

An Israeli Minister In Canada

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By SOLOMON KERSTEIN

AMONG the many works of Hebraica accredited to the veteran Mizrahi-Zionist leader, Rabbi Judah L. Maimon—Fishman—now being acclaimed by religious Jewry on his visit to Canada and the United States, is a six-volume compendium of history and folklore entitled "Sarey Hameah." In his own unusual Hebrew style the author has included in these volumes his memoirs and essays, as well as biographical sketches of great religious Jewish personalities.

To provide a thorough evaluation of the spiritual virtues of Rabbi Maimon and of his manifold activities during the past half century, a complete volume would have to be added to these six. For it can be properly asserted that this dean



RABBI JUDAH L. MAIMON

of Israel's first Cabinet, and of the world Mizrahi movement, supremely merits inclusion among the "Leaders of the Century" implied by the title of his work.

The variegated activities of Rabbi Maimon have followed a remarkable unity throughout his career. In his philosophy, his thoughts, and his conduct he has shown a rare harmony of outlook and aim. Even in his literary endeavor he displays a harmonious and erudite grasp of the ancient and the contemporary literature of the Jews. He is as much at home in the entire range of Hebraic literature up to the present as he is in "the seat of the Talmud." His output comprises legal works and history, biography, and bibliography; he is also distinguished as an editor of literary compendia, historico-biographical anthologies, and occasional writings.

I have before me a "Bibliography of the Writings of Rabbi Fishman," published in Jerusalem on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. It was edited by Naphtali ben Menachem. Under the name of Fishman, and several pseudonyms, 347 items are recorded—written from 1897 to 1946. It is difficult to comprehend, when one leafs through his book, how a single person could have accomplished so much in the cultural realm within the space of half-a-century. The fact is rendered more extraordinary when one realizes that the writer was devoting much of his time and effort during the same period in upholding the standards of religious Zionism throughout the world. As public propagandist for Mizrahi he was traveling over the seas and wastelands of the earth, everywhere waging the battle against the oppressive rulers of the Holy Land, from the Turks to the British.

The story of the internment of Maimon and his colleagues of the Jewish Agency in the latter days of Britain's rule is known to everyone. When the officers sought to compel him to ride in the police car on the Sabbath, he fought his captors with characteristic obduracy. Proudly he addressed the arresting officers: "Even the Turks never dared to force me to ride on the Sabbath; (Continued on Page 19)

Jewish Tradition Entwined In Religion of the Karens of Burma

By PROF. W. S. DESAI, DELHI, in "Indian Quarterly"

OUT of 17 millions of the people of Burma, the Karens number about two millions, numerically being second to the Burmans. They migrated into the country perhaps earlier than did the Tibeto-Burmans. They settled principally in Burma, but numbers of them found a home also in Siam. The only exclusive Karen country is the hill region of the Toungoo district and the Karenni subdivision.

The ancient religion of the Karens was Animism, that is, the fear and worship of spirits. The vast majority of them still hold to it, mingled with elements of Buddhism. They believe in three distinct moral and religious conceptions: (a) 'Pgho' is an impersonal power or force. Perhaps they mean by it the spirit and the soul; (b) the spirits in nature which should be feared and propitiated; (c) the Y'wa tradition.

Their conception of Y'wa is one of the most interesting features in their history. Y'wa is really the Yaveh or Jehovah of the Hebrews. They have stories of creation and the fall of man through eating the forbidden fruit; but instead of two trees there are seven, only one of them being evil and defiling. Stories of the Flood and of the division of mankind at Babel are also preserved by them. They have indeed the Hebrew tradition, but there is no trace of anything Messianic in their folklore. Y'wa is the Eternal God, while Karen is His eldest son. The tradition is that they once had 'The Book' containing their beliefs and the truth concerning Y'wa; but due to the unbelief of the Elders it was lost. Y'wa Himself had given the book to them, so that the loss was a grievous sin. They have also a prophecy that the White Brother would bring this lost book to them. Here are some verses on the book:—

The book of the ages was rooted by the pigs
At first the women neglected it;
The men also did not look at it.
If both men and women had studied it,
All the world would have been happy.
Our book of gold that Y'wa gave,
Our book of silver that he gave,
The elders did not obey:
Lost, it wandered to the foreigner.

It is thought by some that the Karens at some time of their history came under the influence of Nestorian Christian missionaries who are known to have visited China in about the 7th century A.D. If so, it is strange that the Karens have no Messianic tradition or stories whatever. Again

this Nestorian date does not fit in with the migration of the Karens into Burma, which took place centuries earlier. It is also suggested that they are of the stock of the ten 'lost tribes of the children of Israel.' It seems certain, however, that the Karens at some time in their wanderings, perhaps in China, came into touch with the Jews and the Old Testament. This Hebraic influence is clearly to be seen in their poems:—

When first the earth was made,
Who worked and built it?
When it was first formed,
Who was the Creator?
When first the world was created
The edoils and the termite toiled together,
When the earth was first formed,
These two helped each other and made it.
When first the earth was formed
It was Y'wa who formed it.
When first the world was fashioned,
It was God who fashioned it.
Y'wa is eternal, He alone existed
Before the world was made; His throne
Interminable ages stood,
And He, the everlasting God.
Two worlds may pass, and yet He lives,
Perfect in attributes divine,
Age after age His glories shine.
Y'wa is unchangeable, eternal,
He was in the beginning of the world.
Y'wa is endless and eternal;
He existed in the beginning of the world.
The life of Y'wa is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure his
existence.
Y'wa is perfect in every meritorious attribute,
And dies not in succession on succession of
worlds.

Christian Missions, particularly the Baptists, have made great progress among the Karens. There are now about 300,000 Karen Christians in Burma.

A small extremist minority had been busy underground not willing to come to terms with the government. The Karen eruption which took place early in 1949 was their work.

The national government of Burma is doing all it can to crush the rebels, and at the time to conciliate them. The Karen element in the Republic of Burma has an important contribution to make on lines of discipline and duty, courage and dependability.

From Behind The Iron Curtain



AJP Photo
These children from Romania recently arrived in Israel, enjoy for the first time a cup of hot cocoa. They arrived ragged and sickly after a month-long journey with their parents crossing frontiers illegally. Today they are happy and rested.

A Harmonica For Alix

By LARRY ADLER

ASK any performer. Hospital shows are no fun. Not only are they not much fun for the performer but I have never been able to escape the feeling that in a good many cases they're no fun for the people they're supposed to be fun for.

For one thing there's that awful bonhomie that surrounds the whole business. You get to the hospital and meet a lady who is bursting out with Good Will, among other things. She tells you that what you are doing is just Marvelous, and that these poor boys are just going to Love every minute of it. So right away you start off feeling ghastly.

And you would at least like to get to work and get it over with. Take it easy, boy, you have people to meet. Officials, committee members, have a cup of coffee. Have another.

But finally you get led into a ward. One patient is being given an injection. Another is being visited by someone. Two men are asleep.

This all bothers you; you feel as if you are an interruption—and brother, you're so right!—but it doesn't bother the Good Will lady. Nothing bothers her.

"Boys," she says to an assortment of grown men, "we're very fortunate in having with us Mr. Snafu Ufans whose marvelous work on the Hungarian cymbalom is so well known to all of you. There you are, Mr. Ufans, it's all yours!"

The men look at you morosely; that is, the ones who are awake. One fellow you hadn't noticed before has a portable radio going. He's listening to his favorite program. Good Will lady looks at him severely. He turns off the radio. You begin to wish you were dead. Then you commence to play.

I've given you this buildup because it expresses a god deal of my personal experience with hospital shows for the Armed Forces and because I can never get my mind off those men who neither asked for a show nor want it, now it's there. Of course some of the men actually do like it.

At Tel Litwinsky
Now we come to the hospital for disabled soldiers at Tel Litwinsky, outside Tel Aviv. I was told that some nice man from America had sent a shipment of harmonicas and maybe, if I would play something for the patients, it would help them get interested. Sounded logical. On the appointed morning I was called for by Zipora Ruben, who is a Grade A Character. Mrs. Ruben gave me non of the usual smarm, bless Mrs. Ruben. However, when we got to the hospital we did have to meet officials, committees and have coffee.

Finally I found myself standing in a narrow corner where two corridors met up with each other. The men who were there were mostly in wheel-chairs but some were ambulatory. They had heard that I was going to play, they could do it.

I had several harmonicas handed to me from the shipment from the American. They were chromatic harmonicas, made in America, in colored plastic. I was introduced to a good-looking fellow with no legs. He, I was told, had won the Israel version of the Congressional Medal. AFTER his legs had been blown off by a shell, he remained firing his gun and wiped out an Arab machine gun nest. He took the harmonica and looked at it.

"This not what you play," he remarked. I had to admit he was right.

"No good. I like German. Got German?"
The only German I had was what I was playing. If I gave him that—boingg, no show. He agreed. I began to play. I played for about twenty-five minutes. The men seemed to like it fine, even my harmonica critic.

Then I was asked to go to a ward. The group in wheel-chairs followed me in and so did the others. Things got crowded so I stood on a chair. I played one number. Then I asked for requests.

"Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Saint-Saens," said a patient promptly.

I had given several hundred hospital shows in my time. No one had ever asked for a concert tour-de-force like that. Still, I had asked for requests.

I played the Saint-Saens. Or rather, I tried to. After a while it got too complicated and I had to quit.

For these men, a fellow has to practise!
Let me make myself clear. The musical standard in Israel is higher than anywhere in the world where I have played. And the soldiers are an accurate reflection of the civilians. You don't have to play down; in fact you're lucky if you can play sufficiently up.

"Uh—what else would you like?"
"El Salon Mexico, Aaron Copland," said another.
"Brother! Do you realize what usually happens when I ask for requests is a call for 'St. Louis Blues,' 'Red River Valley,' 'Lily of Laguna,' or such-like?"

I played Bach, Debussy, Bartok, some Israeli songs including (Continued on Page 19)

Israel's Makabi

Speeches



Israel government has complained that the 1950 MAKABI games brought no funds of any consequence into the country... hence preparation for the 1951 games are slated to start earlier, preceded by a barrage of world-wide tourist publicity. Evidence of poor attendance is attested by the U.S. Basketball team's physician, Dr. C. Weisbin of Kansas City, who said, according to an interview in the Kansas City Star, that the crowd (witnessing the Basketball event) "consisted to a great extent of families of volunteer ushers." Above is shown president of the World Makabi Union, Prof. Selig Brodetsky, opening the last games before a crowd of 30,000 (in a stadium seating 80,000) at Ramat Gan, Tel Aviv. —AJP Photo.

Spectacles



Displays of precision drill and mass calisthenics by the Israel army were featured at the last Makabi games. —AJP Photo.

And Smiling Girls



Shown above are ten of the lovely girls participating in the many swimming and athletic contests at the last MAKABI festival. —AJP Photo.