

annuity, he gave the residue of his estate on terms that a nett sum of approximately £30,000 is to be divided amongst the Maccabean Institute of the New South Wales Jewish War Memorial and the Sir Moses Montefiore Jewish Home.

Mrs. Ellen Glance, of Liverpool Road, Burwood, is a niece of the deceased.

A History of the Dunedin (N.Z.) Jewish Congregation.

By the Rev. A. ASTOR, B.A.,
Chief Minister of the Auckland Congregation.

(*Read before the Society, July 5th, 1945, by
Mr. Herbert I. Wolff.*)

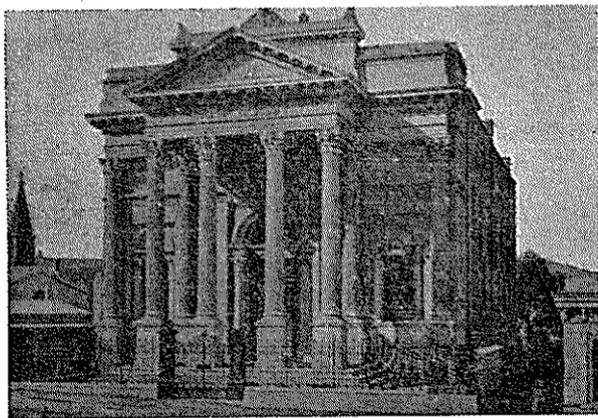
Early in the history of New Zealand, Jews began to settle in the Otago Province. Their enterprise, vigour and foresight equalled that of other settlers in the infant colony. That they were imbued with a deep religious sentiment is evident from the zeal and fervour which they exhibited in establishing a congregation, as soon as their number was sufficiently large, and in building, within a very short space of time, a Synagogue which was one of the outstanding edifices in Dunedin. Far removed from any centre of religious authority, they had to encounter many difficulties, apart from their struggles with the hard conditions of a new country. That they were able successfully to overcome all obstacles, and to place the foundations of the congregation on a firm and sound basis, is a proof of their being inspired by a living earnestness, a religious devotion, a spirit of self-sacrifice, and a sincere belief in the goodness of God.

The story of the congregation, as preserved for us in the Synagogue archives, is full of interest, and compares favourably with that of other congregations in the British Dominions.

When the corner-stone of the present Synagogue in Moray Place was laid on November 11th, 1880, by Mr. Maurice Joel, who was then President of the congregation, he gave an epitome of its history from documents and his own knowledge and reminiscences of the men and events connected with its formation and early history. This sketch of Mr. Joel's was elaborated and published in the

Otago Witness in 1901, together with two pages of photographs, a framed copy of which hangs in the Board Room of the present Synagogue. This article, together with the minutes of the Synagogue, forms the basis of the present record.

Who was the first Jew to settle in Otago cannot now be determined, but it appears that prior to the year 1861 there were but five Jewish residents with their families in Dunedin, viz., Messrs. Wolf Harris, George Casper, Hyam E. Nathan, Jacob Fogel and Adolph Bing. Mr. Harris' name, and that of Mr. Bing, are almost household words in New Zealand as the founders of the firm of Bing,



THE SYNAGOGUE, MORAY PLACE, DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND.
(Photo. by courtesy of Ald. E. S. Marks, C.B.E.)

Harris & Co., which has long flourished in the Dominion. During that year there was a strong tide of immigration to the colony, and the number of Jews increased, so that a Minyan could be held. This was done for the first time on Yom Kippur of that year, which occurred about the end of September. This first meeting for public worship in Dunedin was held at the residence of Mr. Hyam E. Nathan in High Street, afterwards the Empire Hotel, and now the Grand Hotel. The services were conducted by Mr. Henry Nathan. From this time services were held regularly in Mr. Nathan's house, and this gentleman may be regarded as the first and original founder of the Dunedin

congregation. The rush for gold and influx of miners, traders and speculators brought a further increase in the number of Jews in the province, and led to the important step of establishing a congregation.

On January 15th, 1862, a preliminary meeting for this purpose was held in Mr. H. E. Nathan's house, attended by Messrs. H. E. Nathan, Henry Nathan, Henry Hart, H. Josephs, R. da Costa, Solomon Lazarus, E. Nathan, Jacob Fogel, C. I. Levien, Samuel Isaacs, S. Collins, M. Marks, George Casper and Dr. Samuels, who "pledged themselves to use their best endeavours to form a congregation in this city." The first general meeting called by advertisement in the daily newspapers was held on January 26th, 1862, and the provisional committee, in presenting its report, explained the necessity for calling the meeting, because "there are a great many of our co-religionists now residing in Dunedin, and the continual arrivals render it necessary that a regular organised congregation should exist amongst us, and be immediately established." The report also mentions "the most energetic and zealous assistance given by Mr. H. E. Nathan, who has for some months allowed public worship at his private residence, and whose exertions to establish a Jewish congregation are well known." The meeting then proceeded to elect the office-bearers and committee, which resulted as follows: President, Mr. H. E. Nathan; Treasurer, Henry Nathan; Committee—Henry Hart, Benjamin L. Farjeon, D. da Costa, Ezekiel Nathan, Abraham Myers, Isaac Herman and George Casper. Mr. H. Josephs was Secretary.

Of these gentlemen, Mr. Farjeon is well remembered in Dunedin as the manager, in conjunction with Mr. Julius (afterwards Sir Julius) Vogel (later to become Prime Minister of New Zealand), of the *Otago Daily Times and Witness*. He later gained a high place in literature as one of the successful novelists of the day. He was encouraged by Dickens, who admired his work.

The energy and zeal of this committee is evident from the number of the meetings held within a short space of time. The President, Treasurer and Mr. Farjeon were deputed to wait on His Honour the Superintendent of the Province and request that he give a grant of a larger piece of ground than that already allotted to the Jews for their Cemetery. The request was granted. The laws and

regulations of the Dunedin Jewish congregation were formulated and passed by a public meeting convened by advertisement, and held at the Auction Mart in McLaggan Street on April 6th, 1862. The form of service was to be the same as read by the Jews of England under the jurisdiction of the Rev. N. M. Adler, Chief Rabbi. Every member previous to exercising his privileges had "to sign the official manuscript copy of the 'rules and regulations' signifying his willingness to be governed by same." The office of President or Treasurer could not be held by a member unless he was a married man, or had attained the age of forty years. Members above sixty years of age were not to be "compelled" to accept office. It was "obligatory" for bridegrooms and their "supporters" to attend the Synagogue on the Sabbath before the marriage to be called to the Torah.

Decorum at services and meetings was firmly established in these early days, and has ever since been fostered by the Dunedin congregation.

Mr. Nathan's residence in High Street, no longer accommodating all who desired to attend Divine Service, the congregation accepted with grateful thanks the liberal offer of their President to purchase a lease of premises in George Street suitable for a Synagogue. The site is that on which the Plaza Picture Theatre now stands. The building, which stood back from the street, was a small wooden one, and, after some necessary repairs and alterations, it became the first Synagogue in Dunedin. The membership then consisted of forty-three gentlemen, and services were thereafter regularly conducted there, the Honorary Reader being Mr. Henry Nathan. The President was authorised to celebrate marriages, and the first couple united in the Synagogue were Mr. Abraham Myers (an uncle of Sir Arthur Myers, who became Mayor of Auckland and a Minister of the Crown) and Miss Ehrenfried on September 17th, 1862. A scroll of the Law had already been presented by Mr. H. E. Nathan, the President, and Mr. Myers, as an offering on his marriage, presented a canopy.

By this time other names began to appear in the proceedings of the congregation, notable among these being that of Mr. (afterwards the Hon.) S. E. Shrimski, M.L.C. At a general meeting held in April, 1862, notwithstanding the burdens the congregation were undertaking, there was

inaugurated at the instigation of Mr. Shrimski a "Fund for the Relief of the Poor in Palestine."

Mr. Maurice Joel was mentioned in the proceedings for the first time on February 2nd, 1863, and he and Mr. Julius Hyman were elected members of the Committee on March 29th, 1863. Both these gentlemen served the congregation in all the offices, and their yeoman service in the community, extending over a lengthy period, cannot be too highly praised. The name of Mr. Abraham Solomon first appears in the list of annual subscribers submitted to a committee meeting in May, 1862, and in October of the same year that of Mr. Henry Hayman (founder of the firm of P. Hayman & Co., Dunedin). In April, 1863, the congregation was advertising for a minister, and looking about for a more suitable and central site for a Synagogue. Several applications were received from Australia, but Mr. D. Isaacs, a resident of Dunedin, being qualified for the duties by his experience and knowledge of Hebrew, was appointed lay-minister for a period of six months.

The first site agreed on for a new place of worship was the section at the corner of View Street, opposite the present Synagogue, but negotiations were unsuccessful, and the Congregational Church was erected on it.

The membership continued to increase to such an extent that, for the High Festivals, a special hall had to be obtained, and the Divine Services in 1863 were held in the Masonic Hall. Early in 1864, a sub-committee specially appointed for the purpose acquired at the cost of about £600 the ground in Moray Place now the property of the Masonic Body, and erected a Synagogue at a cost of about £1,850. The George Street property was disposed of, and by September, 1864, the new Synagogue was finished and a Consecration Service held and conducted by Mr. H. Nathan and Mr. John Lazar (afterwards the Town Clerk of Dunedin), who also delivered the address. A special choir, trained for the occasion by Mr. Nathan, contributed to the success of the ceremony.

Mr. Lazar acted as Hon. Secretary of the Synagogue for some time. The Chief Rabbi, in a pastoral letter, sent suggestions and advice for the future guidance of the congregation and wished them every success.

In September, 1865, there was a change of officers.

Mr. H. E. Nathan and Mr. Henry Nathan, who had acted as President and Treasurer of the congregation since its inception, being about to leave the Province, resigned, and Mr. H. Hart was elected as President, and Mr. A. Myers as Treasurer, while the new Committee consisted of Messrs. H. Hayman, A. Solomon, M. Joel, M. Haymanson and L. Mendelsohn.

The congregation showed its appreciation of the work of their Past President and Treasurer by presenting them with illuminated addresses and silver plate.

A School Committee was now formed for the first time, and rooms adjoining the Synagogue were prepared and furnished as classrooms. During that same year the Jewish Philanthropic Society of Otago was founded by Mr. Julius Hayman. Its object was the relief of Jewish poor who resided in the Province, or of strangers requiring temporary assistance. Associated with Mr. Hayman at the establishment of the Society were Mr. Maurice Joel and Mr. Godfrey Jacobs. Among the first applications for relief was one from as far north as Onehunga.

In 1867, Mr. J. Myers was appointed Schoolmaster. He also occasionally delivered public addresses in the Synagogue. In November of the same year, the congregation appointed Mr. Jacob Levy as Reader.

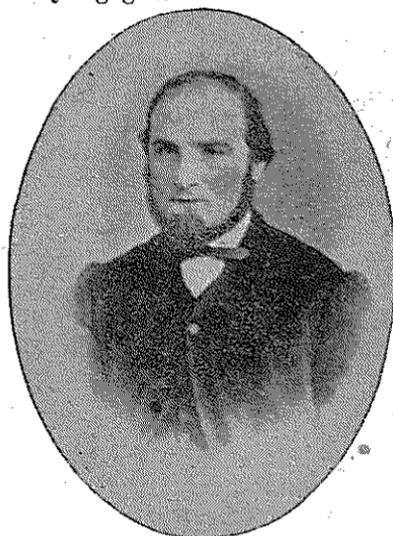
In 1868, the Wellington congregation wrote of their intention to build a Synagogue and soliciting subscriptions for that object.

In conjunction with other religious denominations throughout the Province, the congregation, in response to the desire of His Honour the Superintendent of Otago, observed Thursday, February 20th, 1868, as a day of humiliation and prayer. A special service was conducted in the Synagogue by the Rev. J. Levy. In July, 1868, The Philanthropic Society advanced £50 to the congregation. Mr. Simeon Isaacs was elected President the same year, and, on assuming office, outlined the policy he intended to pursue, chiefly to obtain regular attendance at the Synagogue on Sabbaths and better facilities for religious education. A law was passed which made it obligatory on all committeemen to attend Synagogue at least once a month; if they were absent on three consecutive Sabbaths they automatically resigned. Mr. Isaacs also expressed his intention of obtaining lectures from England to be read at the services by efficient members of the congrega-

tion. An attempt was made to form a choir, but proved unsuccessful. In April, 1869, the congregation accepted the kind offer of Dr. Beaver to act as Hon. Medical Officer.

In 1870, a land slip, due to flood, occurred at the Cemetery, and the congregation were obliged to build a wall to prevent further damage.

In 1871, Mr. Simeon Isaacs, being about to leave Dunedin, resigned the office of President, and Mr. Ezekiel Nathan was elected in his stead. Mr. Nathan expressed his regret that, although there were over 78 adult male Jews in the Province, only 48 were subscribers to the Synagogue.



HENRY HART.
Treasurer, 1864-65; President, 1865-66.



EZEKIEL NATHAN.
President, 1870-74.

In 1872, the first New Zealand branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association was formed in Dunedin, and was later followed by the formation of similar branches in other centres. During the same year a pastoral letter from the Chief Rabbi, Dr. N. M. Adler, was received, informing the congregation that the Beth Din in Melbourne, consisting of the Revs. S. Herman, M. Rintel and A. Ornstein, was the only one authorised by him for Australia and New Zealand. He mentioned, *inter alia*, that he was on principle opposed to the practice of making proselytes.

In 1873, the Board of Management resolved that two members of the Committee should attend the Hebrew School every Sunday and report the result of their visits at the monthly meeting of the Committee. This practice continued for many years.

In 1874, the Rev. J. Levy, after seven years' service with the congregation, resigned, and the congregation decided to obtain a competent person from England capable of acting as Chazan, Schochet, Mohel and Teacher. Letters were accordingly sent to the Chief Rabbi and also to Messrs. H. and L. Hayman and H. Hart, who were then in London, requesting them to act in this matter on behalf of the congregation.

At the annual general meeting held on September 6th, 1874, Councillor B. Isaac was elected as President.

In January, 1875, Mr. Henry Hart wrote stating that he and Messrs. Hayman had selected the Rev. B. Lichtenstein for the post of minister, to the congregation. This gentleman was a native of Russia, and had been minister in Nottingham previous to his appointment in Dunedin. With the arrival of the new minister religious matters were placed on a much sounder basis. Of a quiet and retiring disposition, he won the love and esteem of all his congregants. He was a conscientious Freemason and a Past Master of a Dunedin Lodge. The good work he did for the congregation during his ministry, extending over seventeen years, will never be forgotten.

In the same year the musical portion of the Synagogue service was first put on a proper footing by the appointment as choirmaster of Mr. Joseph Moss, a gentleman well qualified for the duties by long experience and fine musical ability. He had been a chorister in the Great Synagogue, London, of which his father was choirmaster. He occupied the position very successfully for many years.

The membership continued to increase, and by the end of the year 1875 there were 56 male subscribers. The number of children on the roll of the Hebrew School was 40. The position of the Synagogue building, in which services had now been held for twelve years, was by no means an ideal one. Its great elevation above the street level, and other circumstances, rendered it far from being a comfortable or convenient place of worship. This fact, and also the fact that the community was growing larger

every year, led to the purchase of the site in Moray Place on which the present Synagogue stands. The land and a house was acquired by the congregation in 1875 at a cost of £1,000. Mr. Julius Hayman was elected President, and to mark the honour which had been conferred on him he presented a Scroll of the Law to the congregation. In August of the same year the house on the new Synagogue site was altered at the cost of £350, and made available for the residence of the minister. In 1876, Mr. Maurice Joel was elected President. In 1877, it was proposed that a conference of the ministers of all the New Zealand Jewish congregations should be held to discuss various matters affecting co-religionists in the colony. The proposal, however, came to nought. In 1878, the President, Mr. Joel, presented the congregation with a new Sepher Torah, the minister having declared the Sephorim already in possession of the congregation to be Posul. In 1879, the Chief Rabbi wrote informing the congregation that the newly appointed Beth Din for the Australian colonies consisted of the Revs. M. Rintel, I. M. Goldreich, and Dr. Jacobson. A reply was sent to Dr. Adler explaining that Melbourne was too far distant from New Zealand, and that in consequence it was highly necessary that a separate Ecclesiastical Board should be authorised for New Zealand. Mr. Godfrey Jacobs was elected President in this year.

In 1880, Rabbi Hurwitz, an emissary from Jerusalem, visited Dunedin for the purpose of collecting funds for the Soup Kitchens in the Holy Land. By the authority of the Ecclesiastical Board in Melbourne, an extraordinary Beth Din was formed under Rev. Lichtenstein, with the assistance of Rev. Zachariah of Christchurch. Its functions were only temporary.

In May, 1880, the congregation, having received an offer from the Masonic Body in Dunedin to purchase the Synagogue and land for the sum of £1,850, the offer was accepted. A building committee was formed, and the building of a new Synagogue on the present site was immediately proceeded with. Mr. Boldini was chosen as architect. The tender of Messrs. Johns and Evans, contractors, for £3,325 was accepted.

In August of that year, the Synagogue Choir was placed on a sounder footing by the election of a special Choir Committee. Mr. Joseph Moss was reappointed Choirmaster at a salary of £50 per annum, and commenced

training a specially augmented choir for the Consecration Service of the new Synagogue. The foundation stone of the new Synagogue was laid by Mr. Maurice Joel, President, on November 11th, 1880, when he reported that to date he had received the sum of £900 in subscriptions from the members towards the new building.

The congregation was invited to send a delegate to the Conference of Australian Congregations held under the auspices of the Anglo-Jewish Association in Melbourne in February, 1881.

Everything up to this point, as indeed all through the story of the Dunedin congregation, is typical of Jewish tenacity and devotion to their religion. A few earnest men and women, never reaching one hundred male members, were able, without any of the aids which the devotees of the earlier churches obtained from the Government, to establish themselves, to have a building of their own, to provide for a suitable maintenance for a minister, and to raise funds from time to time for the assistance of others. The only gift received from the public resources of the Province was the small plot of ground set apart in the Southern Cemetery for the burial of the dead.

On Sunday, August 28th, 1881, the community rejoiced in the consummation of its desire. The new building was consecrated, the ceremony being conducted by the Rev. B. Lichtenstein in the presence of nearly every member of the Dunedin Jewish community, together with a large assembly of the most influential citizens of all denominations. The building committee, whose arduous labours had extended over a full year, consisted first of Mr. Godfrey Jacobs, President, and Messrs. M. Joel, M. Moss, and Councillor B. Isaacs, while Messrs. A. Solomon, J. F. Anderson and S. de Beer were later added to the committee. The total cost, including extras and internal fittings, seats and decorations, amounted to close of £5,000.

The congregation received a letter, signed by all the workmen who had been engaged in the erection of the Synagogue, congratulating the community on the successful completion and opening of the new building.

Mr. A. Solomons was elected President for the year 1881-1882.

The name of Mr. D. E. Theomin first appeared in the minutes on September 18th, 1881, when he presented a clock for the new Synagogue.

On October 21st, 1881, the first marriage in the new Synagogue took place, the contracting parties being Mr. H. Naphtali and Miss Flora Isaacs. In commemoration of this event, they presented to the Synagogue a cover for the Reader's Desk.

In March, 1882, the Rev. A. J. Messing of San Francisco, California, visited the city and delivered an address at the Synagogue.

Mr. Sam Jacobs was elected President for the year 1882-3.

In December, 1883, a special Beth Din, consisting of the Revs. Van Staveren, Zachariah and Lichtenstein, was formed by the authority of the Chief Rabbi. In spite of strong representations from the various congregations to make the institution a permanent one, their wish was not granted.

In January, 1884, the Committee adopted the suggestions of their Minister, the Rev. Lichtenstein, to read certain portions of the Sabbath Service, including the Haphtorah, in English.

In April, 1884, another special Beth Din was formed at Wellington.

In a report of the Hebrew School dated June, 1884, it was stated that there were 34 pupils and five teachers, viz., Misses A. Lichtenstein, Jacobs and M. Moses, and Messrs. F. Silverston and E. Isaacs.

In October of this year the congregation mourned the loss of Ezekiel Nathan, a respected Past President and active communal worker. A marble tablet was erected in the Synagogue to perpetuate his memory. Mr. D. E. Theomin was that year elected treasurer of the congregation.

The centenary of Sir Moses Montefiore, Bart., was celebrated by a special service on October 26th, 1884. It was largely attended by representatives of all denominations, and the congregation sent an illuminated address enclosed in a casket of New Zealand timbers to Messrs. Henry Hart and H. Hayman, who were then in London, for presentation by them to Sir Moses Montefiore.

(To be continued.)

[A very interesting account of a visit to the congregation by Rabbi Jacob Saphir appears in Vol. I., Part V., pages 154-158 of this *Journal*. According to Rabbi Saphir, the first place of worship was dedicated at the Shevuoth Festival, 1862, the Rabbi delaying his departure to participate in the ceremony.—EDITOR.]