

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by

MR. LYON COHEN

AT ANNUAL MEETING

CONGREGATION SHAAH HASHOMAYIM

November 30th, 1924.

Members of Shaar Hashomayim Congregation :

This is the tenth consecutive Annual Report, as President, since 1915, which I have the honour and privilege of submitting today.

I feel that we ought to take a survey periodically, of the position of the Jew and Judaism throughout the world, so that we may give to our work a more comprehensive character, and in unison with the needs of our people.

The year just ended has unfortunately brought little relief for European Jewry, and conditions in that country are by no means promising. Whatever benefits may be in store for the Jews of Russia, through the limited colonization scheme suggested in the Crimea, they are outnumbered a thousand fold by the religious persecution from which they are suffering, and which, if continued, threatens annihilation of Judaism over there. The old established Jewish communities in Germany and Russia are suffering from a recrudescence of anti-semitism in its most violent form.

Immigration restrictions in the United States and other countries, make it difficult to obtain any relief by removal from these benighted lands. - Early in the year, in connection with the concession obtained from our Government - to bring 5000 of our co-religionists to this country, - your President called a Conference in Toronto, to mobilize our Canadian communities in the work of receiving the immigrants, and through his initiative, various relief agencies in New-York were called together to help the work of rescue, which resulted in a goodly sum being sent here. In our own country, under the direction of two of the officers of this Congregation, Mr. A. Levin, President of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, and Mr. Jos. Levinson, Sr., its Treasurer, a successful campaign was held for the raising of funds for the cause. Three thousand of these refugees, through this great work, have found homes in Canada.

A gleam of hope and encouragement breaks through this cloud of darkness as we learn of the activity which is now going on in Palestine. The establishment of the Jewish Agency by the Zionist Movement, has drawn into the ranks of the active workers of that great cause, many able and influential men in Jewry. Among the outstanding figures are Sir Alfred Mond of London and Louis Marshall of New York. A number of important enterprises are due to the splendid initiative of these and other leaders, and the magnificent amounts being raised throughout the United States and Canada for the Karen Hayesod will undoubtedly stimulate further immigration to Palestine, which has now reached 2000 per month. In connection with this great work, a number of our members are taking a prominent part.

It is with pleasure that we record the fact that members of Shaar Hashomayim are also taking a leading part in social endeavours both at home and abroad, wherever the amelioration of suffering or the advancement of learning call for their participation. Your President, during the past Summer, was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the Jewish World Relief Conference, with headquarters in Paris. - Mr. Michael Hirsch was appointed on the Jewish section of the Committee to study the School Question. - Your Vice-president, Mr. Jos. Levinson, Sr., was elected President of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and Messrs. A. Lesser, A. L. Gittleson and Dr. Kirsch are named officers of that institution.

Mr. A. Z. Cohen was elected President of the Baron de Hirsch Institute; Mr. M. Rittenberg - President of the Montreal Hebrew Orphans' Home; Mr. Phillip Levy - President of the Herzl Dispensary, and Mr. Harry Rother was elected the Chairman of the Business Men's Council of the Federation. - Mr. Michael Hirsch and your President have been appointed members of the Executive of the Anti-Tuberculosis League. - A signal honour was conferred upon Mr. Samuel Wener, one of our Trustees, by the Talmud Torahs of Montreal, in presenting him with a beautiful loving cup on his retirement from the office of President of that institution. -

Early in the year a committee, with your President as Chairman, Mr. Robert Hirsch as Treasurer, and your Rabbi, were elected to assist in raising our quota towards the Million Dollar Endowment Fund for the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. A number of other members also did splendid work, and the handsome sum of approximately \$14,000. was raised for this purpose.

Our Rabbi, Dr. Abramowitz, our Parness - Mr. Jos. Levinson, your President, and one of our Trustees - Mr. Samuel Hart, attended the Annual Convention of the United Synagogue of America, with which this Congregation is affiliated, held in New York on the 22nd of May.

We have noted with pleasure that a number of our ladies and gentlemen members have taken an active part in the recent Bazaar held by the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. Mr. Charles Friedman gladly assumed the important position of Treasurer of the Bazaar when invited to do so.

Consistent with our policy - that our Community Hall should be used for every purpose for advancing the welfare of our people, - our splendid facilities have been placed at the disposition of a large number of outside organizations which are doing social and philanthropic work, such as - The Local Council of Jewish Women, the Ladies' Immigrant Aid Society, the United Sewing League, The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Hebrew Maternity Hospital, and a number of Haddassah Organizations which regularly meet in our rooms, besides those societies composed of our own members and directly affiliated with our Congregation, including our Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

The destruction of Victoria Hall by fire on March 12th, leaving a large number of non-Jewish societies without a place to hold their meetings, prompted your President to place our Community Hall at the disposal of the Mayor of our City; this was gratefully acknowledged by His Worship, and a number of social and religious societies took advantage of our offer.

When the Rabbinical Delegation, headed by Rabbi Kook, Chief Rabbi of Palestine, and his associates - Rabbi Shapiro of Lithuania, and Rabbi Epstein, Dean of Slabodka University, - visited our City for the purpose of raising funds to assist in rebuilding the Jeshivas of Poland and Lithuania, your Board gladly gave permission for a Banquet and Reception to be tendered to these distinguished visitors in our Assembly Hall, on May 5th. This action on our part drew a great deal of praise from the community; and your President acted as Chairman, and Mr. Asher Pierce as Treasurer, of the local campaign which was subsequently started to assist the cause.

A happy event was The Golden Wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Cohen. The Board took advantage of this occasion to present Mr. Cohen, who was a former Parnass of our Congregation, with an illuminated address, and a handsome gift was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Cohen as a token of the high esteem in which they are held.

On the eve of the departure of your President and Vice-President and their families, on an extended trip to Europe, the Board took the opportunity to tender them a Dinner and Reception. Addresses were read and mementos presented to both the ladies and gentlemen. A very large gathering of our members, as well as representatives of many

outside organizations, made the occasion one of the most notable and brilliant social events which have been held in our halls; the demonstration was such as your President will never forget, and for which he is deeply appreciative.

These events express in a way, the social life of our Congregation as such. The facilities which we have for reunions of this nature; for entertainments, weddings and social evenings, amidst what may be practically called private surroundings, ought to appeal to members. Every festive occasion, when the home is not large enough to entertain in, should take place in our Community Hall.

We are indeed proud of the work which is being done by our affiliated ladies' societies, and take this occasion to congratulate our Women's Auxiliary for the splendid work they have inaugurated early in the year, by starting a Sunday School in connection with one of the smaller Synagogues on Notre Dame Street, St. Henry. Too much praise cannot be given for constructive work of this kind. Our Congregation has already to its credit similar religious schools in the Baron de Hirsch Institute and New Adath Jeshurun Congregation, both of which were also started through the initiative of our beloved Rabbi.

The Women's Auxiliary Societies in modern congregational life, play a large and important part in the upbuilding of the congregation. Our ladies, amply provided with most attractive facilities, have an opportunity in this Congregation for unlimited service. - We wish to express our appreciation of the work of Mrs. Jos. Levinson, the President, and her associates on the Auxiliary Board, and would urge them to even greater endeavor.

The Choral Society, under the presidency of Mrs. (Dr.) Moe Fineberg, have shown much energy and ambition, and must be congratulated for the success which has marked their public entertainments.

Our Young People's Society have held a number of very interesting and pleasing literary and social evenings during the past year, and I trust that the coming year will be one of even greater success.

Affiliated with other Congregations, particularly in the United States, are their Men's Clubs. These Clubs hold monthly meetings, to which they invite speakers on interesting subjects, and engender a great deal of good fellowship thereby. It has been found that these clubs are a sort of training school in congregational work and fit men for the heavier responsibility of officers. I trust that there will be found in our Congregation young men possessing the spirit and desire to start such a Club in connection with our Synagogue.

A number of our rooms still remain unfurnished, and I would like the various societies of our Congregation to keep this in mind. There is also a wide opportunity for beautifying our Synagogue Auditorium. In this connection, I am glad to note the number of presentations which have been made recently. Mrs. Jacob Kellert is presenting the Congregation with a beautiful set of Menorahs, in memory of her father; Mr. Tobias Glickman recently presented the Synagogue with a handsome Pulpit Bible; Mr. Jacob Horowitz sent the Treasurer a cheque to be applied to the purchase of furnishings; your President brought with him from his trip abroad, a gold-encrusted Ethrog Casket. Amongst other presents which have been received during the year were moving picture machinery and films from Mr. Rosenbloom. Mr. Harry Gordon presented a number of prayer books, in memory of his mother. Mr. A. Levin presented the Royal Victoria Hospital with a number of prayer books, and Mr. and Mrs. H. Kellert are presenting a beautiful new Chupah, on the occasion of the marriage of their granddaughter.

Our architect suggests that several pairs of Menorahs can still be used in connection with the Ark, and we also require a number of hanging lamps, and hope that members will make these furnishings available.

With regard to the suggestion in my last annual report, - that a Book of Remembrance should replace the reading of the names of departed members on Holy Days, I wish to inform you that the matter is now in the hands of a Committee, who are tabulating all the names of relatives of members, and the idea has already been put temporarily into operation. I feel sure that when this book is completed and displayed in the Synagogue, reference to it on those occasions when the Yizkoir is recited will recall to mind our dear departed, with the same feelings as when their names were recited, and the Ceremony of Remembrance will be a beneficial improvement to our service.

A special committee has been at work for some time on new Bye Laws, but I can safely say that within the coming months a meeting will be called for the purpose of presenting them for your acceptance.

A committee is also considering the advisability of presenting mementos to donors of the building fund, or some other means of perpetuating the names of the givers.

A special committee has been appointed to represent the Congregation on the Kashruth Committee of the Kahilla.

Our standing committees, which have been in charge of the various functions of the Synagogue and Congregation, deserve credit for the able manner in which their work has been carried on during the past year.

The Treasurer's Report will disclose an increase in income, as well as an augmentation in the cost of administration. We have quite a heavy burden in the annual payments in deduction of our mortgage, and until our higher priced seats are rented, the greatest of care and economy will be necessary to establish an equilibrium between income and expenditure. In this connection, I am glad to be able to report that 45 new members have affiliated with the Congregation, and some \$2700. of new revenue is available for the coming year. This is indeed a very gratifying showing and confirms the anticipation of your officers that it would only be a few years when seats in our Synagogue will be at a premium. I feel that it may soon be necessary to take up a part of the space in front with an extra row of seats.

An extra amount of work during the past High Holy Days devolved upon your Treasurer, due to my indisposition and absence from the seat-renting, with which I have been associated for so many years. The thanks of this Congregation are due to our able Treasurer, Mr. Jacob Kellert, to our Secretary - Mr. A. M. Vineberg, Mr. M. J. Heilig and the other members of your Board, who also participated in this special work.

The Building Fund of our Synagogue has not as yet been incorporated in the general statement. Our Treasurer, who is also the Treasurer of this fund, will bring before you a statement of the condition of our finance. - Authority was granted, as you are aware, at the last annual meeting, to borrow \$200,000., which was applied to the bank loan. There still remains a considerable sum outstanding against subscribers, and an almost equal amount owing as a bank overdraft. The Treasurer will go into more detail, and it is hoped that his appeal to our subscribers to pay up their donations, will bring the desired result and enable him to liquidate this indebtedness.

You know that the scheme of financing of our new Synagogue was based on the value of the seats. These seats in round figures cost ten times the annual rental. Many members have paid the full cost of the seats they occupy. Those desirous, can easily ascertain whether they have paid their share in our Synagogue building. Members wishing to make donations can have the plan explained to them. You are aware that 4% is allowed on such donations towards your seat rentals.

Our House Committee, with the variety of activities which our Synagogue provides, is a very busy department, and the ability, the patience and the time which our very able Chairman of that Committee, Mr. Lesser, gives to his work, can only be appreciated by those who are in daily contact with him. He deserves the greatest praise for his devotion. His report, due to his modesty, by no means conveys the amount of labour which he puts forth.

Mr. Jos. Levinson, Sr. will present to you a report on the progress of our Hebrew Day Schools. The majority of our members have up to the present not taken advantage of the magnificent facilities which our Hebrew School offers for giving our young an education in Hebrew and religious subjects. Under the supervision of our Rabbi and a staff of excellent teachers, a training is provided which will equip the pupils attending, with a thorough knowledge of our Bible history and religion. I desire to impress the members of our Congregation how vitally essential Hebrew education is to the development of staunch steadfast and sincere Jews and Jewesses.

Our Sunday School has grown beyond our expectations, and in both these departments of our School, our Rabbi gives the closest and most painstaking attention. Special mention should be made of the interest in the School by Mr. N. J. Fraid and Mr. A. Saul Cohen.

The work of the Decorum Committee is always a very arduous and thankless one. I trust that members appreciate the sacrifices which the Chairman, Mr. M. J. Heilig, and the young men who are voluntarily serving upon this Committee are making. Mr. Heilig has a number of recommendations in his report which I hope members will take to heart. In this connection, I would also draw attention to the fact that a uniform set of prayer books for Sabbaths and Holy Days are now made available through this Committee.

We are glad to see here this evening Mr. David S. Friedman, Chairman of your Cemetery Committee. He was undergoing treatment at the hospital at the time of our last Annual Meeting. - The work of the Cemetery Committee, I need not impress you, is most trying, and we are fortunate in the members who compose it. Besides the Chairman, there are Mr. A. M. Vineberg and Mr. M. Heilig. The Chairman will outline in his report a number of important matters which will require your consideration.

I never refer to the work of our Cemetery Committee without being reminded of the inroads which the Reaper of Death is making upon the pioneers of our Congregation - those sturdy champions and zealous workers on behalf of Traditional Judaism, who have made our Congregation noted in Anglo-American Jewry. - On July 5th of this year, we were called to mourn the death of Mr. Moses A. Vineberg, the last surviving Past President of our Congregation, occupying the Presidential during the years 1890 - 92, 1894-96 and 1901-04. Mr. Vineberg was a member of this Congregation almost since its inception, and held office intermittently for nearly fifty years. His judgment was sound and his love for the Congregation was deep and sincere; he showed his devotion by coming to its rescue on many occasions. We are indeed fortunate that he has left us a son, Mr. A. M. Vineberg, who is giving up much time on behalf of Shaar Hashomayim, - for many years he has been working on our Cemetery Committee. An illuminated letter of condolence was sent to Mr. Moses Vineberg's family.

Shortly following the death of Mr. Vineberg, one of our oldest and very highly esteemed members - Mr. Solomon Levinson, suffered a great bereavement through the death of his beloved wife, and suitable letters of condolence were sent to Mr. Levinson and his family by your President and Secretary.

The sincere condolence of your Board has been conveyed to several other sorrowing families who have been visited by death during the year, - of these your Cemetery Committee will report.

The ladies of the Chevra Kadisha have, as usual, performed their sacred tasks on all occasions when called upon, and deserve our deep gratitude.

I wish to express my appreciation of the onerous duties which fell to the lot of our Vice-President, Mr. Jos. Levinson, Sr., since his return from Europe. He was called upon, not only to fill the very important position which he occupies as Parnass, but has also been obliged to preside at the meetings of the Board during my enforced absence, through illness which overtook me this Summer, and of which I am not entirely recovered yet.

I desire to thank my colleagues one and all for their fine co-operation and the sense of responsibility they have shown; and to all who have helped in the work of our Synagogue - both ladies and gentlemen - I tender my sincerest appreciation.

During the past Summer it was my privilege to travel through some of the leading cities of Europe. I had the good fortune to visit a number of the outstanding institutions, particularly the Synagogues of London, Paris, Lucerne, Milan, Florence, Rome, and I have returned home after that trip as enthusiastic as ever regarding our own Congregation and our beautiful Synagogue, despite my indisposition.

In bringing this rather lengthy review of our year's work to a close, I feel that we can be justly proud that we have steadfastly striven for the upbuilding of traditional Judaism along sane and practical lines, and can look to our achievements with pride and satisfaction. We have reared a large and influential Congregation, whose members have taken a prominent, if not a leading, part in every movement in our community; we have builded an institution which reflects pride and honour upon the Jewish community as a whole, and we have provided facilities for the continuation of that great heritage which has been transmitted to us from time immemorial.

We can look with confidence to the future, if we continue to be loyal, if we work with zeal and devotion for the benefit of our sacred institution and the love of the God of our Ancestors.

Respectfully submitted,

PRESIDENT.