

New Year Greetings From Rabbi S. M. Silber

In extending for the twentieth year in succession, to all my friends, the Jews of Minneapolis, my New Year greetings, I am happy to pause and note how full a measure of fulfillment has followed my blessing on previous new years, and my labors to strengthen Judaism here in the Northwest, and how much growth there has been during my incumbency as orthodox rabbi.

There is still room for plenty of accomplishment and improvement, but I hope that as time passes the community will continue to grow and secure what it needs. How different Jewish Minneapolis is now from what it was twenty years ago, when I first came! Then the City was poor,—materially and spiritually. It surely has grown materially. When I would go out in those days to raise funds for public purposes, one dollar was considered a good-sized donation. When, in the second year, I went out for Mo-os Chitim, and received two donations of ten dollars each, I was overjoyed. True, no one refused to contribute, but to raise four or five hundred dollars meant hard work and going all over the city.

Spiritually, however, conditions were much worse. All told, I found on the North Side only the Keneseth Israel Synagogue, the newly completed Mikro Kodesh and a small "Tavriger Schul," while on the South Side there was only the small old, B'nai Abraham Synagogue. All of them were encumbered with heavy mortgages, not to mention other debts. That main spring of Jewish life, Jewish education, intended to insure a generation possessing Jewish knowledge that would bear aloft proudly the banner of the Jew, was at that time in a very deplorable condition. The entire city boasted one small Talmud Torah which the Keneseth Israel Synagogue accommodated with rooms, heat and light. With but few to assist me, the main burden of raising the necessary funds for the Talmud Torah lay on my shoulders. I am not mentioning the names of these workers because to do so would be writing its history. We tried to improve methods and conditions of teaching, but what could a small institution do? Then they also "peddled with the sidur," the sum total of the instruction being to teach the child to recite the Kadish—it often seemed to me as if we were teaching the young to say Kadish for Judaism. The young generation was far from Judaism and knew not what it stood for. Probably they were ashamed of the name "Jew" and of their Jewish parentage. In fact, in my sermons on Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, I would content myself with urging the young generation that when they did attend a ball they should at least take a Jewish young lady to the dance, which many at that time refused to do. As to working for Judaism, that was out of the question. The young would have nothing to do with that. Zionism could be preached only to the old, and the extent of Zionist work was selling Sh'Kolim or a few Jewish Colonial Trust shares.

I re-organized the Chevra Mishnah and the Chevra Shoss, for the old, but my heart bled to see the gulf between the old and the young. Such was the deplorable condition of Judaism throughout the Northwest, for between Chicago and the Pacific Coast I was the only orthodox rabbi. But now, thank God, after twenty years of toil, what a difference there is.

When one urges and exhorts constantly, one must get some results. When I look at the Northwest now, and especially Minneapolis, I am overjoyed to see the growth both material-

ly and spiritually. Materially,—now even a twenty-five dollar donation is considered small, as can be seen by the records of the Keneseth Israel to whom, by the way, much of the progress and improvement can be ascribed. For instance, when I made my first appeal for the new synagogue on Passover, 1912, I raised six thousand dollars, which included many donations of one hundred dollars and over. The same was true to a greater extent with the new Talmud Torah building.

That Minneapolis has grown spiritually also is beyond question. Now we boast eight splendid synagogues,—five on the north side and three on the south. The Keneseth Israel a



RABBI S. M. SILBER

veritable palace, and the most beautiful synagogue in the Northwest, is entirely free of mortgage or encumbrance.

Talmud Torahs we have three in addition to the Talmud Torah at Eighth Avenue and Fremont, the pride of Minneapolis, with its Hebrew classes, its Sunday School, and alumni. And now we are on the threshold of one city-wide Talmud Torah system for which the whole community can work; and, best of all, it is the young generation, with its vitality and energy, which is working whole-heartedly to strengthen Judaism. My heart overflows with rejoicing. Had anyone told me twenty years ago that these things would be possible, I would not have believed it.

To give credit where credit is due. One must admit that winning over the young for this activity was the accomplishment of Dr. Geo. J. Gordon, who joined me in working for the Talmud Torah years ago. Now we have young workers, who are working so earnestly for Zionism and Jewish causes that now it is almost a reproach to any young man not to be Jewishly minded. I must also acknowledge the assistance of the young rabbis,—Rabbi C. David Matt, and latterly, Rabbi A. M. Heller. In addition to the Talmud Torah, we now boast the Jewish Sheltering Home for Children, a truly Jewish Home, an ornament to the City, also, a fine Hachnosas Orchim, not merely a rented room; Bikur Cholim Societies Associated Jewish Charities, not to mention unofficial charity for local and other poor.

I can truly say that the American Jewish World, through its news and editorial columns, has been most useful in strengthening Judaism here and throughout the Northwest.

Therefore, after twenty years of labor, with a heart full of rejoicing, I extend to all the Jews of Minneapolis, heartiest greetings for a "K'sivo Va-Hasimo Tovoh",—Happiness, Health and Prosperity—to them and their dear ones, and I extend cordial thanks to all those who have helped strengthen Judaism in Minneapolis.

I hope that very soon we will have a city-wide Talmud Torah system, North, South, and West, with classes even for the study of the Talmud and even a club with a lunchroom where I shall be able to eat, together with you all.

THE KENESETH ISRAEL

This, the oldest orthodox synagogue on the North Side, in its growth really reflects the growth and development of the largest share of the Jewish community of Minneapolis. Beginning more than twenty years ago, by holding services in a loft at Second Street and Sixth Avenue, it built its first synagogue at Fourth Street and Sixth Avenue N., where it remained until nine years ago when it removed to its present magnificent synagogue building on Lyndale Avenue North near Sixth Avenue. The new structure, commodious, attractive, and built in accordance with the latest word in synagogue architecture, houses countless activities, religious and cultural. There are numerous study groups in Gemarah, Mishnah, and Bible. There is hardly an hour in the twenty-four when there is not some religious activity in this synagogue. In addition, it is the most popular and frequently used meeting place in all public Jewish undertakings where a large, convenient auditorium is needed. When the new

structure was first erected, the young people were active in raising funds and in other activities for the betterment of the Keneseth Israel, being instrumental in bringing the first English-speaking Rabbi to the North Side. The Sunday School which has been conducted by various agencies for some of the children who cannot be accommodated in the Talmud Torah, has been meeting for years in the vestry rooms of the Keneseth Israel.

From the financial side also this synagogue represents a unique record. When the new building was first conceived, the treasury was practically empty. An appeal on Passover 1912 brought subscriptions totaling six thousand dollars. But the officers and the building committee were hopeful and daring. They contracted for a synagogue that would cost over seventy thousand dollars, and although changes and additions in the plans and the purchase of adjoining lots to give the edifice a finer setting brought the total cost much above the original estimate, in 1921 the last of the mortgages was paid off, and the Keneseth Israel is now entirely unincumbered. The officers, during these years, since the building of the Synagogue were: Nathan Lowenthal, President; Abe Kaplan, Vice-President; Nathan Eisenstadt, Secretary, an office which he has held only twenty years; Henry B. Cohen, Treasurer, the kind of treasurer, by the way, who has often carried the Synagogue when it had a deficit of several thousand dollars. In this office, he succeeded the late Joseph Cohen, his father. The present officers are: Max Davis, President; I. Schulman, Vice-President; Nathan Eisenstadt, Sec.; Henry B. Cohen, Treasurer and Nathan Lowenthal, Abe Kaplan, Benj. Nathanson, L. B. Levin, and Meyer Swiller, Trustees.

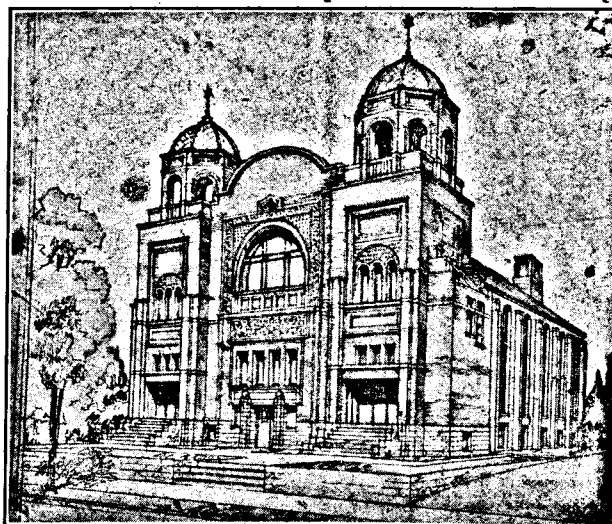
And now, free of debt, newly decorated, feeling young in spite of being the oldest congregation on the North Side, the Keneseth Israel is looking forward to a future more notable and useful even than its past.

GEMILUS CHESED

The Gemilus Chesed, on Girard Avenue North, is a doubly interesting name of a two-fold institution. Originally, it was applied to the synagogue alone, but has, for the last few years, been mostly associated with the Gemilus Chesed as the free loan society. The loan feature developed from the synagogue some ten years ago, when the proceeds from a Minyan for the Holy Days became the nucleus for the loan fund. Since then, additional capital, to make possible loans to the poor without interest has been raised by the payment of ten dollars as a life membership fee. At first, the privilege of making the loan was restricted to life members, but now non-members who are poor and need to tide themselves over by means of a loan are given the preference. The only security they need bring is honesty and the desire to repay the loan. During the first eight months of 1922, more than nine thousand dollars has been circulated, altho the capital of the Gemilus Chesed is only five thousand dollars. Its usefulness is limited only by the funds at its disposal. The percentage of loss from non-payment has been so small as to be negligible, a fine tribute to the honesty of the needy patrons of the Society.

A picnic was recently given that netted the society about three hundred dollars, which was of great use to the loan fund. Mr. Jacob Braverman, chairman in charge of the picnic desires to thank Mr. A. H. Heller, of the Metropolitan Milk Company for donating ice cream.

The officers of the organization are: President, H. Karol; vice president, M. Steinberg; secretary, I. Silber; treasurer, J. Braverman.



CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL, Sixth and Lyndale