

RHODESIAN JEWRY AND ITS STORY

PART 11

BY

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## CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
X11	Jews and the Matabele Rebellion	3
X111	Birth of a Synagogue	12
X1V	The Rival Congregations	17
XV	Early Anti-Semitism	24
XV1	Zionism Reaches Rhodesia	29
XV11	Rhodesian Jewry in the Boer War	34
XV111	Cecil Rhodes and a Jewish Settlement Scheme	40
X1X	Financial and Other Troubles	42
XX	Beginnings in Salisbury and Umtali	51
XX1	Sam Goldreich and Sam Marks	55

## CHAPTER XII.

### JEWS AND THE MATABELE REBELLION.

As a picture of daily life in a pioneer Jewish community, the minutes of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation are among the most valuable surviving records. Unfortunately in the course of nearly 70 years, the first of these volumes has been lost, but even the second one, both in what it says and what it omits, gives a vivid panorama of existence in old-time Matabeleland.

December 15, saw the holding of a Special General Meeting, with Joseph Saber, as President, in the Chair, and an audience of about 30, including H. M. Zeffert, Samuel Nathan, S. Goldring, I. Pieters, A. Jacobs, Saul Jacobs, E. Frank, V. Wolf, J. Tobias, J. Cinnamon, M. Basch, Albert Hillson, R.D. Hanson, C. Solomon, S. Rabinowitz, and sundry others. Among the office-bearers A. Davis, Editor of the "Bulawayo Sketch", was elected Honorary Treasurer and Secretary and C. Friedlander the first Mohel (not Honorary). With some pride, Mr. Saber informed his listeners that the official confirmation from the Government of his appointment as a Marriage Officer had at last arrived.

Concerning the immediate task of erecting a Synagogue Mr. Cinnamon came to light with a plan for a schoolhouse that could be used for this purpose during the Festivals and on the Sabbath, combined with a residence for the minister. Such a project, He explained, would save at least £100, "having one 'parting-board' (wall)".

The closing days of the year 1895 were dominated even in Rhodesia, by the general anxiety and strain that preceded the Jameson Raid. Although the actual assault on the Transvaal took place hundreds of miles to the South, it must not be forgotten that the forces used were largely derived from the British South Africa Police and similar bodies, while the leader himself was the Administrator.

According to the muster-rolls of the invading force there were a few Jewish names in the ranks, among them Trooper Weinthal, Lewis H. Simon, Harry Myer, H. G. Bernstein, Cecil Goldsmid Graves, Webber Marks and Percy Solomon.\* Amid the wave of enthusiasm in Bulawayo, inspired by the personal popularity of Jameson and by the distorted rumours going around, the Jewish settlers were as eager to help as any others. Everything, however, was over too quickly; the Raid collapsed in confusion and shame, with Dr. Jim and his entire force in captivity.

Typical of the eagerness with which events on the Rand were being followed was an item in the "Bulawayo Sketch" on January 4, 1896: "At the close of Thursday's concert, Mr. Wallenstein read out a Reuter's wire to the effect that a three-day armistice had been concluded, and that the British inhabitants of the Transvaal were warned against assisting Dr. Jameson by the High Commissioner, who is himself on his way to the Randt" (so spelt).

Yet even in the middle of the excitement communal affairs still received attention. One of these involved an exchange of the site granted by the Government to the Congregation.

\* Footnote: Trooper Myer was killed in action and Trooper Weinthal was reported missing.

The reasons were set out in a letter dated December 18, 1895, and addressed to Edward Ross Townshend by Joseph Saber as President.

"Re our conversation as to exchange of Stand 201 for 216. As explained to you by the deputation, our ceremonies require that the back of the Synagogue shall be east. We therefore are reluctantly compelled to ask for this change, regretting that this point was neglected when selecting the stand graciously granted to us by the Government. In regard to Stand 202, no change is needed, since it is our intention to use same for the School-house and Minister's residence. We trust that you will speedily be able to grant our request, and that it will involve no inconvenience to the Government. We sincerely thank you in anticipation".

As a result the Civil Commissioner agreed to let the Congregation exchange Stand No. 201 for No. 216. Early in the New Year, 1896, the Johannesburg architect, Douglas Harris, was asked to prepare less amateurish designs than those of Mr. Cinnamon. Discussions raged in the Committee as to whether a Synagogue was more important than the appointment of a Minister-cum-Mohel-cum-Schochet-cum-Hebrew teacher. Since the projects were found equally necessary, proposals were approved for holding a bazaar to raise enough cash for both.

One seemingly odd condition attached to the operations of the Bazaar Committee was that it was given power to increase its number "from among the ladies and gentlemen for the Jewish community only", This may be better understood when it is remembered that quite a few gifts - and generous ones too - were received from local Christians, including 50 from no less a person than His Honour the Administrator, Dr. L. S. Jameson.

But the Bazaar was destined never to take place and progress on the erection of the first Synagogue in Rhodesia was held up much longer than anyone foresaw. Despite collections from a variety of sources, including one sum of £33. 3. 11. by an anonymous "Lady for the Bazaar Committee", and despite the acquisition of a "Book of Rules for the Guidance of the Congregation", the whole project was thrown into cold storage by the outbreak of the Matabele Rebellion.

Signs of trouble, beginning in February 1896, grew more ominous through the agitation against the Whites conducted by the so-called priest, Mgwati, one of Lobengula's close associates. With the defeat of the Matabele armies still a matter of recent memory, the fire spread through countless kraals, fanned by the knowledge that the Colonists possessed only a minimum of arms and food. Moreover, the recent outbreak of Rinderpest made transport much more difficult than in normal circumstances.

As March drew to a close, the first killings were reported, of a Bantu policeman at Dawson's Store at Essexvale and several white men around Filabusu and Insiza, Bulawayo itself lay only a short distance from the scene and by March 25 the town was in ferment.

Guns and ammunition were given out at the stores of the British South Africa company, a laager of ox-wagons reinforced with trenches was prepared on the Market Square and on the edges of the encampment Maxim machine guns were planted among barbed wire entanglements. From all sides stories came in about outrages by the Matabele, and urgent arrangements were made against an attack. As women and children were brought in from outside districts, the Bulawayo Club was turned into a temporary

shelter. In the daytime inhabitants were still allowed to go about their business, but all were expected to sleep in the laager. For very few remaining natives a curfew was introduced from six in the evening until six in the morning, and a numbers of Volunteer Companies were set up, among whose members were most of the able-bodied Jews in the town:

Trooper H. Abraham.  
Trooper J.J.Aschman.  
Gunner Oscar Marlees Behrman.(Artillery).  
Sapper J. Behrman, (Engineering Corps).  
Trooper F. Buirski.  
Trooper S. F. Cohen.  
Trooper P. Cowan.  
Trooper A.A. Ehrlich.  
Trooper J. Epstein.  
Trooper H. Erlanger.  
Trooper Horace Freeman.  
Trooper W.Fredman (Giffords Horse Corps).  
Trooper E. H. Friedman.  
Trooper Stephen J. Goldsmith.  
Trooper John Glucksman.  
Trooper George Henry, (Remount Camp, Bulawayo)>  
Quartermaster Adolf Hirschberg, (Afrikaner Corps).  
Gunner S. Jacobs, (Artillery).  
Trooper L. Kronsteing.  
Gunner E. C. Levita, (Artillery).  
Trooper J. Lipman.  
Sub-Lieutenant M. H. Lyons, (Medical Staff Corps).  
(received wound in the ankle)>  
Trooper L. Levin.  
Trooper H. Norden, (B.S.A. Police Corps).  
Trooper D. Platz.  
Trooper G. Rootman.  
Sapper H. Rosenberg, (Engineering Corps).  
Trooper O. Seidel.  
Trooper G. J Schoen.  
Trooper P. Schukewitz.  
Trooper M. Spiro  
Trooper F. Spanier.  
Trooper Wilensky, (Afrikaner Corps).  
Bugler P Weinthal, (Staff Corps).  
Trooper H. Mortimer Zeffert.  
From other districts:  
Temporary Sergeant-Major Abner Cohen, Salisbury.  
Trooper H.E. Cohen, Enkeldoorn.  
Trooper Barnet Elster, (Gwelo Volunteer Corps).  
Burger Peter Falk, (Gwelo Burgers, originally of Baden,

Germany).

Trooper E. Horwitz, (Belingwe Column Corps, originally of Baltimore, U.S.A)

Lieutenant Heyman, Kimberley.

Trooper S. Hyman, Salisbury.

Trooper A. Hyman, Gwelo.

Trooper J. M. Jacobson, Kimberly.

Trooper S. Lesser, Francistown.

Burger Levi Lehman, (Gwelo Burgers, originally of London).

Trooper J. Lichtheim, Salisbury.

Lieutenant Quartermaster A. Lichtenstein, (Belingwe Staff Column).

Trooper C.F. Mosenthal, London.

Trooper K. E. H. Pollack, Salisbury.

Burger Harris Rosenthal, (Gwelo Burger Corps, originally of Seattle, U.S.A.)

Trooper J. Rosenthal, Salisbury.

Trooper M.A. Shapiro, Salisbury.

Corporal Percy Solomon, Sea Point.

Trooper J. Suzman, Salisbury.

Burger Isaac Sonnenberg, (Gwelo Burger Corps).

At least one Jewish soldier, G. Jacobs, gave his life.

Since this is not the place for a detailed description of the ensuing campaign, it will be sufficient to make some reference to the part played by these men. An account of the Rebellion issued by A. Davis describes the situation in the middle of April 1896.

"Several parties of Matabele", he says, "approached the town very closely at night, murdering the boys in charge of the cattle. Thousands of rebels were camped all along the Umguzu, numbers of them being actually within three miles of the town. A large impi lay at Mr. Crewe's farm on the Khami River, 12 miles to the West. Two large impis had quartered themselves on the Elibaini Hills and the neighborhood of Intaba Unduna. Altogether, not less than 10,000 hostile natives were spread out in a semi-circle from the West to the North-East".

While attacks were made on the outskirts of the European position, the beleaguered inhabitants made repeated attempts to assail their foes. One of these dispatched on May 11 for the Shangani River, numbered 613 men and 42 officers with artillery, and 14 mule wagons carrying provisions and ammunition. "There was ", we are told, "Besides, an ambulance wagon, Dr. Levy being in charge".

By virtue of their pre-eminence in the transportation field, a special load of responsibility fell on Julius Weil & Co.\* At the height of the crisis, on May 9, 1896, it was reported from Bulawayo:

"Mr. Myer Weil, of the firm of Julius Weil of Mafeking, Contractor to the Chartered Company, has been in Johannesburg since Monday last, and has got together a transport service consisting of 500 mules, 50 wagons and the requisite number of 'boys'. He has bought up 50 wagon-loads.

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\* Footnote: According to a letter from Julius Weil to the "South African News", his firm however denied supplying the Jameson Raiders.

of foodstuffs for the use of the white men who are fighting the Matabele, and also for the general population of the Bulawayo. Twenty wagons are leaving for the North this Friday afternoon. The mules are sleek, stout animals, which look as if they might be depended upon for quick work.

"Mr. Weil has arranged for the wagons to be met by patrols at the various points along the road, the supplies being thereafter escorted into Bulawayo, the townships and laagers. Before coming to the Rand, Mr. Weil visited the Karroo and there organized a service of donkey transport to the Protectorate. Mr. Weil has had previous experience of this special class of work in the Matabele and other native campaigns...."

Again, in answer to an appeal for comforts on behalf of the Reverend Mother Jacoba of the Bulawayo Memorial Hospital, we find listed on May 23, under the name of Julius Weil, one case of bottled fruits, one case of table jellies and five fowls, no inconsiderable donation at a time of great scarcity.

Another notice on June 27 reads:

"The Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with any mules or donkeys bearing the mark of J.W. Any information about the whereabouts of any such, having strayed from the wagons on the road, will be appreciated by the undersigned.

(Signed) Julius Weil".

In spite of all the upheavals, however, everyday life had to go on, and a significant item was published in the "Bulawayo Chronicle" on May 20:

**"TO LAUNDRESSES ETC.**

"The four stands below Mr. Hirschler's Stables are hereby placed at the use of the Public for washing purposes. Clean water can be obtained at the well at the Stable adjoining the stands.

(Signed) Joseph E. Verey,  
Town Engineer".

**"CAUTION TO THE PUBLIC"**, was the heading of another notice:

"Persons are hereby cautioned from taking water from the Matjesmshlope Stream, as the same is unfit for human consumption.

(Signed) John E. Scott.  
Town Major.

Then followed a list of wells available for the public which included those on the premises of Frank Jacobs and of Hirschler's in Market Square.

The spirits of the little town were raised on June 5, through the holding of Miss Lowenstark's concert, tribute being paid to the talent of this popular young Jewish musician in the "Chronicle" of the following day.

Some idea of the conditions during the Matabele Rebellion was given when, shortly after, J. Hirschler, in his capacity as Chairman of Rhodesia Limited, reached London and was interviewed by the journal "South Africa". This was one of the first full accounts of what had been happening. Under the heading, "What Mr. Hirschler has to say about the Matabele Revolt - Its Causes and Effects - A Strong Plea for Chartered Control", the verbatim account of the reporter's conversation is unusually vivid:

"You have come from Bulawayo direct, have you not Mr. Hirschler?"

"Yes, just arrived, and have been traveling all the time",

"When did you leave Bulawayo?"

"I left on the 31st".

"What? Of May?"

"Yes, 31<sup>st</sup> of May".

"When did you get to London?"

"On Friday, June 26. I was 27 days coming from Bulawayo".

"Surely a record journey?"

"Yes; we were eight days and eight nights on the coach, owing to the bad state of the roads and the poorness of the mules. We ought not to have been more than 5 1/2 days in the coach".

"Then you could get to London from Bulawayo in 24 days if you caught the "Norman" or the "Tantallon Castle?"

"Yes, if the roads were good. If it was a matter of necessity it could be done, but in traveling by coach that way you get no sleep. It is a continuous journey".

"How long have you been in Matabeleland now?"

"About two and a half years">

"You have seen a good deal of the country, have you not?"

"I have been right through it".

"Have you come home on business?"

"Well, partly on business and partly on a holiday".

"Bulawayo is hardly the place to spend a holiday now?"

"No, I should think not".

"You never anticipated there would be any attack by natives on the town?"

"We wanted an attack, but we have never anticipated that Bulawayo would be taken. There was only one thing which really did cause us some anxiety that was the hospital. It is a very exposed position, and as it stands on the brow of a hill, it was exposed to an attack at any time. Of course, there was a laager very near to it, but it was not in such a position as to cover it. If the niggers shot properly they could shoot right into the hospital"

"How many patients were there in the hospital?"



"I should say 120 to 150. Of course, we had a good many men round the hospital, and temporary fortifications were also put up in three or four places. We also had a Maxim there. Naturally, however, it gave us a great deal of anxiety".

"You had a good town laager?"

"Our laager was one of the most scientific that could have been made in any part of the world. There were barded wire fences all round it, and entanglements of all kinds, broken glass, and so on. In addition to this, there were charges of dynamite everywhere which could be exploded by electricity at any point">

"So you would have been glad to have had a call from the Matabele?"

"It would have given us a great deal of satisfaction to blow them up, but they never gave us the opportunity. In fact, they never came as far as the outlying houses - such as Gifford's and the Government House. A few panes of glass were broken in the Government House; but latterly 100 men were sent out to protect it".

Asked whether the danger in Matabeleland was at an end, Hirschler said that the only problem now was to hunt them out of the Matopos Hills, but that serious opposition was over. On the other hand the insurrection among the Mashonas, so completely unforeseen, was still a matter of anxiety.

"I should not be surprised if the revolt spreads right throughout the East Coast. Then you see, there are but few settlers in Gazaland. Before I left on May 31st I had consultations with men in authority and in the know, and they considered that the back of the rebellion had been broken, and that all that remained to be done was police duty - patrolling the country and hunting the rebels out. This was the work to be done, and it should be carried out not by the settlers, but by a proper Police force. As a banquet given to Mr. Rhodes recently, he said that 500 men would be set aside for this purpose. When I left there was a talk about the disbandment of the Bulawayo Field Force, which is a very expensive force for the Chartered Company to keep up. It costs the authorities between £500 and £600 a day to keep up the force, so you see it is a large expense".

"What is your opinion as to the probability of local resources putting down the Mashonaland rising?"

"Oh, I believe they will have to do the same as they did in Matabeleland. They will have to hunt them down. I do not, however, think the Mashonas will fight as did the Matabele. They only take a hundred to one chance, and when it comes to a fight, they will get frightened and begin to trek northwards".

After assuring his questioner that there was no doubt that the Rhodesian colonists would ultimately cope with the trouble, Hirschler answered questions of a more personal and less warlike nature.

"You have been representing Rhodesia Limited in Matabeleland?"

"Yes, I am one of the managing Directors".

"What is your opinion generally of the assets of the Company".

"the assets of the Company are the most substantial of any held by any Rhodesian Company. Comparing the capital of the Company with that of other

companies, I should certainly say that Rhodesia Limited has the biggest assets of any Company for so small a capital. The capital of the company is only £300,000, and we have still nearly one-third of that cash in hand. We have the very best stands in Bulawayo - 62 or 63 - and we also own eight very good stands in Johannesburg. Besides that, we own very nearly 400 square miles of well-selected land, and we own firm or under option and under our control close upon 2,000 mining claims, which have been selected really with the greatest discrimination. We have pegged but very few. We have taken them after some prospecting has been done in order to show their prospective value. Very great care has been exercised by Mr. Knapp and myself in their acquisition. Mr. Knapp took over the command of Gifford's Horse on his arrival the week before I left".

"But work is not possible on any of these outlying mines at present?"

"Work has been stopped more on account of the Rinderpest than the revolt, which in my opinion, can be suppressed within a comparatively short time".

"Then work may be expected to be resumed soon?"

"Yes; you know the people there are not afraid of the Natives. Every man is more or less well able to deal with a Native. When once you know a Native is treacherous, you treat him differently. I myself, before the revolt, have ridden from one end of the country to the other, and I have never carried a revolver. I have also slept at the kraals when traveling in the midst of a dense population before the revolt. That was shortly after the first war. I never saw the slightest danger in it. The again the men who were right through the first war went out to the remotest parts of the country immediately after the country was thrown open for pegging. You remember that on December 25, 1893, the country was thrown open, and the men went to the Belingwe, the Selukwe and, indeed, all over Matabeleland and they never dreamt of taking revolvers with them. They felt absolutely safe, and I believe when they know the revolt is broken they will again feel quite as safe, because individually the Native would most likely do nothing. It is only when instigated by the witch doctors that they break out - witch doctors such a M'Limo. He is dead now, we're told. I hope it is so".

Despite the reverses inflicted upon them by the Bulawayo and other Field Forces, the suppression of the Matabele rising took longer and demanded far more effort in blood and treasure than anyone had foreseen, especially after June 1896, when the Mashonas, although traditional opponents of the warrior race, decided upon a revolt of their own. Imperial Troops under the Major-General F. Carrington, among them Colonel Robert Baden-Powell (later the famous Baden-Powell of Mafeking), had to be diverted in order to deal with them. July went by, and then August. The Matabele, driven back into the Matopos, still gave no indication of surrender. Only when Cecil John Rhodes, with his companions, Dr. Hans Sauer, Johann Colenbrander, Vere Stent and his two African servants, took their lives in their hands, and went unarmed into the enemy stronghold among the hills, did discussions begin on the grievances of the rebels.

This unsettled condition makes all the more noteworthy the holding of a general meeting of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation on August 29, in the recently-completed "Silver Grill", where Mr. Cinnamon explained his many grievances, and

where a new Committee was elected comprising Messrs. Epstein, Levin, Hanson, Granger and Jacobs, with Mr. Cinnamon himself at the bottom of the poll!

Even when the High Festivals came in September, the Matabele Rebellion was not yet over. Mr. Epstein was chosen to lead the prayers, while Mr. Aserman dealt with the Sepher Torah.

A glimpse of the inadequacy of the available equipment is furnished by the note that a joiner was to "fix up the platform of the Arch (so written), to buy a curtain, kettle, etc". On the Day of Atonement, the prayers were again said by Messrs. Epstein and Aserman, with the assistance of Mr. Lowenstark. Offerings came to 38.17s.

With the machinery of normal government functioning once again, attention could be paid to the reconditioning of the Jewish Burial Ground, damaged during the disturbances, arrangements also being made to procure, not a hearse, but a cart, for use at interments!

Meanwhile Rhodes and his friends were still sitting in the Matopos, trying to negotiate. Only on October 13 was the Empire-builder able to call upon the Matabele chiefs to lay down their assegais and finally agree to accept the Queen's authority.

Nor was the trouble entirely over even then. For many months after Matabeleland was subdued the trouble in Mashonaland continued, and not until July 1897 was the whole of Rhodesia at peace.

## CHAPTER X111

### BIRTH OF A SYNAGOGUE

By September 1896 the Congregation had reached the stage of requiring a set of bylaws from Johannesburg, and in December a wire was also dispatched to the Reverend A. P. Bender of Cape Town: "Send exact copy of Marriage, Birth and Death Certificates, also six Ketubas...." Prayer-books and other essentials to organized worship were ordered from the same source, while a renewed campaign for funds towards the building brought a response typical of those friendly days, in the form of a generous gift from Sidney Redrup, a leading non-Jewish citizen.

In token of the seriousness of its intentions, the Committee, in April 1897, offered a prize of 25 guineas for the most suitable architectural design, a fact advertised not only in the local press, but also in that of the Cape and the Transvaal. Practitioners were informed that while the site was definitely the corner of Abercorn Street and Third Avenue, a portion only of the Synagogue was to be erected as a start. "Designs must be made so that, at any future time, the building can be extended towards Abercorn Street... The amount to be spent is £2,000, which sum is to include forms with 900 seats, fixed at the back, to seat 250 men and 50 to 75 women, also to cover the cost of the Ark and Minister's reading desk".

A ground plan was required, front and side elevations, as well as sections to show the position of the Ark. Acceptance of orthodox principles was implied in one condition: The Men's and Women's seating accommodation must be kept entirely separate, and there must be a separate approach for each. The Ark must be on the Eastern side of the building, and to be approached by four steps. The Minister's reading desk will have to be circular, with two entrances and two steps up. The walls will have to be of sufficient strength to allow of a balcony to be added in the future". Retiring rooms for both sexes were also specified. Four plans were submitted – that of a Mr. Carrick being judged the most suitable. On account of money shortages variations in the designs were asked for and then the whole plan was abandoned in favour of another submitted by A. A. Abrahams.

Although considerably less pretentious than that of Mr. Carrick, this too, at an estimate of £2,600, was more costly than the Committee could face. By substituting chairs instead of forms another cut of £400 was agreed to.

Not since its foundation had the Congregation at Bulawayo been in such a whirl of excitement as now. While tenders were called for the foundation a request sent to Dr. Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire in London, for the selection of the first Minister. He had to be willing to come for at least three years, at a salary of £400 for the first year, rising to £500. In addition to ecclesiastical duties, he would be Mohel and Schochet, and if his time allowed, must be willing to "act as instructor in Hebrew to any school". The first-class fare, plus £75 for traveling expenses, was payable by the

Congregation, on condition that the Minister should start not later than August 28, in time for the New Year Services.

Coinciding with the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, June 21<sup>st</sup> 1897 was selected for laying the foundation stone. Just under a fortnight before the date a telegram went off to Messrs. Cotton & Co. of Port Elizabeth, asking them to supply a suitable presentation silver trowel.

With all the traditional Jewish pomp of which the place was capable, the ceremony at the Bulawayo Synagogue was performed by the Administrator of Matabeleland; Captain the Honourable Arthur Lawley (later Sir Arthur Lawley and Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal). “The Free Masons”, we read, “met at the Stock Exchange Hall, and formed the procession, headed by the Worshipful Brother Lowenstark, P.M., to the ground, in full regalia, and made a striking spectacle....”

The Jewish community of Bulawayo was supplemented by most of their Christian neighbours, including Bishop Gaul of the Anglican Church, Brothers L. Powis Jones and E. C. Baxter, likewise Brother Thompson, who performed on the organ. Practically all the members of the Zambesia and Allan Wilson Lodges attended

The procession halted at the stand and opened the ceremony with “God Save the Queen”, whereupon the stone was placed in position – corn, wine and oil being poured over it, with appropriate benedictions. “Coins of the realm and local newspapers were placed in the cavity, which was tried in due and ancient Masonic form, and declared truly laid by the Grand Master. Captain Lawley then approached and with a silver trowel finished the laying. The magnificent consecration of the building to the Most High, as ordered by Masonic ritual, was given..... In an impressive manner, and was followed again by a second rendering of the National Anthem. The service was especially appropriate for the Diamond Jubilee. Mr. Lowenstark then read to an attentive audience the Hebrew Service of Dedication. The proceedings on the ground closed by the whole body singing the National Anthem for a third time, giving three cheers for the Queen and three cheers for the Administrator and Mrs. Lawley. There must have been about 100 Free Masons present...”.

Elsewhere we learn that the prayer had been specially prepared by Chief Rabbi Adler in England as appropriate for the rejoicings in honour of Her Majesty.

Close by, a large marquee tent had been erected, where the more mundane part of the festivities were held. The toast to the Queen was proposed by the Worshipful Brother Hovell, that of Sir Arthur Lawley by Worshipful Brother Lowenstark, and duly acknowledged, while Bishop Gaul “in a feeling manner, proposed ‘Other Denominations’. Then Bishop Gaul drank to Freemasonry, being thanked by Worshipful Brother Hovell.

“This is the first Masonic laying of a foundation stone in Matabeleland”, the “Bulawayo Chronicle” noted, and the second in Rhodesia. The Hebrew Congregation

may be proud that their edifice received such a good start. The plans, which have been made by Mr. A. Abrahams, show an excellent structure, worthy of the people of the town....”

After general expressions of loyalty to Her Majesty, the Bulawayo Community joined in the dispatch of an Address of Congratulations, in the form of an album from her subjects.

Work on Rhodesia’s first Synagogue was now well under way. But even while Messrs. Henderson & Swift, who had quoted £155.11.3. were busy on the foundations, the Congregation was confronted with a fresh disappointment. Five tenders were received for the building itself, the lowest one again from Henderson & Swift, for £3,800, and the highest £5,572. But even £3,800 was nearly twice as much as the Committee had been led to expect by the optimistic Mr. Abrahams. At a stormy meeting on July 7, 1897, Mr. Saber angrily asked that architect: How can you have made such a mistake in your reckonings, and at different meetings mislead the Committee by saying that the building could be completed for about £2,000?” The explanation, that materials, bricks and wages had lately risen 25 per cent, failed to assuage Abrahams’ clients, and he was asked to leave the meeting. After a long debate a compromise was arrived at: Revised tenders for the four walls and the roof alone were invited. Once more Henderson & Swift came out cheapest, at £2,286. Alas! Not only was the figure still too high, but the structure would be utterly unlike what had first been approved.

With Heavy hearts, the Committee decided to call a meeting of the Jewish Community, to place facts before them. A record attendance of over 40 crowded the Sanitary Boardroom on July 18, 1897, when Mr. Saber began: “I am sorry to tell you that, on account of the high prices ruling, it is impossible at the present time to build the Shul. We have had tenders, which prove out of all reason”.

In plain truth Bulawayo was still too small and too poor to afford anything so ambitious, and the frank acknowledgement of this was followed by a unanimous decision indefinitely to hold over the entire project. Moreover it was now realized that in asking Dr. Adler in London to send out a Minister the Committee had also been too optimistic. The existing subscription scale of two guineas a year would yield a quite inadequate emolument. On the initiative of Mr. Kirschbaum a sum of six guineas a head was voted. When this announcement brought a prompt letter from a Mr. A.B. Diamond resigning his membership, the Committee, in a conciliatory mood, offered to take him back at four guineas.

Times, however, were improving, and immigration was again on the upgrade, a fact shown by the steady rise in the enrolment of members in the Congregation and the establishment in April 1897 of the Bulawayo Hebrew Aid and Benevolent Society. Its membership list – about 120 – was a fair guide to the size of the town’s Jewish Community.

To raise funds, an entertainment was held in the Caledonian Hall, of which we read in the "Chronicle": "The cause seemed so popular that it would be well if the hall could be expanded on the next occasion. The programme was a long one – a little too long, in the opinion of many – but it was excellent and varied. The audience seemed to derive a good deal of enjoyment, especially from the humorous portion. Miss Lowenstark's reappearance was hailed with applause..."

When, after the first eight months, the first annual meeting took place under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. Jacobs, the Benevolent Society had already been able to assist less fortunate members of the community with loans and gifts amounting to £127.15. besides a ten guinea subscription towards the Bulawayo Hospital Fund. Even at that early stage £12 had already been refunded, and there were good prospects of recovering the balance. Rhodesia, however, was from prosperity, and the prevailing conditions were illustrated by a transaction concerning the father of a future Rhodesian Prime Minister. On August 15, 1897, £20 was handed to the Bulawayo Hebrew Aid and Benevolent Society, "for the purpose of assisting to place Welensky in business, such amount to be expended by the Society to the best of their ability.\* In explanation of this message the Society was informed: "It should stand in the Congregation's books as a loan, seeing that the Bulawayo Aid and Benevolent have accepted a bill, and when it receives payment the Congregation expects to receive the money back".

In 1897 the Committee of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation comprised Joseph Saber, President; M. Brown, Vice-President; A. Aserman, Treasurer; M.S. Leven, J. Epstein, M. Rabinowitz, - Tobias, Mark Joseph, Edgar Granger, - Rotshall, M. Greenberg and Coleman Joseph (Life Member). The Trustees were S. Goldring and Joseph Saber, the Auditor J. Freilich and the Acting Secretary Mark Joseph.

With its funds now placed on a more substantial basis, the Congregation felt itself to be in a position to give renewed thought to the choice of a Minister. Several applicants had come forward – The Reverend Phillip Wolfers of Swansea, Mr. B. Rittenberg and Mr. E. Friedman, but none were found suitable. Already it was too late to employ any but local talent at the forthcoming High Festivals, for which occasion the Exchange Hall in Bulawayo was engaged at a fee of 10 guineas.

\*Footnote; The first documentary reference to Michael Welensky appears in a letter signed by J.H. Hirschberg, Honorary Secretary of the Bulawayo Congregation on December 7, 1895, in which he formally thanks him "for your kind services in connection with the funeral of the late Mr. B. Samuels".

One approved suggestion for raising funds which would be regarded unfavourably today was mooted on August 27, when the authorities decided that the "Sepher Torah Brought up by Mr. Natkin be raffled by the Committee, the said Committee to be responsible for the money the Sepher cost; the conditions of the raffle to be that, whoever wins the same shall present it to the Congregation, the presentee's name to be inserted on it!" Later it was felt that this action might be open to misconstruction, and other ideas were substituted.

The roll of members was increased by the addition of N. Boas, Phillip Hanson, Isaac Tannenbaum, Nathan Oppenheimer, Norman Moss, Hyman Rosenstein, Arnold Saber, Mandelson, A. Joseph, H. Goldin, I. Goldberg, I. King, Louis Cohen, Mark Pieters, A. Greenberg and Blatt. Each one meant extra revenue, and the prospect not only of an earlier completion of the much-needed place of worship, but the arrival of the first Minister. Hopes rose high in September 1897, when the Reverend Francis Cohen of London, obviously an entirely suitable candidate, was asked to take the post. At the last moment, however, Rabbi Cohen chose to accept an invitation to Australia, where he made his mark as Chief Rabbi of Sydney.

Yet interest in Jewish matters was increasing, and for the first time there are references to the public celebration of Passover, as well as of the Feast of the Tabernacles, to say nothing of the appearance, during the Festivals, of a choir, “now practicing and under the supervision of the Committee.

Hopeful of support from the orthodox, Joseph Schumackler proposed opening a Kosher Butchery, only to be told by the Synagogue Committee to hold his hand until there was a Minister available to supervise operations. As a temporary arrangement, C. Friedlander was recognized as Mohel and Schochet, at a remuneration of £4 a week. With this went the warning: “Any other person practicing as Schochet is unauthorized, and meat killed by such person is Trifa. Further, a circular to this effect is to be distributed in the community”.

The beginnings of what may be regarded as social work are traceable to October 31, 1897, when E. Granger, Secretary of the Congregation, was asked to function as Prison Visitor, again until the appointment of a Minister.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RIVAL CONGREGATIONS.

The old adage, "Hope delayed maketh the Heart sick", was once more proved at the Bulawayo when, anxious to break the deadlock, Abner Cohen decided to set up a second congregation in the town. The doughty Jewish pioneer, born in London in 1860, educated at Newcastle-on-Tyne, had gone round the world by sailing ship and immigrated to New Zealand in 1877. Two years later he had landed in France as a student before in 1881 he reached South Africa.

Attracted to the Transvaal by the first gold discoveries on the Witwatersrand, Cohen was in more than one field to make his mark there, for to him goes the honour of being the earliest inhabitant of Krugersdorp. In 1887 close to the historic Paarderkraal Monument, where the Boers, on the anniversary of the day when their independence was restored six years earlier, used to assemble and hold religious and patriotic celebrations, Cohen opened a hotel. Some ten years later he set out for Bulawayo, having been accused of complicity in the Jameson Raid.

Few newcomers arrived with better credentials. Still in existence is a personal letter from Sir James Silverwright, Commissioner of Public Works for Cape Colony. It reads:

Commissioner's Office,  
Cape Town.  
20th May, 1187.

"My Dear Rhodes,

"Abner Cohen, who carries this, is a friend of mine. He is leaving the Transvaal and going to Rhodesia; he was a pioneer of Krugersdorp, and I can certify to his being a straight, honourable little chap. You will be greatly interested in having a chat with him, and I know no-one who, in my opinion, would be a more desirable acquisition to the population of a new country than Mr. Cohen. Try and see him early.

"Yours truly,

(Signed) J.Silverwright".

Always strongly interested in communal affairs, Cohen decided at once to take a hand in disentangling those in Bulawayo. In an unpublished personal letter to the Reverend M. I. Cohen written on January 12, 1934, he said:

"Promptly on my arrival in April 1897, a deputation waited upon me, asking me to address a meeting of our people, for the purpose of reaching an amicable understanding between two different sections. After listening to their grievances, I found them real, not imaginary. A Mr. Saber was the leader of one section, but it would appear that little or no attempt was made to hold the usual religious services on the Sabbath and

Holy Days, so at least I was informed, - and that a tension existed between the Home and foreign-born Jews. I promptly set to work to rectify matters, and got quite a big following, but try as I would; I failed to amalgamate them all. So I set up a new Congregation, of which I was unanimously elected President, and a commencement was made to holding the usual services, as best we could, seeing we had no Minister there at the time"

Although supporters of the existing congregations repudiated Abner Cohen's charges, the fact remains that dissension existed, and that it was useless to attempt glossing it over. First a new Jewish "Society" came into being, rivalry developed, and on December 12 it was launched as a separate body. Discussions began very soon, aimed at a reunion between this new Bulawayo Jewish Congregation and the older Hebrew Congregation. Delegates from both sides met on December 23, 1897, Abner's followers having drawn up their "preliminary conditions". Of these the first was that, once the united congregation came into existence, the office of President should never be held by anyone for two consecutive years. The first President was to be elected by the new Congregation and the Vice-President by the old one, while only the Secretary and Treasurer were to be picked from either group according to their suitability. Each Congregation was to contribute four Committeemen, and there was provision for the holding of a General Meeting to settle everything. No discrimination was to be applied to either side, and the minimum subscription was to be 10/6d. a quarter.

Three days later the Abner Cohen delegates reported back: "We much regret that the representatives of the opposite side declare themselves both unwilling and unable to discuss our conditions of union, and confine themselves to a demand.... that we should state our grievances. Seeing that we had taken part in the meeting for the purpose of avoiding a split, and not to rake up old quarrels, the conference came to an end".

On the opposing side the delegates, Salem Goldring, A. Joseph and A. Jacobs, told the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation that, when the Abner Cohenites had "commenced reading their preliminary conditions of amalgamation, we at once informed them that they were under a wrong impression. We did not meet them for that purpose. We were empowered by the terms of the resolution passed at our meeting December 18:

- 1, To meet the representatives of the Hebrew Society.
2. Carefully to go into the just causes of complaint, and suggest to the Congregation the best mode of meeting them, and thereby avoid a split in the community".

Referring to the conditions for the merger, the delegates complained: "Instead of coming to the point and openly stating their wants as far as religious rites are concerned, they wanted your Congregation practically to hand over to them the management of affairs. This, we informed them, we had no power to do, though at the same time we tried to get them to state their wants, or rather grievances. They stated they had absolutely none. Some time ago, they had some, but these, they were pleased to say, had disappeared.

"It was incompatible with the dignity of your Congregation to discuss the matter further, and the natural conclusion come to by your delegates is that they have to fall back on the reports freely circulated in Town, that this agitation has been got up for the purpose of hampering your Congregation in every possible way, as it was openly stated at a preliminary meeting held at Mr. Basch's store, that the greatest complaint against your Congregation were:

- (a) That no provision has been made for education.
- (b) That is has no Synagogue.
- (c) That we have engaged a Minister without consulting the Congregation, and further, that the funds of the Congregation have been squandered. Gentlemen, on all these points your delegates were prepared to meet them in every way".

In spite of this, everybody agreed that something ought to be done to assuage the prevailing irritation, and a request was put forward to meet complaints, to ask the Committee to devise some means of building a Synagogue at once, to make provisions for holding Divine Services as often as required, and to give religious instruction to those requiring it.

After referring to the assurance that the matter of a Minister had not yet been settled, but that the charge of squandering could be easily answered, the delegates' report concluded: "We wish to place on record our deep feeling of humiliation at the disgraceful manner in which this controversy has been placed before the public by the free circulation of printed matter, which is lowering for the dignity of Judaism, not only in Bulawayo, but in the whole of South Africa".

For the next year or two Bulawayo had to resign itself to the existence of two rival Synagogues, in a community barely large enough to maintain one. On the other hand the element of competition produced a remarkable revival in the vigor of Jewish life, from which the older body was not exempt.

No time had been lost in giving effect to the idea of the new "Ginger" group. Besides Abner Cohen, the Committee included J. Cinnamon, A. Frank, I. Pieters, F.N. Joseph and a Mr. Dribbin, who between them had already engaged the boardrooms on Saturday mornings and for classes in "Religious Judaism" on Sunday afternoons. As a start the Festival of Chanukah was to be rendered more pleasurable by a tea party, organized by Mr. Cohen, and a magic lantern show given by Mr. Freilich.

"In observing the Festival the lights will be lit according to the old custom, which would probably be the first opportunity the children resident here would have seen of having it honoured".

Mr. Joseph, as Chairman, added: "Every Jewish child in Bulawayo, with its friends, will be heartily welcome. In doing what has been done, we merely carried out work delayed for years, Hitherto the Hebrews of Bulawayo have been a Congregation only in name. No Synagogue has been theirs in which to congregate. No classes have been there which to instruct children in their faith and their traditions. There has been a

semblance without reality, a shell without a kernel. It is high time to change all that, and changed it will be. The children will be taught and services held".

After loud applause 50 members signed on, and contributions to the value of 250 were handed over to Mr. Maurice Friedman, the Honorary Secretary.

When Chanukah party took place on December 19, there was an excellent turnout of 30 youngsters, among whom it is to be suspected were some whose parents were not in agreement with the policy of the new Congregation, but who enjoyed the magic lantern show, and the good things provided by Mrs. and Miss Frank, Mr. and Miss Cinnamon, Mrs. Dribbin and Mrs. Boaz.

Some days later, the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation assembled and approved of the immediate construction of what might best be described as an "austerity Synagogue", measuring only 33 feet square, but costing a sum of about 450. This was to be suitable for transformation in due course to a residence for the Minister when he came. Before another month ended building was actually under way.

With two rival committees, the matter of access to the Jewish Cemetery became a matter of pardonable perplexity to the non-Jewish authorities, both Municipal and Government. A letter addressed to the Municipality by the Abner Cohen group reads:

"Bulawayo,  
December 31, 1897.

The Town Clerk of Bulawayo.

Sir,

With much regret and reluctance, we feel constrained to call the attention of the Municipal Council to the discreditable state of neglect and disrepair into which the Jewish Burial Ground has fallen. We desire to point out that several fencing-poles are no longer standing, and two rows of wire have been removed, so as to render the ground readily accessible to stray cattle. The enclosure itself is sadly overgrown with scrub, and moreover it is polluted by the pervasive presence of dead donkeys.

On behalf of the Bulawayo Jewish Congregation we would respectfully request the Council to permit us:

1. To renovate, at our expense, the evils above referred to.
2. To place headstones on the existing graves.
3. To erect a sign-board indicating that the enclosure is the "Jewish Burial Ground".

We trust that the Council will agree with us that the reproach of neglecting God's acre is one that should be promptly be removed.

remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

"We

(Signed) Abner Cohen.  
F. Joseph.  
Norman L. Mandelson.  
L. Frank.  
Isaac Pieters.  
G. Freilich.

P.S. Mr. Abner Cohen, our president, will be pleased to give his co-operation to the Council, should they desire to make any investigation".

A simultaneous memorandum from the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation not unnaturally confused the Town Council somewhat about the identity of the parties with which it was dealing, although it was to be noted that a Jewish Councilor, I. H. Hirschler, presided over the next meeting, on January 4, when the matter was discussed.

"A petition was read from the new Jewish Congregation, asking for permission to carry out certain repairs to the Jewish Cemetery.

"Mr. Saber said the Cemetery had been placed under the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, which would make the repairs mentioned. An amount had been spent on the Cemetery in October, but the heavy rains had since caused fresh damage. It was decided to inform the petitioners that Mr. Saber undertook, on behalf of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, of which he was President, to put the Cemetery in the proper state".

A puzzled sanitary Board heard further rival claims, particularly in the matter of reconditioning the fences, and not knowing what to do, gave access to both.

Now a new personality made his appearance in Bulawayo and one very familiar, over a long period to all South African Jewry. Louis Lionel Goldsmid, born in England, had come to Rhodesia in order to make his fortune and decided to use his journalistic experience to publish a magazine, in stenciled form, called first "The Owl" and later the "Bulawayo Sketch". Goldsmid, who presently started the "South African Jewish Chronicle" and server other publications, devoted one of his first leading articles to a survey of the local Congregations.

"The Jews in Bulawayo", he wrote, "are a wonderful and curious people. For four years united, they have not yet been able, during that period, to erect, or even obtain for temporary purposes, a suitable building for the holding of regular Devine Services, and now, mirabile dictu, they consider that what united they were unable to attain in the past, they will, as two antagonistic sections of one community, be able to accomplish in the future. During the course of the week representative of this journal had talk with Messrs. Abner Cohen and Mendelsohn, the leaders of the seceding party. From their statements we are bound to admit that there is ground for complaint but we would remind the seceders that the community was still young at the last election and, if they

have chosen men as leaders for the future who have failed them in the past, it is a mistake which can easily be remedied. Certainly that in itself is not sufficient reason for the formation of a second Congregation. "Eondragt maakt magt", is the Transvaal motto, and what the Boers have realized, surely the Bulawayo Jews can appreciate. We would urge upon both parties the desirability of sinking their differences and fusing their members, with the view to the creation of a community which shall be a glory to the Jews themselves, and an object of respect to the non-Jewish section of the population".

Eager to put things right, the Committee of the old Congregation carefully examined its finances, but found them even worse than they had suspected and the book-keeping deplorable.

February 6 witnessed the receipt of a letter by the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation from the Bulawayo Jewish Congregation, again on the vexed question of using the burial-ground. The reply informed him that "any Jew, belonging to any Jewish Congregation in Bulawayo, will be interred on the same footing as members of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation".

Along with this went a discussion on the opening of a new set of books by a competent accountant, and on the charge to be made to a Mr. Freeman of Salisbury, who wished to engage the local Mohel, (a service which cost no less than £75 ),

Such matters, however, were comparatively routine, and there was no warning when, only two days later, Mr. Saber formally handed over His resignation as President, "for the purpose of bringing union between the two Congregations". In spite of an initial refusal to accept his resignation, he persisted in his attitude, with the result that A. Joseph was chosen in his place. For this bold and public spirited gesture his colleagues warmly thanked him, and immediately notified the rebels so that another meeting might be arranged.

From the speed with which events now developed it may be assumed that pourparlers, to use the diplomatic phrase, had already been going on behind the scenes, for within a week the details of the reconciliation had been settled. By February 14 it was possible to announce: "Claims against the two Congregations are to be handed in to the Secretary of the United Congregations on or before March 1. All movable property and assets can be handed over to the provisional Trustees, Messrs. Goldring and Mandelson. The title of the two Congregations is to be the Bulawayo Hebrew United Congregation".

On that very same evening yet another important development became known -Abner Cohen was leaving Bulawayo. At a special ceremony he was publicly thanked for the skill he had displayed in the negotiations, and for the energy he had manifested in revitalizing Jewish life.

"The object I had in view", he replied to his friends, "has been the unity of the Jewish community, to which I have devoted my time and energy. I hope that the work which has been accomplished this day will be the dawn of a better era for the Jewish inhabitants of Bulawayo. (Applause)

An illuminated address then presented to Cohen still in the possession of his family, reads:

"We the undersigned, being the Committee of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, desire to convey to you our expression of the sincere regret felt by the Community at your departure. We recognize fully the great worth and permanent advantage of the assiduous efforts you have made on our behalf and, though in those results there will be a lasting remembrance of your noble labour, we ask you further accept from us a simple tribute, which may mark our deep esteem, the accompanying present. It is with earnest emotion that we convey to you this very inadequate evidence of the respect and gratitude you have gained and our genuine hope that the future may carry many blessings for you...."

The document was signed by the Trustees, J.Cinnamon, Norman L. Mandelson, by the Honorary Secretary, Maurice Lewis Freedman and by Maurice L. Landau, Galman Jacob, A.Gytner, L. Dripner, Leon Frank, Isaac Pieter and G. Freilich.

Already the young Bulawayo Jewish Congregation had already achieved what its more staid sister body was still anticipating, its own place of worship. On the 17th of that eventful February a brand-new iron building was handed over to the United Congregation, on the understanding that it would be extended by another 20 feet, "making some 60 feet by 35 feet, for the purpose of turning the same into a Synagogue and schoolroom". At the same time a new brick building was earmarked as the future home of the Minister, whose arrival, everyone felt, would surely not be much longer delayed.

Within another three days the first meeting under the changed regime was held, one of its earliest actions being a return to the original name, the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, omitting the word "United". Everyone had agreed that Gaber had behaved extremely well, and in his honour a suitable memorial was to be placed on the premises, with Jacobs as President, Cinnamon as Vice-President, Mandelson as Treasurer and Zeffert as Secretary, the Bulawayo Jewry now set about the restoring and expanding its communal charitable and religious activities.

## CHAPTER XV.

### EARLY ANTI-SEMITISM.

The year 1898 inaugurated a time of healthy growth for Rhodesian Jewry, more particularly in Bulawayo. Ikey Sonnenberg made his home there and enrolled in the Congregation, as did Herman Hepker, founder of a prominent local family, Maurice Solomon, S. Glass, M. Kaplan, A.K. Morrison, L. Guzman, - Kaiser and - Luntz. Even Abner Cohen, now back on the Rand, insisted on remaining on the roll as a country member. When, soon after, Mark Joseph returned to Britain, I. Cinnamon again took the Chair until the Annual Meeting, when J. Saber was once more chosen President, with R. Aserman Vice-President, L. Kramer and Max Sonnenberg, (nephew of Ikey and future South African M.P.) as Treasurers.

One fund-raising event during the year was a "most enjoyable musical soiree which took place in the Temporary Synagogue, the performers being the committee-men of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation. There must have been an awe-inspiring number of items, for although we are assured the proceedings went off without a hitch, they were "kept until the early hours of the morning!"

Conspicuous among the vocalists were Miss Lowenstark, Mr. Taylor and Mr. L.H. Gabriel. "In addition to the poorer brethren - for whose enjoyment the evening had been arranged - some of the leading social lights of Bulawayo society were assembled.... the total number of guests being about 250. Altogether the soiree was a great success, and is worthy of repetition".

Among the newer amenities was a Matzo bakery, for which Mr. Boaz applied for the necessary license. This was duly granted, with the provision, inserted as much for hygienic as for religious reasons, that "he did not employ Kaffir labour".

"The season when the Jewish community all over the world commemorates the Passover is approaching", wrote the "Bulawayo Chronicle", "and preparations are being made for keeping it in the capital of Matabeleland. Mr. Nap Boaz with sanctioned authority of the Bulawayo United Hebrew Congregation, is busily engaged in making Passover bread, the unleavened bread is made in a circumspect and peculiar way, somewhat after the manner of pancakes, and after baking appears like a large crinkled biscuit. It tastes very similar to a water biscuit, and is quite palatable. Mr. Boaz employs eight hands, besides himself, and will later make Passover meal and cakes. This is the first time the bread has been made, we understand, on a large scale, in Bulawayo".

The general press continued to give generous space to the various Jewish festivals, explaining their nature and significance to the outside world. Thus in the "Nugget", the advent of Chanukah was duly described: "The highly enjoyable reunion took place last Tuesday evening, when the dance and celebration was held in the Jewish



schoolroom, Abercorn street. Most of the leading lights of the Bulawayo Hebrew community attended, and dancing was kept up until an early hour..."

For a long time Joseph Saber remained as the only Jewish Marriage Officer in Rhodesia. Jewish weddings were still sufficiently rare in Rhodesia to become affairs of public importance, and the second one is recorded in November 1898 in the "Nugget".

"On Tuesday afternoon Dr. Langerman and Miss Edith Spiro, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. Spiro of the Imperial Hotel, were united in the holy bonds of matrimony. Mr. Pidcock, Assistant Resident Magistrate, performed the civil ceremony, and Mr. J. Gaber officiated at the religious ceremony. A large number of friends the bride and bridegroom attended... At about five o'clock the happy pair departed amid showers of rice, for their honeymoon at Eleven Mile Spruit..."

In the matter of education there was likewise cause for rejoicing. Working on an entirely honorary basis Mr. Freilich gave his services as a teacher, later assisted by the versatile Mr. Diamond, who operated butchery. Rising attendance brought a demand for the services of Miss Cinnamon and Miss Frank, but by December 1898 the time was judged ripe for a full-time worker. So Miss Lowenstark was engaged at 17 a month, provided she supplied her own room and "before engagement satisfied the Committee as to her capabilities".

That the Government was also assisting in the school was shown by a letter in which Captain Lawley agreed to advance 20, a figure raised a few months later to 100.

As was to be expected with a small community, a great deal of overlapping of committee-men and members occurred among the different organizations, one of the most important being the Hebrew Aid and Benevolent Society, of which first A. Jacobs and then N.M. Mandelson was President.

The laying out of the burial-place had led to the founding of a Chevra Kaisha (1900), which worthily kept up its humane, if little-advertised activities. Unfortunately there are few records of its work, but we know that one of the earliest honorary secretaries was V.O Cohen.

Another new body was the Jewish Educational Society launched in 1899, and operating independently of the Congregation, although the teacher was also the ubiquitous Miss Lowenstark.

Inevitably, alas, anti-Semitism made its unwelcome appearance in Rhodesia. Back in May 1897 the Reverend Mr. Hammick, minister of St. John's Church in Bulawayo, mentioned in an article: "White slavery is carried on with great profit to the slaves and their owners, this is, I think, a measure owing to a large percentage of Jews. In my experience where there are Jews found, Morality is low. They are Jews in name only. The South African Jew is in a class apart".

Immediately a special meeting of the Congregation Committee took place, and a reply was forwarded to the press signed by Leopold Jacobs of Cape Town, who happened to be on a visit, and Edgar Granger, the Honorary Secretary. A non-Jew, Mr. F. Byrnes, observed of the reverend gentleman: "His remarks about the Jews are as absurd as they are wickedly untrue, and they show the narrowness of the man. Personally I should prefer an immoral Jew to a moral, self-satisfied bigot". A number of other letters followed, including one by an anonymous correspondent, who called himself "Chorister". He wrote: "I should like to take this opportunity of asking Mr. Hammick how he reconciles his remarks concerning the Jews with the fact that he willingly accepted valuable assistance at an organ recital in the church a few months back from one of our best lady vocalists, who herself belongs to that much-maligned race". And Aaron Jacobs wrote cuttingly: "It may be remembered that, on the occasion of the Bazaar in aid of the English Church, to which Mr. Hammick belongs, the Jews were among the principle contributors".

It would be a mistake therefore to imagine that outbursts such as these represented the true feelings of the community. Not only were two Jews, J. Saber and Isidore H. Hirschler, at the top of the poll in their respective wards at the first Municipal Elections in Bulawayo, held in November 1897, but Hirschler himself was chosen the first Mayor.

Yet another anonymous gentleman, who called himself "Scottish Rhodesian". Accused him in a letter of being a foreigner. At St. Andrew's Nicht Hirschler took up the challenge. "For argument's sake," he said. "Suppose I am a foreigner in the true sense of the word. Then let me refer you to what Colonel Napier just said about Mr. Beit, who has been described by many people in London as a foreigner, but who has worked for this country as hard as any man (Applause). Joking apart, I will mention that, in a certain sense, I am not a foreigner. I have lived in England since 1877, and am a naturalized British subject (cheers). I might say that, in becoming a British subject, I claim more credit for myself than "Scottish Rhodesian" could, because the latter has done nothing but be born in Great Britain (Laughter), whereas I have exercised some judgment becoming a British subject (Laughter and applause), and I hope good judgment.... Furthermore, I did belong, and still belong to another nation, and that is the Hungarian...."

How keenly events overseas were followed by Jews in far-away Rhodesia was again shown on September 10, 1899, after news of the acquittal of Captain Dreyfus. The whole world resounded with the controversy as to whether this unfortunate French Jewish officer was guilty or not of selling military secrets to the Germans. After he had been degraded, deprived of his military rank and banished to Devil's Island in South America, a group of distinguished Frenchmen, headed by Emile Zola and Georges Clemenceau, gradually brought to light, before an astonished and indignant world, the fact that Dreyfus was the victim of one of the most callous and unscrupulous frame-ups in history. Jews in every land, Rhodesia not excluded, watched with breathless attention the battle for his rehabilitation. Despite the weight of the proof, the vested interests of the French Army and the French Government still did their best to hush up the facts, and to prevent justice being done.

When the "Bulawayo Chronicle" came out in support of the unfortunate officer, the local Jewry were so stirred that their representatives felt impelled to address a special letter to the editor on September 10, 1899

"On behalf of our co-religionists, we beg to express to you our warm appreciation of your eloquent leader of yesterday in vindication of the martyr, Dreyfus. We feel convinced that the advocacy of every Anglo-Saxon country will not be wanting to accomplish the ultimate redress of the almost unprecedented injustice to which our co-religionist has been subjected, Redress and not retribution, is what we Jews demand. But assuredly, if the day of redress be long delayed, the hour of retribution will swiftly ensue.

"We are, etc

(Signed) M. Immelman,  
President, Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation.

Fred N. Joseph, Vice-President.

Norman L. Mandelson, President,  
Hebrew Benevolent Society

D.S. Cohen, Chairman Jewish School Board.

Mark Landau, Commander of Chovevi Zion, Bulawayo  
Tent.

Going through the early records one is impressed by the wealth of time at the disposal of the communal leaders. On one occasion it was recorded that a speech was delivered lasting 80 minutes, while on another the Committee was entertained to an address of 48 minutes, followed by another of 20 minutes!

The arrival of Mr. Joseph in London had important effects on the Jewish community in Rhodesia for, as a man personally acquainted with the ambitions and difficulties of the Congregation, he was an effective spokesman on the subject of a Minister, and this time the negotiations proved successful.

The Reverend Moses Isaac Cohen. born in London in 1876, with a thorough education at Jews College and University College, possessed all the necessary qualifications, and was prepared to emigrate. On August 4, 1899, a cable arrived from Joseph in London, informing the Committee: "Minister will leave early October" The sudden renewal of hope spurred the men in charge to cable back: "Arrival before Holidays imperative. Community demanding it. Reply".

But the affairs of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation had overnight become entangled in world history. Tensions building up for years between Britain and the Boer Republics had reached a culmination. On September 27, 1899, as a new committee was elected to organize the reception of Mr. Cohen, thousands of Uitlanders were streaming from Johannesburg to the coast in every train and other available

conveyance, seeking refuge on British territory. Two weeks later the letter welcoming him to South Africa was given a postscript: "As long as you are forced, failing transport, to remain in Cape Town, the congregation will defray all your reasonable expenses". On that very same day, some miles from Mafeking, the first shots of the Boer War were fired.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ZIONISM REACHES RHODESIA.

As the 19th century drew to a close, the Jews of Bulawayo, conscious of their growing numbers, prosperity and stable environment, felt impelled considerably to widen the range of their interests. With Jewish newspapers from overseas arriving by every mail, it became possible to keep abreast of the great European problems and movements, in which at a surprisingly early stage, they had their echoes here, in Central Africa. When, therefore, in April 1898, steps were taken to found a Jewish Mutual Improvement and Debating Society, the first lecture on "Rhodesian Gold" was followed, we are told in the press, by a discussion on Zionism.

Since the original Basle Congress, called by Dr. Theodore Herzl, had only taken place a few months earlier, the keenness of the local pioneers deserves admiration. Still more remarkable was the circumstance that on September 18, 1898, according to the "Chronicle", a "meeting of gentlemen interested in the Zionist Movement" took place at the residence of C. Freedman in Abercorn Street. Morris Landau occupied the Chair and the attendance numbered 24. After considerable discussion, "the sense of the meeting was expressed contrary to the so-called National or Political Zionist Movement, and it was resolved to form a local branch of the Chovevi Zion (Friends of Zion) Society, with the view of assisting in the settlement of Palestine. It was resolved to hold a further meeting on Thursday 22nd instant, at 7.45, at the Temporary Synagogue, Abercorn Street. Mr. J Epstein was elected Treasurer and Mr. Joseph Secretary pro tem".

On September 24 there was fresh news, coupled with an explanation for outsiders. "This movement (Zionism), which in the past few months has assumed almost international importance, has awakened an echo even in far outlying Bulawayo. The Zionist idea manifests itself in two not wholly irreconcilable policies. The first tries to realize, by financial and diplomatic methods, the foundation of a Jewish nation in Palestine; the second, while opposed to the national idea, seeks to Hebraicise Palestine by the promotion of Jewish agricultural settlements within its confines, At a preliminary meeting held recently, the local Jewish community resolved to restrict itself to the support of the colonization movement...."

A substantial proportion of the local Jewry at the time attended the inaugural meeting. With Morris Landau in the chair, F.N. Joseph was at pains to emphasize that a Chovevi Zion was just a little anti-British in its spirit as was a Caledonian Society. The view was supported by Mr. Saber, who added: "What is British enough for Disraeli, Claude Montefiore and Colonel Goldsmid is British enough for me", while Mr. Mandelson declared: "The movement will have my support, because it backs a noble ideal by practical methods".

After a number of donations had been made, with at least one from the country district of Enkeldoorn, the first Zionist group in Rhodesia started its existence with Landau as President, Saber and Mandelson as Vice-Presidents, J.Epstein as

Treasurer, F.N. Joseph and A.B. Diamond as Honorary Secretaries, besides a Committee of nine and two auditors. Since the total Jewish population of Bulawayo at the time was less than 200, the enrolment of 40 could be considered good. Meetings took place in the Jewish Schoolroom.

Already the South African Jewry had rallied to the appeal of Herzl, by holding at Johannesburg, on December 11, 1898, the first Local Zionist Congress. This took place in the Jewish School and was attended by representatives from Bulawayo.

When Morris Landau paid a visit to London in 1899, he was cordially welcomed by the leaders of the Chovevi Zion movement, and authority granted tossed up what was known as a "Tent". Unlike the more familiar forms of Zionism, Chovevi avoided direct reference to the Basle programme for a "legally-secured, publicly-assured home in Palestine for the Jewish people". Instead the aims were set out as "to foster the national idea in Israel, to promote the colonization of Palestine and neighboring territories by setting Jewish agriculturists and artisans thereon and assisting those already established; to foster the knowledge of Hebrew as a living language; and to further the moral, intellectual and material status of Israel. (Here it must be remembered that the word "Israel" was used in the tribal and not in the geographical sense, as today).

The first report, submitted in 1899, and still in the possession of Mr. S.S. Grossberg of Bulawayo, contains an impressive array of achievements. From an original 40 the membership had shot up to more than 100, representing well over half the entire Jewish population of the city. "The Society has been able to grant a subscription of £50 to the Colony Machnayim in Palestine, and of 10 guineas to the School in Jaffa. They have a sum of money in hand which justifies them in hoping that they will shortly be able to make a further substantial remittance for the purpose of assisting in the settlement of the Holy Land...."

After referring to the visit of Mr. Landau to London and to the pending application for affiliation to the main Society there, the Committee said: "With a view to enhancing the position of the officers of the Society, a Commander's Gold Badge has been presented to the Society by public subscription and councilors' sashes by F.N. Joseph, Esq. These emblems will be the property of the Society, and will pass from the outgoing to the incoming officers and councilors. An agreeable element in the history of the Society in the past year has been the support received from the ladies of the community...."

The earliest cash statement, covering the period from October 1, 1898 to September 30, 1899 shows revenue from subscriptions and donations, of £112. 4. 6. and a surplus in the bank at the end of the year of £43. 3. 0. In 1901 the organization collected several hundred pounds allocated to the settlement of Bnei Yehuda in Palestine.

At the height of the South African War there was issued a document still treasured by Rhodesian Jewry, and particularly by its Zionists:

"WARRENT NO.36.

"By virtue of the Authority to me by the Headquarters Tent, in this behalf given, I, Albert Edward Goldsmid, Chief of the Chovevi Zion, do hereby constitute and approve the establishment of a Tent of the Association at Bulawayo in Rhodesia South Africa. This Tent shall be known as the Bulawayo Tent in the Camp of Chovevi Zion, and be administered in accordance with the Laws and Regulations of the Association, and all its Members are hereby directed to render lawful and cheerful obedience to its duly appointed Officers.

"Given under my Hand and Seal, and the Seal of the Headquarters Tent at London, on the 20th day of September, 1900".

The document was signed by Joseph Prag as Acting Chief, and by S.A. Hirsch as Secretary. Marcia Gitlin, in her "History of South African Zionism, "The Vision Amazing", observes: "The Bulawayo Chovevi Zion was unique, not only in that it was a Chovevi Zion Society proper. It was unique also because it met with none of the opposition which was the fate of many Zionist Societies formed about the same time. In 1901, out of Bulawayo's Jewish population of about 220 souls, 170 were members. Its founders were men of both English and European extraction, and relations between them at not time suffered on that account. Morris Landau, a man of great energy and business capacity, was of English origin, as was Joseph Joseph, who succeeded Him as President a few years later, and who maintained an active interest in the Society until his departure for Europe in 1920. Isaac Epstein, on the other hand, was a Russian Jew, a Hebrew scholar, who had served the Zionist cause; even before he arrived in Africa, he was the moving spirit in the organization and he left permanent traces of his outstanding qualities of mind and character upon its development. Others connected with the Society in its early days were Louis Landau, Joseph Beemer, Fred Joseph, Meyer Budlender, L.A. Rubinstein, Oscar Kaufman and Moshe Weiner - the last-named being the founder of the Johannesburg Chovevi Zion, who had now made his home in Bulawayo...."

Assemblies of the Bulawayo Tent were characterized amid other pomp and ceremony, by the wearing of elaborate gold-embroidered scarves by the office bearers. Though it gave particular support to the Jewish Colonial Trust, an early organization to raise funds for settlement in the Holy Land, it persisted in maintaining its independence of the general Zionist organization.

For a number of years and well into the new century, the Chovevi Zion continued to function on its own account, always stressing its close links with the United Kingdom rather than with Eastern Europe. For this reason too, it took the lead in 1903, following an outburst of pogroms in Rumania, in addressing to the new Jewish Lord Mayor of London, Sir Marcus Samuel, a message "expressing its enthusiastic admiration of the noble spirit of courage and humanity which promoted His Lordship in his refusal to invite the Rumanian Minister to the Lord Mayor's installation banquet, for the stand he has made on behalf of the Jewish cause, and therefore of Zionism".

Among what may literally be called extra-mural activities was the celebration of the Feast of the Tabernacles by the Chovevi Zion. For this purpose it

erected a Succah in the grounds of the Synagogue, which once again aroused the intense curiosity and interest of the non-Jewish local press. "On Tuesday 19th, 1899, we read, occurred the Jewish Festival, held in commemoration of the epoch when the Children of Israel dwelt in booths in the wilderness. For the first time in the history of the Jewish community in Bulawayo, a Succoth or Tabernacle was erected close to the Synagogue, in accordance with the ordinances of the Mosaic Law. The Tabernacle in question was constructed under the auspices of the Chovevi Zion Society, and exhibited that morning a very beautiful appearance, with its hangings of light blue and white, profusely decorated with various texts and legends, worked thereon in white, blue, gold and silver. The roof was a thick network of green boughs and twigs, decorated with cluster of choice fruits, lanterns and other beautiful objects. After the usual morning service, a large company assembled in the Succah, and when the usual blessing had been pronounced, the goodly cheer provided was partaken of. Addresses were then delivered by Messrs. Marks, Landau, F. H... Joseph, M. Immelman, I. Epstein, D.S. Cohen and others, in the course of which they mentioned that the entire structure had been erected and provided by free labour and free of cost".

On the occasion of the Feast of Purim in the same year, the Jewish School in Abercorn Street saw the demonstration of one of the marvels of the 19th Century science. At a Children's Party which was given there, after tea, games and dancing and the distribution of gifts, a Mr. Canaris gave "feats of Legerdeain", while "Mr. Moore kindly gave the children an opportunity of hearing his wonderful phonograph....

Local activities included setting up in 1901 the first Jewish Library in Rhodesia, from which offshoots were established in Salisbury, Gwanda, Gwelo and Selukwe in Northern Rhodesia and even in the Congo.

No matter how small the community or the group if the Chovevi could see to it, there was always a gift on any suitable occasion for the rebuilding of Zion. Even when in 1901 the first service was held at Gwelo, it was possible from the 15 people to raise £1. 7. 6.

A Ladies' Sub-Committee, also set up by the Chovevi Zion, succeeded in collecting over a number of years some 2,000, and the influence of the Reverend M.I.Cohen in 1902 brought about the affiliation of the Society with the South African Zionist Federation.

A List published in 1906 gives the office-bearers as follows:

President:	The Rev. M.I.Cohen, B.A.
Vice-President:	B. Basch and S.S. Salomon.
Hon. Secretary:	S.S.Grossberg.
Assistant Hon. Secretary:	M.M. Smollan.



Treasurer:

William Hepker.

Committee:

L. Landau, M Smollan,  
L.A. Rubenstein  
S.Palmer and J. Ellenbogen.

## **CHAPTER XVII.**

### **RHODESIAN JEWRY IN THE BOER WAR.**

From the Rhodesian point of view the outbreak of the South African War had a peculiar significance, By reason of its remoteness from most of the theatres of operation, it was spared any actual fighting, but nonetheless its participation was a direct and varied one. With the key town of Mafeking so relatively close to its Southern boundary, the strategic importance of the territory was soon made obvious, and when communication from the Cape had been cut off during the Siege, the main hopes of relief were, for a long time, centered on Matabeleland. This explains the landing at Beira of a substantial number of British troops, who were transferred overland through the Mozambique via Umtali, Salisbury and Bulawayo, and action which, not unjustifiably, stirred the Boers to complain about Portuguese breaches of neutrality.

An intense loyalty to the Mother Country aroused an immediate response from the Colonists of Rhodesia - Jews and non- Jews to volunteer as local and Imperial forces. Trooper H.J. Levy of "A" Squadron of the Rhodesia Regiment was one of the first to be killed in action, on October 21, 1899, barely 10 days after fighting began.

Among the earliest to enlist was H. Mortimer Zeffert, a founder of the Rhodesian Jewish community. Born at Devonport in 1869, he had come to the Rand aged 22, in 1891, but moved north to Bulawayo soon after the establishment of the city. In the 1896 Matabele and Mashonas campaigns he served in Dawson's Scouts, while on the eve of the Boer War, on July 28, 1899, he joined the Rhodesian Volunteers, soon being promoted to Sergeant. Within a few days of the start of hostilities, Zeffert was sent to the front, being wounded in a bayonet charge at Derdepoort, in an action wherein his unit was "represented by 25 picked men", and again at Crocodile Pool. He took part in the relief of Mafeking and in operations around Zeerust in the Western Transvaal. Sergeant Zeffert, along with Trooper Charlie Cohen, was in the well-known defense of Elands River and both of them, along with Trooper B. Basch, had the honour of being selected members of the famous Commander-in-Chief's body-guard, charged with the personal safety of Lord Roberts. In later years Zeffert continued his military career on the Rand, serving as Captain in the 1914 Rebellion, in the South West Africa Campaign and in Egypt during World War I.

The Rhodesian Regiment included Trooper Isaac Wolffe, who enlisted in February 1900. Vice President of the Bulawayo Chovevi Zion, he was a Russian Jew and took part in heavy fighting near Mafeking, for which he and his comrades received the special thanks of General Baden-Powell. He was recommended for the D.G.M. by General Paget for gallantry at Pienaars River, when, along with Trooper Carton, he rode past the Boer lines under a hail of bullets, fired at barely 200 yards.

Sergeant-Major Louis Enoch, originally from Stepney, London, was in the Rhodesian Field Force under Colonel Plumer at Marandellas.

Despite his mere 16 years, Willie Spiro of Bulawayo became "Galloper" to the redoubtable Colonel Johan Colenbrander, while only slightly older was his fellow townsman, Harry Cinamon, at age 17 in the Imperial Light Horse. M.D. Lowenstark, in peacetime secretary of the Congregation, joined Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry, returning with a medal and three clasps, for service in the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Colony, while his son was in Kitchener's Fighting Scouts. Besides Lowenstark Junior and Wille Spiro, that unit boasted of Troopers Maurice Kantor, Greenberg and Azarkin, all of Bulawayo.

According to a report in 1900 the Rhodesia Regiment included at least 11 Jews, and probably more. In "A" Squadron were Troopers Freedman, Mosenthal, (a relative of the Port Elizabeth merchants), Joseph Holt and Friend. In "B" Squadron was Trooper S.J. Daniels and in "C" Troopers J.Moss and I. Wolffe. "D" Squadron had Troopers Ginsberg and Deutsch and "E" Squadron a Sergeant Freedman. In other units were Trooper Moss of Gwelo (B.S.A. Police), Trooper Rosalsky and Trooper Edward Francis Abrams of the Bechuanaland Border Police.

Mention must also be made of the Grangers, Alex and Louis, who fought in the Colonial Division. Alex gained particular distinction as a Scout near Bargerton on the staff of General Pole-Carew, while their brother Joe, in the Imperial Light Horse, was severely wounded in the bloody action at Haartebeestfontein.

Meanwhile the celebrated "S.O.S." Cohen, who had fought in the Matabele War in 1893, and was to live to take part in World War II, found an opportunity on his own account of contributing to the progress of the Boer War., Lionel William Frederick Cohen, to give him his correct name, had been, in the words of a contemporary writer, "at the outbreak of hostilities, asked by the Portuguese authorities to form an organization for protecting and policing the borders, to prevent the running of ammunition to the Boers. This he did, establishing about a dozen military stations, and for six months he had fiscalisation of the border under his command. The he was relieved by a force of Portuguese cavalry and artillery, but he remained for some time longer, in an advisory capacity, and was instrumental in locating several guerilla bands of Boers on the prowl for supplies from Mozambique.

From the start Julius Weil & Co., with their widespread connections and resources, were recognized as being of the utmost importance to the British side. What had been done during the Matabele War and during the Matabele Rebellion was now achieved on an even greater scale in the transport and provisioning of the forces around Mafeking. In his standard "Times History of the South African War", L.S. Amery wrote how, at this place, "owing to the foresight and business enterprise of the well-known South African contractors, Messrs. Julius Weil, large stocks of supplies accumulated, with the view to the probability of the town becoming a base of important military operations".

When headquarters of Colonel Plummer's forces were fixed at Bulawayo, "contracts for the purchase of nearly 4,000 mules, a number of Mounted Infantry cobs,

considerable quantities of supplies, and for the hire of enormous quantities of ox transport from Messrs. Weil and other contractors, were drawn up for instant completion...."

Before the investment of Mafeking began, Amery mentions: "Six weeks full rations for the men and forage for the horses of the Protectorate Regiment were in store, and large stocks of food in the possession of the important South African firm of Julius Weil & Co., who had a branch here, under the charge of Mr. B. B. Weil, one of the partners. Their stock alone was so considerable that it was valued at £30,000, and the successful defense of Mafeking is no doubt partly due to their forethought".

In building up these reserves, the ramifications of the firm on the Rhodesian side were as important as those further South. Apart from this, it was also noted that the Weils were responsible for the provisioning of the first contingent of Colonial troops commanded by General Brabant.

Even so, the situation in Bulawayo, Salisbury and other communities was by no means easy. Since no one knew how long the struggle was likely to last. Although immigration was at a standstill, at least one distinguished Jewish newcomer was trying to make his way there. The Reverend Moses Isaac Cohen had already waited for months in Cape Town for a chance to reach his new Congregation.

On November 29, 1899, Edgar Granger, the Secretary wrote to him: "In regard to the uncertainty concerning the operations of War, the Committee it advisable that you should journey to Bulawayo by the only open route via Beira, as we are not sure how soon of if the Boers will make an attack on this town. We know that a party of them has crossed the border into this territory. A large number of Rhodesian volunteers are at the front, and the remainder of Volunteer Force at present existing, some 300 are under orders to leave tonight. In the circumstances, you will no doubt agree with the Committee that it will be wiser for you to stay in Cape Town for the present.

"In accordance with the Committee's resolution of October 20th, I now enclose draft for 25 towards current expenses. We are in hopes of receiving a letter from you by the incoming mail, due here next Wednesday and hope that you have been able to make temporary arrangements for yourself".

During January 1900 the Committee plucked up heart. "In view of the delay in the restoration of communications with the South, prompt steps should be taken to bring the Minister to Bulawayo via Beira, the sum of 50 to be allocated for the purpose".

But with all available facilities under the control of the military, these prompt steps were not so easy. Mr. Cohen himself, the last man to sit about idle, during February somehow managed to send a cable, "Am asked to join Jewish Ambulance for Front. Wire if you object". Discussions raged fiercely, and an objection was finally sent, on the grounds that, with two Births awaiting attention, he must hold himself ready to set off for Rhodesia at the very earliest moment.

Mafeking was still besieged, and it was not until May 17, 1900, that the British forces managed to break through and bring relief. As Passover approached, arrangements were made for the dispatch to Jewish Rhodesians in the field of items suited to that season. Mr. Saver reported having sent "20lbs. of Matzo to members of the Jewish faith now serving at the Front", while Mr. J. Ellenbogen received letter from a Jewish trooper, J. Cripps of the British South African Police at Sebungwe Fort, asking for a supply of Kosher wine and of brandy, with three pounds of Matzos meal.

Writing to S.B. Asher, the honorary Secretary of the Fund for Rumanian and Bessarabian Jewry, Lowenstark made a passing reference to his own arm service, in explaining that a sum of 5 had been voted by the Congregation, as well as by the Benevolent Society. He added: "It was arranged that a collection be made from the community at large, and that the whole amount, when collected, should be sent on to you. I shortly after left for the Front, and understood that this amount would be sent to you during my absence. I find however, that nothing has since been done, and I am anxious to know if it is not too late to proceed with the collection. If so, would you kindly send me two or three collection books? I cannot say that we shall be very successful, but will do our best, if it is not too late".

Long before the re-establishment of direct communication between the Cape and Rhodesia, the Reverend Cohen decided to undertake the long trek by the coastal route. Leaving Cape Town in March 1900, he notified his Congregation by telegrams and, having sailed round to Beira, took the train as far inland as the railway then ran, and on from Umtali by coach.

Great excitement prevailed among the Jewish community on March 25, when it became known their first Minister would reach Bulawayo that very day. Six miles out, at the store of a Mr. Roves, the officers of the Congregation welcomed the much-traveled newcomer, and on the same evening the whole Congregation gathered for rejoicings in the local Schoolroom. Illuminated addresses were handed over by the Hebrew Aid and Benevolent Society, the Bulawayo Education Society and the Chovevi Zion.

Gradually the tide of war receded from the frontiers of Rhodesia, but the depth of the feeling stirred up is reflected in the reference on May 24, 1900, at a Thanksgiving Service in the Synagogue for the relief of Mafeking, when £17.13s. was collected for the Bulawayo Memorial Hospital.

Among the correspondence carefully preserved in the press copy book of the community, and addressed, on the whole, to a very humdrum collection of individuals, there appears with startling suddenness, a missive (the first and only one done on a typewriter), dated February 4, 1901.

It reads:

"To the King and Queen's Most Excellent Majesty's.(so written)

"Sire and Madam,

"May it please Your Majesties; I am instructed by my Committee of the Hebrew Congregation, to humbly offer to Your Gracious Majesties our most heartfelt sympathies on the irreparable loss, which you have sustained in the death of Her late Most Noble Majesty Queen Victoria. We trust that Your Majesties may derive some consolation from the knowledge of the sympathetic and devoted feelings the pervade all classes of your subjects the world over.

"We further humbly offer to Your Gracious Majesties the expression of our homage and most ardent loyalty on the auspicious occasion of your accession to the Throne of Britain and the Headship of the Empire. We recall with gratitude the fact that the very beginning of the reign of Her Late Lamented Majesty was signaled by the election of Moses Montefiore as Sheriff of London, and by the conferring oh Knighthood upon him. These acts were a fitting inauguration of a Reign rendered glorious for all time by its noble application of the principle of religious liberty and equality. Not only has the Victorian era seen the removal of all Jewish disabilities, but the wisdom of this tolerant policy has been abundantly demonstrated by the great and ever-growing part that British Jews are taking in the Public Service, and by the contributions they have made to the development of Commerce, Literature, Art, and Knowledge. As Pioneers and Colonizers they have contributed in no small measure to the mighty growth of the Empire. We Jews of Bulawayo share to the full the feelings of devoted loyalty so characteristic of Colonials. WE offer up our fervent prayer to the Merciful Father of the Universe that he may abundantly bless the Reign of Your Most Gracious Majesties. May He grant Your Majesties long years of peace, prosperity and happiness and may the Empire advance from strength to strength, based upon the ideals of Justice, Righteousness and Peace. We pray that as her Late Majesty's Reign conferred lasting distinction on the 19th Century, so may Your Reign be the Glory of the 20th Century.

"I have the honour to remain. With profoundest respect,

"Your Majesties' most faithful subject and dutiful Servant.  
(Signed) Maurice M. Landau.  
Honorary Treasurer and Acting Secretary".

Very soon after, the Committee had to deal with another aspect of the same event. On July 21, 1901, a letter went off from Mr. Lowenstark, the Secretary, to Leopold Jacobi, Secretary of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, acknowledging receipt of sheet of vellum "intended for the address to be presented to His Majesty King Edward VII on his accession to the Throne, by the Combined Congregations of South Africa".

Great pleasure was expressed at "the language contained in the address, also at the style of the vellum" Mr. Lowenstark added, however, a point which not infrequently cropped up in those days: "I might mention that you have spelt the Bulawayo incorrectly. You have spelt it Bulawayo. I think it is quite possible for your

engrosser to alter the O into an A to make it correct” He accordingly sent back the sheet with the signatures of the officials of the Congregation.

The last echo of wartime conditions occurred only four days before the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging in May 1902, when Lieutenant Burton, in his capacity as Controller of Civil Supplies at Bulawayo, was asked for a permit, addressed to Messrs. Philip Brothers of Port Elizabeth, to forward to the School of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation three cases of bentwood chairs, weighing altogether about 1,000 lbs., proof that the shortages resulting from the conflict were not yet at an end.

## CHAPTER XV111.

### CECIL RHODES AND A JEWISH SETTLEMENT SCHEME

One of the unproved traditions connected with Cecil John Rhodes is his allegedly Jewish ancestry. As the son of an Anglican Clergyman the story sounds more than unlikely, yet so eminent a scholar as Dr. Cecil Roth expressed the view that it may be true. Apart from the statesman's strikingly Semitic profile, about the portrayal of which he always remained sensible, there are the well-attested remarks of his sister, Edith, who sardonically remarked in connection with Cecil's benefactions to the Church, that they were odd for one of his origins. Most probably the answer will never be forthcoming – nor will we know whether the name Rhodes is derived from the island in the Eastern Mediterranean, with its ancient Jewish community. It is a fact, however, that some of Rhodes' ancestors in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century were dairymen in the London suburb of Hackney, and may have come from there.

Of the Empire-builder's admiration and respect for Jewry there can be no question. A pioneer who knew him, Mr. Norman L. Mendelson, wrote as recently as 1953: "I remember C.J.R. saying: 'In building up this country we must have a leaven of Jews; they are constructive, farseeing and persistent'".

This adds significance to an unremembered episode in his career, set down in 1902 by the celebrated early Cape Minister, the Reverend Joel Rabinowitz. "Soon after Mr. Rhodes took possession of Mashonaland", he recalled, "I waited upon the Governor, the late Sir Henry Loch, making him a proposal, but he informed me that it was not in his hands and advised me to appeal to Mr. Rhodes". Mr. Rabinowitz tried several times, but found him too busy with his duties as Premier of Cape Colony and as Chairman of De Beers. So he decided instead to call on John X Merriman, Treasurer-General and a member of the Ministry.

"I suggested to him that Mr. Rhodes should grant a tract of country in the newly-acquired territory for the benefit of my persecuted co-religionists. I distinctly stated that the land should be granted to none but practical certified agriculturists, with but a few tradespeople, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, which are necessary to form a new Colony. I further stated that the fund of Baron de Hirsch would help to carry out the plan".

Merriman promised to submit Rabinowitz's plan to Rhodes, and wrote as follows:



Treasury  
Cape Town  
10<sup>th</sup> December 1890

“My dear Mr. Rabinowitz,

I am afraid I must have misled you if I induced you to believe that the project of the immigration of your co-religionists had developed so far as to specify where they could be located. I spoke to Mr. Rhodes generally and mentioned the purport of our conversations and he then said he would not be averse to considering a proposal if it was put before him in definite shape, but I think you ought to do this.

Believe me,  
Yours truly,  
(Signed) J.X. Merriman”.

To this Rabinowitz answered that he had no power to do such a thing, but would approach the Jewish authorities.

“It so happened”, he noted, “that Sir Henry Loch and Mr. Rhodes soon after left for England. I then addressed a letter to two or three parties about my doings. To one I enclosed the original letter from Mr. Merriman, and to the others copies of the same, also asking them to see Mr. Rhodes on his arrival. My letters were acknowledged..

Unfortunately the Reverend Rabinowitz failed to give the names of the persons in question, but a clue was furnished long after when the great scholar, Dr. Caster, addressing the Anglo-Jewish Association after Rhodes’s death, mentioned that the statesman had been “deeply impressed with the precarious position of the Jews in Rumania, and was at one time inclined to place a large tract of land at their disposal. Pourparlers were held, but they did not terminate in agreement”.

On the same occasion Rabinowitz told the “Jewish Chronicle” in London: “One party wrote that Mr. Rhodes could not be seen. From the statement by the Reverend Caster in your paper, I can well see that if my advice had been taken up with energy, you might have had a Jewish Colony in Rhodesia, located in a large tract of country granted by Mr. Rhodes”. That this was never carried further was described by Mr. Rabinowitz as “indeed very lamentable”.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### FINANCIAL AND OTHER TROUBLES.

In the history not only of Jewry, but indeed of Southern Africa, the position occupied by the Reverend Moses Isaac Cohen stands unique. If this was in part due to the vastness of the territory and the length of time during which he was the sole spiritual guide, it was equally on account of his forceful and versatile personality, his kindness and his learning, his dignity and his patriotism.

Moses Isaac Cohen had his faults like other men, but those who had the privilege of knowing him, and who saw him maintain his position at the helm of Jewish affairs in Rhodesia still get a catch in their voices when they think back. The hotchpotch of problems with which he had to deal neither frightened nor troubled him. From the tragic to the comic, from the sublime to the ridiculous, he too them in his stride. In a word, he was Rhodesian Jewry.

The letter addressed on March 16, 1900, by the Secretary to the Administrator marked the beginning of a new era in the community. "Reverend M.I.Cohen, B. A., the gentleman appointed by the Very Reverend Chief Rabbi as Minister of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, is expected to arrive in this town in a few days. On behalf of the Congregation, and in conformity with a resolution passed by its Committee on March 14, I beg to request that the Reverend M.I. Cohen be appointed Marriage Officer to the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation and that the appointment now in favour of Mr. Joseph Saber be cancelled".

From this community of pioneers, so inadequately equipped with even necessities, were sent letters of thanks for kindness on all sides: to John Brown "for the loan of flags, used for decoration at our Minister's reception"; to Mrs. Isaacson and Miss Franks "for your kindness in making curtains for the Ark in the Synagogue and mantles for the Scroll of the Law...." and to the Town Council for lending some plants "during our Festival of Pentecost"

Stresses of existence in Bulawayo are hinted at in a note addressed, on August 5, 1901 to S. Budlender at Bulawayo, wherein he was informed: "At a Special Committee Meeting this evening, the Committee decided to erase your name as a member of the Congregation, in consequence of your having publicly and grossly insulted our Minister at yesterday's meeting in the Schoolroom".

A week later a further message however arrived: "I am requested to inform you that at the Committee Meeting of the Congregation held this evening, in view of the public apology made by you at yesterday's meeting in the Schoolroom, the Committee has great pleasure in reinstating you as a member". The sinner was evidently duly contrite, for immediately after we find Mr. Budlender hard at work again as Honorary Secretary of the Chevra Kadisha, collecting subscriptions!

Problems of a different sort were the subject of an entertaining correspondence opened on January 20, 1902, when the Reverend M. Weiner wrote about "providing a Mikva for the use of the residents of Bulawayo. This was welcomed by the Committee, and it was agreed that the President, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary should wait upon the Mayor in order to secure a suitable site, while Mr. Weiner should be informed that the responsibility for finding the money would fall upon him and his adherents. "It is absolutely impossible", the letter concluded "to erect a Mikva on the Synagogue stands, for reasons inadvisable to lay forth here". Moreover, the Committee made it clear that they were in no way bound by any promise.

The next task was for Mr. Lowenstark to explain to the Acting Town Clerk the nature of a Mikva, which he did in a note of March 30, asking for a site to erect a bath, "approximately as per plan enclosed. The bath is a necessity for the purposes of the rites of our religion, and it would be advisable that it should be erected within reasonable access of Town". Unfortunately the Council were not much impressed. However, the Committee tried again, and the campaign continued until August 21, 1902, when Mr. Cohen addressed a letter to the Chief Rabbi in London:

"The agitation for a Mikva has been lately renewed, and a petition is being drafted to the Congregation demanding provision of the same before Rosh Hashanah. In any event, this question is likely to lead to a lively discussion at the next General Meeting; which takes place between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We should very much value an expression of opinion from you as to the advisability of pushing this matter in critical times such as the present, and I therefore submit the following information for your consideration.

"We have the sum of 250 laid aside as a fixed deposit, which cannot be touched for nine months. Though this sum has come in as revenue, I understand it includes a good deal which represents trust money, having been given before my time, especially towards a Building Fund. Apart from this, we have a certain sum in hand towards meeting current expenses, but times are unprecedentedly bad. Our monthly deficit amounts to about £20. and we shall be obliged to make an overdraft on the bank before the close of the financial year. Thus at the Annual General Meeting we shall have to face this overdraft, having only our fixed deposits as our money possession. Universal discouragement prevails in Bulawayo- no one sees any likelihood of business improving for months to come. And yet it is proposed to embark on so expensive a scheme as the projected Mikva. In the first place, it is proposed to construct it on the School stand, but there are many members, including our chief supporters, who are quite opposed to using the School stand for such a purpose. Again the estimates vary greatly as to the probably cost".

The Reverend Cohen then went into the financial aspect, and added that even when the Mikva had been provided; it would probably not be patronized. "We can well judge from our Hebrew classes. There was formerly established classes, equal, if not superior, to any in South Africa and, although expenses were heavy, charged merely a nominal fee. Yet the fees that are actually paid do not produce one-third of the

expenditure...." He closed with the remark: "I believe that it would be a disaster to the best interest of Judaism in Rhodesia to yield to this demand".

This opinion seems to have been shared by Dr. Adler and the outcome was that the project was dropped until more prosperous days.

With S. and J. Weil large creditors of the Congregation, the Committee was thrown into a panic when in October 1900. it received from them a claim for £227,1.2. against the defunct Hebrew Bazaar Fund. "A Bazaar Committee was once formed", the Secretary explained, "for the purpose of raising money, the proceeds to go towards building a Synagogue, but such a Committee no longer exists. The Rinderpest set back the country, and the principal supporters left town. Consequently the Bazaar fell to the ground. The community here at present finds it impossible, owing to circumstances, to proceed with such a large scheme, and we now must humbly suggest you drop the matter. There are at present heavy responsibilities attached to the community, and we trust that, for the sake of those who worked hard for the benefit of Judaism, who have either left or been reduced in circumstances, that you will give the necessary instructions as above suggested".

Back came the reply on November 2.

"Dear Sir,-I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 24th October addressed conjointly to my brother, Major S. Weil and myself, and in reply beg to inform you that I have instructed my agents in the Bulawayo Office to withdraw all charges against your Congregation in connection with the Hebrew Bazaar Fund.

Yours faithfully.

(Signed) Julius Weil"

Later the attitude of the firm became much friendlier and Lowenstark, the Secretary, had an interview with Julius, at which he revealed the plight of the Congregation. The bank balance was down to £25.1s. "As our members are being continually reduced, owing to their leaving the country, we can foresee what shall be unable to continue our present work without outside assistance.

"Our present monthly expenditure is the sum of £67, which is made up as follows; Minister's Salary £35, Beadle and Schochet £15, Hebrew School teacher 10, Electric light £1, Commission on Collection £3, Sundry expenses £3. This does not include sanitary fees and cost of maintaining our present temporary buildings and its insurance. Our income (if all collected) , amounts to about £59.10s., made up as follows: Member's Subscriptions £30, Schochet fee from Butcher £15, offerings £15, School Fees £1.10s., showing monthly deficit of £7.10s

He added that the amount of £75 from the Government was the only one received from non- Jewish source.

Julius Weil had given £50 in December 1896, which was still held in trust for the day when it might be put to practical use. Evidently he was impressed, for he sent another cheque for £10.

The financial straits of the Congregation prompted it to appeal also to the Rhodesian Government. On June 12, 1901, the Chief Secretary of the British South African Company at Salisbury was formally asked for a grant of £100 per annum, to which the Committee of the Congregation believed, they were entitled. "As it has only come to their notice recently", said Mr. Lowenstark, "I do not know if it is possible for you to make a grant for the previous years for other churches and denominations have been receiving this.

A very non-committal reply from the Chief Secretary inquiring the reasons for such a request brought another letter from Lowenstark. "On making enquiries at the administrator's Office, Bulawayo. I was there informed that certain annual grants had been made to the Anglican, Wesleyan and other churches, and that there was an allowance of £300 for 'prospective grants....'" He submitted a Book of congregational Rules and a formal statement to the authorities by the Reverend Cohen.

"His Honour the Administrator", was the answer "is not prepared to add to the grants now made, unless it can be shown that there is a real necessity for assistance"

Indignantly Mr. Lowenstark inquired: "Why in this instance if the Chartered Company going back on its principles and refusing to grant, in the case of one denomination, while giving it in the case of others? We are as completely organized as any congregation in Rhodesia, and the increase in our burdens and responsibilities is shown by our constantly rising expenditure. Only the fact that the Government grant would be of the greatest service to us prompts us to make this application. We trust therefore, that you will see your way clear to reconsider your decision".

Without advancing a step, Andrew B. Rankin of the General Branch of the Chief Secretary's office at Salisbury replied again: "Consideration will be given to your request for a monetary grant, if you can show that there is the necessity therefore".

Recapitulating how the Congregation was conducting its work under very great difficulties, Mr. Lowenstark set out: "We have firstly no permanent structure for our Synagogue, not having funds to build the same. Secondly the income of the Congregation is derived from annual subscriptions of members, which amount to about £340 per annum. supplemented by donations, which last year amounted to £198, whereas our ordinary yearly expenditures amounts to roughly about £650 (Salaries amounting to £516). Our donations fell off last year to the extent of £90, owing to the bad state of business here, and it is a great tax upon these resources of our wealthier members, who are so few in number now, many having left Bulawayo for good".

There was also payment for religious instruction to be considered, since classes were not self-supporting, and any deficit had to be made good among the

members. The Benevolent Society was similarly supported, "to look after our poorer co-religionists, which is in a measure an extra tax upon their resources". Lowenstark closed with the words: "You will thus see that we have no possible means for the present, even to continue our work, or lay by any sum towards a permanent structure for our Synagogue, and trust you will see your way clear to make us a grant, in common with the other religious denominations who are now receiving it".

The form forwarded for completion gives an insight into the functioning of the Congregation:

"ECCLESIASTICAL RETURN.  
(NO.4 RECORD STATISTICAL DEPARTMENT)  
Local Revenues 1 April 1900- 31st March 1902.

Church of the Hebrew Denomination at Bulawayo.

N.B. This Account may be made out for the year ending at any date on which the Church books are balanced.

Receipts.

Balance. Balance brought forward	£37.6.9.
Two years Subscriptions	£673.19.3.
Donations	£487.18.0
Marriage Fees.	£ 5.15.6.
Burials	£30.15.0
Grants, Rents, Bazaars, Interest, School fees, etc.	£245.19.5.
Note: of this about £150 are funds held in trust	
	£1,481.13.11.

Expenses.

Clergy- fixed	£660.0.0
Variable	£312.0.0.
Buildings: Erection pf and repairs to and furniture	£116.6.8.
Miscellaneous	£ 63.6.5.
Balance in hand n August 31,1901	£30.0.10
	£1,481.13.11.

N.B. This copy is made from two years' Balance sheets, from September 1, 1899 to August 31, 1901

(signed) M.D. Lowenstark  
SECRETARY

The heart of the Rhodesian Government at least softened and a gift of 75, extremely welcome, though inadequate, was sent by the Chief Secretary at Salisbury. It prompted Lowenstark to forward yet another letter on December 18, 1902, asking him "kindly to increase the grant of £75 to £100 for the ensuing year. My Committee is of opinion that they are not being fairly treated in comparison with other denominations, who are receiving the £100 grant. Our Congregation is a very poor one, and our expenditures greatly exceed our revenue...." He concluded by reminding the Chief Secretary that, where as all the others had their own churches actually erected, the Jews were still in a temporary building, with little or no prospect of putting up anything better.

By way of marking time, the Government Statistician, George Duthie of Salisbury, asked further questions about the Congregation, the answer to which, given by Reverend Cohen, shows further details of communal life in those days. "We support our own poor and distressed, and every case of Jewish poverty is dealt with by this body. The officers of the Burial Society deal with the dying; these sacred duties are willingly performed by a Sub-Committee of the Synagogue". After explaining that the purpose of the School was to inculcate Jewish principles in the children, and to make them conversant in Hebrew, he said: "The Minister attends each morning during the ordinary school days, at the St.Johns and Convent Schools, and instructs Jewish pupils in the ethical and moral principles of their Faith. Each afternoon Hebrew classes are held. In addition, there are classes on Saturday and Sunday mornings. We have devised this elaborate system because we consider the proper education of the young to be our most fundamental work.. We have a library for adults, for whose benefit we have periodical lectures and debates, in addition to Synagogue services. The Congregation exercises a deep influence on Jewish social life.

"The Schoolroom forms a sort of communal centre, in which we hold all meetings and social gatherings, and in this way unity and harmony are diffused throughout the community...." Mr. Cohen explained that the Congregation gave voice to the Jewry as a whole, many of whose members come from non-British countries. "I have myself taken over the work of naturalizing many of the members of our community. Owing almost entirely to the influence of our Congregation these newcomers are rapidly Anglicized. Their children, in particular, in a year or two become indistinguishable from British and Colonial children.. We Anglicize and socialize the community, while paying faithful adherence to the tenets of Judaism. We concern ourselves in the general welfare of the Jewish community of Matabeleland, and particularly of Bulawayo, and they look to us to represent, defend and develop their interests. I trust this general statement of our work may suffice">

But with no more money forthcoming. a desperate appeal went forth to Caesar himself. On October 3, 1903, Lowenstark addressed the Private Secretary: "Will you please call the attention of His Honour the Administrator to the fact that we have not yet received the annual Government grant to the above Congregation. Mr. Wilfred Honey, the Civil Commissioner, wrote to the authorities in Salisbury in August last, recommending £100 annual grant, but no reply has yet been received. I trust that

you will kindly bring this matter to the immediate notice of Sir William Milton, and hope to receive your reply before your departure for Salisbury, with cheque.

A cheque came in December, but once more it was only £75, so that Lowenstark, in his thanks pleaded with the Chief Secretary to see his way clear to put an increase to £100 on the estimates for the next financial year, as was recommended by the Acting Civil Commissioner".

The only reply was the request from Mr.Duhie for yet more information for his statistical returns:

"We do no missionary work" Mr. Cohen explained on February 1904. "Our efforts are entirely confined to the local Jewish population of Bulawayo and, to a much less extent, to the whole Jewish population of Rhodesia who from time to time require the assistance of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation the only-properly equipped and organized Jewish Congregation. We hold regular services weekly, but our main services are held at the Jewish Festivals, and are crowded. On such occasions sermons are delivered in English, lectures at other times, by means of our Library. and by personal propaganda we carry on a steady educational work, which is having a marked influence as the years go by.

"Our children attend the ordinary day schools, but we have our own Hebrew classes. In addition, the opportunity is afforded of taking 35 to 40 Jewish children, attending the St.Johns and Convent Schools, five times a week in Jewish religion, ethics and history. Our Congregations is the only one taking advantage of these facilities, and I am pleased to report that the arrangement works very satisfactorily. We have thus far been able to care for our own poor, though we are indebted to the Government for a few free railway passes. We visit the sick and the dying, and give the dead their last rites. Indeed, we may take as our motto the words of Terence slightly amended: "Judaeus sum et nihil Judaicum alienum a me puto". We interest ourselves in everything pertaining to the welfare of the Jewish populations of this country, when ever necessary act as their representatives....

English classes for adults had just been established to facilitate and accelerate the process of "Anglicization", the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation being responsible for the educational work which was influencing Jewish newcomers and converting them gradually into a sound and integral part of the general population.

Unfortunately the financial troubles besetting the Jewish Community were also felt by the British South Africa Company, which, illogical though its differentiation seemed, professed itself unable to produce a larger subsidy.

Another problem with which Mr. Cohen had to contend was that of defining his attitude to Michael Welensky (whose name was variously spelt as Wolenski, as well as Wilenski). He had written in from Gwelo, asking for the Minister's services as a Mohel, to which the Committee of the Congregation replied: "Before he can do so, we



will have to be satisfied that your wife is a Jewess or, if a Gentile, has been received into Judaism by a recognized Beth Din...”.

Satisfaction seems to have been given, for Mr. Welensky was informed that the charge for the Minister was six guineas, the certificates were in order and would be held for his wife when she came to Bulawayo.

But poor Michael’s troubles were by no means over, for he fell into arrears with an advance made to him through the Benevolent Society. A letter was sent off on August 25, 1903, to the Globe and Phoenix Gold Mining Company at Sebakwe (now known as Que Que), reminding him: “There are three payments of £5 overdue, as per your arrangement to pay off your indebtedness. I trust, therefore, that you will not fail to send me your cheque for £15...”

He evidently did fail, for a few months later G. Pilkington, a solicitor of Gwelo, was handed the account to collect. At the last minute, however, Welensky raised a few more pounds to stave off a summons. “My Committee”, the Secretary told the lawyer, “wish me to inform you that you must get your cost of settlement from Mr. Welensky. He has paid no interest at all, and had the use of the money for so many years. He could have repaid the loan by installments long before this”.

One record of unique value in the history of early Rhodesian Jewry has been preserved through a request from L.L. Goldsmid, now editor of the “South African Jewish Chronicle” in Cape Town. Anxious to secure subscribers for his new journal, he asked for a list of the members of the Bulawayo Congregation, which was duly furnished, and which stands as the earliest and most complete compilation of its kind.

**LIST OF MEMBERS OF BULAWAYO CONGREGATION**  
**AS ON JANUARY 23, 1902**

Aserman R. 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Hepker, W., Abercorn Street
Assersohn, L., Grand Hotel	Immerman, J., Matopos
Basch, E., 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Jacobs, A.
Beemer, J., Abercorn Street	Jacobs, S., 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue
Beemer, H., Abercorn Street	Gilman, J., Brickfields
Budlender, S., 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Joseph, J., Abercorn Street
Budlender, C., 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Kaufman, A., Brickfields
Bernstein, J.	Kaufman, O.
Bass, H., 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Josephson, J., Brickfields
Brayer, J., Market Square	Koren, A.
Baron, I.	Klempton, J., Fife Street
Barnet, J. 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Leven, M.S. 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue
Boyer, J.	Landau, D., Abercorn Street
Blume, A., c/o M.S. Leven	Landau, H., Abercorn Street
Basch, B.V., Market Square	Leven, P., c/o Landau Bros.
Braimer, S, Market Square	Lipset, B., Fife Street

Bagg, W.  
Cohen, I, Rhodes Street  
Coleman, I.  
Davis, E., Avenue Hotel  
Epstein, I., c/o J. Joseph  
Ellenbogen, Jack, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ellenbogen, Joseph, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ellenbogen, H. B.  
Falk, J., Grey Street  
Friedman, Enkeldoorn  
Frankel, J., Abercorn Street  
Faiga, L., Abercorn Street  
Frank, L., Landau Bros.  
Fedderman, L., Abercorn Street  
Goldberg, A., Brickfields  
Goldberg, I., Abercorn Street  
Goldberg, J., Abercorn Street  
Goldberg, S., c/o E. Basch  
Gordon, H.  
Grossberg, A., Fife Street  
Granger, E., c/o M.S. Leven  
Grill, M., Station Stores  
Grauberg, M.S.  
Gollan, D., Abercorn Street  
Hoffman, L., Market Square  
Hoffman, J., Market Square  
Horwich, M., Bauer's Township  
Hirschberg, A., c/o M.S. Leven  
Hepker, H., Abercorn Street

Liptz, J.  
Lassman, A., Fife Street  
Lowenstark, M.D.  
Moss, Jack, Market Square  
Moss, Mrs ., c/o Lock Bros.  
Moss, J.  
Morrison, J.  
Mangelsdorff, J., 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Natkin, L., Main Street  
Nurick, M.  
Nathanson, A.  
Palca, T., Main Street  
Pevsner, M., Abercorn Street  
Pevsner, F., c/o J. Falk  
Pieters, I., Market Square  
Pieters, M., c/o J. Falk  
Rotovski, N. c/o J. Falk  
Rubenstein, M. c/o J. Falk  
Rubenstein, H.L. c/o Landau Bros.  
Rubenstein, L. c/o Landau Bros.  
Rabinowitz, A. Abercorn Street  
Solomon, B., Fife Street  
Solomon, S. Fife Street  
Solomon M. Fife Street  
Steinman, O., Fife Street  
Salant, M., Abercorn Street  
Shawzin, J.  
Sussman, E.  
Spiro, R., Imperial Hotel  
Snapper, c/o S. Jacoby  
Scheiner, B., Abercorn Street  
Thal, M. c/o H. Hepker  
Schulman, J.R.  
Schulman, S., Abercorn Street

## CHAPTER XX

### BEGINNINGS IN SALISBURY AND UMTALI

Although the focal point of Rhodesian Jewry was Bulawayo, progress was also recorded in other parts of the Colony. Salisbury, for example, was advancing, even if the days were still distant when it would outstrip its rival in total population. As early as June 2, 1895, the Masonic Hotel there witnessed an assembly of 20 men and two women to form a new Congregation. With £399 subscribed, this tiny group chose Samuel Hyman as President, and asked the British South Africa Company for a Synagogue site. Within two days the authorities agreed to make over three stands.

In his memoirs, "Great Days", Colonel Frank Johnson, the famous leader of the Pioneer Column, quoted Rhodes as making a significant comment on the news. The statesman, always a friend of Israel, "Became very cheerful and quite excited, exclaiming: 'my country is alright if the Jews come. My country is all right!' For he knew", added the Colonel, "the presence of Jews meant that they had faith in the commercial prospects of the new country.... How different from the Hitler theory 50 years later!"

As there was no suitable building during the High Festivals of 1895, a Minyan gathered in the store of Julius Altman. About 20 Jews attended the reading of the Musaph by a shop owner called Kaplan. The following year there was still no Minister available, and the High Festival Services were taken by A. Rosenthal, Mr. Freeman and Mack. Within a few years Sam Hyman had been succeeded as President by Van Praagh, who also achieved the honour, during his term of office, of being elected Mayor of Salisbury. In that capacity, on July 14, 1901, (the Jewish Year 5661), he laid the foundation stone, with a specially-inscribed silver trowel, for the first Synagogue in the capital.

Assisting in the communal work as Honorary Secretary of the Congregation was Moss Harris, followed first by Monty Jacobs and then by Morris Freeman.

One of the earliest surviving letters, addressed to the President of the Salisbury Hebrew Congregation, dated July 4, 1897, was signed by Edgar Granger, Honorary Secretary of the Bulawayo Congregation. It is with the greatest pleasure that I have the honour to thank your Congregation on behalf of my Committee, for the kind wishes expressed in your wire of congratulation, which was read at the laying of the foundation stone of the Synagogue, and was greatly appreciated by all present".

As yet there was no question of Salisbury having a Minister of its own, but very occasionally the Reverend M.I. Cohen made the 300-mile trip by Mail-coach from Bulawayo to hold a service

On August 16, 1901, a letter went off to R. Bernstein, the new Honorary Secretary and Treasurer at Salisbury. "I have much pleasure in acknowledging receipt of your favour of the 11<sup>th</sup> instant, enclosing cheque for £31.5.6., being refund of £25 on account of the Reverend Cohen's fare, £6.6 Congregational Fee for Minister's service and 2/6. for Exchange...."

Early Jewish names of those living in Salisbury in 1895 include A. Cohen of Edwards & Co., General Merchants; L. Hyman, General Dealer; S. Hyman, Commission Agent; I. Kirschbaum, Watchmaker and Jeweler; H. Lichtheim, General Dealer; L. Marcovitch, General Dealer; H. Myers, Painter and Glazier and E. Myers, General Dealer; L. Suzman, Managing Director of the Salisbury Reef Gold Mining Company Ltd.; D. M. Jacobs, Secretary of the Salisbury Stock and Share Exchange Company Ltd. and S. Hyman, Managing Director of the Salisbury Central Estate Company Ltd.

To this were added the following year, E. Levy, Manager of the Avenue Hotel; M. Benjamin, Cigar Divan and Toilet Club; J.H. Lazarus, Proprietor of the Cecil Hotel; B. Myers & Co., French Bakery, Outfitters and Storekeepers, along with B. Rothstein, Proprietor of the Salisbury Toilet Saloon.

Among the newer businesses, set up at the end of the nineties, was the Salisbury Cycle Depot of Pioneer Street, Proprietor L. Bernstein, P.O.Box 225; likewise Cohen & Co., Pioneer Street, Auctioneers, Brokers and Commission Agents. (Produce and Cattle Sales held every Saturday. Consignments Stored and Disposed of by Auction or Private Treaty to the Best Advantage. Prompt Settlement"). The Salisbury Lager Brewery and Ice Factory, backed by the famous Rhodesian pioneer magnate, Tom Meikle and conducted by A. Rosenthal & Co., produced, we are told, "First Class Lager Beer, Fully Equal to the Imported Article, in Casks and Bottles. Ice Supplied Daily in any Quantity".

Before long, however, the firm encountered difficulties, and was ultimately disposed of to the South African Breweries. Rosenthal incidentally was Manager of the Masonic Hotel on behalf of the Proprietor, J. Susman. Then there was Mayer Bronse, Cycle Depot, P. Kriesman of the Imperial Hotel, H. Isaacs, Tobacconist and Cigar Merchant and Posner & Co., Storekeepers.

Meanwhile at Umtali the Manica Board of Executors had been established, with L. Weissenborn among its directors. Julius Altson had settled there as Managing Director of the Manica Trading Company, as had Hyman Marks, barkeeper of Third Street.

Upon his arrival in England, Abner Cohen in May 1898 was interviewed by the "South African Globe", under the heading of "The Real Rhodesia – Plain Truths about its Men and Mines". The article opened with an onslaught upon the unfriendly elements of those days, who bear a remarkable likeness to their counterparts of the present time.

“The Rhodesia and the Rhodesians of Little Englanders’ imaginations and Laboucherian misstatement (a reference to continual attacks by Henry Labouchere in parliament and in his weekly, “Truth”), are a very different matter indeed from the country as it is, and the people as they are. This can be readily ascertained at any time, if people and the press in England will only take the trouble to go to representative settlers themselves, men who have borne the brunt of the early later hardships, and glean from their own lips the plain truth as to the present position of Matabeleland and Mashonaland and the future outlook. Mr. Abner Cohen is just one of those settlers. He is an old hand at getting at the true inwardness of new mining countries....

After describing his earlier career, “South African Globe” mentions that Abner Cohen had taken back with him his black servant, Tim, “an excellent specimen of the natives of the country.... And a testimony in himself of the splendid treatment which natives receive from Rhodesian settlers”

Asked to give his general impressions, Mr. Cohen said: “Rhodesia is a White man’s country in every sense of the word. Commercially there was great room for improvement before the Railway was opened, but already there has been a rapid change for the better”.

To the question, “What about the gold?” Abner replied: “I have found the country a great network of reefs of the most variable quality. Very many are good; some are bad and others again of a very indifferent type. In testing these and arriving at my conclusions, I brought to bear comparisons which my knowledge of Johannesburg, from the earliest days, enabled me to apply, and I do not hesitate to say that there must be a very bright prospect, also a brilliant future, before Rhodesia. As an agricultural country, I consider it will grow almost anything and, as to the numerous rumours about the water difficulties, all I have to say is that there is unlimited water at a slight depth from the surface. If only the excellent example that Mr. Rhodes has set up in respect of the conservation of water is generally followed, Rhodesia might well become as successful a country as any part of South Africa”.

“What about the better class mines?”

“I have already expressed” was the reply, “the opinion that numbers of these have actually been working for some time past, with great success, and that the merits of Rhodesia thoroughly warrant capitalists sending their own money there for investment. If you take my own case, I have already such confidence in the future of Rhodesia that I have established a big business stake in the country. There is no prospect of my severing my connection with Rhodesia. I continue absolutely convinced of the future of the country, and that given good men and good money, it is assured. No one need or should expect a rush, after the manner of the booms which have occurred in connection with the Rand, but on the other hand, you may look for permanent improvements, which, after all, is much more satisfactory than a series of financial booms and slumps, such as have occurred in connection with the Transvaal. There is only one

word of warning. For some time to come, Bulawayo will be no place for a man without capital, but with capital I should judge he could employ it there with as much advantage to himself as anywhere else in the world”.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SAM GOLDRICH AND SAM MARKS.

Although early Rhodesia, with its aura of gold reefs and other underground treasure, inevitably drew a mass of get-rich-quickly fortune-seekers, a number of Jews among them, it is remarkable to find at what an early stage important South African Jewish industrialists were already concerned with the possibilities offered in other realms.

Sam Goldreich, mainly remembered today as a pioneer of Zionism, offers one of the most striking examples of an effort to exploit the less obvious resources of Rhodesia. Born in East Prussia in 1862, son of a Rabbi, he reached England as a boy and attended to the Transvaal at the age of 18. In early Johannesburg he soon became known as a successful operator, both in the property and mining markets, being responsible for the erection of Goldreich Buildings in Joubert Street, which housed the original Post Office. He also opened up the area now known as Hillbrow, which in his honour still boasts of Goldreich Street.

Along with his brother, J. H. (Jim) Goldreich, he pioneered many new ideas, amongst them exploitation of cinnabar, the ore of mercury, which he succeeded in locating in the Western Transvaal, though without much profit to himself.

In the Jewish community, Samuel Goldreich played a leading role, and was responsible, as Chairman for the establishment of the original Transvaal Zionist Association, one of the major interests of his life. He was personally known to Theodore Herzl and enjoyed his respect. His Rhodesian associates, with which we are concerned, date back to 1897.

The earlier stages of the episode are difficult to trace, but, following the opening up by the Moodie Trekkers and others of the sub-tropical Eastern Districts, particularly Manicaland and the Gaza country, a proposition was examined by Harry Lichtheim of the firm of Lichtheim & Wilk, Brokers and Commission Agents of Salisbury. When samples of a creeper containing the latex of India-rubber were brought into their offices, the partners, in view of the prevailing world-wide demand for that commodity, immediately had report prepared on its commercial possibilities. Dated November 16, 1897, it claimed that the rubber trees growing near Melsetter were comparatively easy to exploit. The Goldreich brothers, contacted by Lichtheim and Wilk, were even more enthusiastic and were instructed on December 21 to make formal application for exploitation rights. After the lapse of the year-end holidays, on January 14, 1898, the authorities at Salisbury cabled to the head office of the British South African Company in London:

“Lichtheim, for the Goldreich Brothers of London and Johannesburg, proposes to form a company for growing rubber in South Melsetter, with a working capital of £50,000. He asked the grant of 16 farms along the Sabi River, South of

Swanepoel's concession, the British South Africa Company to have two representatives on the Board. We recommend the grant of eight farms at once, at the usual quitrent, provided development at once commences and £20,000 spent thereon within five years, also the right to use a further eight farms as required. The title to be given when the satisfactory development carried out. Natives not to be disturbed. All mineral rights reserved. Farms to be forfeited. With compensation if conditions not fully complied with. Do you confirm?

On the draft of the cable, still preserved in the Central African Archives, the additional words "Lands reported valueless for ordinary European farming", are crossed out.

Subject to the approval of the London Board, the proposition was accepted and on January 27, the investors applied for 100,000 acres in the Melsetter district. In addition to the india-rubber producing trees, they were to cultivate olives, cocoa, sunflowers and other crops. Steps were already under way to define the area, near Chickere, the American mission station on the Sabi River. Quitrent was fixed at £ 2 per 1,000 morgen, each farm averaging about 3,000 morgen. The survey, which occupied months, resulted in the demarcation of 50,493 acres, of which the fees payable to the Government were £618.48.

Sam Goldreich announced on April 26, 1899 that he was leaving for Europe in a few days to float the new company there, a fact confirmed in a letter from Lichtheim to the British South Africa Company as Salisbury.

But the new Company took longer to launch than at first hoped. Only a few days before the outbreak of the Boer War, on October 7, 1899, John Mahon, originally employed at the famous Botanic Gardens at Kew, near London, described as the "botanical expert and a high authority on rubber Trees", was instructed to report. On October 20, 1899, he expressed his willingness to undertake the task

Lichtheim, who agreed to accompany him, engaged no fewer than 100 carriers and arranged to pay Mahon £1,000 a year. One complication, revealed at the last minute, was set out in a letter from L.C. Meredith, Native Commissioner at Melsetter. The area in question include a "place looked on as sacred by all the tribes, including those in Lichtheim block". Meredith complained that the arrangement had been made without the approval of the local chief, Muskavanu, who ought not to be antagonized. To his suggestion that the trouble might be overcome by an exchange of land, the Goldreich Brothers promptly agreed.

The course of the expedition itself is vividly set out in a memorandum, headed, "Report of the Trip to Gazaland" by Mr. Mahon.

"Arrived at Melsetter on October 15, and presented my letter of introduction to Mr. Longden, Civil Commissioner", said Mahon. "I remained there a day, gaining all possible information from him as to the best route to take; I received



from the letters to Mr. Meredith, Native Commissioner at Gewndingwe, also to Mr. Bates, in charge of the American Mission Station at Mount Selinda. On October 16 I proceeded to Gewndingwe, where I handed my letter to Mr. Meredith, from whom I received every assistance in securing boy to carry my things. He also gave me a Police boy to act as guide around various places. I got him to question the natives as to whether rubber trees were in existence in the Southern parts of Melsetter and the Sabi Valley. They said that to their knowledge there were none and that the rubber in the district came from the creeper. Both the natives and Civil Commissioner, however, were agreed in stating that rubber trees could be most successfully grown in the Southern part of the district.

“I questioned Mr. Meredith on the native position as to whether a grant of land would in any way affect the natives of the district. He emphatically stated that, provided the natives were treated fairly, it would be to their advantage to have work on the land whereon they were living, and that they (the natives) would benefit by it”.

On leaving Gewndingwe on October 18 for the American Mission Station, Mr. Mahon stopped a night at Kenilworth Police Camp, where he met A.L. Renwick, a particularly valuable encounter, since that settler had spent a number of years in India, and actually had practical experience of rubber cultivation. With him he discussed the whole project, and was reassured to find “the district adapted”.

Moving on next day to Mount Selinda Mission, he introduced himself to the Superintendent, Mr. Bates, who gave him a cordial welcome and the offer of any help that lay in his power. During his three days there Mahon gathered as much information as he could. Unfortunately Wilder, who was considered the best-informed man on the subject, happened to be away for some weeks. “I found the rubber creepers plentiful and tapped one myself. The results were the sample now before you”.

Analysis of a similar piece sent by him to Johannesburg showed 91 per cent rubber, 5.4 percent resin and moisture and 3.6 percent fibre. The creepers grew to any height, some reaching 70 feet, twisting round the trees until the top was reached, when they spread out and burst into fruit and leaf. Foliage very small and the fruit round and fairly soft, about the size of a peach, brownish in colour and tart to the taste, even when ripe,

One of the American missionaries, Dr. Thompson, told Mahon that, about three years previously, another kind of tree had been pointed out to him by a native, which the latter claimed also contained rubber.

From Mount Selinda, on October 23, the expedition struck out South West, reaching a kraal on the same night. There he headman Ziti, said that rubber was secured from the creepers in the Sabi Valley. After trekking West then North to the junction of the Tanganda and Sabi Rivers, Mahon next tried an eastward move before turning back to Melsetter, where he gave Mr. Longden a short account of his travels.

“The opinions of the most reliable people in the district”, he said, “are undoubtedly favourable to the success of rubber-growing. I found the climate and the condition of soil, from the American Mission Station; well adapted for the object I have in view- cocoa, olives and sunflowers... The Valley undoubtedly has a splendid climate and soil for the growth of rubber trees, and with irrigation, which I think can be managed from the Sabi River, and other sources, the rubber plantations should prove a great success...”

Today more than 60 years later, an enormous irrigation and general development scheme is in progress in that very same Sabi Valley and, although the circumstances have not yet justified the laying out of rubber plantations, it is regarded as one of the most promising economic frontiers of Rhodesia.

With the outbreak of the Boer War Sam Goldreich himself had to leave his headquarters on the Witwatersrand as a refugee for Cape Town. Only in March 1900 was he able to take up the thread, when from his new office at 21 and 22 Mansion House Chamber in Adderley Street, he addressed a letter to J.M. Orpen, Surveyor- General at Salisbury, under the heading, “Melsetter Agricultural Grant”.

“Adequate commercial utilization of the above ground has engaged our unremitting attention, and has necessitated voluminous correspondence with experts in many parts of the world. At the expense of a great deal of money, labour and time, we have accumulated a quantity of valuable opinions relative to this project.

“All authorities agree that the failure of similar schemes in other parts of the world has been due to lack of transport and the employment of incompetent amateurs. They have advised me, before commencing work, to obtain information as to the capacities of the ground, the value of the local markets, the best means of transport, etc., to place a properly qualified man in charge, no matter how high the remuneration demanded may be; to give him competent assistants, together with the best agricultural and engineering consultative facilities, and then substantial profits should result”.

Goldreich recounted how, on the recommendation of Sir Thistleton Dyer, head of Kew Gardens, he had secured the services of John Mahon, and the results of his three months research.

“This report, in our opinion, is a document of exceptional value, and is, we believe, the first authoritative statement as to the cultural potentialities of that district. We have great pleasure in presenting same to you, and hope it will be of practical utility to the inhabitants of Rhodesia, and to the British South African Company. Should you desire it, you are at liberty to publish the same”.

In order that the technical staff might be thoroughly competent, Goldreich proposed to appoint it on the nomination of some person of undoubted authority, such as the Imperial Commissioner for Agriculture, West Indies, the President of the Planter’s Association, Ceylon, or the Chief of the Department of Agriculture at Washington. His firm was also negotiating for the services, as Consulting Agriculturist, of Professor

Hedger Wallace, who had recently lectured at the Imperial Institute, whilst, as their own Consulting Engineer, Mr. S.B. Asher would advise on irrigation, power canals and machinery. A tobacco curer from Cuba, a California fruit grower and accountant and assistants would live on the estate.

“Mr. Mahon, we think rightly, attaches great value to the opportunities for transport, irrigation and power afforded by the rivers intersection the ground, and therefore we desire that facilities in these respects be granted us; although it is not all certain that the Sabi would be available the whole year round. Still, we think it of sufficient importance to endeavor to avail ourselves of this means of effectually competing in the European market...”

Mining probabilities, he thought, were remote. This ground is to be utilized for agricultural purposes, and the geological formation renders the existence of gold-bearing reefs highly improbable. Hence we think that the intrusion of the mineral prospector would be a great disadvantage to us, especially in view of the possibility that reckless and unscrupulous men may, under cover of their prospecting licenses, destroy timber, or blackmail us, and we therefore desire you to reserve this ground from prospecting operations”.

To British South Africa Company, in return for their providing one half of the working capital, Goldreich offered the right of appointing half the directors and nomination 10 free planter pupils. The latter would be of a class similar to those found in India, who would be instructed and boarded without charge and at the end of their apprenticeship would be provided by their guardians with sufficient funds to allow them to become independent planters themselves. He hoped later to persuade the Surveyor-General to provide those who had earned Certificates of Competence from Goldreich Brothers with land at cheap rates. It would be obvious to the authorities how useful such a new class of settlers would be to Rhodesia.

A cheque for £ 719.4 8. Goldreich concluded, had been forwarded to the Government for survey fees and quitrent. “We have spent upwards of £4,000 in preparatory measures, reports, etc., in order that operations, when begun, may be conducted on an assured basis, and it will be a source of gratification to us all preliminaries be completed with the least possible delay, especially as we only await the confirmation of the suggested modified contract, to begin operations. We shall be pleased to hear from you as soon as possible.

Fresh delays, characteristic of State departments, occurred before the documents were dispatched by the Surveyor-General for comment to the office of the Civil Commissioner at Maseru, W.M. Longden. The latter, while agreeing that the conclusions were on the whole fairly correct, made a number of comments on Mr. Mahon’s “exceptionally roseate view of the prospects of the proposed industry”, and failure to mention “the many and serious drawback which would have to be contended with”.

He agreed, for example, that the area covered by the grant, which included a very large section of the South Melssetter plateau, enjoyed a climate and rainfall practically identical with that of Mount Selinda, and was therefore eminently suitable for cattle-raising and agriculture. "The greater portion of the block may fairly be said to be healthy and suitable for European occupation, but there is no doubt that the low-lying parts are quite unsuitable and very deadly at certain periods of the year. Mr. Mahon, however, saw this Low Country at the end of the dry season and consequently at the healthiest time of the year, though admittedly when the pasturage would be at its worst. It is generally acknowledged that the portion of the Sabi River which forms the Western boundary of this estate flows through very rich country, vastly superior to any found in the neighbourhood of that river further north. The rainfall in the Sabi Valley is, however, very small, some parts of it having none for practically eight months in the year. Still, I believe that irrigation works could be constructed, though they would probably be costly, and that water could be obtained by the sinking of wells at no great depth".

About timber resources of the area Longden considered Mr. Mahon was right. With trees averaging 20 or 30 yards apart, they represent an enormous amount of heavy growth, which might well support an industry.

Mr. Goldreich's proposals the Civil Commissioner declared to be "generally fair, with the exception of his suggestion with regard to minerals. I would on no account advise the Government to accede to his request to reserve this ground from prospecting operations. The country has never been prospected, and therefore it is uncertain if valuable minerals exist. Ancient copper workings are found at no very great distance from their Northern boundary, and it is very probable that coal beds will eventually be discovered upon this ground".

On the whole Longden thought the new agreement "reasonable", and that it would be inadvisable to insist on the normal condition under which farms were granted in Rhodesia, namely that each individual property must be beneficially occupied and worked. "The industry should not be handicapped by the distribution of operations would make working more economical and conduce to the success of the understanding".

With the Boer War still dragging on and no immediate prospects of peace, Sam Goldreich found the raising of capital in London more difficult than he had foreseen, and before the year 1900 was forced to make a radical change in his agreement with Chartered Company. Instead of a renewed concession, a lease was now granted, which he endeavoured to turn to account.

Two years went by and in 1902; at long last, the fighting in South Africa was over. But now troubles of a new kind began, for, with the cessation of military expenditure came a depression that grew only blacker as time passed. By February 25, 1903, Goldreich, now himself in financial trouble, had to ask for a cancellation and for a refund of certain payments already made by him to the Government, amounting to £769.7.2.

So ended a project entirely to the honour of the Jewish pioneers of old-time Rhodesia.

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This was by no means the only industrial enterprise then planned by Jewish interests. Richard Rothkugel, that well-known Capetonian mainly responsible for growth and prosperity of the famous furniture manufacturers, D. Isaacs & Co., took the initiative in one of these.

David Isaacs, who had started in 1875, withdrew from the scene fairly early, but the workshops which he fathered expanded until they employed a staff of over 300, the largest in Cape Colony. During 1898 the firm sent a personal letter to the Right Honourable C. J. Rhodes, M.L.A. Rondebosch.

“Dear Sir, - When our Mr. Rothkugel spoke to you some time since, with reference to the stands in Bulawayo for business purposes, you promised to use your influence to procure us an eligible site at the upset price. Our reason for not having written you upon the subject before is that we have only now decided to open a branch of our business in Bulawayo. This decision has been influenced by the fact that, with our extensive machinery, we can produce more furniture than there is at present demand for, and therefore it has become necessary that we should open up other markets for our manufactures, in order that constant work may be found for our plant. We feel sure that your recommendation is all that is necessary.....”

“(Signed) D. ISAACS & Co.”

The letter bore fruit, and on February 26, 1898, Rhodes’ private secretary, Gordon Le Suer, wrote to the Administrator of Matabeleland:

“Dear Captain Lawley, a promise, Mr. Rhodes bids me say, was made to Messrs. Isaacs & Co. that, when they were in a position to open a branch business in Bulawayo, they should be granted a stand upon the above terms.

“Mr. Rhodes thinks that if you do not see your way to meeting Messrs. Isaacs & Co. wishes you might select a stand and let them have at it what you consider an average price...”

A few weeks later, on March 30, 1898, Lawley addressed a note to Rothkugel. “A large number of stands were offered by public auction as recently as November last. In spite of many applications, the Government have regularly declined, since that date, to sell any by private agreement. Under a resolution recently passed by the Legislative Council, no land or stands are in future to be disposed of except by public auction, and I regret, under the circumstances, that I cannot grant you a stand at the upset price...”

Unwilling to accept defeat, Rothkugel submitted the papers once again to the authorities, with the result that on June 15, 1898, J. A. Stevens, the Acting Secretary of the British South African Company, informed E. Ross Townsend, Civil Commissioner of Bulawayo: “Mr. Rhodes thinks the promise should be carried out, and before the commonage is handed over to the Municipality, he wishes you to reserve a stand for Messrs. Isaacs & Co. there at the upset price of the stands, say at the last sale...”

A precedent had already been established, through the grant to Captain Lindell of two other plots on the Commonage.

Faced with this instruction, the Administrator duly sanctioned the deal on July 6, 1898. D. Isaacs & Co. made their preparations to start up as the first furniture manufacturers in Rhodesia, but the outbreak of the Boer War soon after and the subsequent Depression, also put an end to this venture.

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In view of the proverbial enterprise and farsightedness of the celebrated Sammy Marks, it is not surprising to find that this famous Transvaal industrialist and agricultural pioneer also turned his eyes to the lands beyond Limpopo. Discussions, began in 1897, were conducted through his brother, Eli Marks, who so closely collaborated with him in the foundling of the town of Vereeniging, and in the beginnings of the famous Vereeniging Estates, for many years the biggest agricultural enterprise in South Africa.

Having revolutionized farming in the old Boer Republic by demonstration the first mechanized ploughs, harvesters and the like, having set up herds of cattle and sheep running into five figures and planted hundreds of thousands of trees and vast areas of grain and vegetables, Sammy Marks hoped to do something similar up North. Well acquainted with Cecil John Rhodes, with whom he had participated in founding the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company and other ventures, he was referred to the Administrator, Sir William Milton to settle details.

When no answer had come from him, he sent a wire on January 16, 1898 to Salisbury. “I learn from Mr. Rhodes that I should have heard from you. No letter reached me. Wire me here if you have written and when”

Percy Inskipp, Resident Secretary of the British South Africa Company at Salisbury, wired back: “Agree to sell 100,000 morgen, to be selected by you, partly in Mashonaland and partly in Matabeleland, at 3/- per morgen. Payment is to be deferred and remitted if you should show, within three years that you have invested on the property not less than the amount of the purchase price, in agricultural implements, livestock, fruit orchard, substantial buildings, permanent dams and irrigation works. If these conditions are not fulfilled, the land is to revert to us, without payment by you or compensation to you. For the purpose of expenditure, the land may be concentrated in the blocks of 6,000 morgen, instead of spending the necessary amount on each individual

farm of 3,000 or 1,500 morgen, which are the usual extents in Mashonaland and Matabeleland respectively. The quitrent will be payable at the usual rate of £2 per 1,000 morgen per annum”.

Once again the Boer War brought matters to a halt, but not as completely as in the cases of Goldreich and Rothkugel. Ten years later, on November 11, 1908, a letter was dispatched by J.A. Stevens, of the Chief Secretary’s Department, to W. Olive of the Chartered Company at Cape Town.

“When in Cape Town, Dr. Jameson (then Prime Minister of the Cape) spoke to me with reference to the conversation he had with Mr. S. Marks, who subsequently saw me’ and upon my arriving here, I made enquiries as to available land. Although the Company has certain available areas, it seems to me that the block, the Rhodesdale Estate, belonging to the French South Africa Development Company, now in liquidation, would be as suitable as any.

“Mr. Marks told me that, if he could secure a suitable block of ground, his idea was to settle poor Dutch upon it, and farm the half-share principle with them. Please ask Dr. Jameson if he has any objection to a scheme of this sort. If not, then write a letter for Dr. Jameson to sign, sending the report for Mr. Marks’ private information.

“The suggestion might be made that Mr. Marks should send someone to inspect the land, and the he might deal directly with the Secretary in London through his agent”.

Rhodesdale Estate, even now one of the best known properties in Rhodesia, though no longer in its original form, at the time covered no less than 150,00 morgen, over 500 square miles, fronting on four river- the Ngoezi, the Umniati, the Sebakwe and the Bebezaan. The report Mr. Stevens attached had been prepared by a famous old-time official in the B.S. A. Company service, Harold Henry Abrahamson de Laessoe, then Acting Manager in the Chartered Company’s Estate office, later head of the great cattle –breeding enterprise of the Liebig Company, De Laessoe referred to Rhodesdale as “good grassing country, with a fair proportion of agricultural land” The proposed Gwelo-Blinkwater railway would run within eight miles of the Southern part, while the line from Gwelo to Salisbury was 35 miles from the Northern end. It was held under a pioneer title, and the value was estimated at 4/- per morgen.

A letter marked “Confidential” went off on November 21, 1908.

“Dear Mr. Marks, - Dr. Jameson, who is now on a visit to Rhodesia, had gone into the question of land, which you spoke to him about, and desires me to suggest that you should inspect the block known as Rhodesdale. Dr. Jameson has caused the block to be reported upon by one of the Company’s officials and thinks, if you could secure it, it might suit you better than the British South Africa land”. Mr. Stevens added that the Secretary of the Owners, the French South Africa Development Company was C.R. Saunders of Copthall Buildings, London E.C.

Sammy Marks was interested, and from Pretoria promptly wired back: “Can you tell me where the local representative of the Company is to be found? I would like to communicate with him’.

That official turned out to be another Rhodesian Jewish pioneer, H.S. Gupertz of Willoughby’s Buildings, Bulawayo. Discussions went on until, on March 19, 1909, it seemed as if business was almost certain. A cable reached the London office of the B.S. A. Company: “Think can purchase 112, 000 acres of Rhodesdale”, the conditions being the cancellation of the £5,600 debt due by the French South Africa Development Company, the expenditure by the Chartered Company of another £8,000 on the 5,000 acres central farm, as well as the cost of cattle fencing. The remaining 107,000 acres would be applied by Sammy Marks for settlement.

Typical of Marks’ scientific approach, notwithstanding his own rudimentary education was the request, on April 23, 1909 to C. A. Pingstone, the well known chemist at Bulawayo, for a soil analysis of the area concerned. Probably the first ever made in Rhodesia.

The agreement was approved by British South Africa Company on July 8, a fact conveyed to Sammy Marks by Sir Edward Dunning two days later. Then, alas, something went radically wrong and the proposed partners at the last moment failed to agree. On July 21 Sammy Marks wrote: “After considering, have decided not to purchase any part of the Rhodesdale Estate”. So ended one of the great might-have-been in the history of the Colony. The property remained with the British South Africa Company and instead of being devoted to the intensive settlement, became a huge cattle-breeding enterprise.



