

Synagogue Services: Attendance during the year (with very few exceptions) was quite good, though it would be a very pleasing development if a greater number of members would attend. There were a number of celebrations during the year - the Bar Mitzvah of Anthony Melman and that of Robert Fisterman. The weddings of Arthur Neumann and Betty Lewin, as well as all the traditional Holiday celebrations.

New Members: We welcome to the Congregation Miss Maxine Goodman & Miss Dora Revelman. I hope that they, with all the other members of the Congregation, will join us in the coming year to intensify our effort and to help continue our present good progress to an even greater degree of success. During the year we were fortunate to gain two new Board Members, Dr. Gary Melman and Mr. Albert Fradin. On the same token we express our regret that Mr. S. Levett who has been a distinguished Board Member for a great number of years is resigning from the Board. We thank him for the many years of valuable service to the community - our Board meetings will never be the same.

Bereavements: With sadness, we convey sincere condolences to the family Speiser on the tragic passing of their mother and wife Mrs. Vivien Speiser, to the family Nebenzahl on the passing of Dr. Ben Nebenzahl's mother, to the family Fradin on the passing of Mr. Fradin's sister, to the family Bandi on the passing of Mr. Bandi who was an esteemed foundation member of our congregation and to the family Kalmar on the passing of Mrs. Kalmar. A plaque in memory of the late Rabbi Tapoohi has been affixed in the Synagogue foyer. Notices of Yahrzeit are now sent to the respective members under the supervision of Rabbi Gutnick - a most appreciated service by those concerned.

Last but not least, I would like to emphasise the outstanding work of our Hon. Secretary Miss Rosetta Meinrath. Among other services, her minuting of our Board meetings have probably never been more business-like as at present.

In conclusion, I thank the Hon. Board Members sincerely for their support and co-operation throughout the year. I also thank all members and friends for their involvement and help in the many and varied tasks. I wish the incoming Board Members continued good progress and success. Thank you.

SAMUEL STEIF, J.P.
PRESIDENT.

Ladies Auxiliary Chit Chat

The Strathfield Synagogue Ladies Auxiliary held its annual general meeting on July 6th.

Mrs Sue Cohen in her presidential report outlined the activities of the auxiliary over the past year, which included the usual annual functions, all of which resulted in a successful year. She pointed out that although these functions were successful and the auxiliary had also raised a very satisfactory sum of money for the Synagogue, the work involved had to be carried out by a dwindling group of workers. She hoped that more women would assume responsibility in the future.

Rebbetzin Gutnick addressed the ladies, continuing a feature of the ladies auxiliary meetings that has become quite common in recent years - namely, that each meeting should not only be used for discussing activities but should also be used as an opportunity for some intellectual stimulation. The Rebbetzin spoke on the theme of Ahavat Yisrael - the practice of loving kindness between each other. She concluded that the work of the auxiliary should not be seen merely as a fund-raising organisation but should dedicate much of its efforts towards fostering friendship and closeness amongst the women of the community.

The meeting elected the following office bearers:

Mrs Sue Cohen - President.

Rebbetzin Gutnick and Mrs Susie Buchman - Honorary Vice-presidents.

Miss Rosetta Meinrath - Minutes secretary.

Mrs Yola Schneider - Correspondence secretary.

Mrs Ellen Meyer - Honorary Treasurer.

The following committees were formed:

Childrens' Functions: Mrs Tamara Lowbeer, Chairman.

Fete: Mrs Fritzi Fitchman, Chairman.

Ball: Mrs Ruth Lutman, Chairman.

It is hoped that all our ladies will join in to ensure another successful year's work.

The first meeting of the new year was held on August 3rd at the home of Rebbetzin Gutnick. It was well attended, and hopefully this augres well for future meetings.

The next major function will be the Annual Ball on Saturday night, October 31st. The Lord Mayor of Sydney and the Lady Mayoress will be guests of honour. Information and full details will be forthcoming, but mark the date on your calendar. It promises to be a most enjoyable evening.

Feature Pages



The Rosh Ha-Shanah service showing the *hazzan*, the *shofar* blower, and the “caller”, Germany, 1530 (left).

DAYS OF AWE

The High Holy Days are remarkable for the impact they make on all who have experienced them to the full – an impression that sometimes remains for a lifetime. The Days of Awe seem to embody the whole spirit of Judaism. Thus for the religious Jew they become the climax of the year, for the non-religious they become a last link with tradition, while for the anti-religious the Days of Awe become the symbol against which they rebel. In each case the Days of Awe are associated with the very essence of Judaism. Agnon, in the introduction to his book *Days of Awe*, recounts the impression made on him at the age of four by attendance at the synagogue, and this impression was reinforced in later life. Like many others, he attempts to analyze the cause of this impression. Is it the prayers of the High Holy Days, or the particular tunes? Is it the ecstatic recital of the reader, or the pervading tone of common purpose? For Agnon it was above all the atmosphere of sanctity, as the congregation stood enwrapped in prayer shawls, engrossed in prayer.

Agnon's description is true not only of East European Jewry but of many congregations the world over. The synagogue service on the High Holy Days has always been considered vital. Outlying Jewish settlements take extreme measures to ensure having at least a *minyán*. Considerable stress is always laid on procuring a suitable *hazzan* to lead the services, especially the climactic *musaf* service. Certain communities insist on an accomplished musical rendition; others closely examine the saintliness of the *hazzan's* character. In many cities today the services are advertized on billboards and in the newspapers, which give prominence to the name of the *hazzan* who will lead the service.

It is perhaps surprising how little the High Holy Days have changed in 2,000 years. — they have remained essentially the same since the days of the Second Temple — excepting, of course, the central ceremony in the Temple, especially that on Yom Kippur, when the High Priest entered the inner sanctuary, the only time during the year that this was allowed. Originally the Holy of Holies contained only the ark with the tablets of stone and the Torah. In the Second Temple the room remained completely empty (much to the astonishment of Pompey, the Roman general, who in 63 b.c.e. forced his way into the inner sanctuary). When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement he was completely alone, and as he was the representative of the Jewish people, this was understood as a direct confrontation, once a year, of the people with God. The rabbis averred that even the angles were denied access to this encounter.

The sanctity of that moment of confrontation has been preserved in the synagogue service, except that since the destruction of the Temple it cannot take place through a representative. Everyone is expected to participate, even those who normally have little contact with Judaism or the community. This involvement is illustrated by the hasidic tale of a young shepherd's boy who could not read or speak Hebrew. He came to the synagogue with his flute in his pocket and listened to the service in growing wonder. He was seized with an ever-growing desire to participate, but owing to his ignorance did not know how. Finally, as the

congregation reached the *Ne'ilah* prayers, he could no longer contain his desperate desire to express himself and, taking the flute out of his pocket, blew a long piercing blast. Seeing the consternation he had caused, the lad fled back to his fields. At the conclusion of the service the Ba'al Shem Tov stated that it was the shepherd boy who had opened the gates of heaven, allowing the prayers of the congregation to ascend, because his motives had been of the purest, to pray directly to God.

This anti-formalism and emphasis on basic morals is not confined to Hasidism. It finds expression in Peretz's story of the rabbi who, instead of going to *selihot* in the early morning, would secretly help the poor and aged while his congregation prayed. It is even related of the saintly Rabbi Israel Salanter that once he did not come to *Kol Nidrei*. He was eventually found returning a stray cow to its non-Jewish owner. Thus Rabbi Israel Salanter absented himself from the most important evening service of the year in order to return the lost property of a gentile. These tales stress the purity of intention and the consideration for others which are prerequisite to the service of God. The High Holy Days should be the peak of man's spiritual experience during the year, which must include the love for one's fellow. This, Hillel stated, is the basic tenet of Judaism.

ROSH HA-SHANAH

It Is A Day Of Blowing The Horn Unto You

Surprisingly, the name Rosh Ha-Shanah is not found in the Bible. This name of the festival is normally translated as New Year although the literal and more correct meaning is Head of the Year. It is by the name of Rosh Ha-Shanah that the first of Tishrei has become rooted in Jewish tradition. In the Pentateuch, the festival is mentioned only twice, once in Leviticus where it is called "a solemn rest . . . a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns, a holy convocation . . .", and again in Numbers where the festival is once more associated with the blowing of the horn: "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation, ye shall do no manner of servile work; it is a day of blowing the horn unto you." Apart from the sacrifices which are enumerated in the passage in Numbers, it is the *shofar* which, in both instances, is the major theme of the festival

Due to the biblical emphasis, the *shofar* has become the symbol of Rosh Ha-Shanah, just as *mazzah* symbolizes Pesah and the *lulav* and *etrog* symbolize Sukkot. The symbol became so popular in ancient times, that, together with the *lulav* and *etrog* and the *menorah* (the seven-branched candelabrum of the Temple), it became a leading motif in Jewish art. The significance of blowing the *shofar*, passed over in silence in the Bible, has intrigued Jewish thinkers throughout the ages. The most explicit treatment of the question was given by Sa'adiah Gaon (892–942) who gave ten reasons for sounding the *shofar* on Rosh Ha-Shanah.

1. Rosh Ha-Shanah as the day of Creation is the anniversary of God's rule. It is a coronation day, and Israel, as God's people, proclaim His kingship.

2. Rosh Ha-Shanah introduces the Ten Days of Penitence and the *shofar* calls for repentance.

3. The *shofar* evokes the revelation at Sinai, when the Torah was given to Israel amidst the blowing of the horn.

4. The sound of the *shofar* is compared to the inspiring message of the prophet: "When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman; if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he bloweth the horn and warneth the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the horn and taketh not warning . . . his blood shall be upon him; whereas if he had taken warning, he would have delivered his soul. But if the watchman seeth the sword come and bloweth not the horn and the people be not warned . . . his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchmen unto the house of Israel, therefore, when thou shalt hear the word at My mouth warn them from Me . . .".

5. The *shofar* is the sound of battle and the clash of arms. The memory of the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple evoke prayers for the speedy return of our national glory.