

Editorial

After the completion of the High Festivals the Hebrew Sephardic Society of Rhodesia, the first general meeting was held at the Palace Theatre, First Street, Salisbury, on Sunday 18th October 1931.

Much water has passed under the bridge since that historic day, and this short edition attempts to cover some of the events and decision taken during the last eventful 75 years. The 2005/2006 Committee made the decision to put out this small publication to mark the occasion.

It has also been argued that it would not be worth while to produce this book because of the dwindling numbers of this Congregation. I have maintained that to produce a record for posterity. Today with all the marvelous modern electronic media and technology available, this publication could be stored on a compact disc or lodged on a website for future generations to browse and know of the life and times of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe.

The last publication about the history of our

congregation was published in August 1991 when we celebrated our 60th Anniversary. Sadly, since then, in the last fifteen years, due to the political climate, our numbers have dwindled drastically, with congregants moving or passing on. For the last two years the two Hebrew Congregations in Harare have combined their resources to form minyanim for Shabbat Services and festivals.

For two years we published the Sephardi News, recording events and biographies of well-known personalities. Regrettably, again, because of escalating costs this publication ceased to be printed. The postage alone was astronomical and we resorted to emails and hand deliveries. However, we have selected salient reports and biographies for this edition. If we have omitted something or someone out, we apologise, it is not intentional.

It is my great pleasure to prepare, present and edit this publication for posterity.

Benny Leon

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ZIMBABWE

We look back on the past 75 years of our existence with pride as we note the achievements of Congregants who originated in the Dodecanese Islands and settled in this part of the world. The dedication and enthusiasm of those who eventually formed, administered and directed the course of the Congregations existence is gratefully and respectfully acknowledged. In this connection special mention must be made of the late Haham Dr. Solomon Gaon and our present Ab Beth Din, Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano whose attention and guidance is always appreciated.

To mention all those who have participated in the evolution and progress of this Congregation would be a vast undertaking and for fear of omitting anyone we pay a blanket tribute to their endeavours. They have laid the foundations on which we must continue to build.

Regrettably political uncertainty has taken its toll on the Community and although members have shrunk it is our hope that with the dedication being shown by our present members we will be able to continue our task of persuing and maintaining a viable Congregation.

I extend my sincere Congratulations and best wishes to the Congregation on this auspicious occasion.

VICTOR COHEN

Greetings from Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano

To all the members of the Community. It gives me great pleasure to send you my greetings and to bless you with all the blessings of the Torah.

Our Fathers built the magnificent Temple to the Almighty and today we are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Congregation.

First and foremost it is our duty to remember past spiritual and lay leaders who are indeed servants of God.

No doubt, our aim, of course, is to survive another 75 years with God's help. For this reason, I would like to draw your attention to the following verse:

"Now Israel harken to my commandments, do not add unto the word unto which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it - but keep the law of the Torah as it stands."

This is one of the most beautiful verses in the Torah and the moral lesson is clear. The ethics and morality of the community have to be based solely on the law of the Torah. Do not add on My law. Any addition to My law is a radical departure of the fundamentals of the Jewish faith. "*Loteegrau*" – do not diminish My law. In other words, do not try to change or modify the law, for by doing so you are diluting the original meaning, you are weakening the force of the divine law.

Of course, it is paramount that our leaders should exercise tolerance and understanding with those who break the law,

but not with those who would like us to alter the law of Moses. We are the bearers of an ancient tradition which we should keep at any cost. Let us adapt our lives to Judaism rather than adapting Judaism to our lives. Let us remember that when the call came to Abraham, the Patriarch, to leave his birthplace and even to sacrifice his son, he obeyed God despite the sacrifice and the enormous inconvenience he had.

As nowadays our community is getting smaller, it is important that we must reach out to each other to see in which way we can help each other. It is most essential that Shalom should prevail amongst us so that in turn God Almighty will care for us and bless us with Shalom.

May I conclude with the blessing which God has given to Ya'acov. As Ya'acov left his birth place and his parents, God appeared to him in a dream and said to him "Behold I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go and I will not forsake you." So, may God be with you, too. He will no doubt direct the leaders and lay leaders in the future for the welfare of this community. May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.

Shalom.

Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano, B.A.

Av Beth Din of the

**Spanish and Portuguese Jews Synagogue,
London.**

CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE HARARE HEBREW CONGREGATION

Greetings from the, Harare Hebrew Congregation on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Harare.

Since its foundation the Sephardi Congregation has established a proud record in maintaining the high moral and ethical standards of a Jewish congregation, at the same time adhering to their religious and cultural heritage as Sephardi Jewry.

The Ashkenazi Congregation applauds our fellow Jews, who, worshipping the same one true Deity, have not deviated from their own special customs. The history of the Sephardi Congregation is studded with the illustrious names of people who have brought great credit upon Jewry, by their contributions to our country by their contributions in every sphere of life. The Harare Hebrew Congregation is proud to have been associated with our Sephardi brethren.

We extend to you all our heartiest congratulations and look forward to a continuation of your beautiful and uplifting services.

May the Almighty continue to bless and keep you.

Jos Pitluk

President.

Harare Hebrew Congregation.

Greetings From the Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation

On behalf of the Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, I would like to extend a warm Mazeltov to the Sephardi Congregation of Harare on this wonderful milestone of your 75th anniversary. Many of the members of the Johannesburg Congregation originated from Zimbabwe and were founding members of the shul in Harare. They speak of their experiences there with great fondness and even longing. The fact that the shul has been perpetuated until today is a wonderful achievement on your part.

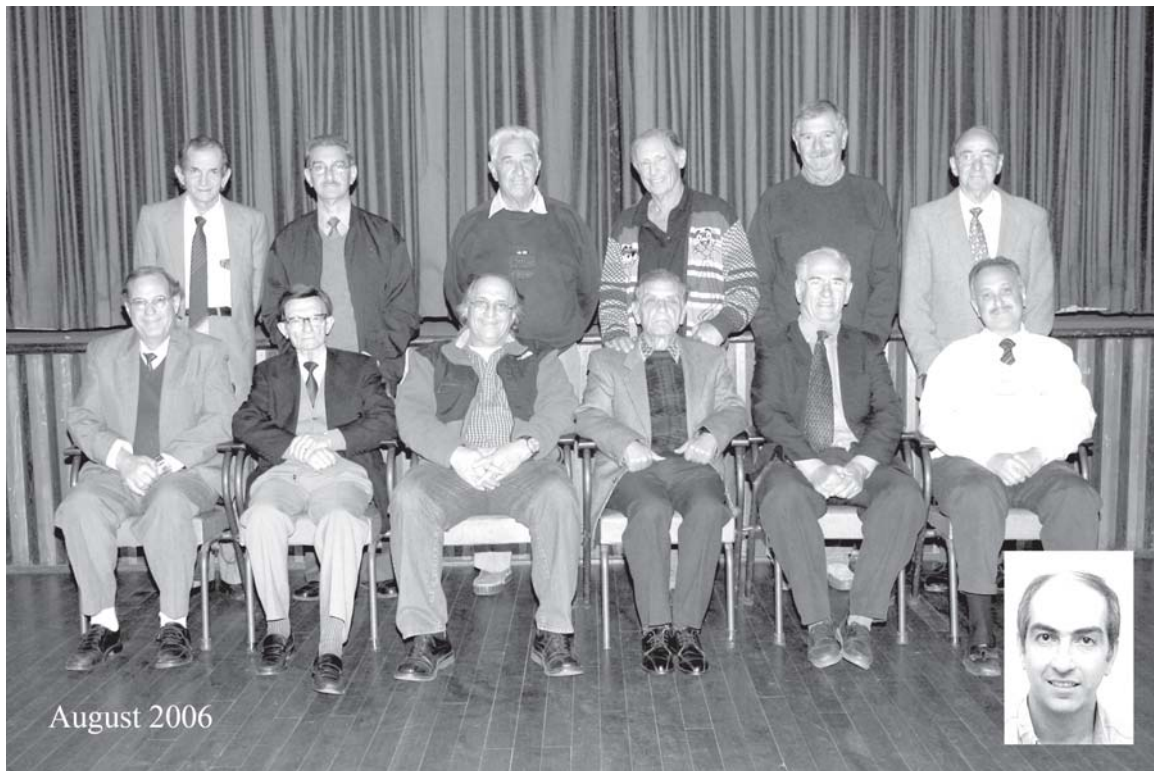
The current situation at our shul in Johannesburg is, Thank G-d, very positive. Shul attendance is on the increase, we have a fantastic Rabbi, who, together with his wife are helping the congregation to learn and grow with enthusiasm. There is also a growing number of 'little

Sephards' who are running around on Shabbat and Chagim and who bring joy to every one of us. May Hashem bless both our communities with many more milestones which should be reached in health and Simcha!

With best wishes to all your congregants.

Robert Youngworth
President
JHB Sephardi Hebrew Congregation

Rabbi Moshe Kazilsky
Rabbi JHB Sephardi Hebrew Congregation



The Committee 2006

Seated L to R: Assistant Gabbai, Victor Alhadeff, Hon. Life President Sam Benatar, President Victor Cohen, Gabbai Leon Hanan, Secretary Benny Leon, Philip Hasson.
Standing L to R: Jacky Cohen, Victor Hasson, Mark Cohen, Ellis Fintz, Rueben Bardavid and Eli Bondi
Inset Right: Vice President Robbie Merdjan, Absent Treasurer Bertie Bondi

Greetings from Rabbi Reuben Suiza of Cape Town

Your community will always hold a very special place in my heart. Some thirty years ago, fresh out of the Montefiore Yeshiva in London, it was the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Harare that I chose to serve as my first position in my rabbinical career.

My first, and most lasting, impression was of a vibrant congregation of wonderful, warm and kind people who spoke a rather peculiar form of Spanish! I was to learn of the great Ladino and the Rhodes community culture, as well as the indomitable spirit of the true Sephardim in our history.

That was a long time ago; however, the love and affection, as well as the continued spirit of togetherness, in your community was and is an example for all to behold.

During the first High Festivals I spent in Harare in 1973, I clearly recollect a full synagogue of people who prayed, sang and joined together, with dozens of children at the youth service. A truly awe-inspiring memory.

It is gratifying to know that, whilst diminished in numbers, the congregation continues to function and provide a wonderful service to all its members.

A *chazuk ubaruch* to all your dedicated leaders and lay readers, as well as those teaching Bar-Mitzvah and Judaism to the younger generation, the helpers of the Chevra Kadish and members of the Guild.

May Hashem always bless your endeavours and dedication and may He protect and bless every congregant "con salud i alegrías, para muchos años".

Rabbi Reuben Suiza
Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Cape Town

THE LAST 75 YEARS

By Victor Hasson

1931 – 2006

Fifteen years have now passed since the last publication celebrating our Diamond Jubilee. Now in 2006 we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe.

The intention of this publication is to portray the history of the community as a pictorial journey from the early days with perhaps a little more emphasis on the last fifteen years.

We have come a long way since the early days of the founding of the congregation and needless to say the last fifteen years have not been without many challenges.

We have seen a steady decline in our membership. Our older members have either passed away or have moved to be closer to their children in other countries and similarly the younger generation have left to further their education and to look for opportunities further afield.

Our Membership

At the time of writing our community comprises 89 souls, of whom two are Holocaust survivors. The occasional birth is registered, an occasional Barmitzvah is celebrated and regrettably the last wedding to be celebrated at the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue was in 1995. Ironically the congregation has approved a number of applications for membership in the last few years. There are quite a number of Israeli expatriate residents, with small children in Harare and they are being encouraged to participate in community affairs.

Past Personalities

Our community has over the last few years lost a good number of exceptional personalities and communal

workers both men and women, who have passed on.

The same applies to others who have emigrated to other countries. We miss their knowledge of Sephardi traditions and customs.

The Present

Our community is indeed very indebted to Mr Leon Hanan who without persuasion stepped in and took over the functions of Gabbai and spiritual leader. Mr Hanan is most knowledgeable in Torah, all aspects of the festivals as well as customs associated with each of these festivals. He possesses a wonderful singing voice, having served the choir for many years and retains the original tunes he remembers as a very young man in Rhodes. He is supported by a very caring wife Rachelle, and has a very quiet yet very convincing approach in all he does.

We are also very grateful to Victor Alhadeff who stepped into the breach after Rev. Mayo left. Victor is self-taught and is very ably assisting all of us by being on the Tevah with his reliability and dedication to duty.

Co-operation

Whilst for many years there has existed good co-operation and communication between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, the last few years have seen even more than before. Circumstances have necessitated services to be held at alternate synagogues each Shabbat as well as joint services on most festivals. Jointly the communities enjoy the services of Yossi Kably who being Shomer Shabbat reads and prepares the Parashah each week. He assists with all the festivals and is always available for any other requests or service the communities may require.

Chevrah Kadisha duties are still performed by vol-

unteers from both communities and the order of service takes on the custom and tradition of the deceased.

Other joint functions include overseeing Sharon Primary School and the Hebrew Nursery School, and attending to the needs of the elderly and infirm.

Shechita and procurement of Pesach products are also a joint responsibility although most of the above fall under the auspices of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

Ladies Society

The Sephardi Ladies society is still going strong and they are never found lacking in preparing their famous fortnightly Shabbat table, complete with Bourekitas, Reshikas and the occasional tray of Travados. They sew shrouds, visit the sick and do other communal work. Many of their members work jointly on WIZO committees.

Finances

All congregations need funding and financially our community has benefited from a substantial bequest from the estate of the late Albert Hanan to whose family members we are grateful. The funds have assisted in numerous projects and day- to- day running costs of the complex. The community also benefits from extremely generous donations that continue to be received from a small nucleus that give for various projects that need to be funded from time to time, as well as very generous donations that are received on the High Festivals. Thanks go

to Sam Benatar for managing the finances and Harry Kantor who deals with matters legal.

Dedication

Without the extra dedication of the remaining few, the congregation would not have survived until today. Despite the adversities that the community faces, perhaps the finest attribute that we can claim over the last fifteen years is the resilience of these few. The workload is the same whether our numbers are eighty or eight hundred.

Very special thanks go to each and every one of us who participate in communal affairs. To those who conduct our services, to those who prepare food for our tables and those who do the blessed work of the Chevra. From the individual, who makes a generous donation, to those who always help make up a Minyan or visit the sick.

From the one who sources a globe to keep the Kehila bright, to the one who blows the shofar or tends the cemetery. They are all very special. These are the ones who keep the Sephardi community alive.

In conclusion a very special note of gratitude must go to Benny Leon, who has dedicated a great deal of his time and effort, to making this publication possible.

He has preserved a wealth of printed and photographic material over the years, much of it from his Sephardi Newsletters.

Kipps Rosin



Kipps Rosin leading personality of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, in his study where he had several bibles of various editions. Many were given to him by ministers of the Christian faith.

Kipps Rosin served for a total of sixteen terms as president of the congregation. He was also the driving force behind the building of the present Sephardi Hebrew Complex.

Now in his eighty-eighth year, Mr I.R. Rosin OBE, FRCS, affectionately known as Kipps Rosin, a man with a distinguished professional career behind him as a surgeon, was made Honorary Life President of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation in 1970. This was a singular honour bestowed by a community in the main transplanted from Rhodes, upon a man who could trace no ancestry to that island. Kipps Rosin's influence upon the Sephardi community is an example of how out of sadness, and perhaps a certain bitterness, good and powerful things grow.

In 1935 Kipps Rosin became disenchanted with the Salisbury Ashkenazi Congregation for the manner in which he felt it had treated his father, the late Rabbi Joseph Julius Rosin, after eighteen years of service.

It was the young Aron King who encouraged him to approach the fledgling Sephardi community, then some four years old, and conducting their services according to Rodis traditions. Kipps joined for Rosh Hashana and remembers that "They welcomed me with open arms."

While training as a houseman in Manchester, Kipps attended the Withington Sephardi Synagogue, where the Rabbi had extended a warm hospitality. Enjoying a similar hospitality in Salisbury, Kipps asked if he could join the young congregation, was accepted and even preached a sermon at the high festivals. This was the beginning of a long custom and since 1935 Kipps has given countless sermons to his congregation.

In 1938 he served his first term as president "If we are going to be a congregation, we had to be a proper

congregation," he recalled. "We could not wander around with the Sefer Torah in a suitcase, and take a hall here and a home there for our Festivals. We had children growing up. We had to teach them to be Jews. We had to find a Rabbi." During his many terms of office as president, a piece of land was acquired in Jameson Avenue (Samora Machel Ave.) and the first Sephardi Hall erected.

It was now essential to have a Minister and through Chief Rabbi I Abrahams in Cape Town contacted a Sephardi Rabbi, one who had been an inmate of Dachau concentration camp. He was Rabbi Dr. Manfred Papo who came to Rhodesia in 1944.

Kipps remembers that General Smuts had to give special permission for him to travel up from the Cape to Rhodesia, in those war years, Dr Papo was an Austrian, considered in theory an enemy alien.

There were the more subtle and complex problems of trying to harmonise the old Rhodes Island traditions with the needs of a modern congregation. "This was not always easy," he recalls. Many of the old Sephardis wished to stick to the old Turkish ways. But slowly the necessary transformations were made. In this I had tremendous support from B.D. Almeleh, B.S. Leon, J.N. Alhadeff, Saul Alhadeff and Salvatore Alhadeff."

In all, Kipps Rosin served sixteen years as president.

He also made a tremendous impact on television viewers in the 1960's when he appeared on a religious programme "Viewpoint", in which members of the Christian and Jewish faiths exchanged views. He cleared up many misconceptions Gentiles had about the Jewish faith,

even to the extent that many wrote letters expressing the wish to convert to Judaism.

Perhaps the crowning culmination of his work was the building of the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue and the Rhodes Community Memorial Hall. He conceived the complex, was the mastermind behind the plans and with tireless support of Solly Habib, saw the centre become brick and mortar.

He recalls that one of the golden moments of his life, was the consecration of the synagogue in 1953. The building was packed. Dignitaries consisted of the Governor General, the Governor and the Mayor, all in morning coats and top hats. He was Master of Ceremonies that day and had the honour of escorting Lord Dalhousie. The ceremony was conducted by the Haham Dr Salamon Gaon assisted by Dr Papo.

Despite the fact that he came from an Ashkenazi background, Kipps still believed that the Sephardi Community must retain its own identity. "I do not believe in religious tribalism," he said, "but the Sephardi community has many beautiful traditions and rituals which should not be submerged to those of another community." He believes that all communities should work in harmony, each of them in their own separate ways towards the greater glory of Judaism.

Kipps Rosin was semi-retired but remained passionately interested in the affairs of the congregation and still delivered the occasional sermon. His message throughout his life to Jews and non-Jews alike was that Judaism is not a dogmatic religion but a way of life.

Kipps Rosin died in June 1993 aged 90.

CHEVRA KADDISHAH

The Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe is particularly fortunate to boast the fact that it has a completely voluntary Chevra Kaddisha. From its inception the Congregation has had dedicated service from both men and women who have served in this indispensable organization. Regrettably the last few years has seen a decline in the numbers of willing helpers.

The Congregation acknowledges the part played by, and pays tribute to such past members on the men's committee as J. C. Benatar, J. N. Alhadeff, I. B. Benatar, V. Israel, S. N. Alhadeff, A. I. Menashe, M. Franco, B. Alhadeff, M. Strugo, J. Amato, V. Alhadeff, M. Dozetos, and I. E. Menashe.

ON the ladies Committee, V. Amato, E. N. Levy, M. Galante, C. Soriano, F. Menashe, F. Capelouto, R. Surmany, E. Alhadeff, H. Ben Yahuda, R. Benatar, B. Krikler, E. Bondi, S. Piha and D. Hasson.

If we have inadvertently omitted anyone's name, we apologies in advance and would explain that most of our records were sent to Israel and were not available at the time of printing (1991)

UPDATE

From 1992 Chairpersons:

1992 Isaac Menashe/Victor Alhadeff
 1993 Isaac Menashe/Victor Alhadeff
 1994 Victor Alhadeff/Isaac Menashe
 1995 Victor Alhadeff/Isaac Menashe
 1996 Victor Alhadeff/Isaac Menashe
 1997 Victor Alhadeff/Isaac Menashe
 1998 Victor Alhadeff/Isaac Menashe
 1999 Victor Alhadeff
 2000 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2001 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2002 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2003 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2004 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2005 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi
 2006 Victor Alhadeff/Bertie Bondi

TABLE OF PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE SEPHARDI HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ZIMBABWE

1931 B.D.ALMELEH	1973 R.J. BENATAR
1932 H.S. COURT	1974 H. van den BERGH
1933 B.S. LEON	1975 R. J. BENATAR
1934 B.S. LEON	1976 R. J. BENATAR
1935 H.S. COURT	1977 I.E. MENASHE
1936 J.N.ALHADEFF	1978 I.E. MENASHE
1937J.N.ALHADEFF	1979 M. MIZRAHI
1938 I.R. ROSIN	1980 D. KAY
1939 I.R. ROSIN	1981 D. KAY
1940 S.N. ALHADEFF	1982 D. KAY
1941 I.R. ROSIN	1983 D. KAY
1942 I.R. ROSIN	1984 A.J. NAIM
1943 I.R. ROSIN	1985 A.J. NAIM
1944 B.S. LEON	1986 A.J. NAIM
1945 S.N. ALHADEFF	1987 A.J. NAIM
1946 I.R. ROSIN	1988 H.J.V.ALHADEFF
1947 I.R. ROSIN	1989 H.J.V.ALHADEFF
1948 J.N. ALHADEFF	1990 S. BENATAR
1949 S. HABIB	1991 S. BENATAR
1950 S. HABIB	1992 S. CODRON
1951 A. I. MENASHE	1993 S. CODRON
1952 I.R. ROSIN	1994 S. CODRON
1953 I.R. ROSIN	1995 P. J. M. HASSON
1954 I.R. ROSIN	1996 P. J. M. HASSON
1955 B.S. LEON	1997 P. J. M HASSON
1956 A. I. MENASHE	1998 S. CODRON
1957 A. I. MENASHE	1999 S. CODRON
1958 I.R. ROSIN	2000 P. J. M. HASSON
1959 B. RODITI	2001 P. J. M. HASSON
1960 A. L MENASHE	2002 S. BENATAR
1961 A. I. MENASHE	2003 S. BENATAR
1962 A. I. MENASHE	2004 P. J. M. HASSON
1963 I.R. ROSIN	2005 V.E. COHEN
1964 I.R. ROSIN	2006 V.E. COHEN
1965 I.R. ROSIN	
1966 S.M. ALHADEFF	
1967 S.M. ALHADEFF	
1968 I.R. ROSIN	
1969 I.R. ROSIN	
1970 N.I. ALHADEFF	
1971 N.I. ALHADEFF	
1972 R.J. BENATAR	



B. S. Leon with his nephew Sammy Leon, at the opening of the Hebrew School in 1962

B. S. Leon - A Philanthropist

by Benny Leon

Mr Behor Shumuel Leon was born in 1889 on the Island of Rhodes and came to what then was Rhodesia as a young man in 1908. He worked at various projects for a number of years, until he had saved enough money to start his own businesses. He tried many things including farming, mining, trading stores etc, before going into the property market.

Mr. B. S. Leon unveiled a plaque on the rear wall of the Sephardi Synagogue in Harare, in June 1958 during the consecration ceremony. Mr. B. S. Leon was highly regarded by the members of the congregation for his financial endeavours and his philanthropy towards his fellow man. The Samuel Leon Hebrew School is named after his father.

The economy of the island could no longer support the 4000 strong Sephardi community there, and with the clouds of the European war gathering on the horizon he assisted many of them to immigrate to Southern Rhodesia in the early 1920's and 1930's. Rhodes Island at that time was an Italian possession, and with the alliance between Mussolini and Hitler, the racial laws discriminating against Jews were implemented in 1938. In August 1944 the Nazis deported the remaining 1767 Jews of which only 163 survived the horrors of Auschwitz. Many families owe him a debt of gratitude. A good many members of the present congregation are in this country

because of Behor Shumuel Leon, who died in 1963, aged 74.

Although B. S. Leon was a well to do man, having made money through mining and farming ventures, he did not marry. Whilst living in Gatooma and the Eiffel Flats he became a Freemason and was Past Master of the Gatooma Lodge.

He was a founder member of the Wingate Country Club and Youth organisations could always rely on B. S. Leon for help.

In July 1950 the Loyal Woman Guild lead by a Mrs Henry Smith initiated the idea of a home for elderly men and woman. She got B. S. Leon interested in the project, and he opened a Trust Fund with a gift of 100 pounds sterling. This was followed in April 1951 with a gift of land, 20 acres of Mayfield Estate. In September 1952, the foundation of the present home was opened in the farm house with 7 elderly residents and it became known as the B. S. Leon Jubilee Home for the elderly. He also established the B. S. Leon Trust, of which he was Founder and President. Shortly after this he was honoured by Queen Elizabeth and received the O.B.E (Order of the British Empire). Although not a Jewish institution, this Home is still operative and of the forty odd residents five are Jewish.

June 2006



FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES

In recognition of his outstanding services to the congregation, Mr Raphael Jacob Menashe, had the title of Honorary Life Gabbai bestowed upon him by the committee in 1980.

From 1980 until the time of his death in 2001, Mr Menashe continued to take upon himself the task of Hazan, and to lead the services in the Kehila. In the absence of a minister he conducted the burial services and was always available for Zehirot. Born in Rhodes Island in 1911, R.J. Menashe immigrated to Rhodesia in 1936, settling in Salisbury where he immediately became a member of the congregation. He established himself as a merchant here and in later years as a clothing manufacturer. He had served on the committee and in the early 1970's, assisted in the conducting of religious services. During Rabbi Benzaquen's absence on sabbatical leave, he conducted the services and recalls

that in that year there were twelve Barmitzvahs. In 1946, he married Regina Hasson, a survivor of Auschwitz. They were married in the Salisbury Street Synagogue.

In 1979, he succeeded Leon Mayo as Gabbai to the congregation and the following year the honorary life title was bestowed upon him. Throughout this period of service he endeavored to keep the beautiful and cherished traditions of Rodis. He had indicated that he feels a moral obligation to keep these traditions going, but now that he is in his eightieth year he would welcome a gradual retirement. (Interviewed August 1991)

Raphael Menashe died in June 2001 in his ninety-first year after serving the congregation as Gabbai Emeritus for twenty-one years.

THE GABBAIS

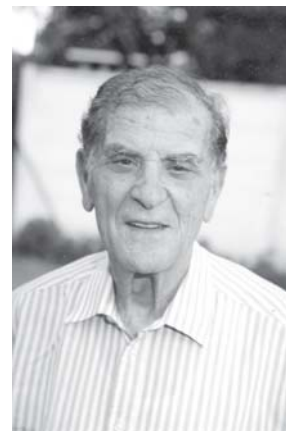


Rev. Leon Mayo

Rev. Leon Mayo was designated a reverend by Dayan Rabbi Pinchas Toledano. Rev. Mayo served the Congregation from 1993 to 2003. He and his wife Sarah emigrated to South Africa.

He was born in 1924, in Rhodes Island and at the age of 15 illegally emigrated to Palestine where he served in World War 2 in the Jewish Brigade of the British Army.

Unable to settle in Palestine he emigrated to Southern Rhodesia in 1947. Two years later he married Sarah Cohen. They have two sons and in 1999 celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary. They are at present retired and living in Johannesburg.



Gabbai Leon Hanan

In the early 1930's before the congregation was able to take on the services of a Minister, it has been the Gabbais who have given spiritual leadership in the services of the community. They have continued their work even during those periods when the community had its own Minister. It is a task requiring considerable devotion and the Sephardi congregation has been particularly honoured to have a succession of such competent and dedicated men, such as Marco Alhadeff, the community's first Gabbai. Behor David Almeleh (B.D.) was the first Hon. Life Gabbai Emeritus. He was succeeded by Salvatore Alhadeff, and Santo Codron, the first Hebrew teacher. Joseph Menashe followed until the appointment of Rev Leon Mayo. R.J. Menashe became the Hon. Life Gabbai, assisted by Jacques Hasson who also served for many years. Today Leon Hanan is our Gabbai and Victor Alhadeff is the Assistant Gabbai.



The Tevah of the
Sha'are Shalom Synagogue, Harare

Sephardi Synagogue Consecrated

Reprinted from the Rhodesia Herald
June 1958

After 25 years, the Sephardic Hebrew Congregation of Rhodesia finally have a permanent place of worship. Yesterday afternoon a distinguished gathering, including including the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, and the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Peviril William-Powlett, watched the new Sephardi Synagogue in Salisbury being Consecrated at an impressive ceremony.

"This day will long be remembered by the members of my congregation", the president of the congregation, Mr. A. I. Menashe told the congregation which filled the big synagogue in Montague Avenue.

From New York

A quarter of a century ago the congregation had been founded in Salisbury, Mr. Menashe said. Since that time services had been held of necessity, in a number of different places.

"We now have a permanent place of worship."

Mr. Menashe thanked the people who, he said, had come from afar as London and New York

to attend the service.

"We hope nothing but peace will flow from this place."

In his consecration sermon, the Very Reverend Haham, Rabbi, Dr. S. Gaon said that many members of the congregation had been given the opportunity to build a new future for themselves and their children in Rhodesia.

Thanksgiving

This synagogue is a symbol of thanks giving to the God of Israel for having brought His children to this land."

The sacred Scroll of the Law from the Mother Congregation (Sha'are Shalom - Rhodes Island) was carried around the synagogue by clergy and wardens at the start of the service.

The Scrolls were then placed in the Sanctuary which was opened by Gabbai Emeritus, Mr. B. D. Almeleh. Rabbi Dr. M. Papo consecrated the Perpetual Light. The Consecration Stone was unveiled by Mr. B. S. Leon.

Crown Clothing and the Alhadeff Brothers



by Nick Alhadeff

There were four Alhadeff Brothers of whom Saul [S.N.] was the eldest, followed by Jacob [J.N.], Albert [A.N.] and Yehiel [Sylvest]. All four were born on the Island of Rhodes.

The first to arrive in S. Rhodesia in 1913 was J.N. who worked for several years managing various trading stores owned by B.S. Leon. In 1922 he married Tamar [Behora] Leon from Rhodes. On her arrival in the country J.N. went to meet her in Bulawayo and they were married there before proceeding to Salisbury. Their children all born in Rhodesia were: Nissim, b. 1924- d. 1998 in Cape Town. Stella, b. 1925 married Solly Alhadeff. Alfred b. 1926- d. 1997, married Clairette Soriano in Elizabethville in 1954. Ethel b. 1932, married Sam Miller [divorced], married Ken Brauer [deceased], married Ludwig Levy.

Concession Stores

In 1924/25 J.N. together with J.S. Benatar and Haim Galante formed a partnership to take possession of a chain of concession stores operating on the gold mines in the Shamva/Bindura district. At the peak of the gold mining industry they employed many young immigrants from Rhodes, some of them relatives, who had come to Rhodesia lured by the stories of the discovery of gold. In 1930/31 with the closure of the majority of the mines in the area, the partners decided to liquidate the enterprise.

A.N. arrived in Rhodesia in 1923/24 and opened a general dealer's store in Glendale with branches in the Mazoe area. In 1927 he married Grazia Levy in Istanbul and they had two sons. Isaac [Benji] b. 1928 – married Ann Shandling [divorced] married Ruth Codron. Edward [Teddy] b. 1930- d. 1998, married Suzanne Bar David In 1930/31. Both J.N. and A.N. decided to move to Salisbury and together bought a controlling interest in a clothing factory. Their children, all born in Rhodes were: Rachel b. 1922 married Dr. B. Roditi in 1953. Nick b. 1923 married Nelly Israel in 1954. Raphael b. 1930 d. 1941. S.N. had worked in Rhodes as the managing-director of Bank

Alhadeff, a well established concern owned by an uncle.

The uncle together with two nephews were the joint owners of the bank as well as a large import/export business servicing the surrounding islands and the south/west coast of Turkey. In 1930 following policy disagreements, the uncle and the nephews split. They decided to emigrate.

It was not long before fierce and acrimonious competition broke out and this was further aggravated when the nephews decided to open a rival bank. At this stage both parties sought the services and banking expertise of S.N. who found himself caught-up in a family tug-of-war. Finally rather than side with either party he decided to emigrate and join his brothers in Rhodesia. Soon after his arrival in 1931, the three brothers bought Harry Cohen's share in the factory as well as expanding the business by establishing a wholesale outlet under the same name.

Yehiel [Sylvest], the youngest brother married Amelie Levy in Salisbury in 1935 and had two daughters: Sally b. 1936 – d. 1963 married Mark Plotkin [divorced], married Alec Kavonic. Marilyn b. 1939 is the youngest in the family. Sylvest as the youngest brother worked for his brothers for many years.

Communal Affairs

All the older brothers were involved in communal affairs and both S.N. and J.N. each served two terms as presidents of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation. Again all were ardent Zionists and A.N. in particular together with B.S. Leon played an active part in the Zionist Fund Raising Campaigns. Over the years, as many members of the congregation turned to the brothers for advice or help with their personal or communal problems the Crown Clothing Co.'s offices became a focal point for the conduct of the congregation's affairs.

FOOTNOTE: It is with regret that we record that after trading for almost eighty years, and due to the economic climate, Crown Clothing closed its doors for the last time, in August 2006. Richard Alhadeff, grandson of one of the founding brothers J. N. Alhadeff, wound up the family business.

FAMILY NAMES OF THE JEWS OF RHODES

From the book "I Remember Rhodes" by Rebecca Amato Levy the following is the first category of the oldest families that had lived there for as long as she could remember.

Alkana	Cordoval	Mazal
Alhadeff	Codron	Menashe
Angel	Fiss	Mizrahi
Almelech	Ferrera	Notrica
Amato	Franco	Pilousoff
Arougheti	Galante	Piha
Avzaradel	Gategno	Pizante
Bardavid	Habib	Rousso
Benatar	Halfon	Sadis
Benun	Hanan	Shalom
Benbeniste	Hasson	Shaul
Beraha	Hazan	Sidis
Berro	Huniu	Soriano
Biton	Leon	Surmani
Capuya	Malel	Tarica
Capelouto	Mayo	Turiel

The second category are names rarely found in Rhodes. These names were of immigrants who came to Rhodes in the beginning of the 1900's.

Eskinaz	Skapa
Rozio	Shioti
Gaon	Treves
Fresko	

The third category is the names of people who emigrated to Rhodes from Turkey and Greece after the First World War.

Albagali	Danon	Nahum
Arditi	Ergas	Nahamias
Azkiri	Erera	Butchuk
Alaluf	Eskapa	Peres
Abuaf	Estmgo	Perahia
Behar	Fernandez	Romano
Bega	Rosanes	Salomoni
Benozilio	Fonseca	Catan
Benezra	Gerusalmi	Sarfati
Calvo	Hemsi	Segura
Caw	Hassan	Varon
Cori	Moreno	Sereno
Dogno	Merdjan	Zuvi



Salvo Almeleh now in his 89th year is pictured here with his great grand niece Luchia Turtledove aged 3 years.

Down Memory Lane

By Salvo Almeleh

Now in his 89th year, Salvo Almeleh was born in Rhodes and came to Southern Rhodesia at the age of nine. His father, B. D. Almeleh was the first president, and first Gabbai Emeritus of this Congregation. Salvo recalls from memory the events of the past 75 years.

The old French saying, "referring to the difference in the sexes, "toujours la difference" may also be applied to the difference between the Sepharadim and the Ashkenazim. You can say they each come from two different ethnic groups, with customs, traditions and even diet.

The different countries where they dwelt have stamped even their characters.

The Sephardic Community, mainly from the Island of Rhodes, in the case of Zimbabwe, came about at the beginning of the 20th century, and trickled through into various parts of the country, before settling in the big towns,

Theirs was a lonely life, originally, being stuck out in lonely areas, where there was not a familiar face to be seen.

We have an old Spanish saying, and it is very apt here - "andi se arapo il werko" - translated, "Where the devil shaves himself."

It was a tough life, crossing swollen rivers, sleeping on bare store counters, with a blanket or two pulled out of the shelves, water from wells, outside toilets and paraffin lamps. And, of course, the added difficulty of having to cope with the language

After sharing our services and functions with our Ashkenazi brethren, we managed to form our own community in 1931. The three leaders were, B. D. Almeleh, Marco Alhadeff and J.C. Benatar. At first holding services in various homes and halls, stands were bought in Samora Machel Avenue, in 1954 and in 1940 a magnificent hall was built, and this served all our functions, it must be mentioned in passing, that H.S. Court rendered much help and guidance during all this time. Members who took an active part in the building of the Sephardi Hall were Mardoche Tarica, S.N. Alhadeff and Mr. I.R. Rosin.

Then came the Second World War, where some of our members acquitted themselves well. With the arrival of Dr. L. Papo in 1944, our congregation was put on a sound footing. He was greatly assisted by his wife Louise with the lessons. Co-operating with him were Rodrigues Pereira, 1955-1958, and later, Rev. Ichay.

In 1951, the stands in Montague Avenue were purchased, and it is here that the present hall and Synagogue were built all under the supervision and presidency of A. I. Menashe and his committee.

The Rabbis' house and the Samuel Leon Hebrew School were also built then. Assisting with the Hebrew classes was Mrs. Mogilnic. The Sephardi Ladies Society was also formed in 1954. Their main functions, were collecting funds, visiting, the sick and attending to weddings.

The first Chairlady was Amelie Benatar. A Chevra Kadishah was formed in 1959, headed by Camilla Soriano.

Moving to the present, and keeping an eye on our congregation, is Dyan Toledano, who from time to time pays us a pastoral visit.

Mention must be made of our secretary Mary Levinsohn who has been with us for the last 25 years.

We must not forget our staff of Camilo and Paul who have served us for more than 30 years, looking after our vast complex.

In conclusion, one must ask, what is the special character of the Rhodesie? His character has been molded over the centuries, through his constant contact with different peoples amongst whom he has lived - Turks, Greeks, Italians and now the English. He has a "Hail, well met" attitude towards everyone, and of course we must not forget his own special diet. He is a character all his own, and he is to be admired.

Mention must be made of our Gabbais, who have attended to the services through out the years B.D. Almeleh, Marco Alhadeff, Santo Codron, Joseph Menashe, R. J. Menashe, Leon Mayo and now Leon Hanan assisted by Victor Alhadeff. Joseph Kably has also been available for his very competent reading of the Torah.. We were also well represented with the Jewish Board of Deputies with Mrs Illana Hasson, as Vice-President of the Mashonaland Region, Richard Alhadeff and two board members Philip Hasson and Sam Benatar. Mention must also be made of Benny Leon, who has been a great asset and has been most helpful in the compiling of our magazines with photographs and narratives, our own folklore going back into the past.

Salvo Almeleh



Preparing for his Barmitzvah is Kevin Merdjan, who is the grandson of Isaac Merdjan. Behind him is the Gabbai, Leon Hanan with the Assistant Gabbai Victor Alhadeff. Leon Hanan has coached many boys for their bar mitzvahs.

Victor Alhadeff

Victor Alhadeff was born in Harare on 27th March 1946. In his youth he was active in Betar and the Zionist Youth Society, which was a social organization for the Jewish youth. He was also a junior representative on the congregation's committee for a couple of years.

He has served on the Jewish Board of Deputies for several years both in executive and non-executive capacity.

Over a period of 30 years he has served on the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation Committee almost continuously. During this period he was secretary for several terms, Vice - President for four terms and President for two terms. For the past two years he has held the position of Assistant Gabbai.

The first funeral he attended, as a member of the Chevra Kaddisha was in 1979 at the funeral of the late B D Almeleh, when Mario Strugo asked him to help out since many people were away at the time. Since then he has served several terms as chairman until it was decided to split the responsibility and adopt a two co-chairman solution. Since then Victor has been one of the two officers continuously.

In the Hebrew Order of David he was one of the inaugural members, and over the years rose to hold the post of president, and was also on the regional committee.

For a few years he was on the Sharon School PTA committee and then was appointed onto the Board of Governors. He held the post of vice-chairman and then chairman.

He has enjoyed the many years of communal service and even though there were many difficult times, he believes that overall it has been satisfying. He felt contented that he was able to contribute wherever he could. This year, amongst family and friends he celebrated his 60th birthday. He is still active, and we hope that he will be blessed to serve the congregation for many more years to come.

June 2006

The Merdjan Family

by ISAAC MERDJAN.

My Father Joseph Elie Merdjan arrived in Gatooma from Rhodes Island on the 2nd February, 1926. Soon after his brother Nissim followed. Both brothers were employed by B.S. Leon, who had a store in Eiffel Flats. Joseph was one of four sons. His other two brothers were Isaac and Moise.

My Mother, Diana Amato was Albert Amato's sister. She arrived in Gatooma in early 1928. She and Joseph were married at Specks Hotel by REV. Joseph Rosin, on the 1st October, 1928. My Uncle Albert Amato assisted my father to start a business called Hope Farm Store in Eiffel Flats.

I was born in Salisbury on the 8th August, 1929. My mother fell pregnant for second time and was advised by our family doctor Guy Peall to return

to Rhodes Island where my sister Rica was born on the 31st October, 1931. We spent four years in Rhodes Island and returned to Rhodesia in 1935. Soon after leaving Eiffel Flats my parents purchased the Frascati Hotel, Salisbury. This was home to numerous members of our community.

Rica and I attended primary school at the Convent and I continued my schooling at Prince Edward. Rica remained at the Convent.

My first place of employment was Thompson's Service Station as a motor mechanic, this gave me the grounding necessary to start up my own business Zack's Cycle Company on the 4th May, 1949.

Rica married Ralph Eagle and had two children, Vivienne and Selwyn.

My first marriage to Claudine Soriano was dissolved but we derived three wonderful children, Lorraine, Robert and Ralph. A few years later I remarried April and we have one daughter Nicole.

Lorraine, my eldest daughter is married to Alan Kushynski. They have two daughters, Talia and Gina and live in Los Angeles.

Robert is married to Lianne and they have two children, Kevin and Lisa they are resident in Harare.

Ralph married Debbie Codron. They also have two children, Claude and Lori they reside in Johannesburg.

Nicole unfortunately is separated from Alan Cooke they have a daughter Emma Alice Abigail and live in Cape Town.

My grandparents on the Merdjan side, were my grandfather Elie Merdjan a watchmaker and his wife Djoya (nee Jaffe) who both hailed from Aiydin and sadly they perished along with their daughter-in-law Mathilde in Auschwitz Concentration Camp in 1944.

On the Amato side, my grandfather Isaac Amato, a fish-merchant, was married on Rhodes Island to Rica (nee Charon). My grandmother Rica, arrived in Rhodesia with my aunt and uncle Nethanel and Rachel Menashe just prior to the Second World War breaking out.

We have been blessed by the love passed on to us by our parents and grandparents.

The Sephardi Ladies Society



The time honoured custom of the Sephardi Ladies is to clean and polish up the rimonim prior to the High festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
From L to Right: Becky Krikler, Ray Cohen, Sarah Kaplan, Stella Cohen Lina Kantor and Betty Bondi

Following a meeting called by Mrs Sarina Koblenz, the Sephardi Ladies Society came into being in 1954. The first chairlady was Mrs Amelie Benatar- a position she was to fill for six consecutive years.

On the original committee is Mrs Sarah Shapiro who is still a serving member of the society. The original committee comprised the following:- Chairlady: Mrs Amelie Benatar Vice-Chairlady: Mrs Sarina Koblenz Co-secretaries: Mesdames, Ruth Ferrera and Sarah Shapiro Committee Members: Mesdames Behora Alhadeff, Perla Alhadeff, Rosa Ferrera, Alegra Hasson, Rica Menashe, Rachel Surmany and Rebecca Tarica

This society is an often unsung, but nonetheless vital organisation which keeps the day to day running of the community so well oiled. The duties of the ladies are to attend to the upkeep of the Synagogue, to visit Jewish patients in hospital, to assist in raising funds for the congregation and especially to cater for Barmitzvahs, weddings and festivals. Over the years the society has done sterling work for the congregation.

In 1987 under the chairmanship of Mrs Stella Cohen a publication "Sephardi Cuisine" proved very popular and raised a considerable sum for the congregation.

The chairladies of the society, since its inception have been as follows:-

1954 Amelie Benatar
 1955 Amelie Benatar
 1956 Amelie Benatar
 1958 Amelie Benatar
 1959 Amelie Benatar
 1960 Amelie Benatar
 1961 Sarah Shapiro, Rachel Roditi
 1962 Sarah Shapiro, Ettie Mizrahi
 1963 Amelie Benatar

1964 Justine Piha
 1965 Camilla Soriano
 1966 Camilla Soriano
 1967 Camilla Soriano
 1968 Camilla Soriano
 1969 Camilla Soriano
 1970 Sarah Shapiro
 1971 Rosie Benatar
 1972 Camilla Soriano, Rosy Benatar
 1973 Vivianne Capelluto, Ketty Amato
 1974 Eve Bondi, Rosy Benatar
 1975 Eve Bondi, Rosy Benatar
 1976 Etti Mizrahi, Lydia Marks, Betty Rodman
 1977 Rosie Benatar, Babs Naim
 1978 Babs Naim, Doris Menashe
 1979 Rosy Benatar, Gene Trevis
 1980 Becky Krikler, Sarah Shapiro
 1981 Stella Cohen
 1982 Stella Cohen
 1983 Stella Cohen
 1984 Stella Cohen
 1985 Stella Cohen
 1986 Stella Cohen
 1987 Donna Hasson
 1988 Donna Hasson
 1989 Donna Hasson
 1990 Clairette Alhadeff, Stella Cohen & Rachel Hanan
 1991 Clairette Alhadeff, Stella Cohen & Rachel Hanan
 1992 Lilly Roth/ Ray Cohen
 1993 Lilly Roth/ Ray Cohen
 1994 Lilly Roth/ Ray Cohen
 1995 Lilly Roth/ Gloria Levy
 1996 Lilly Roth/ Gloria Levy
 1997 Lilly Roth
 1998 Lilly Roth
 1999 Leanne Merdjan
 2000 Clairette Alhadeff
 2001 Donna Hasson
 2002 Donna Hasson
 2003 Stella Cohen
 2004 Stella Cohen
 2005 Stella Cohen
 2006 Stella Cohen



The Sephardi Ladies Society having a bake-in at the kosher kitchen, preparing bourekas and bouyos for the Shabbat morning brocha. L to R: Becky Krikler, Sarah Kaplan, Stella Cohen, Ray Cohen, Lina Kantor and Betty Bondi.



Our Choir in 1981

L to R: Stella Alhadeff, Rose Leon, Al Naim, David Arenson, Esther Arenson, Leon Hanan and Jack Benatar

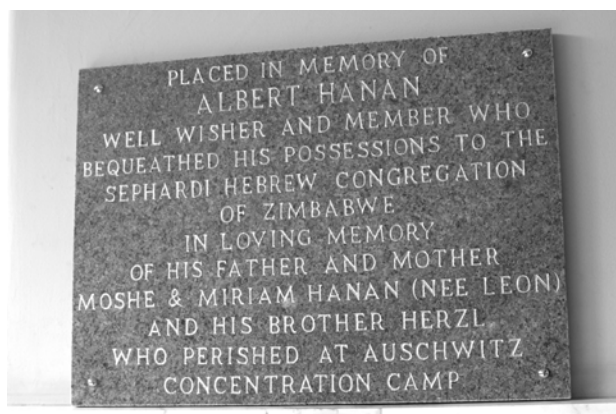
A very novel and interesting innovation on the educational side of the congregation was the start in 1946 of a choir under the guidance of the late Salvator Alhadeff and Leonid Bersin the choir then consisted of the young pupils of our Hebrew School and was limited solely to the youth services. Mr Leon Hanan a foundation member was also instrumental in the formation of the choir. He is still a member and sings regularly at the Shabat evening services.

In 1947, Stella Alhadeff, a music graduate of the Cape Town University, willingly gave of her services and together with the blessing and co-operation of the late Rabbi Dr. Papo succeeded in achieving outstanding results with the new choir which now had attracted the adult members of the congregation.

The present choir is still called upon to participate in several varied functions within the Jewish community. To them we extend our grateful and sincere thanks for their extreme loyalty and the wonderful and important contribution they have made to our Sephardi congregation.

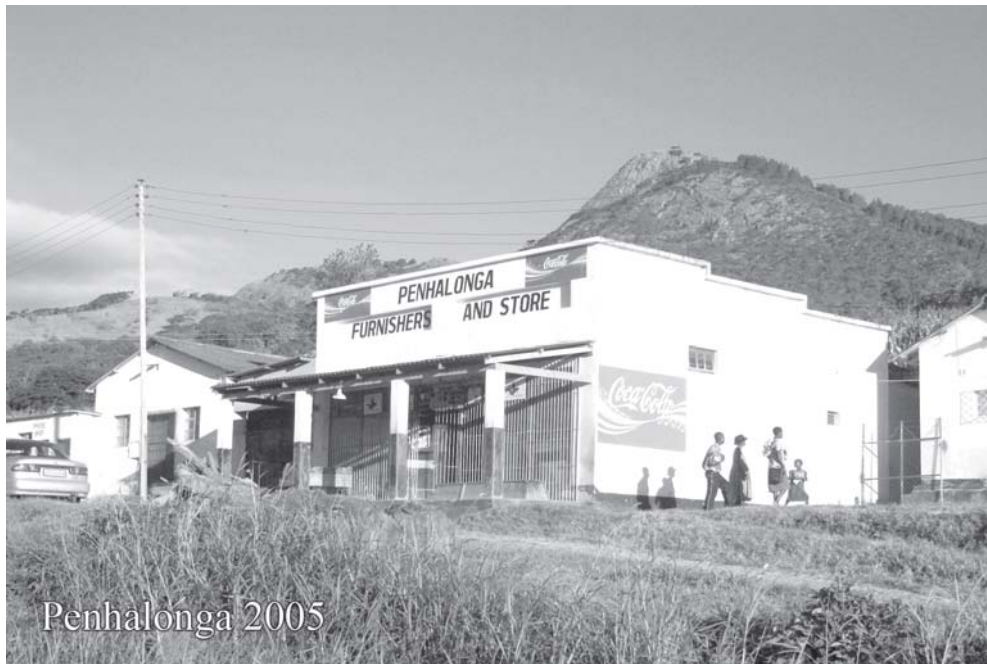
Regretably, now in 2006, the Sephardi Choir is no more. Leon Hanan and Rose Leon are the only remaining members of this choir. In its day the choir form an intergal part of the Shabbat services and in particular and was a highlight of wedding ceremonies held in the synagogue.

The Albert Hanan Bequest



The Albert Hanan memorial plaque placed in the foyer of the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue, Harare. The plaque commemorates his parents and his generosity in bequeathing his possessions, in 1996, to the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe. The Congregation has benefitted enormously from his generosity.

Rural Stores



Many Sephardim upon arrival in this country ran trading stores in the rural areas. Many spent a few years in Penhalonga before moving in to Salisbury. This store is typical and is situated in Penhalonga, a mining town near Mutare in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. This photograph was taken recently.

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF JEWISH IMMORTALITY?

If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers.

He has made marvellous flight in this world, in all ages, and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, and the Persian and the Babylonian rose, filled the earth with sound and splendour, then faded to dream stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

From the article "Concerning the Jews" by Mark Twain.

DOES THIS AUTHOR HAVE THE ANSWER?

Jewish history consists of a unique series of events - accidental or purposive - which have had the practical effect of preserving the Jews as Jews in an "exile" to fulfil their avowed mission of ushering in a brotherhood of man. Whether this mission was initiated by God or retroactivity attributed to God by the Jews themselves in no way alters our thesis of a Jewish manifest destiny. We contend that this exile is not a punishment for sins, but a key factor in Jewish survival. Instead of having doomed the Jews to extinction, it funnelled them into freedom. As long as the Jews stick to the ethics of the Torah and the ideology of the Prophets, they will remain indestructible. When all men embrace this ethic and ideology, they, too, will symbolically become Jewish. There will then be only man.

From "The Indestructible Jews" by Max I. Dimont

Survivor of Auschwitz Visits Rhodes After Sixty Years

by Benny Leon

Sixty years after being deported to the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz, Rachel Hanan (nee Hougrou) returned to Rhodes, the island of her dreams. Her first stop was the Mandraki and the promenade facing the protected harbour. Of course, it was not the Mandraki of her childhood, when she remembered the Italian musicians playing in various bands, with Italian music floating across the waters. She remembered taking walks with her family and meeting friends on the promenade. The Italian pastries sold in the Mandraki building had been replaced with Greek food.

The Italians after Mussolini's alliance with Hitler, had loud speakers placed everywhere and one could hear Mussolini's voice proclaiming victories everywhere and particularly in Abassynia.

She was very emotionally moved and shocked when she entered the old city of Rhodes, which encompassed the Juderia. Here she found decay and lack of maintenance on the old familiar buildings. Some former Jewish homes were abandoned and derelict. The Juderia had deteriorated considerably.

It was a very emotional moment when she visited the home in which she had spent her youth. What had struck her the most was, that the potted plants on the steps leading up to the front door, were exactly the same ones as when she had been deported from Rhodes, and she believes that the very same plants in the pots were the ones her mother had planted sixty years ago.

Her house near the Kahal Shalom Synagogue was on three levels. The Greek couple occupying had converted the first floor into a bed and breakfast boarding house. They occupied the two upper levels.

She asked permission to see the rooms and when she began to cry the Greek woman asked her why she was upset. Rachel explained who she was and that she had lived there with her parents and this had been her home. She asked permission to bring her grandson the following day to see the place. The husband said something to his wife in Greek.

When she returned the following day the woman said that they were busy and refused entry. Later on Rachel visited the secretary of the Jewish community, Carmel Cohen, and told her what had happened. Carmel explained that there was a legal dispute over the title deeds and that Aron Hasson was involved in the matter.

She also visited the Kahal Shalom Synagogue which was being painted and renovated. Next door was the Jewish Museum of Rhodes, where much to her surprise she came across a photograph of her father with herself and sister. She was six years old when it was taken.

In retrospect Rachel believes that the Nazis had destroyed her dreams and memories of Rhodes as the Island of Roses.



**Rachel Hanan a survivor of
Auschwitz**

The Shoah Foundation Remembers

Rachel Hanan has received a letter from Shoah Foundation of the University of Southern California, advising her that her testimony, given several years ago, along with 52 000 others had been preserved so that future generations could learn first hand about the devastating effects of prejudice and hatred.

The Shoah Foundation founded and funded by movie producer Steven Spielberg, became part of the University of Southern California and is now known as the USC Shoah Foundation Institution for Visual History and Education.

They were pleased to inform her that excerpts from her testimony would be included in a new book titled *Zachreinu L'Chaim: Remembering for Life*. The book is edited by Rabbi Brad Hirschfield and will be published at the end of 2006. The book will contain brief excerpts from other testimonies as well as being organised around selected themes of the annual cycle of Torah readings.

June 2006

Survivors of Auschwitz



1946 - Ten young ladies photographed in Bologna Italy. All had survived the horrors of Auschwitz the notorious Nazi death camp. The camp was liberated by Russian force on 27th January 1945. The young lady sixth from the left is Rachel Hanan.



Salomon Alhadeff Street, named after the banker, is the only street in Rhodes Island bearing a Jewish name. To the left a new opening to the sea was breached during the Italian occupation. On the right is the ruin of a twelfth century church, which surprisingly, was once the home of Gabbai Leon Hanan and his family. During Turkish rule, Leon Hanan's grandfather had converted this building into a dwelling which contained a synagogue. When the Italians took over, in 1912, they wanted the ruins of the church "restored" and the Hanan Family had to move out.

The Jewish Community of Rhodes

A Short History

With acknowledgements to Joseph Alhadeff



The Via De Cavaleri built by the Knights of St. John.

They left imposing evidence of their presence in Rhodes, and gave to the island the particular character it retains to this day, with its impregnable gates, churches, hospitals, inns and palaces. Their stay in Rhodes lasted 213 years, untill 1522, when the last of the Grand Masters was compelled to surrender the island to Suleman the Magnificent

In Antiquity

The date the Jews first reached the shores of the island of Rhodes cannot be known with certainty since there are no historical documents on this subject. It is not impossible that there have been Jews on Rhodes since the third century BC. It was, in fact, at this time that the first Jews left their homeland, Judaea, and dispersed beyond their natural frontiers. The beginning of what is termed the "Diaspora" dates from this period. Initially, they were attracted to Egypt, especially its capital Alexandria. Its founder, Alexander the Great, invited the Jews to settle, promising them the same rights as those granted to the Greeks. The Jews came in large numbers. During the Hellenistic period that followed, some quite large Jewish colonies left Judaea and Egypt and came to settle all around the Mediterranean coast and on the islands, including those of the Aegean Sea. It was from here that the first Jews to establish themselves in continental Europe came, as early as the end of the third century or at the beginning of the second century BC. Rhodes was already, at that time, a place of importance and an almost unavoidable port of call on the seafaring routes of the time. There is no doubt that some Jews chose to settle on the island. Suetonius, a Roman historian, who lived at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century AD, already mentions their presence. From that time on, Jews never ceased to live on the island of Rhodes.

The first reliable document referring to the presence of a Jewish community at Rhodes dates, however, from fifteen centuries later. It is the work of a Spanish Jew, Benjamin

deTudela(1130-1178).

Originally from Tudela in the Kingdom of Navarre, Benjamin ben Yona undertook a long journey through most of the then known world. Leaving his native Spain in 1163, he travelled through several countries of Europe and Africa and visited several islands in the Aegean Sea, including Rhodes. A tourist before the term existed, Benjamin de Tudela was very observant and, in all the towns he visited, he took notes on their geographical position, their trading activities, as well as any significant historical events that had taken place there.

Naturally, Benjamin dwelt on information concerning the Jewish communities he encountered during his travels. It is from the travel journal of Benjamin de Tudela that we know that in the years 1163-70, that is more than eight hundred years ago, there already existed at Rhodes a Jewish community numbering more than 300 people. It should be recalled that our traveller had only found 200 Jews in Jerusalem and 2,300 at Constantinople, the capital of the Empire.

Under The Cross Of The Knights Hospitallers

In 1291, after the fall of Acre, the last stronghold of the Knights of the Order of St. John in the Holy Land, the Knights, defeated and their numbers much depleted, sought refuge in Cyprus. The king of the island settled them in the region of Limassol, but without leaving them much room to manoeuvre. Consequently, shortly after their arrival, they were already looking for somewhere in the

Mediterranean where they could settle and be fully independent. The occasion presented itself in 1303.

Since 1271, Rhodes had been under the control of Genoese admirals who, in theory, held the island on behalf of Byzantium. They were supposed to defend the Archipelago from the incursions of Corsairs who, at that time, infested the Mediterranean. In reality, they themselves practised piracy for their own ends.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the Genoese Vignolo de' Vignoli was Governor of Rhodes. In 1305, he went to Cyprus and met the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers. He put to him a proposal to help him conquer the island of Rhodes, thereby betraying his suzerain, the Emperor of Byzantium. Evidently, the proposal delighted the Grand Master who, at the head of his troops, landed on Rhodes on 22nd June 1306.

However, the undertaking proved to be more difficult than they had anticipated. In fact, it was only on 13th August 1309, after three years of bitter conflict, that the Knights were finally able to seize the town of Rhodes. And so began an occupation that was to last for more than two centuries.

We have seen that in 1170, some 300 Jews already lived on Rhodes. It is therefore very probable that on their arrival at the island, the Knights found a Jewish community of this size, or perhaps even larger. We have no precise information on the community at the start of the occupation, nor concerning their relations with the island's new masters.

The first reliable documents come to us from Volterra Meshoullam, a wealthy Jewish banker and jeweller, who lived in Florence, Italy, under the protection of the Medici court. In his journal of 1481, he described his voyage to Rhodes in the spring of that year. He spoke of having visited the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers, the notorious Pierre d'Aubusson, in the company of two Jewish notables very much enjoying his esteem.

He also gave a description of the Jewish quarter which, apparently, had suffered greatly in the siege of the town by the Turks the previous year. This was the attempt by the armies of Sultan Mohammed II, better known as Mohammed the Conqueror, to seize Rhodes, reputed to be the most impregnable fortified town of the period. First, less than 300 metres to the north of the Jewish quarter, the Turks attacked the tower of St. Nicholas that controlled the two harbours, the Commercial Harbour and Mandraki, as well as the Bay of Akandia. Having failed in their first objective of taking the tower, the Turks then attacked the fortification that stood before the Juderia and which historians of the time called "the wall of the Jews".

In the hope of making a breach, they subjected the wall to intense bombardment by their eight large cannons.

On 27th July 1480, at dawn, the Turks launched a large-scale offensive. They succeeded in taking the tower of Italy and entered the town through the Jewish quarter which, unfortunately, suffered considerable damage. Most of the houses in the quarter were destroyed. The bloody fighting that followed cost the lives of thousands of soldiers in both camps.

When their Grand Master was seriously wounded, the exhausted Knights were ready to surrender. But, for inexplicable reasons, the Turks, in spite of the superiority of their numbers, withdrew in confusion. On 17th August, they raised the siege and returned to Anatolia.

The Knights then hailed it as a miracle. By way of thanks, the Grand Master, Pierre d'Aubusson, built a Catholic church, Our Lady of Victory, in the middle of the Jewish quarter where the worst carnage had taken place. In recognition of the loyalty of the Greeks and Jews who had fought alongside the Knights during the siege, he also had an

orthodox church built, St. Pantaleon, and ordered the reconstruction of the synagogue that had been destroyed by Turkish artillery. This was the Kahal Gadol, or Great Synagogue, that was finally razed to the ground during English air raids almost at the end of the 1940-1943 war. The synagogue had remained in service until the deportation of the Jews of Rhodes by the Nazis in 1944.

Another authentic document dating from the same period and concerning the Jewish community of Rhodes comes to us from the letter writer Ovadia Yare de Bertinoro, an Italian rabbi known above all for his classic commentary of the Mishna. Having left Citta del Castello, in Italy, in 1483 to travel to the Holy Land, he only arrived there three years later because he had wanted to stop off wherever he came across a Jewish community. It was in this way that he came to Rhodes in November 1487. He only stayed on the island a fortnight, but he was very impressed by the town itself as much as by its Jewish inhabitants. Here is what he wrote in one of his famous letters to his family that is preserved in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence: "I have never seen a Jewish community like that of Rhodes where everyone, from the eldest to the youngest, is intelligent; they have polite habits and are kind to all; almost all of them are nicely dressed. They wear their hair long and look like princes. Nowhere have I met Jewish women like those of Rhodes, who do all kinds of work; they are particularly skilled at embroidery, their main customers being the Knights.

The leaders of the Knights often honour Jewish houses with a visit in order to admire the work of the beautiful embroideresses."

These documents bear witness to the existence of a long-established Jewish community at Rhodes and are therefore proof that all the Jews of Rhodes do not descend from the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, as is very often thought to be the case.

Expulsion

The events in Spain were, however, not without consequence for the Jewish community of Rhodes.

The last few years of the occupation of the island by the Knights Hospitallers were dark days for the Jews of Rhodes. Just when the Jews were least expecting it, their relations with the Grand Master being particularly good at that point, Pierre d'Aubusson, urged on by the clergy, signed a decree - at the beginning of 1502 - banishing from Rhodes all those Jews who refused to be converted.

A work entitled "Itinerary of a Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the Island of Rhodes", published in 1900 by Sommi Picenardi, himself a dignitary of the Order, gives the following description of events:

In the Jewish quarter, the synagogue had been destroyed by Turkish artillery during the famous siege of 1480. After the siege was raised, the Order rebuilt the synagogue at its own expense with the full support of Pope Sixtus IV in recognition of the loyalty shown by the Jews during the siege. However, in 1501, a movement against the Jews began to emerge in Rhodes. Grand Master d'Aubusson (the very same who, twenty years before, had rebuilt the synagogue to reward the Jews for their loyalty) declared the banishment of the Jews by a decree dated 9th January 1502. This act, one of the most heinous in the history of religious intolerance, ordered that every adult Jew, man or woman, who refused to be baptised had to set sail for Nice, in Provence, with a period of 40 days' grace to sell their belongings. Otherwise, their belongings would be confiscated by the Treasury and they themselves would be sold as slaves;



The foyer of the Kahal Sha'are Shalom Synagogue, with its cobblestone floor and vine leaves hanging from the roof. On the left is the entrance, next to which, is the plaque bearing the family names of those who perished at Auschwitz.

children would be baptised, even against the opposition of their parents."

This was how the exodus came about of the majority of Jewish families who had been established in Rhodes for centuries. They preferred to abandon most of their belongings and leave the island with what little they could carry, rather than renounce the faith of their forefathers.

Some of these families settled in mainland Greece, especially Salonika, the present day Thessaloniki.

Other families went to Genoa, Italy, and from there they continued to Ferrara where, for some years, the Estes had been asking Jews to come and settle promising them generous hospitality, equal rights with Jews who were already established there, freedom to exercise any profession, etc.

Naturally, all the Jews did not leave Rhodes in the short time of 40 days that was accorded them.

Those who remained and refused to be baptised saw their children snatched from them and forcibly baptised, their belongings were seized and they themselves were shipped to Provence or the island of Malta where they were sold as slaves. Others, in order not to be separated from their children, allowed themselves to be baptised. For this reason, like many Spanish and Portuguese marranos, they risked their lives every day by attempting to preserve and practise, in great secrecy, some elementary precepts of the Jewish faith.

Under The Ottoman Crescent

Following the failure of the first siege in 1480, the Turks returned to Rhodes in June 1322. With an army of 200,000 men and 280 ships, they once more besieged the island. After six months of bitter conflict, with the most deadly fighting being, as in 1480, near the Jewish quarter, the Knights were forced to surrender. On 1st January 1323, they left Rhodes forever.

The arrival of the Ottoman occupation forces marked a significant turning point in the history of the Jewish community of Rhodes. As early as December 1322, Sultan

Suleiman, who was on the island, asked the Jews who had been forcefully converted at the time of the expulsion decree of January 1302 to return to the faith of their forefathers. The synagogues, closed for more than twenty years, re-opened their doors and services were organised both by the Jews of Rhodes and by the several hundred other Jews that the Knights had brought back as slaves from their customary expeditions as corsairs.

The Sultan also signed a "firman" granting the Jews who resided in his Empire, and who wished to settle on Rhodes, a number of privileges, including exemption from all taxes for a period of one hundred years and the right of each individual to a dwelling offered by the Ottoman government. These measures did not fail to attract to the island large numbers of Jews from Salonika, Constantinople, etc., almost all of whom were of Iberian origin.

They had sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire after being expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 16th centuries.

And so the number of new arrivals soon exceeded that of the original Jews who were of Romaniote, that is Byzantine, origin.

Little by little, the exiles from Spain succeeded in imposing their Sephardic culture. Some tens of years after their arrival, the entire community had adopted the customs and religious practices of the Sephardim and, a quite extraordinary fact, they had also embraced their language. Indeed, following the Ottoman occupation, the Greek-speaking Romaniotes of Rhodes acquired a new language. Paradoxically, this was not the Turkish spoken by the new inhabitants of the island, but Spanish, or rather Judeo-Spanish, or "ladino" as it was called on the island.

The Jews of Rhodes were to keep this language until their deportation in 1944. Passed on from generation to generation for almost five hundred years, it is still spoken by the survivors of the camps, as well as by Jews from Rhodes who emigrated before the war.

During the occupation of Rhodes by the Turks, the Jewish community experienced some happy times and other less agreeable periods.

As in all towns of the Ottoman Empire, the Jews of Rhodes, just like the Orthodox Greeks, were considered as "dhimis", i.e. protected infidels.

The status of the community was that of a "millet", which for the Turks meant both a religious minority and a nationality. As a "millet", the community enjoyed a certain autonomy, it could organise itself as it wished in accordance with its own laws and customs. The community administered its own court of justice and its own schools. Contacts with the authorities were maintained by means of a representative nominated by the community and called a "kahya" or "parnass".

As long as the Empire was strong and the administration functioned more or less well, relations were relatively serene. However, with the decline of the Empire and the disintegration of central government, the community came to depend increasingly on the whims of the local governor.

It is enough to recall here the unpleasant incident known by the Jews of Rhodes as that of the "del greghito". In 1840, on the eve of the Feast of Pourim, on the grounds of a simple accusation of ritual murder and without the slight-

est proof, the governor had the Jewish quarter surrounded. In the meantime, de Vecchi was recalled to Rome and relieved of his duties as Governor. He was replaced first by General Bastico and then by Admiral Campione, who was given the title of Civil and Military Governor of the Italian Islands of the Aegean.

On the day of the unconditional surrender of Italy, 8th September 1943, there were more than 33,000 Italian soldiers on Rhodes and only some 8 — 9,000 German soldiers; the latter were mostly Austrians under the command of General Kliemann.

Governor Campione was a man of weak character. He did not immediately take the necessary decisions concerning the German soldiers on the island, nor other measures that the situation required. He prevaricated waiting for instructions from Rome that never came.

Skirmishes broke out immediately between the Italian and German soldiers; shots were exchanged and there were casualties on both sides. Unfortunately, three days later, on 11th September, in spite of their superior numbers, the Italians capitulated leaving military control of the island to the Germans.

This was to cost Campione his life. He was deported to Germany and then handed over to the Italian Fascists who shot him. It was also the cause of the annihilation of the Jewish community of Rhodes.

Under The Nazi Swastika

Whereas elsewhere in Europe, from September 1943 to July 1944, Jews continued to be arrested and deported, on Rhodes the Germans took no particular measures against them. This mitigated their apprehension from the outset and gave most members of the community a false sense of calm and the



The Hospital used by the Knights of St. John. It now has the tombstones of past Grand Masters on display

hope that nothing very serious was going to happen.

Only some young Jews, at the risk of their lives, dared to flee, at night, on frail rowing boats making for the Anatolian coast. The rest of the community waited and hoped. Their

main preoccupation at that time were the continual air raids by the Royal Air Force. Although the objective of the English raids was the port, very often the bombs fell over the adjacent Jewish quarter, causing loss of life and enormous damage. The raid of 2nd February

1944 caused the death of eight Jews and that of the first day of Pessah, in April, resulted in 26 victims from the community. This is the reason why many Jews left the quarter to take refuge in neighbouring villages.

Meanwhile, the Nazis were finalising their criminal plan to deport and exterminate the Jews. Towards the middle of July 1944, orders from the German command required the Jews to reside in the town of Rhodes or in the villages of Trianta, Kremasti and Villanova (the present day Paradissi). These were the villages where most Jewish families had taken refuge, that is to say at a maximum distance of twelve kilometres or so from the town.

Deportation

A few days later, on 18th July 1944, a German officer went to the house of the President of the community to inform him that, on the order of the general commanding the German forces, all Jews aged 16 and over should present themselves the following morning at the former Italian Aeronautical Command, all with their identity cards and work permits. By the strategy of the work permit, these innocents were made to believe that the purpose of their being summoned was to send them to a work camp. The next morning, Wednesday 19th July, they were all there, clutching their documents. As soon as they had gathered, two SS officers, sent by the Rosenberg Commission that had its headquarters in Athens, entered the premises, accompanied by their interpreter, a certain Costa Ricanati, who came from Thessaloniki and spoke Judeo-Spanish. With their characteristic brutality and making the heaviest of threats, the officers snatched the identity cards and work permits from the hands of the poor dumbfounded Jews who wondered what was happening to them.

That same day, the President of the community was given the responsibility by the SS of warning the women that they had to rejoin their husbands during the following 24 hours, failing which the husband or father of the recalcitrants would be shot. They had to bring with them all their valuables: jewellery, gold coins, bank notes, etc., as well as some personal effects and a little food.

In spite of the panic and anguish that gripped them, these good women could only obey the orders that had been given them. On 20th July, almost all the Jews of Rhodes, men, women, children, babies, the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, were trapped in this mini-concentration camp. The diabolical Nazi plan was in motion.

It would be proper here to point out the very humane attitude of the Consul General of Turkey on Rhodes. He intervened with the German authorities, at this point, in or-



IN the Juderia, the street and entrance to the Kahal Shalom Synagogue, with Mdme. Lucia Sulam, the caretaker of the synagogue in 1990

der to protect Jews of Turkish nationality, and even entire families with just one family member who was Turkish or in possession of some identity document issued by the Turkish authorities. In this way, he snatched from the clutches of the Nazis some forty Jews of Rhodes who, otherwise, would have met a certain death. Subsequently, he received the title of "Righteous among nations" from the Yad Vashem.

People are often astonished by the ease with which the Jews of Rhodes allowed themselves to be arrested, like sheep going to sacrifice. But what else could they do, these poor people, considering that the great majority of the Jewish population consisted of women, children and men of mature years? There were very few young people; most of them had left the island before the war, some for economic reasons, others as a result of the Fascist racial laws.

Having assembled all the Jews, the Germans, with unbelievable bestiality, hastened to strip them of everything they had brought with them, including the jewels that most of the women wore. Even their wedding rings were brutally torn from their fingers.

If there was the slightest hesitation, they were kicked, slapped and threatened with death. The German soldiers crammed everything into large sacks that they took away.

They then made everyone go down into the basement of the building where they remained without food. During this time, the houses abandoned by the Jews in their haste were looted and ransacked. The Italian Civil Governor had to publish a decree by which all property and personal belongings of the Jews were confiscated for the benefit of the Italian State.

On Sunday 23rd July, at midday, came the order to depart. A very long column of Jews could be seen setting off. There were almost 1,600 men, women, children and old people. Some dragged their meagre luggage behind them, others carried it on their backs or shoulders. For the weakest, the burden was too heavy and they were forced to leave behind what little they had thought they could save. Those who did not walk quickly enough were hit with rifle butts by the German soldiers flanking the column, with their

bayonets fixed and wolf-hounds on the leash.

They crossed the town on foot, their heads lowered as they had been forbidden to raise their eyes on pain of reprisals. The streets were deserted, the Germans having sounded the air raid sirens so that people did not come out.

Having arrived at the port, they embarked, or rather were pushed onto three ancient little cargo boats, that were normally used to carry coal.

On that sad day of summer 1944, a centuries old Community ceased to exist.

A Journey of No Return

The crossing from Rhodes to Piraeus was horrendous and lasted eight days. At the end of July, the heat was suffocating. The cargo boats were so packed that it was impossible for the poor people in the hold to come up on deck for a breath of fresh air.

Seven people died during the crossing and their bodies were thrown overboard as fish fodder.

The boats put in at the port of Leros where, for the first time since their departure, the deported Jews were given something to eat and drink. At Leros, another small cargo boat joined the three boats that had left Rhodes. It was carrying the hundred or so Jews who made up the small community of Kos. Like the people from Rhodes, they had been herded onto this tub after being stripped of all their valuables and their identity papers.

After four days' call at Leros, the four boats went back to sea as a convoy and, after a brief call at Samos, they landed at Piraeus on 31st July 1944.

That same day, the deported Jews were taken to the notorious Hai'dari concentration camp, near Athens, from where so many convoys of Jews and Greek patriots left for the death camps.

Following their arrival at Hai'dari, the Jews from the islands were treated very cruelly. It was more than 36 hours before the Red Cross brought them something to eat and drink.

Immediately, the women were separated from the men.

Their clothes were brutally torn off them and the SS searched them in a very degrading fashion, even performing internal body searches, to make sure they had no hidden jewels. At the least movement of modesty, they were slapped and whipped in the face. In addition, even for no reason at all, and doubtless to break down any vague idea of resistance, men, women and children were continually and savagely beaten and tortured, sometimes to death.

This was how, during the three days the Jews of Rhodes stayed at Hai'dari, that there were ten or so deaths among them. Others, who were dying, were left behind.

On 3rd August, after ripping off spectacles and removing gold teeth, they were all herded into cattle wagons, 63 people to a wagon. The SS sealed each wagon carefully. The sad convoy set off to take these poor wretches to places they did not know and whose name they had never even heard of. This was, it seems, the last convoy of deported

Jews to leave Hai'dari.

The journey to Poland, through Greece, the Balkans and Czechoslovakia, took thirteen long days in appalling conditions. During this time, several people died - between 22 and 100, depending on the source - and their bodies were thrown into the fields alongside the railway line.

On 16th August, the convoy arrived at Auschwitz.

As soon as they arrived, a terrible selection was made.

All those that an expert eye considered unfit for work, the elderly, the sick and the children, were left to one side.

They numbered some 1,200 people, that is more than two thirds of the group. They were led to the gas chambers and eliminated that same day.

How can those moments of horror, that separation, that heartbreak be described? Only those who witnessed this terrible tragedy could describe it!

Between four and five hundred young people were considered fit and able to physically undertake the heavy tasks that awaited them. For them, their suffering was only just beginning. The atrocities that the Jews of Rhodes were subjected to were no different from those inflicted on their six million fellow Jews deported from the various countries of Europe.

It would be too painful to give details here: extremely heavy work in stone quarries, coal mines, on the railways and, for the women, rape, sterilisation and inhuman experiments. Nothing was spared them.

Notwithstanding the relatively short time the Jews of Rhodes stayed in the Nazi camps - from August 1944 to April 1945 - most of the people the Germans had not gassed died from sickness, exhaustion or as a result of the bad treatment they endured.

Only about 150 people, 120 women and thirty or so young men, out of almost 1,700, escaped death.

At the time of the liberation, by the allied forces, of the camps of Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen and others, those who were still alive were in such a weak condition that they could hardly stand. They were, literally, skin and bone. They were living skeletons; many of them did not survive and died immediately after they were liberated.

The English Interlude

In the spring of 1945, the Nazis having capitulated on all fronts, the British armed forces occupied Rhodes. The Germans and Italians were forced to leave the island. The English were temporarily responsible for the administration of Rhodes and of the other islands of the Archipelago. They remained until 1947.

As soon as the news spread that Rhodes had been liberated, the few Jews who had not been deported and who, willingly or unwillingly, had found refuge in Turkey, returned to the island. In 1946, they attempted to rebuild the community, but without great success. There were too few of them and their heart was not in it.

One after the other, they all left. Only one family remained: the Soriano family. With a rare devotion, first Elia, the father, and then his son, Maurice, presided over



The street of the Kehila Grande, with the domed fountain on the left, which served the synagogue, which was destroyed during the war. The inscription above it acknowledges the Jewish Community by the Italian Government. The lettering on this monument is now in a state of disrepair.

the destiny of the community and attended to its interests for more than fifty years.

As for the survivors of the camps, not one of them dared to return and settle definitively on Rhodes for fear of being all alone. They had neither family nor friends.

Most chose to rejoin relatives, either in Africa or in America.

Some settled in Palestine, at that time still a British mandated territory, while others decided to remain in Europe.

Rhodes Returns To Greece

Finally, in March 1948, Rhodes and the Dodecanese were definitively returned to Greece. Shortly afterwards, in memory of those who had lived in the Jewish quarter for centuries and in remembrance of their tragic end, the Municipality of Rhodes gave the name of Platia Marriron Evreon (Square of the Jewish Martyrs) to the Calle-Antcha. For as long as there had been a community in Rhodes, this street had been the heart of the Juderfa, the Jewish quarter.

This gesture is to the credit of the Greek authorities, and the Jews of Rhodes, as well as their descendants, will be forever grateful.

After the return of Rhodes to Greece, some Jewish families from the mainland came to settle on the island but, unfortunately, not in sufficient numbers to constitute an autonomous community. From the point of view of the community, Rhodes is directly dependent on the Central Committee for Jewish Communities in Greece — the K.I.S. — in Athens. The K.I.S. appoints a select committee with special responsibility for the affairs of Rhodes. A chairman is nominated by the committee.

A secretariat is also maintained in Rhodes, at No. 3 Polydorou Street. In addition to maintaining relations



The interior of the Kehila Shalom with its two Arona Kodesh. The centre door leads on to a court yard which has the remains of a sukka. After the war the Jews came back to find only the four walls standing. It was refurbished with funds donated by Rodislics from the Americas, Africa and Europe.

between local Jews and the Central Committee in Athens, the secretariat takes care of the maintenance of the synagogue and cemetery, as well as of a few other buildings belonging to the community.

The Synagogues

Of the four synagogues and three oratories that existed on Rhodes before the war, only one synagogue still survives: the Kahal Kadosh Shalom (the Synagogue of Peace). It is situated at No. 8 Simmiou Street, in the heart of what was the Jewish quarter in the old town. Built during the last quarter of the 16th century, very probably between 1575 and 1577, the synagogue has been renovated several times yet, for all that, no major modifications have been made to the original building. The most recent renovation dates from after the Second World War and was carried out thanks to contributions from Rhodian Jews living abroad.

The external architecture is fairly sober. The interior of the synagogue is divided into three large arches supported by heavy columns in freestone. The walls are decorated with paintings dating from the 19th century depicting various religious symbols. These have also been restored, but the result is none too felicitous.

As in the majority of Sephardic synagogues, the Tevah, or Bimah, is placed at the centre of the prayer room facing the East in the direction of Jerusalem.

Exceptionally, instead of just one Ehal containing the Scrolls of the Law, the Kahal Shalom has two: one on each side of a large central door that leads to a rear courtyard. It was the custom to erect the Sukkah in the courtyard during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Like the interior of the synagogue, the courtyard is paved with elegant mosaic motifs in black and white pebbles. The courtyard still has the original washbasin where the Kohanim came to wash their hands before blessing the congregation. A small marble plaque bears the date

of its construction: Kislev 5338 (1577).

The courtyard gives access to what was the Azarah, set aside for the women, and which now constitutes the beginnings of a museum of Jewish life in Rhodes. For the time being, it has a number of interesting photographs. It should be noted that, next to the Azarah, can be found the remains of a Mikvah.

A mezzanine floor, also for the women, was built in the 1930s inside the synagogue. Access to it is by external steps next to the main entrance. To the right of the entrance to the synagogue is a commemorative plaque with the names of the families who were deported by the Nazis in 1944.

There is no rabbi on Rhodes, but services are held on Friday evenings, especially in summer, when former Jewish residents or their descendants visit the island.

For the solemn festivals of Rosh-Hashanah and Kippur, the community invites one or two outside rabbis to lead services. This makes the Kahal Kadosh Shalom the oldest working synagogue anywhere in Greece.

Although the old Sefer Torah - some dating from the 16th century - and other silver trimmings have been either sent to Israel or offered to the Jewish Museum of Athens, there are two new Sefer Torah in the synagogue that have been presented by Rhodians living in the United States, as well as some pairs of Rimonom.

Time has also taken its toll. The synagogue urgently requires some extensive renovation work. It is to be hoped that the combined efforts of the Central Committee of Athens, of former Jewish residents of Rhodes and their descendants, and perhaps the intervention of some national or international organisation, or of some other patron, might succeed in the near future in raising the necessary funds for carrying out this essential work. In this way, a unique testimony to the former grandeur of the Jewish community of Rhodes, and classified by Unesco among the world's one hundred buildings declared to be heritage sites most "at risk", the Kahal Kadosh Shalom may be prevented from falling into total ruin.

Since this article was written in June 2001, a young lawyer of Sephardi descent, Aaron Hasson has been the moving force in establishing a museum adjacent to the Kahal Shalom. Using the two rooms once occupied by the rabbi he has set up and exhibition of photographs and the artifacts used by the Jewish Community of Rhodes. He has also excavated various sites and found Jewish headstones.

With the co-operation of the Greek authorities, in charge of antiquities, the site where the Kehila Grande once stood was cleared of all rubble. The synagogue was destroyed when stray bombs, intended to target German ships, hit the building. Aaron Hasson arranged for a display of an 800 year old Torah used by Sephardim to be displayed in Los Angeles. Under the presidency of Bella Restis, the Kahal Shalom Synagogue has been refurbished. The building itself believed to be more than 400 years old has also undergone renovations. As reported elsewhere in this publication a memorial to memory of the martyrs who perished in Auschwitz was erected and consecrated in the Calle Ancha in June 2004. Through the efforts of both these dedicated workers the memory of the Jews of Rhodes lives on.



Salamon Alhadeff Martyrs

This memorial plaque may be found in the newest of three cemeteries in Rhodes. It commemorates the personnel who died at the hands of the Nazis in Auschwitz. Salamon Alhadeff Street is the only street in Rhodes that retains a Jewish name. All the others have been replaced with Greek names.

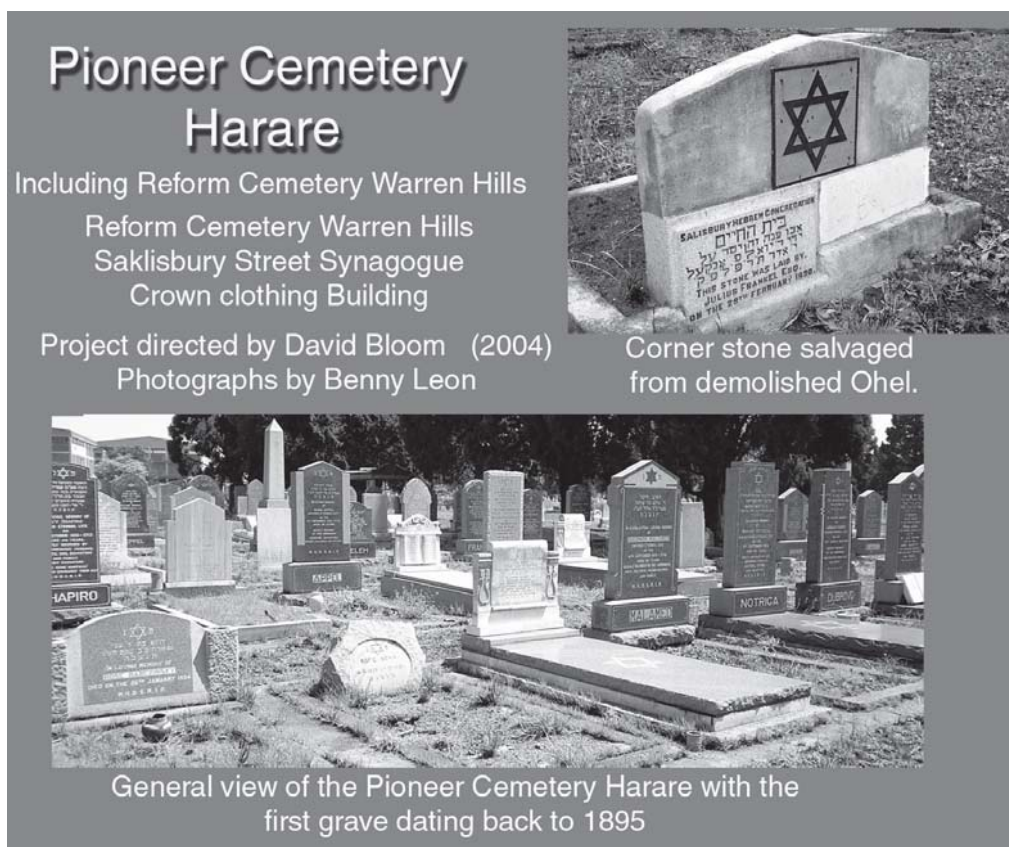
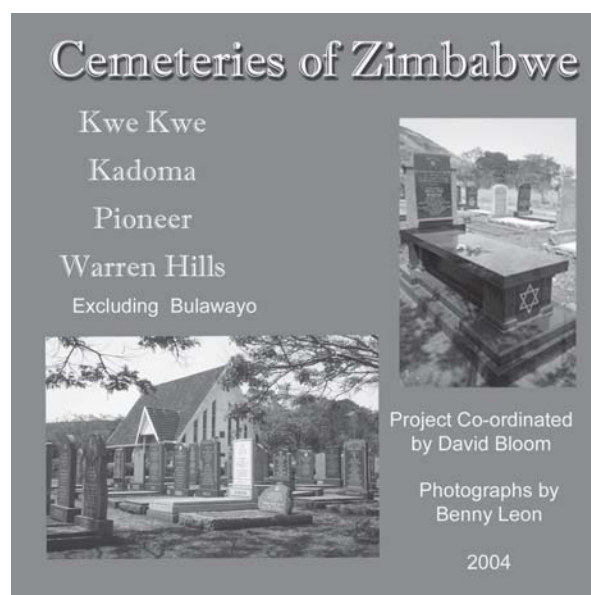
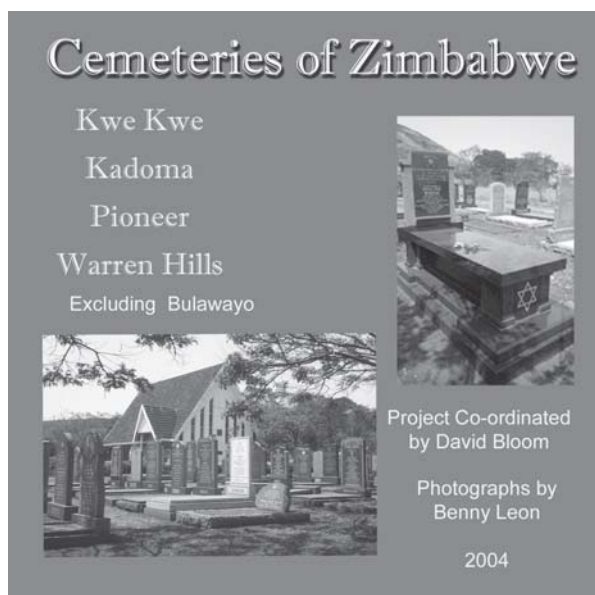
Rachel Hanan with her son Ronnie in the foyer of the Kahal Shalom Synagogue in Rhodes in June 2006. Rachel returned to Rhodes sixty years after being deported to Auschwitz in 1944.



THE CALLE ANCHA IN THE HEART OF THE JUDERIA IN THE OLD CITY OF RHODES. FROM THE FOUNTAIN IN THE FOREGROUND, THE JEWS OF RHODES WOULD DRAW THEIR WATER SUPPLIES BEFORE PLUMBING WAS INSTALLED. THE GREEK AUTHORITIES HAVE NAMED THIS AREA AS THE HEBREW MARTYRS SQUARE.

Cemeteries in Zimbabwe

APPROXIMATELY 1500 GRAVES IN THE JEWISH CEMETERIES AT WARREN HILLS AND PIONEER, HARARE INCLUDING THE ONES IN KADOMA AND KWEKWE, WERE PHOTOGRAPHED BY BENNY LEON. THESE WERE ALL PLACED ON A ZIMBABWE JEWISH WEBSITE MANAGED AND CO-ORDINATED BY DAVID BLOOM IN ISRAEL. THE GRAVES IN BULAWAYO HAVE ALSO BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEWISH RESIDENTS THERE, AND ADDED TO THE WEBSITE IN 2004. THIS ALLOWS RELEATIVES AND FRIENDS TO LOOK UP TOMBSTONES ON THE INTERNET.

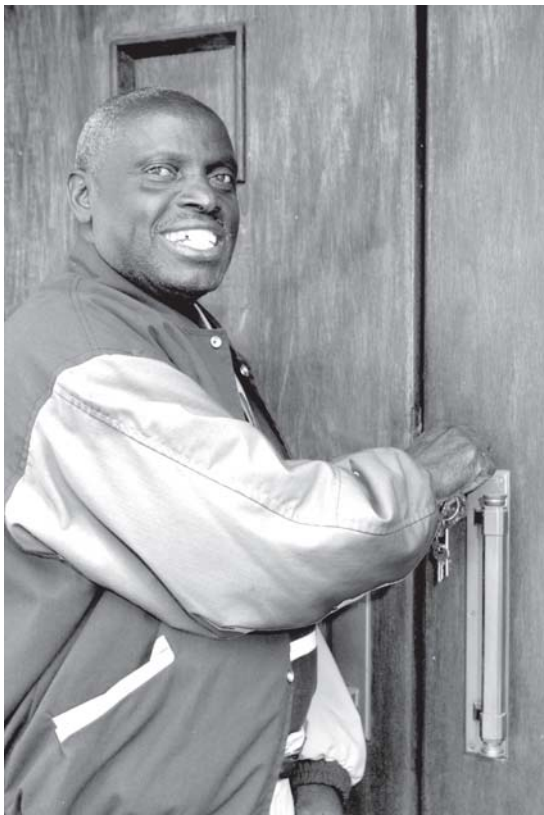


FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY THE STAFF HAVE BEEN LOOKING AFTER THE MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY OF THE SEPHARDI HEBREW COMPLEX.



Mary Levinsohn

Mary remembers being interviewed for the position of executive secretary, in 1981 by the president Maurice Mizrahi. She has been very happy and grateful to the congregation for being employed all these years.



Camillo Chidumba

Camillo joined the employ of the Congregation in 1964. He appreciates that they have kept him for so many years and has been very happy looking after the complex. He assists as the Messenger, helps in the Kitchen and upkeep of the Synagogue.



Paul Nyahotsi

Paul remembers that he has been employed since 1972 "without any trouble." He has been responsible for the upkeep of the Grounds, Cleaning and Security of the Car Park.

All Our Yesterdays

FROM 1998 TO JULY 2001 THE SEPHARDI NEWS WAS PUBLISHED ON A MONTHLY BASIS. THE PUBLICATION LATER WAS PUBLISHED EVERY SECOND MONTH AND WAS LATER ONLY AVAILABLE ON EMAIL. BELOW WE REPRINT SOME OF THE ARTICLES THAT APPEARED UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF BENNY LEON. THE PRESIDENT SADOE CODRON ALSO CONTRIBUTED WITH HIS PAGES OF RODESLIC SAYINGS AND LADINO PASSAGES

Dayan Toledaningo Addresses Jewish Community

Dayan Dr. Pinchas B. Toledano B.A. Ph. D.; Av Beth Din of the Sephardi Community, London, under the auspices of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies, address a gathering of 150 people of the Jewish community in Harare, Thursday 25th February, 1999 in the Rodis Community Memorial Hall.

The subject of his address was the Torah and Medical Ethics. He stressed the point, that any of the 631 commandments in the Torah could be ignored if it meant the saving of a human life - with the exception of the three cardinal sins stipulated in Judaism, namely, Idolatry, murder and adultery. For example one could not save a human life by killing or murdering another human being. He touched on the delicate subject of suicide, abortion and mercy killing. He elaborated on the rabbinical definition of death and how it affected the removal of organs from a living person for transplants, and at what point the donor had died.

Question time brought out an interesting number of subjects including those of post mortems and cremations.

Officiating for the Board of Deputies, Mr Arnold Joffe, introduced the Dayan, as very learned man who could trace his ancestry back to the Spanish Inquisition, through an unbroken chain of chief rabbis and dayanim. (A dayan is a judge in a rabbinical court).

In 1974 he was appointed Dayan of the Sephardi Community, London, and in 1980 Av Beth Din. In 1990 he became Ab Beth Din of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe. He is also a mohel and a shochet.. A vote of thanks was given by Mr. Adolf Leon President of CAZO. February 1999.

European Diplomats Attend Yom Hashoa

Seven European diplomats were present, together with 150 people from both the Harare Hebrew Congregation and the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation when the annual Jewish Day of Remembrance, Yom Hashoa was held in the Rodis Community Memorial Hall, Harare, on the evening of Monday 12th April, 1999.

An exhibition of stark grim photographs, depicting the horrors of the Nazi death camps was on display in the hall.

Mr. Arnold Joffe, Senior vice-president of the Mashonaland Division of the Board, opened the evening, by introducing the National President of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr Maurice Ross. Touching on current events he said that the lessons of the Holocaust had not yet been learnt.

Mrs. Illana Hasson, Vice President of the Mashonaland Division, was called on for a reading in which she outlined the Nazi brutality with anti-Semitism as an official party policy. Jews were rounded up and sent to death and labour camps.

The Israeli Ambassador to Zimbabwe, His Excellency Gershon Gan, in his address, recalled the 56th anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto. He outlined the Nazi policy of genocide. Without moral scruples they ruthlessly implemented this policy.

Hilton Burke on behalf of the youth delivered a reading. Mr Leon Mayo read the prayer for the dead.

This was followed by a short edited video tape recording of testimonies given by survivors to a team of videographers employed by Steven Spielberg of the Survivors of Shoah Foundation. Those included were Mrs. Stella Habib, Mrs. Rachel Hanan survivors of Auschwitz and resident in Harare. This was followed by a candle lighting ceremony in which participants remembered those who perished in the Holocaust. Also participating was Henry Ellen another survivor of Auschwitz.

There were diplomatic representatives present from the countries of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and from the Vatican the Papal Nuncio.

Fifty Golden Years

The President, the Executive, committee members and congregants would like to congratulate, the Chazan and his wife, Leon and Sarah Mayo on their Golden Wedding Anniversary. They were married by Rabbi Dr. M. Papo, in the Sephardi Hall in Jameson Avenue, on 13th March, 1949. Leon and Sarah traveled to South Africa to be with their children on the anniversary date. April 1999

Stella Cohen Exhibits Works of Art in New York

Stella Cohen, has been exhibiting for three months, from June through to September religious works of art, entitled "Stella Cohen - Bendiciones de Vera (Blessings from Vera)", in New York. Sponsored by the Yeshiva University Museum and the American Sephardi Federation the exhibition began on Tuesday June 29th at The Gallery on 55 Fifth Avenue at 12th Street, New York City. She will also be exhibiting at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, that have 800 synagogues and 18 000 members nationally.

Dominique Nahas is an independent critic and curator working in Manhattan. A former museum curator and director, he writes for numerous art publications including Art in America, Flash Art and ARTNET Worldwide. The following critique about Stella Cohen's art exhibition appears in a beautifully printed catalogue which has a limited edition of 1000 copies.

Stella Cohen's paintings are enormously rich and varied, yet one essential and ongoing search threads its way through all of the stylistic differences. It entails a unique retracing of spiritual, personal and collective experiences and whilst the artist's techniques differ, her work can be categorised as symbolists in orientation and hermetic in nature. In Cohen's world, then, people or symbols often seem to exist in eternal or cyclical time scheme where past, present and future blend, alternate and diffuse.

In *Mysticism in Exile*, 1997, one of the artist's most impressive oils, two culturally different architectural motifs dovetail almost magically. The changing iconography depicts an exchange of Islamic formats with Jewish ones through time. In symbolic form, the imagery suggests the Sephardic displacement from Spain to the Moroccan town of Fez, Meknes and Rabbat which were to become Kabbalistic centres. This painting is of central importance in Cohen's work. Movement Integration. Transformation. Tradition. These are the key aspects in all her work that serve as the template for her vision.

Her mystical work, however varied, is about faith in one's destiny, self-sufficiency, self-discovery, transformation and compassion. The artist has stated she yearns "*to express the energy of the omnipresent divine, and to connect and integrate the traditional with the mystical and the spiritual realms of Judaism.*" Yet her artworks are the residue of her involvement with overriding ethical questions that goes beyond the Jewish faith, however central it is in her oeuvre.

Stella Cohen's paintings - with their blends of the real, symbolic and imaginary - make full use of the suggestion, mystery and dream. They are incantatory visual hymns whose major notes are drawn from an impulse towards self renewal and balance - an urge toward *tikkun*. Thus all of the artist's imagery could be considered as an ongoing self exploratory process through which the state of the psyche examines itself as pure substance close to a Divine Spirit. In the end, Stella Cohen's visionary and hermetic conceits draw their inspiration and vitality from a cherished monotheistic belief system which emphasises the union of man with his Creator. July 1999.



Pessach 1990

Kiddush is said at the Communal Pessach Seder at the Rodis Community Memorial Hall. The evening was well attended with the Sephardi ladies catering for about 100 people.

From L to R: Jacques Hasson, Leon Hanan and Victor Alhadeff.

Large Crowd at Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebrations

Approximately 300 people gathered in the Harry Margolis Hall, Harare to celebrate the 51st year of Israel's independence. Many members of the non-Jewish sector were included in this figure.

In the open area near the synagogue the crowd first gathered to hear the address by the Ambassador of Israel to Zimbabwe, H. E. Gershon Gan pay tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the peace and security of Israel. He saluted the IDF and the fallen people of Israel.

This was followed by the igniting of Magen David made of grass and hessian. There was also a minutes silence in memory of the fallen. Yischor was recited by the Chazan, Mr. Leon Mayo. The master of ceremonies was Hilton Burke.

Later on in the hall, the combined Jewish ladies societies provided a tasty cold finger supper. This was preceded by singing and dancing of Israeli songs.

The Sephardi News May 1999

DONATION OF A TORAH

The Kahal Shalom is the oldest synagogue in Greece and the sole remaining synagogue on the island of Rhodes used for services. In 1998, a new Torah was generously donated to the synagogue by the *Rhodesli Sephardic organisation* from Brooklyn, New York, called the *Brotherhood and Sisterhood of the Rhodes League Aid Society*. During the Friday night Shabbat service on July 10, 1998, Reggie Sadis Goldberg and Marion Hougrou Crespi presented the Torah to the Jewish Community of Rhodes. Marion and Reggie's parents were born in Rhodes, and emigrated to New York in the 1910's.

Rhodes Martyrs Remembered

Poor attendance at service

On the 9th of August corresponding to the 28th of Av, a memorial service was held at the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue to commemorate the martyrs of Rhodes, who were deported and brutally murdered by the Nazis, in August 1944.

In an address to the small group of congregants the Vice President Mr. Richard Alhadeff said, "Today, the 28th of Av commemorates the deportation of the Sephardi Jews from the island of Rhodes and its surrounds. This day is acknowledged by the survivors who can trace their origins from that area, as the day that marks a turning point in the war, which would leave an indelible mark in their minds and souls for the rest of their lives.

Records show that prior to 1938, the communities of Rhodes and Cos numbered about 4000. When Italy introduced the 1938 race laws, approximately 2250 people had the foresight and opportunity to emigrate to various countries around the world including Southern Rhodesia. At the time of the deportation there were only 1767 Sephardi Jews residing on these islands. Of these only 163 survived. Our community here in Zimbabwe has four of these survivors.

The statistics show that no Sephardi Jew whose parents or grand parents originated in Rhodes, can claim that he did not have a relative in the holocaust.

The small attendance here tonight, would indicate that some of us are in the process of forgetting the past! What the survivors and their descendants can do, and indeed must do, is keep the memory of this terrible tragedy, and all the horrific stories that have been told about it, at the forefront of our minds, lest we forget this tragic chapter in our history.

The Honorary Life Gabbai, Mr. Raphael Menashe, in voice choked with emotion intoned the verses of Ladino, which remembered the martyrs of Rhodes. September 1999

Ambassador Gan Leaves Zimbabwe After Tour of Duty

Fond Farewell from Jewish Community

About 150 members of the Harare Jewish Community bid farewell to Ambassador Gershon Gan, outgoing Israeli Ambassador to Zimbabwe, at an afternoon tea at the Rodis Community Hall last Sunday. H. E. Gan had just finished a five year tour of duty which covered six countries, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique and Botswana. The farewell was under the auspices of the Central African Zionist Organisation and the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies.

In opening the ceremony the president of CAZO, Mr. Adolf Leon introduced Mr. Stan Harris former president of the Zimbabwe Board of Deputies, and who was in office when Ambassador Gan presented his credentials to the Zimbabwe government in 1995. Mr. Harris said the opening of the Israeli Embassy was a milestone in the 100 year history of the Jewish Community in Zimbabwe. Prior to that the community functioned in a hostile environment largely due to the hostile propaganda of the PLO which the local media lapped up. Representing six countries the Ambassador had a formidable task. Soon Israelis were involved in providing technology in medicine, agriculture and information. Ambassador Gan impressed his audiences in his speeches as he projected a vibrant and clear image of Israel. Mr. Harris thanked Amb. Gershon Gan for his fruitful input into the community.

In his reply, Amb. Gan said that he was sad to leave after making so many friends, but that was expected of those who served in the diplomatic corp. He was the first ambassador to Zimbabwe, and of the six countries he was to frequent, Zimbabwe was chosen because it had the largest community and was noted for its Zionist activities. A number of Zimbabweans involved in agriculture and education had received training in Israel. Here in Zimbabwe Israeli experts had set up an agricultural project at Domboshava. Other projects had included prevention of blindness and eye care. Recently an Israeli doctor had traveled all over Zimbabwe in a specially equipped "eye train", performing operations and restoring sight.

He had been made very welcome by the Jewish community, and one of the main challenges had been to get to know its members. He was sorry to leave. His successor would be Ambassador Itzhak Gerberg, married and with three children.

Mr. Maurice Ross, president of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies, paid tribute to Amb. Gan saying that he was a professional diplomat down to his finger tips. He was hard working and in four years had made fifty-five trips to the other five countries he served. He then presented Amb. Gershon Gan with a small gift as a token of appreciation. Those who attended the farewell were treated to a scrumptious tea prepared by the WIZO ladies.

Sept 1999

LEON MAYO DESIGNATED AS REVEREND

Mr. Leon Mayo, the chazan of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation was designated as a Reverend by Dayan Pinchas Toledano, of the AV Beth Din in London, last month. Reverend Mayo has been serving this congregation for the past six years, and we congratulated him on his new appointment. November 1999

OBITUARY

Muriel Rosin

It is with sadness that we record the passing of one of our most distinguished and eldest members of our congregation Muriel Rosin who passed away shortly after her ninetieth birthday. Muriel Rosin was a member of the Southern Rhodesia parliament under Garfield Todd. She also opposed Ian Smith's UDI in the 1970's.

When she arrived in 1932 as a young bride, to marry Mr. I. R. "Kipps" Rosin, she was recruited by her father-in-law the Rev. J. J. Rosin to join the Board of the Rhodesia Children's Home. She was still the Home's much esteemed Life Patron at the time of her death..

It was countless committees, boards and charitable organisations she joined, and very often led, which prepared her for her role as one of only three white women ever to have entered Parliament before independence in 1980. Diana Mitchell, Muriel Rosin's biographer recalls that it was her greatest triumph to break through into the all male preserve. She is still remembered for her determination to enforce the wearing of crash helmets by motorcyclists.

She also regretted the failure of the Federal experiment from 1953 to 1963. "To think that we ran the whole Federation- not just S. Rhodesia - on seven cabinet ministers and two deputies!!" Muriel's two terms on the electoral Supervisory Commission after independence (1985 and 1990) ended her formal association with politics. She was always at ease in parliament, and at her funeral she was affectionately known "as the only man in Welensky's party."

Muriel's British parents, who were from German and American backgrounds, raised her and her brother in "Reformed" Jewish congregation of London's Hampstead, where she was born and where she learned the duties of the privileged - to give service where ever she could. She loved the great traditions of her religion. Before and after independence she served for decades on the Central African Jewish Board of Deputies as president and representative of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, which her husband had guided over the years. She was also a foundation member of the Union of Jewish Women.

At her funeral there were many distinguished personalities who represented the relics of organisations she had been involved with - the United Party, the post-UDI Rhodesia Party - Jan Savoury was there as was the CCJP's Mike Auret who had fought RF with them in the 1970's. Also there was Bob Stumbles, formerly of "The Pledge"; Old friends such as Harry Kantor, the Kaplans, Cynthia and Mike Hind, Justice Nick McNally and Kiki Divaris of the Greek community. Widows Tomi Samkange and Victoria Chitepo also paid homage.

Farewell to a grand old lady and the end of an era.

With acknowledgements to Diana Mitchell October 1999

ASF Appoints Stella Cohen as Representative

STELLA COHEN has been appointed as the representative of the America Sephardi Federation, for the purpose of collecting archival materials for the Sephardi Archive Project. The purpose of the archive is to collect items and information of Sephardic historical significance for proper cataloging, archival storage and and publication on their web site.

The ASF has recently become a partner organisation in the Centre for Jewish History. The Centre for Jewish History, which will be fully operational in the year 2000, is a state-of-the art facility which will include 100 million items and 500 000 library volumes including genealogical materials, music holdings, rare books, microfilm, posters photographs documents letters, artifacts and other materials from all four corners of the Diaspora.

The Federation asks that members of the Sephardi Community submit archival material to Stella Cohen. The success of this project will prove invaluable for posterity.

Babs Naim - Grand Old Lady of WIZO

First interviewed April 2000

Cazo has bestowed the grand old lady of WIZO, Babs Naim with the Honourary Life Vice-Presidency in recognition of the work she has done for Zionism and Israel. The announcement was made at the 25th Biennial Congress of CAZO in Harare last March.

She was born Freda Mary Sklair in Johannesburg in 1914. She immigrated with her parents to Southern Rhodesia in 1924. Her first husband was Mark Benatar whom she married in 1941. During World War Two, he was report missing in action. Babs at that time had been recruited into the FANYs (First Aid Nursing Yeomen) and saw service in East Africa. On one occasion

she traveled to Egypt to receive pips for the rank of acting major.

In 1946 she married Al Naim and had two children, Mark who is a medical doctor in Australia and Linda who lives in California. In 1948 she worked for a while for Landau Trading Co.

Well known for her Zionist work she began in 1930 to sell sheklelim, with Mickey Rosin (Kipps Rosin's sister) and remitting money to Palestine. They were known as the daughters of Zion. Since then she has never stopped working for Israel.

Babs Naim has been chair lady of WIZO for thirty years and she still holds the position. (She confides no one else wants the job.) She recalls that WIZO had many fund raising activities which included

fetes, cake sales and jumble sales, but because of the political climate and dwindling numbers of members, catering remains the main source of fund raising.

Babs joined the WVS (Women's Voluntary Services) in 1948, and is at present the national chairlady. She recalls the many musicals and pantomimes the WVS staged at the old Duthie Hall and at REPS Theatre. Regrettably these productions ceased a few years ago. She is still very much involved with WVS activities and supervises the wardrobe of theatrical costumes, which the public hire out for various occasions.

Babs now aged 93 is still an active member of our congregation

An Evening of Sephardi Reminiscences

The United States Government has made a grant of US\$4 million dollars to establish a Jewish website on the Internet, said Marlene Brill an executive on the board of the American Sephardi Federation.

Addressing a gathering of about fifty guests at the home of Stella and Victor Cohen, she said the website would store Jewish history in the form of photographs, artefacts, articles and genealogy. She even encourage stories of Juha (the village idiot) and other anecdotes.

A leaflet distributed to guests states "ASF is a partner in the Center for Jewish History, a state-of-the-art institution that will house and make accessible the largest Jewish archival collection in the Diaspora". It was the intention to have the genealogical history of every Sephardic in America by the year 2005. She said that Zimbabwe Sephardim had been invited to contribute.

Marlene Brill encouraged her audience to send in stories of Sephardic origin. After her address, in the course of a general discussion, she said that her grandfather was Sephardic and her grandmother Ashkenazi, but both were Sephardic orientated. They had immigrated from the island of Salonkia at the end of the 19th century. Her grand parents had spoken to her in Ladino. The topic changed to the Holocaust and she pointed out that the Sephardim were decimated the most when only 3% had survived.

Anyone wishing to communicate with Sephardi rabbis could do so via email or the Internet.

Guests were invited to a tea with magnificent spread of Sephardi delicacies. There was masapan, kaisee (apricot) shamalee, bourekas, boios, pinyonatee to mention a few delicacies. Thanks to Stella and Victor Cohen for a very informative and entertaining evening.

FOOT NOTE: Many congregants were asked to fill genealogical forms (family history) and hand these in as soon as possible to Stella Cohen or Mary Levinson. April 200

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ladies Society

At the AGM held by the Society on 8th August, 2001 Donna Hasson and Leanne Merdjan were elected Chairlady and Vice Chairlady respectively, with Sarah Mayo as Hon. Secretary and Doris Menashe as Hon. Treasurer.

Thre Committee comprises of: Clairette Alhadeff, Luana Bardavid, Ray Cohen, Sarah Kaplan, Becky Krikler, Sarah Shapiro and Joanna Turtledove.

The members of the Society have been cleaning the silver Rimonim on the Torahs in time for the High Festivals.

Pioneer Cemetery

The committee in conjunction with the Harare Hebrew Congregation (HHC) are still looking at the ways and means of maintaining the Pioneer Cemetery in Remembrance Drive near Rufaro Stadium. Several of the graves require attention. It was necessary to demarcate the area of the cemetery with a boundary of some sort possibly with a durawall.

AN OLD TROUPER

Once again Babs Naim has stepped into the breach to keep WIZO going. Babs has on and off held the position of chair lady for 39 terms of office.

Yom Hashoa 2000

Mr. Maurice Ross, National President of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies announces that Yom Hashoa, the Jewish day of remembrance of the Holocaust, on Tuesday 2nd May.

Proceedings will commence on the evening of Monday 1st May, when there will be a commemoration service at the Rodis Community Memorial Hall.

As usual there will be a service and a kaddish will be recited at the Ohel and cenotaph. Further details will be circulated at a later date.

Congregation Loses Nine Members

We regret to record the passing of the following nine members of this congregation for the year ending July 2000.

Victor Gallante, Daniel Benatar,
Muriel Rosin, Victoria Dozetos
Ester Israel, Peter Zimet,
Raul Codron, Nelli Israel
Louise Phillips

BARMITZVAH

The president of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, Mr. Philip Hasson and Mrs. Rosalie Hasson are pleased to announce that their only son, Maurice, will read a portion of the Parasha Ki Tabo on Saturday 16th September at the Sha'are Shalom Synagogue at 9 am. The service will be followed by a brocha in the Rodis Hall. September 2000

Film Evening Cancelled

The film that was to have been screened at the Rodis Memorial Hall on 12th September, by the Israeli Embassy, was cancelled after Israel declared a Day of Mourning for the victims of the terror attacks on New York and Washington. Sept 2001

SEPHARDI DIARIES

Congregants are once again reminded that the Sephardi diaries prepared by the Sephardi Congregation of Cape Town are now available from the Secretaries office. They are priced at \$250 and contain the names and addresses of congregants of the Cape Town, Johannesburg and Harare congregations.

Leon Hanan Celebrates Eightieth Birthday

By Benny Leon

December 2000

Mr. Leon Hanan, Gabbai and a dedicated member of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe, celebrated his eightieth birthday amidst family and friends in October, 2000

Leon Hanan was born in Rhodes Island in 1920, and was the second youngest of a family of eight, one of which died in infancy. It was a large family of five brothers and two sisters. The youngest brother together with his parents perished in Auschwitz. At an early age he wanted to become a rabbi, but was unsuccessful in obtaining a bursary to study. Later on he regarded this as a blessing in disguise – otherwise he too may have perished in Auschwitz.

He remembers playing the trumpet in a band in his youth and would team up with the Italians in parades. There was friendship and trust with the Italians, until 1938, when the governor of Rhodes was replaced with an anti-Semitic fascist. Anti-Semitic articles began to appear on the front pages of newspapers.

His father Musani (Maurice) Hanan was a very enterprising man, who made wooden clogs, violins and Shofars. Of note, is that the Shofar used in the synagogue on high festivals, was made by his father and is thought to be 100 years old! His grandfather Joseph, later changed his name to Mercado Hanan, was wealthy

and built the Hanan Synagogue in Rhodes for the poorer section of the community who could not afford to attend the other synagogues. (There were six synagogues in Rhodes).

Leon Hanan saw no future in Rhodes, and contacted his elder brothers Jack and Joe, who had left for Southern Rhodesia in 1924, when Mr. B. S. Leon, a first cousin, to his mother Miriam Leon, had brought them out from Rhodes.

The Hanan Brothers had trading stores and a farm in the Hartley (Chegututu) area. When the young Leon Hanan, aged eighteen, arrived in 1938, he was given a store to run in the Mondoro reserve. He was the only white person in the area, and served there for six years. Like so many others of his countrymen, he slept on the store counter and used blankets from the shelves. Food at one time was a problem, until he bought a few chickens, which in time multiplied to fifty in number. He also had a supply of eggs. He remembers that the chickens were free to forage for themselves, and were well fed from the seeds and grains that spilled from stocks of mealie meal and grain that came in and out of the shop. Life was very simple in those days. Often a stock of blankets was left outside on the verandah day and night. Neither the chickens nor the blankets went missing!

He had a visit from the native commissioner, and was very embarrassed because he could speak neither Shona nor English. Later on in private, the commissioner conversed with him in Chilapalapa. Soon after that Leon Hanan purchased a book from a near by school. It had sixty words of Shona and one word English and illustrated with drawings. He learnt the basic words of the two languages. During weekends he would drive to the farm near Hartley to see his brothers. In 1945, he moved to Hartley (Chegututu), and became manager running the family stores.

Later, in 1952, he moved to Salisbury, and together with his brother Albert, opened a store in Charter Road. As the years went by they opened a soap factory, and later a sweet factory. In 1960, they purchased a property in Pioneer Street (Kaguvi Street).

In 1953, he married Rachel Hougny, who had just arrived in the country after surviving the ordeal and horrors of Auschwitz. They have two married sons, Maurice and Ronnie, who live in Johannesburg.

Gabbai Leon Hanan, a humble man with a strong singing voice founded the Sephardi Choir. Their first performance was at the corner stone laying ceremony of the synagogue in 1957. Over the years it flourished until a rabbi, of another congregation, declared that females were not allowed to participate, and numbers were reduced.

Leon Hanan, now at the age of 86, is the only surviving brother. For over ten years he was the assistant gabbai. He is now the Gabbai. He has a sister Rosa, who married Joe Mallel, and lives in Rome.

Stella Cohen Exhibits in Houston

Stella Cohen has just returned from the US where she had a very successful exhibition at the Jewish Communal Centre in Houston at the Deutser Gallery.

She gave a forty-minute presentation to a very receptive audience and has been invited to exhibition of her new works entitled +Oracle Women- which was well

acclaimed. Some of the honoured guests were the UN Ambassador Sisso and the Minister of Environment from Israel and other dignitaries from Miami and Washington. She is co-assisting in the publication of a book about Sephardic women and been invited to work on a project of Sephardic life cycles with the ASF”.

Gabbai Emeritus

R. J. Menashe Attains 90 Years of Age.

By Benny Leon
February 2001

Raphael Jacov Menashe attained his ninetieth birthday. In this year he also lost Regina, his wife for over fifty years.

This Gabbai Emeritus, who has served the Sephardi community with dedication, also suffered a set back to his health after a fall in which he broke his left leg, and has left him frail and infirm.

He was born in Rhodes Island on the 24th October 1910, being the youngest in a large family of four brothers and four sisters. His father Jaco Menashe ran a general store in the Juderia. His mother was Ester Tarica.

When the rabbinical College was established in Rhodes, his father wanted him to become a rabbi, but Raphael had other ideas. He remembers his father taking him by the hand to the Silihot services. These were held during the Ten Days of Penitence, in a private home, beginning at two o'clock in the morning and finishing at sunrise.

It was here that he learnt the Sephardi tunes currently sung in prayers in the synagogue.

He worked for five years in the foreign exchange department in the bank of Isaac Alhadeff. In 1936 he received a visit from a Jewish gentleman who worked for the British Council in Rhodes. The man asked him if he was happy there, and the young Raphael replied, "Why shouldn't I be?" The man warned him that things were not going well in Europe and that he should leave the island. He suggested that Raphael should go to the British colony of Southern Rhodesia and that he would facilitate all the immigration formalities.

In June 1936, he left the island sailing to Genoa, through the Straits of Gibraltar to Cape Town a journey of two weeks.

From Cape Town, he traveled by train to Bulawayo, where he was met by Boaz Menashe. In Salisbury the immigration facilities proceeded smoothly.

He worked for two months for Eli Menashe, who had married his sister Rachel, before opening a trading store in

Charter Road. He had brought enough money with him to buy a Ford motor car, the registration number he remembers very clearly – S40. It cost him 140 pounds! A few years later, together with Mr. A. H. Benatar he opened a clothing and suitcase factory, which he sold ten years ago. (1990). In 1946, he married Regina Hasson, a survivor of Auschwitz. She was forced to work in a munitions factory, and as the result of a poor diet her health suffered in later years, and when they had two children they both died before reaching their teens.

He remembers the first president of the congregation, Mr. B. D. Almeleh, with great respect and affection. B. D. as he was affectionately known, kept the congregation together by holding Shabbat services in his home, in Fife Avenue. When B. D. Almeleh passed away in 1979, aged 98, Raphael Menashe accepted the position of gabbai in an honorary capacity, stating that he did not wish to be paid for his services. He has held this position until 1994 when he was made Gabbai Emeritus.

He also remembers a past president and benefactor of the congregation Mr. B. S. Leon, who always befriended members of the Ashkenazi Jews stating "We are all Jews." He and Kipps Rosin were great friends.

At the age of 90, Raphael Menashe still goes to work to his shop in the industrial sites of Southerton

Raphael Menashe died the following year aged 91. A plaque in the foyer of the synagogue commemorates his service and dedication.

Obituaries

BENATAR

It is with regret that we record the passing of Myrna Benatar who died in December after an illness bravely born. Our deepest sympathy to Eddie and families.

MENASHE

The passing of Mr. A. I. Menashe, a former president and Honourary Life Treasurer of this Congregation is sadly noted. He died on 19th December 2002, in Israel in his ninety-first year. The Vice President Mr. Bertie Bondi has sent a letter of condolence to his son in Israel.

Congregation Holds 70th Annual General Meeting

Mr. Philip Hasson paid tribute to the gentlemen officiating on the Tevah, Rev. Leon Mayo, Mr. Jacques Hasson and Mr. Leon Hanan in his report when he addressed about 40 people at the 70th annual general meeting of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, in July. He described their dedication and devotion to duty as exemplary.

He paid tribute to the late Gabbai Emeritus Raphael Menashe, and regarded his passing with a sense of loss to the congregation. Raphael Menashe upheld the religious realm of Sephardim, and would be remembered for the manner, in which he kept the Rodis traditions and Sephardi tunes.

He thanked the Ladies Society for their support and in particular for providing food for the Shabbat morning services, and for visiting the sick in hospitals.

In his financial report, the treasurer Mr. Jacques Tarica, said that the congregation was experiencing increased running costs, and reduced revenue from lower interest rates. The congregation was waiting for the finalization of the estate of the late Albert Hanan.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following members were elected to as office bearers:

President: Mr. Philip Hasson
Vice-President: Mr. Bertie Bondi
Hon. Treasurer: Mr. Jacques Tarica
Hon Secretary: Mr. Benny Leon
Hon. Gabbais Messers Jacques Hasson
and Leon Hanan

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following were elected to the Committee
Leon Hanan, Jacques Hasson, Victor Hasson, Albert Michaan, Marc Dosetos, Robbie Merdjan, Salvo Capelluto and Richard Alhadeff.

CHEVRA KADDISHA

Co-Chairmen: Victor Alhadeff
Bertie Bondi

LEGAL ADVISOR Mr. Harry Kantor

TRUSTEES: Jackie Ferera,
Eddie Hasson
Zac Menashe.

In conclusion, Mr. Marc Dosetos proposed a vote of thanks for the President and committee who run the affairs of the Congregation in a very capable manner.

June 2001

NEWS IN BRIEF MAZALTOV

To Eli and Betty Bondi, and Benny and Rose Leon on the arrival of a grandson, and the third child for Derek and Jacqui Bondi, and a baby brother for Liora and Shira. 2001

Contract Renewed

The Rev. Leon Mayo has renewed his contract with the Congregation for another year.

Visits to the Aged

Under the leadership of Mrs. Donna Hasson the Ladies Society visits the Jewish residents of the B. S.. Leon Home on a weekly basis. There are approximately five members of the congregation there at present.

Consecration of Tombstone

The consecration of the tombstone of the late Raymond Shapiro will take place on Sunday 16th December at 9.30 at the Warren Hills

Israeli Ambassador invites Harare Jewish Community for Hanuka

The Israeli Ambassador to Zimbabwe, H. E. Mr. Yizthak Gerberg, has invited the Jewish community to celebrate the last night of Hanuka, on 16th December, at 6.30pm, at his residence 4 Viewdale Close, Greystone Park, Harare. Preceding this is the invitation from the president of the Harare Hebrew Congregation, Ivor Davis to the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, to attend the first night of Chanuka on the 9th of December at their synagogue.

Hanuka, which celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, after the Macabbes overthrew Antiochus Epiphanes, leader of the Greek occupation in 169 BCE. The miracle is that there was only enough oil to light the lamp for one day, but it lasted eight days.

November 2001

Marie Scemaria Celebrates Ninetieth Birthday

Mrs. Marie Scemaria, a resident of the B. S. Leon Home, amidst family and friends, celebrated her ninetieth birthday at a luncheon, at the home of her daughter Lucy and Franklin Plein, on 10th March 2002.

Born in Rhodes Island on 10th March, 1912 she was part of a large family of eight comprising of four brothers and four sisters. Her father Nissim Benveniste was a tinsmith who lived in a double story building on the street of the Kehilah Grande. Her mother was Birdie (Ziporah), whose parents were Miriam and Abram Cordoval.

She left Rhodes Island, travelling by boat which she recalls as being the Llandavery Castle, and during the two week voyage called in at Cairo, Port Said, traveled through the Suez Canal, touching Dar-es Salam and finally landing in Beira on the 23rd of February 1934.

She traveled by train to Salisbury and during a brief stop over and then went onto Que Que where she met up with her fiancé Haim Leon. She married him on 24th September 1934, at Pixiecombe Farm, which belonged to B. S. Leon, just outside Gatooma. This was a double wedding when Violette Leon and Ezra Hasson were married.

They settled in Que Que where Haim Leon like all of his compatriots ran a trading store. Amongst their friends were Josepo and Rica Menashe, Albert and Vida Menashe, Aaron Menashe and family, Victoria Benatar, Santo and Violet Codron and Nissim Codron, and her in-laws Violetta and Ezra Hasson. Not many people owned a motor car and she remembers walking to the railway station to see people travelling to and from Salisbury.

They lived in a few rooms at the back of the shop and although they had electricity there was no plumbing. Marie recalls the preparation to have a bath. A bucket would be filled with water from a tap in the yard. This would then be heated on a wood burning stove. It would then be poured into a small zinc bathtub where she would bathe. When it rained the wood would become wet and it was difficult to light a fire.

In February 1936, due to lack of maternity facilities in Que Que, she traveled to Gatooma to have her first child Benny Leon. Later Ezra Hasson came to fetch her. She remembers how terrified she was when Ezra negotiated the low level Umsweswe River Bridge that was in flood after February heavy rains. They drove over a bridge covered by a raging torrent and managed to get back safely to Que Que. She looks back and notes that this baby is now sixty-six years old.

Three years later she had another son Jacky Leon, who died in a motor accident in 1961, age 22. In 1939, Victor Cohen was born a month after his cousin Jacky Leon. Because Victor's mother Rebecca Cohen could not breast feed him, Marie Scemaria became his second

mother.

In 1942, due to her husband's ill health Marie Leon moved to Gatooma, where her in-laws, Ezra and Violette Hasson had already settled. In 1944 Haim Leon died of malaria, Marie was widowed for a period of three years. In 1947 she married Jack Scemaria, She became widowed for the second time when Jack died soon after a medical operation. In 1973, together with Gracie they wound up the affairs of the shop he had in Gatooma, and thereafter moved to Salisbury (Harare).

A highlight of her life was the trip she made in 1978, when she visited her family. First she went to Israel and then to Rhodes, Athens and New York. In California she met her brother Isaac and in Atlanta brother Victor, and finally to Brazil where she met her "kerida ermana Regina". Today, from this family of eight only three sisters are alive. Marie has an elder sister Rachel in America who is 93, and her sister Stella Habib aged 82, who is a resident of the B. S. Leon Home.

Today at the age of 90, a great achievement, she has eight grand children and three great grandchildren, looking through four generations. She attributes her longevity to the fact that she is very careful of what she eats. She walks about with the aid of a walking stick. Her sight and hearing is still good and she still has a hearty appetite. She appears to be a good candidate to reach her one-hundredth birthday. She had hoped that her grand children and great grand children will visit her on 10th March 2002. She has not as yet seen her great grandson. Due to the elections in Zimbabwe falling on her birthday, travel arrangements were uncertain.

March 1992.

Footnote. At a Brocha held after the Shabbat morning service on 23rd March, the president Mr. Philip Hasson congratulated Mrs. Scemaria on attaining her 90th birthday. The Sephardi Ladies prepared the food.

Marie Scemaria died at the age of 92 in July 2004 in the B. S. Leon Home.

Hebrew Nursery School Moves to Margolis Complex

From the beginning of the second term this year, the Hebrew Nursery School which is housed in the Samuel Leon Hebrew School will be moved to the Maon in the Harry Margolis Complex. Building alterations to the Maon are already in progress.

The School was opened in the 1950's by one of the congregation's benefactors Mr. B. S. Leon who named it after his father. 2001

VISIT TO SPAIN - OUR ONCE ANCESTRAL HOME

By Salvo Almeleh

(May 2002)

Salvo Almeleh was born in Rhodes in 1917 and immigrated to the then Southern Rhodesia in 1926. His father Mr. B. D. Almeleh was the first president of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, and also its Gabbai Emeritus until 1979, when he died at the age of 99 years.

My wife and I spent a most delightful and memorable week on a "conducted tour" of Spain, towards the end of June last year. We visited Alicante, Valencia, Toledo, Madrid, Avila and Segovia. Although the temperatures sometimes soared into the 40s C We still enjoyed cool and balmy days.

We flew in from an Airport some distance from London to Alicante staying overnight there,

Our tour started the following day, we drove to Valencia through La Mancha, arriving in Toledo that afternoon. Toledo was going to be our springboard, making daily excursions to all the other cities mentioned. We used to be let loose at all places of interest, letting us find our way back to the bus. In Avila we succeeded getting ourselves lost, trying to find our way back to the bus. A very kind person drove us all the way to Segovia, where we managed to wave the bus down as it sailed past us.

The Square in Valencia

This part of Spain, on the eastern and central side is similar to our countryside here in Zimbabwe, except of course, that it is all cultivated with orchards, citrus groves, grapevines, wheat fields and other crops. Walking around in the open square in Valencia, I felt very much at home, as I listened to and watched the people, with whom I had so much in common. Then there were those very quaint windmills of Don Quixote fame, going through La Mancha. We actually went up one of those windmills. They are about a thousand years old. Some were used to grind corn, Avila is very much a walled city, similar to Rhodes Island. I was very impressed with the Roman aqueduct running high above one of the main roads in Segovia. Madrid of course, is a beautiful city, with its stately buildings, its statuary and its history. At the railway station we saw two bullet trains, they travel at over 120 miles an hour. I had no problem with the language, making myself understood with my Ladino and of-course understanding the Castellano spoken to me.

In Toledo

It was Toledo of all the cities I had been to, that stole my heart, with its minarets and spires, its ancient walls, castles and gates - all breathing history. A relic of the past, as it were looking at you through the centuries, as in a time warp. This was the meeting point of three,

real religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The name Toledo itself is Hebrew. The Romans invaded it in 192 CE, leaving behind their own brand of civilization their language, Latin, their laws, their dams aqueducts etc.

Then came the Visigoths, a group of German tribes. They brought with them their own religion, which was Christianity, and their own type of architecture, as evidenced in some of their surviving cathedrals. This was about 570 CE.

The Moors followed in 711AD until 1492, when the Spanish forces crushed their last stronghold. They brought with them the Arts, Sciences and learning and not a few agricultural products, such as grapes, olives citrus and others. For many hundreds of years, these three peoples fared well, under the beneficent rule of the Moors.

During that time the Spanish were still fighting with the Moors, and recapturing many of the strongholds taken by the Moors. The final capitulation came in 1492.

Synagogues in Toledo

I visited the two synagogues in Toledo, both bearing Christian names, namely Santa Maria la Blanca and Il Transito. As the Spanish conquered these places, so they changed the names of all mosques and synagogues, adapting them for Christian Worship. The former synagogue was built about 1200 CE and the latter in 1357 Il Transito, of course meaning Christ's transition after resurrection,

When I entered La Synagoga - Il Transito, there was a conducted tour about to start and I decided to join it. The guide was Spanish, and his groups of tourists were American University academics, with knowledge of Spanish. He started off by telling them of the various persecutions and expulsions suffered during the different periods of time. Under the Persians, then the Romans, followed by the Arabs towards the end of their rule in Spain and finally under Spain. The Jews before that time, had risen to great heights in every sphere of government, commanding high positions. They also excelled in all the sciences and Arts, as well as medicine and philosophy. Sadly these Jews, known as Sepharadim were forced to leave, to return no more.

A Hushed Silence

At that point, I decided I had better introduce myself, since I was the odd man out in that group. In my best broken Ladino, I said, after giving my name "Yo vengo de una rama de estos Sepharadim". There was a hushed silence, you could have heard a pin drop.

They were all taken aback. The guide stretched his hand out and with a very warm handshake, said "Encantado" and how delighted he was to meet me and make my acquaintance. The group also came around me, unable to believe such a strange coincidence. It was a good finale to my visit to Toledo and Spain,

Post Script: It is of interest to note that the Moors who conquered Spain were actually Arabs, acquiring that name, because they came by way of Morocco, Syria and Arabia.

Their armies fanned eastward as far as the outskirts of China and westwards to the Nile.

SAM BENATAR BESTOWED WITH HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENCY



Mr. Sam Benatar

The Executive and Committee of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation has bestowed a Life Presidency on Mr Sam Benatar, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Sam Benatar has served the congregation as President from 1990 for two consecutive years. He also offered much valued advice on the financial affairs of the congregation and was instrumental in bringing the present Gabbi Mr Leon Mayo to Harare. He was also honoured by a surprise visit of his daughter Ingrid who brought with her some outstanding Judaica which was displayed in the foyer of the synagogue.

Sam, for more than a decade has looked after the finances of the congregation in the face of the ever escalating inflation. He also has the interest of the Sephardi Community very much at heart.

November 1998

SEPHARDI MEMBERSHIP

At the time of going to press the number of congregants, of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe is 86 souls.

The Star of David

IN USE FOR MANY CENTURIES and in many cultures, the original hexagrams were part of ritual magic and Kabbalistic mysticism. It was only about two hundred years ago that the Star of David was appropriated as a symbol of the Jewish people. One interpretation of the hexagram is that the six points represent the six days of creation, and that the centre space represents the Sabbath. The most widely recognised symbol of modern Judaism, today the Star of David appears in the centre of the flag of Israel

Congregations thank Sam Levy for hearse

At a reception held on 18th October, 1998, in the Rodis Community Memorial Hall, Mr. Sam Levy was thanked by members of both Harare Congregations for his generous donation of a hearse.

With about seventy people in attendance and comprising of the committees and Chevra Kadishim of both congregations, the Chairman of the Sephardi Chevra Kadisha, Mr Victor Alhadeff thanked Mr. Levy. In reply Mr. Levy handed over the registration documents and said amidst laughter he hoped that the vehicle would not be used very much. Later, Mr Leslie Lobel chairman of the Harare Hebrew Congregation Chevra Kadisha also thanked Mr Levy.

Correcting a report in last months Sephardi News, Mr Sam Levy said that the vehicle had a Daimler engine and a Rolls Royce body. A finger supper was prepared by the Sephardi Ladies.



THE COMMITTEE 1980/81

SEATED: L to R: Raphael Menashe, Hon Life Gabbai; Albert Menashe, Hon Treasurer; David Kay, President; Victor Alhadeff, Vice-President; Morris Mizrahi, Immediate Past President; Isaac Menashe, Hon Secretary.

STANDING: Isaac Merdjan, Neville Codron. Al Naim, Mario Strugo (Chevra Kaddisha) Victor Surmany and Salvo Almeleh.

ABSENT: Bobby Benatar and Gerry Katzenberg.

Memorial to Rhodes Martyrs Unveiled Emotional Scenes as Wreaths Laid

By Benny Leon
(July 2002)

In an emotionally charged atmosphere, survivors of the Nazi holocaust laid wreaths at the cenotaph erected in the Calle Ancha of the Juderia in the old city of Rhodes Island, on Sunday 23rd June 2002.

The monument, in the area called by the Greek authorities as the Jewish Martyrs Square in the Old Town of Rhodes is six sided wrapped with a barbed wire symbolizing the concentration camps. Each of the six sides has a different language, Greek, Hebrew, English, Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), French and Italian, with the words:

IN ETERNAL MEMORY OF THE 1604 JEWISH
MARTYRS OF RHODES AND COS WHO WERE
MURDERED IN NAZI DEATH CAMPS. JULY 23, 1944



Two life long buddies who shared the horrors of Auschwitz together, Sammy Modiano (left) and Jack Hasson, in front of the Holocaust Memorial in the Calle Ancha, in Rhodes.

Jacque Hasson a Gabbai of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation of Zimbabwe, was one of nine Auschwitz survivors who laid a wreath. Overcome with emotion and sobbing, he was assisted by his life long friend Sammy Modiano and Sarah Jerusalmi both survivors of Auschwitz. Sammy Modiano was Jacques companion in Auschwitz

Festivities

This sombre and heartbreaking ceremony was preceded by five days of prayer and festivities, all of which was funded and ar-

ranged by Bella Angel Restis (60), who approximately a year ago became the president of the tiny Jewish Community of Rhodes. The former president Maurice Soriano, who is in his nineties, was unwell and unable to attend. Bella Restis provided the air ticket for Jacques and Ray Hasson to travel to Rhodes.

The festivities began with a concert, on Wednesday 19th June, when Nadia Weinberg the half Jewish half Greek internationally renowned opera star, accompanied by the Athens Philharmonic Orchestra sang in the Metheval Theatre tafrou Melina Mercouri.

On Thursday guests were taken on a guided tour of Filerimo, Petaludes (valley of the butterflies) and the Seven Springs. In the evening, they attended the inauguration of an exhibition "History of the Jews of Rhodes" arranged by the Jewish Museum of Athens, and the Archaeological Museum in the Knights Hospital. A cocktail party followed this event. Two luxury buses were at the disposal of the guests.

The following Friday morning saw visitors at the Jewish cemetery where Mr. Haim Itshaki recited the Hashkava at the memorial of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The nine survivors stood at the front. Ray Hasson recalls that this was very sad and so emotional.

Kabalah Shabbat

Ray Hasson reports that the Kahal Shalom Synagogue was packed to overflowing for the Shabbat service on Friday night. People were standing in the foyer. The Minha and Kabalah Shabbat services were conducted by the hazan from Athens flown in especially for the occasion. On the bimah were two old faithfuls Joseph Alhadeff and Albert Almeleh who visit Rhodes every year on a pilgrimage.

Ray Hasson noted that present at all these occasions were the Israeli ambassador to Greece and the president of the Jewish Congregation of Athens. Also amongst the guests were numerous dignitaries from the Greek community.

The morning Shabbat service at the Kahal Shalom was followed by a brunch which featured the special delicacies of Ladino cuisine. It was held in the garden of Salamon Alhadeff with 120 persons in attendance as guests of Bella Restis President of the Jewish Community of Rhodes.

In the evening in the mediaeval castle of the Knights of St. John, Mr. Elias Kollias, head of the archeological office of Rhodes addressed the gathering. This was followed by splendid rendition of Hebrew songs and prayers by the Jewish Choir of Athens numbering eighteen men and women. They were accompanied by a ten piece orchestra under the direction of Mr. Sakis Negrin. Its repertoire included many religious hymns such as Adon Olam, Romemou, En keloheinu, Tres Hermanicas, Nabucco and Alleluiah.

The Unveiling

At 10.30am, on a hot Sunday morning, guests congregated at the Kahal Shalom Synagogue for tehilim prayers, led by Mr. Haim Itshaki. At 11.00 everyone moved to the Calle Ancha, named Hebrew Martyrs Square (Evreon Martyreon) by the Greek authorities.

Nine chairs were placed for the survivors, in front of the monument. Everyone else was standing. The rabbi from Athens intoned the El Maleh Rachamim with such emotion that there was not a dry eye in the place. Bela Restis stood with eight government ministers. The mayor of Rhodes laid a wreath. Jacques Hasson was so overcome emotionally that he had to be assisted by Sammy Modiano and Sarah Jerusalmi to lay his wreath. In all twelve of them were placed around the monument.

A cocktail reception hosted by the mayor of Rhodes, Mr. G. Yannopoulos, at the Four Seasons restaurant at the entrance of the Martyrs Square, concluded the events of the past five days.



Assisting Leon Hanan with the reading of the Torah is Zac Menashe on the right, with Arnold Roth (left)

Zac Menashe

A dedicated communal worker

By Benny Leon

(Interviewed July 2004.)

Isaac Menashe was born in Rhodes Island, in the Aegean Sea, on the 8th of June 1926. His father Eliya Menashe immigrated to America where he was employed doing odd jobs. He returned to Rhodes Island circa 1924 and in 1926 he married Rachel Menashe (not related.)

Instead of returning to America he was talked into immigrating to Southern Rhodesia in 1928. Zac arrived at the age of two. They settled in Que Que (now Kwe Kwe) where his brother Aron Menashe had opened a trading store. In 1933 Eliya moved to Salisbury, where the majority of the Rhodes Island Community had settled.

Return Visit.

Zac returned to Rhodes at the age of twelve, and his family put him to good use, when he was used as an interpreter, speaking in English to the tourists. The tourists he remembers were transported in horse drawn carriages. In 1974 he made a return visit, showing his wife Doris around the Juderia. Rosh Hashana services were held with the minyan comprising mainly of tourists.

He received his secondary education at Prince Edward School in 1944, and in 1950 started Strand Stationers in Manica Road. Later his brother Boaz qualified as a printer and together they started Strand Printers.

In 1957 he married Doris Essakow. They have three children.

Doris was very much involved with the Sephardi Ladies Society and WIZO

Habonim

Circa 1936 at the age of ten Zac joined the youth movement Habonim and at the age of 16 became a

The Survivors in Attendance

Sarah Jerusalmi	Cape Town
Stella Levy	New York
Aron Franco	Brussels
Jacque Hasson	Zimbabwe
Sammy Modiano	Rhodes Island
Stella Amato	Italy
Matty Level	Brussels
Lucia Sulam	Rhodes Island

Poor Attendance at Memorial Service

The president, Mr. Sam Benatar, remarked on the poor turn out when he addressed congregants at a service commemorating the Jews of Rhodes who perished in the Holocaust in August 1944. Mrs. Rachel Hanan a survivor of Auschwitz lit a candle. Ray Hasson lit one on behalf of survivor Jacque Hasson who was absent due to illness.

A total of fifteen men said kadish with ten ladies in attendance. The Sephardi News is published every second month. The last edition came out in May 2002. The current edition was delayed to contain reports of the 71st Annual General Meeting. July 2002

madrich. In 1957 he retired from Habonim after attaining the highest office of Barkoach. Whilst serving as a madrich in the later years he was he was active in the Salisbury Zionist Youth Society, and from there progressed to the South African Zionist Society. He began his activities with the Central African Zionist Organisation in the late 1970's. Through out the years he held various Committees.

Whilst in Habonim he was a member of a committee set up to study the feasibility of founding a Jewish Sports club, because Jews were denied membership in existing non-Jewish Clubs. He assisted with the formation of the Wingate Sports Club. He represented the club in various competitive sports.

In the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation he served as a junior in the senior committee, and later served in various capacities as treasurer, secretary and held the position of president for two consecutive terms from 1967-68.

He also held various positions in the Hebrew Order of David and was president in 1990.

He served for many years on the Jewish Board of Deputies and held the position of senior vice-president. He was also chairman of the Rhodesia- Zimbabwe Macabbi Games committee.

In 2003 Zac sold Strand Stationers. In May 2005 Zac and Doris emigrated to Australia to join his children and grandchildren.



The Sephardi Hebrew Congregation celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 1981. From left to right Mr.I. R. Rosin; the guest of honour The Reverend the Haham, Rabbi Dr. Salamon Gaon Chief Rabbi of the World Sephardi Jewry; president of the congregation, Mr. David Kay and the Gabbai Emeritus Mr. R. J. Menashe.



Stella Habib (nee Benveniste) a survivor of Auschwitz was born in Rhodes in 1922. She is now resident in the B. S. Leon Home for the Aged



Double Wedding 1934

A wedding photographed at Pixiecombe Farm near Gatooma and owned by B. S. Leon. From L to R: Haim Leon (Il Alto): unknown, Violetta Leon who married Ezra Hasson; unknown; Marie Benveniste who married Haim Leon (di Que Que), in between is Sarina Koblenz (nee Leon) and Haim Koblenz. Violetta and Haim Leon were brother and sister. The young flower girls are unknown.



Benny Leon

Benny Leon was born in Gatooma on 21st February 1936. He was educated at Jameson School and later from 1949 to 1952 at Milton High School, Bulawayo.

He worked as a clerk on Rhodesia Railways from 1961 to 1971 and for seven years with Zimbabwe Furnishers as manager. In 1963 he married Rose Navarro. They have three children. Whilst in Gatooma Benny became very involved with the Gatooma Follies later to become the Campbell Theatre Club.

Here he found a talent in miming to records and impersonated such artist as Danny Kaye, Jerry Lewis, Schnozzle Durante and Rolfe Harris with the Jake the Peg number. This three legged mime was very popular, and was featured twice in 1975 and 1977 in the forces Bless'em All Shows on national television.

He was also a member of the Gatooma Round Table and held the position of Chairman for one term. He was secretary for six years.

He was at one time secretary of the Gatooma Hebrew Congregation.

In Gatooma he operated a photographic darkroom after learning the processing at Milton High School. He was also very keen on the history and development of Gatooma and contributed weekly to the Gatooma Mail. From 1958 to 1978 he contributed regularly photographs to this newspaper and was at one time correspondent for the Rhodesia Herald.

He also sent much of the town's historical development in the form of photographs to the National Archives in Harare.

On moving to Salisbury in 1978 he worked for Bon Marche, Paramount Garments and is now with Strachan's Photo Pharmacy. In 1992 he qualified as a photographer at the Harare Polytechnic College. He has moved with the times and is up to date in the field of digital imaging. He also photographed the tombstones of the Harare, Kadoma and Kwe Kwe cemeteries. These were later placed on the Zimbabwe Jewish Community's website on the Internet along with biographies of various Harare Jewish personalities. He edited the current edition of the Central African Zionist Digest and Sephardi News.

He is at present secretary of the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation. November 2006



Jacques Hasson lights the oil lamp in front of the Ark. He was Gabbai of the congregation for numerous years. At one time Jacques had the unenviable task of arranging a minyan for Shabbat morning services. He is a survivor of Auschwitz. In 2004 he attended, in Calle Ancha, the consecration of the memorial to the martyrs of Rhodes. Jacques and Ray Hasson emigrated four years ago and now live in Cape Town.

Toledano Visit 1990



In December 1990 the congregation was honoured with a visit from Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano, B. A. Ab Beth Din of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, London.

From L to R: President, Sam Benatar; Assistant Gabbai, Jacques Hasson; Mr. I. R. (Kipps) Rosin; Dayan Toledano, Gabbai Emeritus R. J. Menashe and Assistant Gabbai Leon Hanan