOTES

1. Elie Wiesel, "The Holocaust's First Target", *Dimensions*, vol.6, no.2, 1992, p.8.
2. This is an oft-quoted statement. My reference here is Jack Eisner, *The Survivor*, London, Sphere Books, 1982, p.iii.

Paul R. Bartrop



## A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HENRY J. COWAN

*by Henry J. Cowan, Foundation Professor of Architectural Science,  
University of Sydney, Department of Architectural and Design Science,  
University of Sydney and Hermitage Press, Sydney, 1993, pp254.*

“**T**he House that Jack Built” might have been a very good title for this fascinating autobiography of Jack Cowan, foundation professor of Architectural Science at the University of Sydney. Having held the chair for 31 years, he retired ten years ago and left a legacy of innovative ideas, challenging concepts and professional standards in a field which a fellow academic once described as “a contradiction in terms”.

With the thoroughness that apparently was to stay with him all of his academic life, he embarked on new disciplines like a bull terrier, letting nothing escape his desire to acquaint himself with every aspect of the subjects he was to teach with all the enthusiasm and vigour that impressed his students for many years. With a very small but enthusiastic staff he was able to offer new courses as the need arose and to adapt rapidly to new practices as well as embracing new computer technology which he saw as the future direction for his chosen discipline.

This book deals with so much more than architecture and architectural science. It is an historical and geographical journey from early twentieth century Europe to late twentieth century Australia; it is the physical, intellectual and philosophical journey of a man from his teens to his seventies. It is written with humour and insight in an easy style for readers both familiar and unfamiliar with architectural disciplines and Australian society. Chapters dealing with architectural and engineering problems are written in a manner which does not frighten the lay reader and give an insight into the rigorous enthusiasm and tenacity with which Professor Cowan obviously approaches all his problems. Professor Cowan was a model and guide for many overseas students who returned to their native lands after graduating here and made good use of their degrees in a new discipline.

The book is obviously intended for readers from many backgrounds. It begins with his life in Glogau, originally in Germany, now in Poland, the gradual disintegration of a peaceful existence as the Nazis rose to power and his father's decision to send him to England at the age of 15. Then follows his schooling in England, life in Manchester at University, his internment in 1940 and transfer to Canada; his enlistment in the Pioneer Corps and transfer to the Royal Engineers. Then there is service in France and medical discharge. All this gives the background to his

chosen career and his rising to every new and challenging role he was to play in his long academic life. He developed the first undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Architectural Science in Australia, founded the Architectural Science Review, has written twenty books and supplied hundreds of contributions and thousands of book reviews for publications in his field.

Just as he is able to draw excellent word pictures of places and people, he also describes vividly the tensions of the close university atmosphere, the rivalries of the Opera House design competition, the student revolts of the seventies and the controversy over tall buildings.

An autobiography is, by definition, a very personal accounting of one's life and Professor Cowan has taken the opportunity to reflect on many social and political aspects of the time and places in which he found himself. The book is a most interesting insight into the man behind the discipline as well as the discipline itself.

Helen Bersten

## NO TIME TO GROW. THE STORY OF THE GROSS-BREESENERS IN AUSTRALIA

*by W. S. Matsdorf, Edited by Richard Dreyfus, published for Hilda Matsdorf from a manuscript deposited by the author in the Archive of Australian Judaica, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1994. 144 pp. Indices, Bibliography and glossary. \$20 + \$2.00 (postage).\**

**W**olfgang Matsdorf was born in Berlin and emigrated to Australia in 1938, initially finding employment as migration officer with the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and later returning to work with the AJWS. As Richard Dreyfus writes in his introduction, Wolf Matsdorf had tremendous social conscience, which expressed itself in numerous directions. "None were more valuable than his tireless efforts to obtain 'guarantors' in Australia who would 'vouch' for Jews who appealed to him from Germany for entry visas to Australia." Among those for whom he 'vouched' were the Gross-Breesen boys.

Gross-Breesen was a Silesian estate owned by a Jewish family who, after Hitler came to power in 1933, were obliged to return to Poland. Between 1936-9, Gross-Breesen became one of the most important German centres for preparing young Jewish men and women for emigration by giving them training in agriculture. The program was directed towards ultimate settlement in overseas countries.

In November 1938, pogroms swept over Germany, and Gross-Breesen and its residents were exposed to a reign of terror. In a chapter with



the subtitle: "Youth Without Faith," the author provides the key to the title: "No Time to Grow." The continual struggle for a place to work crushed the energies of the young people, stunting their growth and development. Many were non-believers.

The book provides a record of the Gross-Breeseners' Australian life stories, written, told and analysed after thirty years. As the writer admits, the fact that most of the Gross-Breeseners survived and settled is a testimony to their resourcefulness, learnt through their training at Gross-Breesen. Though making no claims to having written a scientific study, the author nevertheless sets out to analyse available records, statements, and interviews, personal commentaries from former trainers and friends and other resources. Other information has been added from the collective letters which Curt Bondy, the founder-mentor of the Gross-Breesener school had exchanged with former Gross-Breeseners.

The result is a testimonial that bears witness to resourcefulness and courage. As one Gross-Breesener comments: "Gross-Breesener gave us the ability to rely on one's own strength, on the importance of the family group and on the beauty of knowledge". This book is a warm story of human endurance, a fitting tribute from a man whose own efforts for the numerous disadvantaged sections of the Australian Jewish community through his work for Jewish welfare generally "were without ceasing."

Marianne Dacy

## EARLY AUSTRALIAN ZIONISM: AN ANNOTATED INDEX OF RECORDS IN THE CENTRAL ZIONIST ARCHIVES

by Marianne Dacy, general editors: A.D. Crown and N.A. Radford  
Jerusalem. Sydney (*Archive of Australian Judaica, University of  
Sydney*), 1993. Monograph No 9, 50 pp. \$5.0 + \$1 for postage.\*

For many years, researchers into early Australian Zionism have been hampered by the lack of primary source material in Australia. A preliminary investigation in 1983 of Zionist archives in Australia revealed that virtually the only extant archival material here, in Australia, consisted of an incomplete set of minute books, the earliest, that of the *Young Judean Zionist Society* dating to 1921. The *Archive of Australian Judaica* had these filmed in mid 1984, with the material having to be assembled from Zionist resources in both Sydney and Melbourne. A small amount of information on early Australian



Zionism is to be found in the minutes of the York Street Synagogue, preserved in the archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, and in the newspapers of the day. The only other substantial Zionist archival material apart from incidental material preserved in the records of other Australian Jewish organisations, such as with the archives of the *New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, dates back to the 1960s, and has just been lodged with the *Archive*. The rest has simply not been preserved. However, in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, files of all correspondence between the World Zionist Organisation, and the various countries have been preserved from the 1890s. This also includes Australian material, the earliest of which dates back to 1894.

An examination of these records makes it very clear that Zionism was slow to be established in Australia, emissaries from Israel finding their enthusiasm not matched by the Jewish population, here. In 1927 Dr Alexander Goldstein, a representative of the Jewish Agency arrived in Australia, and was instrumental in arranging the first Zionist conference in Australia, so founding the Zionist Federation. However, after the Third Australian Zionist Conference (12-16 July, 1930) the Zionist Federation decided to withdraw its funding of a paid secretary, precipitating the departure of Ettinger. This may account for the fact that no typed version of the minutes of the Fourth and Fifth Australian Zionist Conferences could be located even in Jerusalem. A letter written by Israel Cohen, from the Central Zionist Headquarters to Percy Marks on 20 July 1932 reflects these slow beginnings: "There is one point, however, in my letter which you appear to have overlooked, namely, my inquiry as to whether the *Australian Zionist Federation* still exists nominally or actually and whether there are regular and live relations between the Federation's Headquarters and the Societies in the various States..."

The book is what it purports to be: an index of early Australian records in the Central Zionist Archives. After the twelve page introduction, there are 23 more pages of material found in the archives, which is listed, dated and described, in order to enable researchers to access this material, as well as a nine page name index. Some of the people whose names appear in the index are living, today. In other cases, people's ancestors are listed, such as in the case of Alex Selig, whose great grandfather's letter is dated 1894. It is hoped that in the near future, sufficient funds will be available for the Archive to microfilm this material, and thus make it accessible to researchers in Australia.

Marianne Dacy

\*Both books are available from the *Archive of Australian Judaica*, c/o Rare Books, University of Sydney 2006. Tel 692 4162 (Mon - Wed) of fax: 692 2890.



## AUSTRALIA AND THE HOLOCAUST 1933-45

by Paul Bartrop, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing,, 1994,  
pp. xvii, 304, \$34.95.

Australia is usually just a footnote, little more, in the many general books on how the 'bystander' nations beyond Europe reacted to the post-1933 Jewish refugee crisis, and then to what became known as the Holocaust.

We have not yet seen an Australian scholar attempting a comprehensive analysis of Australia's admission of Jewish refugees between 1933 and 1945, although several scholars, most notably Dr Suzanne Rutland in her revelations about the existence of a 'Jewish quota' in the post-war immigration policy, have made major contributions to an understanding of Australia's immediate post-Holocaust record.

Dr Paul Bartrop's most welcome book seeks to fill this historiographical vacuum. His analysis is based very largely on the Australian Archives, and the result is so powerful that he should be encouraged to publish a book of the key documents along the lines of his earlier work on the *Dunera* episode.

What he shows is that Australia failed in the years 1933 to 1945 to admit as many Jewish refugees from Nazism as its own stringent administrative criteria might have allowed. Bartrop is the kind of empirical, archival historian who rigorously opposes the imposition of retrospective standards on the period under review. How Australia performed - how generously or otherwise it provided a refuge for Jewish victims of Nazism - when compared to other countries is not his concern. Rather, his interest is in how Australian Government officials, and when relevant their political masters, devised policy and administrative responses to Jewish and other pressures for the admission of refugees here, and how consistently or otherwise these guidelines were implemented.

As Dr Bartrop points out, Australia had no refugee policy as such before the Jewish refugee crisis caused by the advent of Nazism in Germany, but it did have an immigration policy devised in the aftermath of World War One, which severely limited the numbers of non-British immigrants able to settle here.

Bartrop's book is a major contribution to our knowledge of the formation of Australian refugee policy, although the author does not take the liberty of comparing Australia's performance on the Jewish question in the 1933-1945 period with its much more recent responses to crises such as the Cambodian boatpeople interned here. Doubtless others will draw the obvious parallels. The core of this book is a

bureaucratic cum political expose: it is clearly demonstrated that rather than having a 'good record' in its response to the post-1933 Jewish refugee crisis, Australia's immigration officials and their political masters did everything possible to minimise the number of refugees who actually reached Australia before the outbreak of World War Two in Europe - that is, before it was too late.

The book briefly covers the trickle of Jewish refugees who reached Australia from Japan, Shanghai and other Asian ports before the outbreak of the Pacific War - a subject that still deserves closer scholarly attention for Australian purposes. In a sensational (in the best sense) story that gradually emerges from a complex bureaucratic narrative, Dr Bartrop shows that the key Interior Department officials making and enforcing policy throughout the whole period ensured that, even at the time of peak refugee pressure on Australia (1938-1939), no more than one in ten of those eligible by Australia's highly selective criteria were actually allowed entry. Dr Bartrop's analysis, which converges with Dr Suzanne Rutland's work on the immediate postwar period, even suggests the need for a new category - 'bureaucratic anti-Semitism' - as the key determinant of Australia's policy.

Bartrop also rebuts the historical myth that Australia committed itself at or as a result of the Evian Conference of July 1938 to take 15,000 Jewish refugees over a three year period.

This book has its unsatisfactory aspects. There is too little on the Australian Jewish community's pressure on the Government to take more refugees, and on the international Jewish bodies which assisted the local efforts.

Given the prominent role ascribed to a handful of Interior Department officials, a more biographical approach to those individuals was surely required. Dr Bartrop's analysis of Australian press responses to the Jewish refugee crisis is superficial and lacks curiosity about why, for instance, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was editorially so much more 'pro-refugee' than other Australian papers.

Nor does this book add much to what was already established by Walter Laqueur and others on how much and when non-Jewish elites knew about the true scale of the Holocaust.

Still, these are minor quarrels with what is an outstanding and long overdue work.

Warren Osmond



## THE EUREKA FLAG

by Len Fox, Sydney, 1992, 59pp.

Most would agree that Nathan Frederick Spielvogel of literary fame – once described as an “Australian Zangwill” – deserves to be remembered. Len Fox, by dedicating his latest book, *The Eureka Flag*, to Spielvogel helps to do just that.

This latest book of Len Fox acknowledges his debt to Nathan Spielvogel and W.B. Withers – a descendant of one of the diggers who fought within the Eureka Stockade – both men being historians responsible for supplying the author with valuable material. Fox described Nathan Spielvogel as “one of the friendliest men I have ever met” when they met soon after the Second World War.

*The Eureka Flag* describes in detail the blue flag and the white cross with stars on each of the four ends and a fifth in the centre. It tells how the flag came into existence and, most of all, it records how as a symbol it aroused such strong feelings of the desperate need for freedom, independence and democracy in the diggers. The book explains, too, why one might have at first the sense that the flag was made of silk: it is subsequently learned that its background is “a blue material, while not silk, has a silky appearance, which would account for its description as silk”, and the white cross is made from cotton twill sheeting, while the stars are made from white petticoat lawn (fine) giving the stars a transparent look. It is a riveting story of how a Canadian, Lieutenant Ross – a digger who fought and died during the struggle – designed the flag and commissioned three women, wives of miners, to make up the standard.

In the early days of December 1854, the Stockade on Bakery Hill was built. Peter Lalor was chosen as leader, although he claimed no military expertise. He and his four lieutenants raised the blue flag with the Southern Cross upon it within the Stockade, which by 4 a.m. on Sunday, 3 December, had been largely deserted by the majority of miners, who had either gone home or gone to the hotel for a drink. The small number who were left were shouting “Liberty”, and swearing “by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other to defend our rights and liberties” to the death. Troopers and soldiers numbering 276 were ready for them and grasped the opportunity. Within half an hour it was all over. The flag was taken down from its flagstaff by one of the policemen after the storming of the Stockade, and the rebellion was subdued on that fateful Sunday morning. Thirty rebels and four soldiers and an officer were killed. But the valiant stand made history;

the whole affair was a powerful force for constructive change in Australia: "It was a stand against tyranny".

Len Fox's writing is distinctive; his feel for Australian history is well judged. A former Ballarat City Councillor, John A. Chisholm, MBE, writes in the foreword: "*The Eureka Flag* deserves to be compulsory reading." Another Australian author, Leslie Haylen, describes the revolution as "greater in significance than the short-lived revolt against tyrannical authority would suggest". This book brings out clearly the reasons why this might be so, and how a flag can rally folk to a cause as little else.

As an epilogue, the final chapter of the book, "Behold the Banner", has been written by a Ballarat woman, Val D'Angri, who spent many hours during the early 1970s restoring the tattered flag for presentation at the 125th anniversary of the rebellion in 1979 to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. Mrs D'Angri is a descendant of Anastasia Withers, who helped sew the flag in 1854. The Eureka Flag, which this slim volume accurately describes – and explains how it has been authenticated – is accepted and honoured as one of Australia's historical relics. The book brings into even sharper focus where we should be looking in our search for an identity.

It appears that the only Jew to actually feature in the fighting with the miners was the 24-year old Teddy Thonen, although a number of other Jews took part in the general upsurge which led to Eureka. Among these were Charles Dyte, Henry Harris and W. Levy. It is of interest, too, that during the lead up to the Eureka Revolt, a Crown Prosecutor attacked "all German Jews" when one of them was found guilty of obtaining money under false pretences and assessing wrong weights. Charles Dyte penned a vigorous protest to the press, pointing out that "it was a rarity for *any* Jew to offend against the civil code".

The writings of Len Fox, like those of Spielvogel, show a sturdy love of country. Len Fox's book is available at the special price of \$6.00 from the author at 10 Little Surrey Street, Potts Point, NSW 2011, Australia (ph. (02) 331.3625).

Louise Rosenberg



## JEWISH PERSONAL NAMES — THEIR ORIGIN, DERIVATION AND DIMINUTIVE FORMS

*by Rabbi Shmuel Gorr, edited by Chaim Freedman, pp. 112.*

One of the hallmarks of a Jew is often his or her name, although there is an aphorism that it is the man who makes the name, not the name which makes the man. In the Bible, in Numbers Chapter 1, we find the meanings of many of the names of Israel. It was believed that if, for instance, a child was named Gamaliel the parents had regarded their infant as a reward from G-d. Or, if he was named Shelumiel, it was a response to his birth as "at peace with G-d", and they hoped and planned that the child would grow up accordingly.

Rabbi Shmuel Gorr, the representative of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Israel, who died suddenly in September 1988 at the age of 56 years, was working on this book, *Jewish Personal Names*, at the time of his death. The work was well advanced at the time: he had prepared his dedication of it. It was to be dedicated to his mother, Hayyah Sarah (May she be well and happy), "who first revealed to me the world of the shtetl and from whom I first heard our traditional Jewish personal names". As well, he had decided upon two texts which were to preface the work: (1) Because of four merits our ancestors were redeemed from the Egyptian bondage: They did not change their Hebrew names; they did not change their Holy Tongue (Hebrew); they did not change their Religion (it has been said that this particular merit was attributable solely to the women); nor did they change their specific Jewish clothings. And (2) in general, the Name of a person determines one's destiny.

Then, after four years, Rabbi Gorr's friend and colleague, Chaim Freedman of Petah Tikvah, edited the book - running to 112 pages. Although it contains fascinating information, it can be classified as a text book. For example, in the Introduction, we are advised that only the names which are regarded as traditionally Jewish are dealt with. These are a) Hebrew, b) Aramaic, c) Yiddish and d) Non-Jewish.

The book gives us reasons why specific customs, such as the Ashkenazi tradition on not naming a child after a living relative, are deeply entrenched. It is arranged in such a manner that the main body of the text contains the root Hebrew names from which the derivations and diminutive forms arose. The Indices enable ready location of all the forms covered, and the list of family names broadens the scope of the book, as it also includes those surnames referred to in the text as well as adding others which are also derived from personal names. For example, Joseph may be a personal name or a surname, as may Aaron,

Solomon, Alexander, Asher, and so on. Probably the most interesting section is the meaning of names: Aryeih Leib (coming from Genesis 49, verse 9) is Lion, indicating strength and fearlessness. Judah (Yehudah) took the lion of the symbol of his Tribe, and as Jerusalem became the capital of Judah, the lion is the symbol for the City of Jerusalem.

Chapters are given as designating Personal Male Names, Personal Female Names, and so on. The book charts the Hebrew names phonetically, their roots, meanings, variations and diminutives. Some might wish that the book was most comprehensive or more systematically set out but it is still a worthwhile addition to one's bookshelves.

Chaim Freedman, the editor, concludes his editorial note thus: "Rabbi Gorr was involved in the compilation of a number of books stemming from his researches, but none reached completion." He adds that it is hoped this work will be the forerunner of others and that Shmuel Gorr's contribution to Jewish scholarship will be made available to a wider audience. He explains that since the book was published after the author's death, it was decided to present it in the form Rabbi Gorr wrote it, with minimal editorial corrections. Those who knew Rabbi Gorr will recall that he regarded every Jew - even if they were not fully aware of it - as a "displaced Israeli".

The cost of Jewish Personal Names, available from Avotaynu Inc. P.O. Box 1134 Teaneck N.J. 07666 USA, is US\$15.00 plus US\$3.00, and it is recommended for those with an interest in this rather delightful subject.

Louise Rosenberg



## OBITUARY

### *Harold Pearlman*

Canberra: Inaugural honorary treasurer of the ACT branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Harold Pearlman, died in Canberra in 1993 at the age of 80. He had been honorary treasurer since the Canberra branch's formation in 1985 and was one of its founding members.

Harold Pearlman was a community stalwart and benefactor. He and his late wife Ette were major benefactors of the National Jewish Memorial Centre in Canberra. The building was erected in 1971 and their names are recorded as patrons on the Centre in the foyer.

He was honorary treasurer of the community for a decade, during the period when the Centre was built. For years he assisted in many communal activities, including as a regular "*minyán* man" on *Shabbat*, as a driver for other older members of the community for Golden Years meetings, and with Earle Hoffman, founding and current AJHS (ACT) president, as "treasurer" during the community's annual food fairs.

On his eightieth birthday in April 1993 Mr Pearlman was honoured by the community at a *Shabbat Kiddush*. In 1993 he was also awarded the honour of life membership of the Australian Society for Certified Practising Accountants which he joined 50 years ago when it was known as the Federal Institute of Accountants.

Mr Pearlman was born in Ballarat, the fifth of nine children, and moved to Melbourne at the age of 19 after his father's death. He trained as an accountant and joined the Commonwealth public service, retiring in 1973. He was a senior financial officer to the Department of the Air and was posted to Butterworth Air Force base in Malaysia in 1964. He was an active member of the ACT Jewish community from his arrival in Canberra in 1966.

His wife Ette, whom he married in 1940, died in 1973. He is survived by a son, Tony, who lives in Canberra, and a daughter, Beverley, who lives overseas, and five grandchildren.

Sylvia Deutsch

## **ERRATA**

Morris S. Ochert, "History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation":

- Volume IX, Part 7, 1984, page 509:

First line "1885" not "1985"

- Vol X, Part 1, 1986, page 29:

Add: "The original design was by Andrea Stombucco and his son Giovanni. The details were then prepared by another architect, Arthur Midson, who supervised the construction".

Page 34:

"1973/4 Rev B. Skolnick, who succeeded Rabbi Engel, was inducted by Rabbi A. Fabian, in the presence of Premier Bjelke-Petersen."



## GENEALOGICAL ENQUIRIES

Would anyone interested in the following families and who did not themselves initiate the enquiry, please contact the Genealogical Section at 166 Castlereagh Street, Sydney 2000.

- ASHER, Henry, Sydney, Samuel – Descendants sought.  
 BENJAMIN, Henry born 1852 married Julia Lyons dau. Rebecca.  
 BENJAMIN/DAVIS, Morris David Benjamin (d 1904 in Melbourne) m in Brisbane 1868 Fanny DAVIS (b Goulburn 1851). Descendents sought.  
 BENJAMIN/PHILLIPS, Samuel Benjamin, storekeeper of Queensland m Eve PHILLIPS (b 1839 in Sydney). Descendants sought.  
 BERENDSON, Fanny – Descendants sought.  
 BERG, Hyman, of Adelaide and brother Isaac of Melbourne. Parents Morris and Rebecca BERG.  
 BRUENN & STEINECKE – Coolah Sawmills Pty. Ltd. 1950 to 1960.  
 DAVIS, Henry, New Zealand.  
 DAVIS, John (convict) Arr. per "Aurora" in 1833, married Jane Blinkford.  
 DAVIS, Amy Gertrude, married Augustus Napoleon Power.  
 DAVIS, Philip, (b Goulburn 1852) - a chemist in Camperdown Sydney, Gustavus ALEXANDER (b 1856 Sydney) m in Queensland, Mark (b 1856 Sydney) m in Brisbane c1884 sons of Sarah PHILLIPS & Samuel DAVIS. Descendants sought  
 ESSERMAN, Maurice. Lived in NSW 1870s-1880s. Migrated to USA 1905.  
 FIENBERG, Barnett Asher marr. to Annie Facey in Sydney 1883. Siblings sought.  
 FRIEDMAN/DAVIS, Marcus Friedman m 1880 in Melbourne (H) Esther Davis (b 1859 in Melbourne). Descendants sought.  
 FOGEL, Abraham m. to Sarah ALEXANDER 21.3.1877. His father Joseph FOGEL. Info. sought re FOGEL ancestors.  
 GARFINKLE/GARFINCLE/GARFINGTON, Hyman aka Naman or Nachman and his wife Sarah nee FEINBERG aka FANBERRICK..  
 HENRY, Rebecca. Born Tasmania 1841 Parents Arthur and Mary (nee Birkenshaw).  
 HERSCHELL, Hannah – arrived on "Himalaya" 1864/5 aged 35.  
 HERSCHELL, Nancy, living in Pitt St, Sydney. 1860s.  
 HOLLANDER/DAVIS, Siegfried HOLLANDER m in Brisbane 1872 Hannah DAVIS (b 191 George Street Sydney 1855). Descendants sought.  
 ISAACS/DAVIS, Catherine (Kate) Davis (b Melbourne 1868) d of Adelaide GOLDSMID & John Davis m ... Isaacs. Descendants sought.

JACOB, Davis or Davies arrived c. 1840 Tasmania.

JACOBS, Abraham arrived "Hercules" 1832, marr. Eliza Pierce 1840.

JOSEPHSON, Emma (nee MOSS), wife of Jacob Josephson, previously married to Wilson. Her parents sought.

JUDE/PHILLIPS, Asher Jude, a jeweller (b Poland 1830 d Melbourne 1873) m Nancy Annie Phillips (b 1835) in Sydney 1858. Descendants sought.

KURTS/DAVIS, Robert Kurts m in Brisbane 1881 Adelina Rebecca Davis (b 1864 in Brisbane). Descendants sought.

MYERS, Frederick, pupil at Newington College in 1863 (aged 14 years).

PHILLIPS, Michael Aaron b 1824 London of Clara Solomons & Barnett Aaron Phillips. Descendants sought.

PHILLIPS, Rose – Descendants sought.



## NEW MEMBERS

*Since July 1993*

### NEW SOUTH WALES

BITEL, Mr David (rejoin)  
COWAN, Prof. H.S. (rejoin)  
DAVIS, OAM, Ms A.A.  
DEAKIN-BELL, Mr Donald  
DEMPSEY, Dr Clare T.  
FAUST, Mr & Mrs A.J.  
GAFFEY, Ronda  
GARLICK, Mrs B.  
GOLDSCHMIDT, Bella  
HUGHES, Mr Anthony  
JEWELL, Mr Bob  
JONES, Mrs Sybil  
JOSEPH, Ms Elma L.  
KENNEDY, Mr John & Mrs Sally  
LOCKEY, Mr and Mrs Allen  
LOVE, Mr John D.  
LUKE, Mr Gary  
MEINRATH, Mr Nigel  
MONK, Dr M.  
PLEBAN, Ms S.  
RATNER, Mr Leon  
SHUTE, Mr Bill  
TIMMERMAN, Gai  
VORCHHEIMER, Mrs Sara  
WOLPERT, Mr and Mrs Kenneth  
WRIGHT, Mrs Diana  
YESHIVA LADIES COLLEGE  
ZWI, Mr and Mrs W.

### ACT

MAIN, Ms Penny  
SHEAFFER, Mrs Marilyn

### QUEENSLAND

ROSS, Mr Allan K.

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**Isidor Solomon**, CPA is in his fiftieth year as a member of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and first contributed to this journal in December 1946. He was a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem (1972) and was archivist for and contributor to the *Enduring Remnant* (History of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation) published by Melbourne University Press in 1992. He was President of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, 1979-1981.







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