

The Jewish Press of Australia.

(Read before the Jewish Literary and Debating Society of Sydney in 1913.)

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The complete history of Judaism in Australia has yet to be compiled. Valuable articles on the subject have been written at various times dealing with particular congregations. Mr. Brodzky has written of the founding of the two Melbourne congregations; the Rev. Mr. Boas has done the same for the Adelaide Synagogue; and the Rev. A. B. Davis, our venerable Rabbi Emeritus, and Mr. Coleman P. Hyman have dealt in more or less concise form with the history of Sydney Jewry, but no complete view comprising the whole of Australasia has yet been written. For some years past I have been collecting information about the various congregations, and have several scrap books full of useful information. Time alone can tell whether I will be able to put the undigested mass of materials in my possession into form, so that the history of Australian Jewry may be written. For the present, there is little probability of my doing so, as apart from the lack of necessary time, my records are still far from being complete. However, as a small contribution to the subject, I propose to-night to speak of the Jewish Press of Australia. To an outsider, there would seem hardly sufficient scope for an article on this subject, but I think that although I may not be able to do full justice to the paper, my hearers will be convinced that this subject is really one, if not the chief, source, of the annals of Jewry. The future historian will be largely indebted for his facts to the records of the newspapers, and a careful search through the Jewish Press both of England and Australia will give information that is not otherwise obtainable.

The history of printing in Australia dates back to the foundation of the colony. Mr. H. W. H. Huntington, in a valuable lecture before the Royal Australian Historical Society, showed that amongst the cargo of the First Fleet was a small press and the necessary type. Apparently, however, it was not used till 1795, when George Hughes printed the Government Orders of the day. The first paper did not appear till eight years later, when Governor King authorised the publication of the *Sydney Gazette*. It was first issued on March 5th, 1803, and purported to be published by authority of the Governor. It was printed and edited by George Howe, a native of the West Indies, who has been styled the Father of Australian Printing, although, according to Mr. Huntington, that title really belongs to George Hughes. The *Sydney Gazette* appeared weekly every Sunday till 1827, when it became a daily, and ceased publication in 1842. But there was nothing specifically Jewish in this paper, which, while not altogether ignoring items of general news, was an official gazette used for purposes of giving publicity to matters that the Governors of the time desired the settlers and others of the infant colony to be acquainted with.

On Rosh Hashanah, 5602 (September, 1841), appeared the first issue of an English Jewish newspaper called *The Voice of Jacob*. This was a fortnightly publication, although six weeks intervened between the first two numbers. Its price was twopence, and it was published in London, being, with the possible exception of *The Hebrew Intelligencer*, a monthly issued in 1823, the first Jewish newspaper printed in England. It was followed two months later by the *Jewish Chronicle*. This latter paper, however, ceased publication in May, 1842, and its editor became attached to *The Voice of Jacob*. The *Jewish Chronicle* was subsequently resuscitated in October, 1844, and is still being published. Shortly after the arrival at Sydney of the early numbers of *The Voice of Jacob*, Mr. George Moss published a Sydney edition. Its title page was as follows: "*The Voice of Jacob, or The Hebrews'*

Monthly Miscellany Sydney Edition for private circulation. The first number is dated Friday evening, May 27th, 1842, and it was printed at *The Australian Office*, Bridge Street, Sydney. Although the editor deplors the want of Hebrew type, its get-up and general appearance were fully equal to more recent productions. It consisted of eight pages, and corresponded in size and style with the London original, 'in order, as the editor states, to give parties who are disposed to have the numbers bound, the opportunity of adding to them the colonial numbers." This course was adopted in the set which I possess, both the London and Sydney editions being included in the same volume. Most of the articles are extracts from its namesake, but there are a few local items. The first number contains an account of the laying of the foundation stone of the York Street Synagogue on April 19th, 1842, and a number of interesting details about the proposed building, particular notice being given to a splendid Hebrew Decalogue which had been recently received from Mr. J. Solomon, of London. It is described as an elegant piece of manufacture, being made of plate glass, with burnished letters, and was to be fixed in its proper place on the opening of the new Synagogue. On the Tuesday previously, being Her Majesty's birthday, a ball and supper were held at Clark's Assembly Room in aid of the Philanthropic Society, and the sum of £35 was realised. Thus the Montefiore Home Ball, which is now held annually, may be said to be an ancient function, as the Philanthropic Society there referred to is now amalgamated with the Home. The census statistics for the year 1841 furnish an interesting article. The number of Jews in the colony, which then included the Port Phillip District (now the State of Victoria) and Moreton Bay District (now the State of Queensland), is given as 856. As at the present time, the greater portion were then in the metropolitan district. Out of the total, 559 were in the County of Cumberland; 57 were in the Port Phillip District, none at Moreton Bay. Norfolk Island, which was included in the return, had nine Jews. The editor, in his leading article, after referring to the London contemporary, writes :-

After reading the numbers of this periodical in our possession, they have infused into us a kindred-spirit. We are anxious to be permitted to contribute our humble offering in aid of so good a cause. . . . How great soever may be the comparative ignorance and the defects in elementary education of the Jewish natives in England, in relation to their European Continental Brethren, there still is in that country abundant means of lessening this disproportion, to be furnished by the learning and zeal of their talented Brethren, and the liberality of many of the members of their body, which have not hitherto been supplied to the limited communion, of that persuasion in the Australasian colonies. Our number is too small, and with one or two exceptions, our wealth, too inconsiderable, to have admitted of the Australasian Jews having hitherto been benefited by the devotions of a Rabbi. There is no Jewish college or school, nor any tutor in all the Academic institutions of importance to themselves, as a distinct body of colonists. , Such a publication as that we now attempt to issue periodically from the Press, seems to have been quite providentially suggested. It is, in fact, the only source whence any copious stream of the elements of knowledge, most valuable to the Jewish race can at present flow. . It is, nevertheless, impossible that we can undertake this task of re-publishing single-handed. The zeal which warms our own bosom must animate the feelings of many others. The best practicable mode of giving proof of such sympathy, will be the formation of a committee, comprising a treasurer, with a view to obtain subscriptions of £1/i/- per annum, to be forwarded to England, for the regular transmission of the original work to the subscribers here. As some time, however, must elapse before any such regular supply can take place, and as we shall continue in the meantime to receive our numbers regularly from our own. correspondent, we shall publish such a compilation of extracts as we have before described, and of which we now present the first specimen.

It is of interest at this distance, both of time and space, to recall what English news was of interest to our co-religionists nearly seventy years ago. The first number of our paper contained articles and

notes from the London edition on the following subjects: "The Hebrew National School," then recently established at Birmingham, with the Rev. M. J. Raphall as headmaster, and Mr. D. Asher as assistant; "The Conflagration at Smyrna"; "An Account of the Services at the Great Synagogue, London"; the report of "an important meeting at the Western Synagogue"; articles on "College for the Training of a Jewish Ministry," "Parisian Sanhedrin", "Jewish Educational Institution" (the prospectus of which had lately been issued), "The Proposed Opening of the Jews' Infant School," "The Office of Preacher; and various paragraphs of foreign and provincial news, including an account of the laying of the foundation stone of the Bath. Synagogue. The second number bears the date Friday evening, June 24, 1842, and the items of local news are an editorial on "The New Sydney Synagogue", with an illustration of the front and back elevations, an article on the Sydney Jewish Philanthropic Society (then already ten years old) and, as usual, deploring the limited amount of support it received. There are several extracts from Australian and other papers, besides items taken from the English edition. It is interesting to note that, although the Jews' College at London was not founded till 1852, yet a London Hebrew College for the training of native Jewish youths for the various ecclesiastical offices connected with our holy religion was then (in 1842) being established in London. Commodious buildings in Leadenhall Street had been purchased, and Mr. Simeon Oppenheim appealed for funds in a letter that is reprinted in the local paper.

The third and last number of the *Sydney Voice of Jacob* is dated Sunday evening, September 5th, 1842. There is a leading article, in which the editor deplors the lack of support that he has received; 'the former numbers have been, as the present will be, gratuitously and extensively distributed. "The compiler would be guilty of neglect and injustice towards his domestic and social relations if he risked his means or wasted his zeal and enthusiasm to any greater extent than he has done, without an efficient support from his brethren.' The editorial then asks for funds for the new Synagogue, for which £2000 more was wanted; has a reference to the Philanthropic Society; and deplors the serious division that had taken place in English Jewry by the formation of the New Reform Synagogue. The only other items of local news are a copy of the Deed of Grant dated July 4, 1835, by the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, to Joseph Barrow Montefiore, Michael Phillips, and Phillip Joseph Cohen, of two roods for a Jewish burial ground; and a reminder that there are many defaulters to the Berriss Society. The greater part of the issue is taken up with the account of the quarrel caused by the secession of a number of leading Jews from the orthodox congregations to form the Reform Synagogue, called 'The West London Synagogue of British Jews, and the correspondence relating thereto between Sir Moses Montefiore, as President of the London Committee of Deputies of the British Jews, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Francis H. Goldsmid, the Junior Warden of the new Synagogue. The declaration, signed by Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell and the members of the Beth Din of the Sephardic Congregation, forbidding Israelites to have any communion with the members of the new body, is also given in extenso. There are also articles on the New Year and the Day of Atonement.

I have dealt at some length on this early journalistic effort, which was not alone the first Jewish paper in Australasia, but one of the earliest in the British dominions. Before finally leaving it to deal with later publications, I must briefly mention its able editor, or compiler, as he modestly preferred to call himself. In addition to his work here, it appears, from subsequent copies of the London periodical, that he also kept his English brethren informed of the doings of Australian Jewry by writing accounts of what transpired at the Antipodes to *The Voice of Jacob*. Mr. George Moss is described by a recent writer as "having been a man of superior education and marked individuality, who exercised considerable influence in the community. He was the Honorary Secretary of the

Synagogue Beth Tephillah in George Street, Sydney, in the year 1833. He even occupied the pulpit and delivered a discourse, a proceeding which at the time was deemed by many 'a gross violation of orthodoxy.' In 1844 he was a member of the committee, and in conjunction with Messrs. J. B. Montefiore, M. Phillips and A. Lyons, he was appointed on a sub-committee to draw up the code of rules for the York Street Synagogue. Mr. Moss was also one of the committee which prepared the report in 1845. This gives the early history of the Sydney Jewish community to that date. It is a valuable historical record, and was doubtless written by Mr. Moss. In 1854 we find him back in his old position as Secretary to the Synagogue. There was evidently some trouble in the community which caused his retirement in this year, and he was voted the sum of £100 per annum in consideration of his unfortunate position, and of his long and energetic services. Mr. Moss was also apparently the founder and chairman of the Sydney Jewish Library and Hebraic Institution, which was established in 1846. In a printed catalogue of this institution in my possession, there is a list of 419 works, embracing both Jewish and general literature, and it is a great pity that this early collection of books should have been allowed to be scattered. The catalogue was a creditable production for the time, although not an ideal one from the modern librarian's point of view, as some books are indexed under authors' name and others under title. It, however, gives the size and binding of the various books, as well as the date and place of publication. It was evidently compiled by one of great literary tastes, and I do not think that I am far wrong in ascribing it to Mr. Moss.

In 1871, Mr. Solomon Joseph, who was subsequently the editor and proprietor of the *Tamworth News*, issued *The Australian Israelite*. It was published weekly, every Friday, at 99 Bourke Street West, Melbourne, and later at 7 Collins Street East, Melbourne. The first number is dated Friday, 11 Tamuz, 5631, June 30th, 1871, and its price was sixpence. It consisted of eight pages, about 15 inches by 10 inches. The first list of subscriptions to the Great Synagogue, Sydney, appears as an advertisement on the front page, the total amount being £3219/13/-, S. A. Joseph and John Solomon being the joint honorary treasurers and M. De Lissa honorary secretary. The early numbers contained correspondence copied from the *Sydney Morning Herald* between the Rev. A. B. Davis and Rev. John Graham, in reference to some remarks on the Jews made by the latter gentleman. The numbers of this paper are full of interest, and we can trace the foundation of the St. Kilda and Sandhurst Synagogues, both of which were consecrated for public service on September 29th, 1872. In the issue of August 30th, 1872, under the heading, "A Hint for St. Kilda, is given an account from the *Jewish Chronicle* of a sermon preached at the Hambro Synagogue, London, by Mr. H. Gollancz, a student of Jews' College. He is now Rabbi Dr. Herman Gollancz, On December 26th, 1873, The *Israelite* announces the arrival of the new minister of the St. Kilda Synagogue, the Rev. E. Blaubaum, an account of whose installation appears in the following number. We read in the issue of September 8th, 1872, of Mr. Henry E. Cohen being called to the Bar of the Hon. Society of the Middle Temple on June 6th; and in another issue of the scholastic success of Mr. Joseph Jacobs, the now celebrated Jewish writer and folklorist. We read in this paper, *The Australian Israelite* (October 25th, 1872), of an interesting account of how Mr. (afterwards Sir) Henry Parkes first appointed Mr. (afterwards Sir) Saul Samuels as a Minister of the Crown. It states, quoting from 'Roundabout Papers' in another journal :-

Again the Jewish party is a recognised power in the State, and is inclined strongly to the party of Mr. Cowper and Mr. Robertson. To detach this power from the opposition and to unite it to his own interests was the next stroke of policy that suggested itself to the astute Henry Parkes. He was well aware that Mr. Samuels was one of the leading members of the Jewish persuasion, and one of its

most trusted political heads. He therefore appointed Mr. Samuels to be the representative of the Government, without portfolio, in the Upper House, and gazetted him besides to the office, which belonged to Mr. Parkes himself as Premier of the Parliament, of Vice-President of the Executive Council. Mr. Parkes was not the man to care for an empty honour, but he was just the man to turn it to the best advantage, and that is exactly what he did in surrendering to the leader of the Jewish party, the second seat at the Cabinet Council Board.

I cannot, in the space of this short article, deal with all the interesting information these old papers contain. The *Israelite* was apparently not very successful financially, and attempts were made in 1873 to form a limited company to take over the publication of this paper. As of the 2000 proposed shares, only 466 were applied for, the project fell through. Mr. Joseph decided to continue the paper himself. My set of *The Australian Israelite* ends with No. 45 of Volume 3, June 26th, 1874, and this is also the last number possessed by the Public Library of New South Wales. The Chief Librarian of the Public Library of Victoria, however, informs me that their set of this publication ends with No. 44 of Volume 4, May 7th, 1875. This appears to be the last date of the paper, as at a public meeting held in Melbourne on June 4th, 1875, a resolution was moved and carried, "That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable and necessary to have a weekly Jewish organ for the Australian colonies," and reference was made to *The Australian Israelite* having been left to die of starvation. The project was evidently not successful, for the first number of *The Jewish Herald*, which was published in 1879, refers to the previous want of a Jewish paper, and states that it is the sole organ of the Jewish community in the Australasian colonies.

In 1873, several Jewish schoolboys connected with the Sabbath school at Adelaide brought out a small paper, or leaflet, called *The Jewish School-fellow*. My enquiries from the South Australian Public Library and other sources in Adelaide have failed to secure a copy, or to get any more definite particulars of this publication, which apparently only lasted a few weeks.

There was published at Melbourne, in 1875, a monthly magazine called *The Dialectic*. I was unable for some time to obtain any particulars about this publication. It was not in the libraries, but when in Melbourne recently I bought at a second-hand bookshop a bound volume containing what is apparently a complete set. Its full title was *The Dialectic, Jewish Monthly*, with a quotation from Ecc. xii., 13. In size it was medium octavo, 9½ inches by 6 inches, and each number consisted of sixteen pages. It was printed for the proprietor by T. Smith at 103 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy. According to the editorial announcement in the first number, its "primary object was to give to the Essays, Lectures, Speeches, etc., delivered at the Melbourne Jewish Literary and Debating Society a local habitation and a name. It, however, contained in addition general Jewish news and reports of communal meetings. The first number was dated Nissan, 5685, May, 1875. My set contains only seven issues, the last, "an extra number," being dated Heshvan 5635, November, 1875.

In 1894 another Jewish periodical appeared. Its title was *The Australian Hebrew* lines; the first number is dated January 5th, 1894, and its price was threepence. It was published by Figginbotham & Robinson, 62 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, printed by Batson & Co. Ltd., 146 Clarence Street, Sydney, and issued weekly. It consisted of sixteen pages, 15 inches by about 10 inches. Its editor was Mr. M. A. Cohen, the Headmaster of the Hebrew Schools at Sydney. The first issue contains special letters of congratulations from the Rev. A. B. Davis and J. H. Landau, a biographical notice of Israel Zangwill by the Rev. J. H. Landau, general news and several special articles. Succeeding numbers were equally good, although the paper sometimes appeared with only twelve pages instead of sixteen pages.

Later on, Mr. M. A. Cohen was succeeded in the editorial chair by Mr. Coleman P. Hyman, and after twelve months the paper went the way of previous issues and ceased publication. Among the special articles contained in the different issues were the following: 'The Kosher Meat Question in Sydney,' "The Religious Education of The Australian Hebrew," "Chaldean Archaeology," "Judaism and Modern Philosophy," "A Chat about the City (London)," "Schules of 60 Years Ago," "Jews and Athletics", and "An Imaginary Conversation between the Prophet Malachi and the Greek Philosopher, Plato."

An ambitious attempt to adequately supply the Jews of this continent with a high-class newspaper was made by the publication of *The Australasian Hebrew*. The first number is dated November 22nd, 1895, and Mr. Jacob Goldstein was announced as the editor and conductor. I do not think that I am divulging any secret, because subsequent numbers disclosed the fact, that associated with him was a Christian friend, Mr. Greville Tregarthen, the author of "The Australian Commonwealth" in the *Story of the Nations* Series. The paper appeared every Friday, and was well printed by Little & Co., of Church and Macquarie Streets, Parramatta, N.S.W. While treating principally on Jewish matters, it also had columns dealing with money and finance, theatrical and social news, and reviews of recent publications. The tone of the paper, according to the editor in his opening remarks, was orthodox, with a tendency to liberality, but no violent departures from conservative ideals and practices were to be entertained. In another editorial, it is stated that "we will never rest, God willing and our co-religionists aiding, until we have produced a paper which is better than any Jewish paper published in the world." Among the special contributions may be mentioned some excellent translations from Heine by the editor, also a series of articles by the Rev. J. F. Landau on "Present Day Unbelief" and "The Wandering Jew" by Mr. Walter D. Benjamin. Amongst the contributors were the Revs. A. B. Davis and Dr. J. Abrahams. The paper had great literary merits and was in every way a creditable production. If properly supported, it would no doubt have gone far to realise the wish of the editor in his opening editorial. It had a series of illustrated biographical articles of prominent Australian Jews, and other illustrations lent interest to the periodical. The first number of the second volume, dated May 22nd, 1896, announced the retirement from the paper of its able editor, Mr. Goldstein, the proprietorship being retained by Mr. Tregarthen, and Mr. Daniel Levy, B.A., LL.B., succeeding to the editorial chair, being ably assisted by the manager, Mr. ---. Reid. Under their charge the paper kept up its high standard, although one misses the short, pithy pars in which the previous editor was particularly successful. The last number appeared on November 13th, 1896. Apparently the Jews of Australia did not sufficiently support the efforts of the proprietor and editors in producing a high-class literary production, and thus *The Australasian Hebrew* went the way of its predecessors.

Of the two Jewish newspapers now being published, the older in point of time is *The Jewish Herald*. On December 12th, 1879, appeared the first issue of this paper, the full title of which was "*The Jewish Herald* devoted to the interests of Judaism in the Australasian Colonies." It consisted of twelve pages, 12¾ inches by 9 inches in size, and was 'printed for the proprietors by Walker, May & Co., at their general printing office, 9 Mackillop Street, Melbourne.' The price of the single numbers was one shilling, or 10/6 annual subscription in Victoria. It first appeared as a monthly on the second Friday in each month, but it shortly afterwards changed to a fortnightly, and has ever since been issued every alternate Friday. It was edited by the Rev. E. Blaubaum, the Minister of the St. Kilda (Melbourne) Synagogue, and in the early numbers he had the assistance of Messrs. Nahum Barnett and Maurice Benjamin. The 21st number, dated December 17th, 1880, was published by Messrs. A. McKinley & Co., the proprietors of *Melbourne Punch*, and it has since continued to be issued by that

firm, but the price is now threepence per copy. Since 1883 a special Sydney edition of this paper has been published. With the exception of the advertisements, and having a Sydney imprint, it is practically identical with the Melbourne copy. The *Herald* has always been distinguished for its literary merit. The Rev. Mr. Blaubaum wrote some very learned articles during his control of the paper, and one of the most notable was "Marcus Aurelius and Rabbi Jehudah I.," published on September 26th, 1902. This was a signed contribution, but, of course, others being anonymous, it is not possible to absolutely identify them with the editor, although many scholarly articles that at different times appeared in this periodical are undoubtedly from his able pen. Mr. Blaubaum died in April, 1904, and was succeeded by Mr. M. Moses, M.A., who had temporarily conducted the paper during the reverend gentleman's absence. The present editor has sustained the high literary merits of the paper, but what is no doubt an improvement, as far as the general reader is concerned, is that the articles are of a lighter nature, although showing scholarship and deep knowledge of Jewish literature. It not only regularly prints the news of the Victorian Jews, but has correspondence from each of the other States and New Zealand, and London and American letters. Its tone is conservative, but the editor allows full play in the correspondence column to writers, even though their views differ from his own; in this respect, carrying out the policy enunciated in the first number

Our religious standpoint is traditional Judaism. Call it orthodoxy, call it reform, call it what you like, we adhere to Judaism as it is laid down in the Bible and interpreted by our sages. We acknowledge both the written and oral law. We respect, however, the convictions of those that differ from us in this respect, and our columns will always be found open to all parties, so long as this is compatible with the advancement of Judaism and the respectability of our journal.

The other periodical still being published is *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*. Its publishers and owners were, and still are, Messrs. Henry Harris & Son, Printers, Sydney. The first issue appeared on November 1st, 1895, and its full title was "*The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* : A Biographical and Authentic Record in the Interests of Judaism, and was printed by Harris & Son at 249 George Street, Sydney. It consisted of eight pages, the size of the pages being 11 inches by 8 ½ inches ; price 3d., or 10/6 per year. It had a special portrait of the late Dr. Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi. The second issue did not appear till December 6th, 1895. It then ceased publication, owing, apparently, to the appearance of a rival paper, *The Australasian Hebrew*. *The Australasian Hebrew*, however, only lasted twelve months, and Messrs. Harris & Son again took up the publication of their paper. The new issue of *The Hebrew Standard* appeared on July 23rd, 1897. It still consisted of eight pages, but these were enlarged to the size in which it at present appears. The issue of July 23rd had an account of the Record Reign Celebrations, and a portrait of Queen Victoria, which was entitled "The Queen of the Jews, This periodical has appeared regularly every week since, up to the present. It has been under the editorial control of Mr. Alfred Harris from November 1st, 1895, to May 1st, 1908; of Mr. Philip I. Harris from May 1st, 1908, to October 1st, 1909; and of Mr. Marcus Marks from October 22nd, 1909. The paper deals fully with local news, and has correspondents in the other States and New Zealand. It has as its regular features a sermon, generally one by Rabbi F. L. Cohen, and a short story, and gives a fair amount of space to social news, reports the doings of the community, and reprints, often at length, the papers read before the local Literary and Debating Society. Its price is still threepence per copy, it appears every Friday, and is eagerly looked forward to by many Jewish households in New South Wales and the other parts of Australasia.

In the course of my investigations I have found references to the *Australasian Jewish Chronicle*, published in Melbourne in 1861, but have not been able to see a copy, or obtain any definite information about it.

This completes my survey of the Jewish Press of Australia, and it is unfortunate that the records are so incomplete. Even the great Public Libraries have not sets of all the papers mentioned, although I have to thank the staffs of the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide institutions for their kind answers to my enquiries. Other gentlemen who endeavoured to assist me in my search for the missing papers were Messrs. M. Moses and Nahum Barnett, of Melbourne, and the Rev. A. T. Boas and Mr. S. Saunders, of Adelaide. Although they were not in all cases able to supply me with the required information, yet I feel grateful for the trouble they took. This only shows, what I have recently emphasised before another society, "the absolute necessity on the part of our libraries and literary institutions for keeping proper records and copies of publications that are likely to be of historical interest.