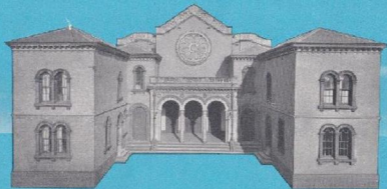


BIRMINGHAM HEBREW CONGREGATION

1856-1956



*Centenary Celebrations*

5616-5716

SOUVENIR BROCHURE

1856 - 1956

*To all those members and friends of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation who recognise that the Synagogue at Singers Hill has preserved the glorious heritage of Judaism, contributed to the welfare of Anglo Jewry, enriched the story of Birmingham and enhanced the prestige of its Jewish Citizens.*

5616 - 5716



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FROM THE VERY REV. ISRAEL BRODIE, B.A., B.Lit., CHIEF RABBI

EVER since I have had associations with the Birmingham Jewish community — and that dates from the War period when my duties as a Senior Chaplain brought me to the city, I have held Birmingham Jewry in high esteem. Indeed I am on record as having described Birmingham as the model Jewish community. I think it is deserved firstly because of its communal organisation and the religious, cultural and social activities which express efficiency, cohesion and sense of responsibility. Secondly it deserves my tribute because I have found that the spiritual and lay leadership of Birmingham is concerned for the religious and communal advancement of Anglo-Jewry as a whole. That is especially exemplified in its consistent loyalty to the Chief Rabbinate. But it will be readily acknowledged by those who administer the affairs of Birmingham Jewry in general and of the Singers Hill congregation in particular that much of the reputation it enjoys is due to those who were the early pioneers of the community and who laid its foundations well and truly.

And in this year when the Synagogue celebrates the Centenary of the consecration of the beautiful and dignified House of Worship, we do well to recall with gratitude those who went before, who generation after generation occupied themselves with the needs of the community worthily and faithfully.

I am looking forward to my participation in the celebrations of the Centenary of the congregation, when I am confident that I will see evidence of the contribution that the present generation of members of Singers Hill is prepared to make to ensure that the Synagogue and all its associated activities will further the cause of Judaism which inspired their forbears.

ISRAEL BRODIE



FROM ALDERMAN ERNEST W. APPS, J.P., *Lord Mayor of Birmingham*

I AM happy to send my greetings to the members of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation on the occasion of the Centenary of their Synagogue at Singers Hill. The Jewish Community of Birmingham, although numerically small, has always been highly respected and I am glad to acknowledge their contribution to public life — in the field of philanthropy, science and art, as well as in their efforts for the industrial and commercial development of the City.

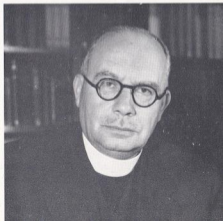
On behalf of the citizens of Birmingham, I wish the Hebrew Congregation great success and trust that the next phase of your history will be one in which the achievements of the past will even be outshone by the realisation of your ambitions for the future.

ERNEST W. APPS

FROM THE REV. Dr. A. COHEN, M.A., *Minister Emeritus*

AT the celebration of the Centenary of the Synagogue, I recall with pardonable pride that it has been my privilege to minister to the Congregation for over one third of the period. I remember the humility with which I assumed the sacred charge entrusted to me, while I was young in years and experience. Great traditions were then placed in my keeping and my sense of obligation to maintain them was acute. I derived encouragement from the knowledge that during the long ministry of my predecessor, the Rev. G. J. Emanuel, close co-operative relationship had been created between him and the Hon. Officers which I felt to be essential to me in my tasks. Now that my term of service is ended, I look back with the deepest gratification to the unflinching concord in which the lay leaders and congregational officials combined to advance the welfare of the Community. Whatever progress may have been achieved during the past four decades springs largely from this source. I stress this point because it is not enough on this happy occasion to be proud of the honoured past of our Synagogue; we must be inspired by the hope for its still more honourable future. To this end the continuance of the same spirit of loyal co-operation between laity and clergy is indispensable. May the divine blessing rest upon the endeavours of all who labour for this goal.

A. COHEN



## COMMEMORATING ONE



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO — on 24th September 1856 — the Synagogue at Singers Hill, Birmingham, was consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Dr. Nathan Adler, who in the course of his address described it as 'an honour to the architect, a glory to the Community and an ornament to the town.'

At this milestone in the life of our Community, let us pause awhile and recall the interesting circumstances which led to the building of an edifice still regarded as one of the most imposing Jewish places of worship in the Country. At that time, the Congregation worshipped in the synagogue in Severn Street (now the Masonic Temple) which we are told was pleasantly situated on the outskirts of the town with an almost uninterrupted view of the countryside. Some three years earlier a schism had broken out in the Community and a rival synagogue had been opened in Wrottesley Street. Faced with this situation, the leaders of 100 years ago decided to meet it with the courageous decision to build a new synagogue with a capacity sufficient to meet not only their immediate requirements but also those of the future. That their efforts were crowned with success is a tribute to their foresight, character and courage. Birmingham Jewry became reunited in its new and magnificent synagogue.

## HUNDRED YEARS . . .

Since then, the prestige of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation has been enhanced by its characteristic unity. It has grown considerably in numbers and in influence, so that today it is still not only the primary congregation of Birmingham Jewry, but one of the leading congregations in Anglo-Jewry.

In commemoration of this historic anniversary, a special Centenary service will be held in the Synagogue on Sunday, 14th October, 1956, at which the Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Israel Brodie, will officiate. On the same evening, a Celebration Banquet will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Fuller details of these events will be circulated among the members of the congregation in due course.

But the most important feature of the Centenary celebrations must obviously have reference to the future of the Congregation. We must emulate the example of our forbears, and build for *our* children. We therefore commend to your attention an outline of the proposals which the Council of the congregation unanimously recommends to its members. These are projects which will not only help to preserve the memory of this centenary year, but will serve the present and future generations by providing long overdue improvements and amenities to our Synagogue, the Communal Hall and adjacent buildings, thus perfecting that concentration of Jewish life and property, which has sturdily developed over the century and become known throughout the land as 'Singers Hill'.





## THE SYNAGOGUE

IT is proposed to reconstruct the interior of the two wings alongside the forecourt, which at present house the sexton and the caretaker.

The left wing — at present the caretaker's house — will be converted into :

- (a) A CHILDREN'S SYNAGOGUE to seat about 80.
- (b) A new maisonette for the caretaker.
- (c) A new vestry for the ministers.

The right wing will be converted into :

- (a) A spacious gentlemen's cloakroom and toilet.
- (b) A ladies' toilet on the ground floor.
- (c) A new maisonette for the sexton.



*Illustration of the  
Medallion to be  
presented to the Children*





## THE CHILDREN'S SYNAGOGUE

**T**HE Childrens Synagogue will be a small sanctuary in which the children will regularly conduct their religious services on Sabbaths and Festivals. It will be beautifully furnished with all the appurtenances of a Jewish House of Worship. Here our children will grow up to love their religious heritage and become familiar with the traditions of their people; here will be provided a training ground which will strengthen their loyalties to our ancient Faith.

**OTHER FEATURES** of the above proposals :

The Childrens Synagogue could be used for our daily weekday services. Adjoining the Children's Synagogue will be located the new vestry for ministers, somewhat larger than the present one. Its new situation will enable our Clergy to pass directly from the Children's Synagogue into the main Synagogue without leaving the building. The gentlemen's cloakroom will be transferred to the right wing (now the Sexton's house) where much larger accommodation will be provided. A ladies' toilet will also be constructed on the ground floor. The first and second floors of each wing will be converted into maisonettes to re-house the sexton and the caretaker under modern conditions.

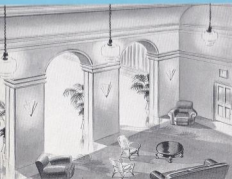


*Artist's Impression of  
the new Children's  
Synagogue*



ABOVE, *Communal Hall today*

BELOW, *Artist's impression of the new lounge to be added to the Communal Hall*



## THE COMMUNAL HALL

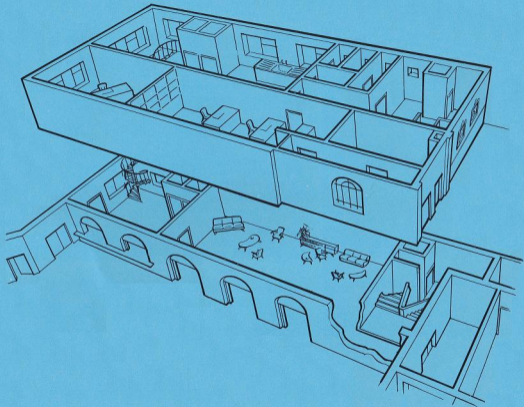
IT is proposed to convert the present kitchen and Succah alongside the Main Hall into a lounge with direct approach from an improved entrance lobby; the existing dummy windows will be opened up to give several direct approaches to the main floor. This will considerably improve the accommodation and amenities of the Communal Hall.

To erect over the present kitchen and Succah :

- (a) A large modern kitchen with direct access from Ellis Street, having lifts to a servery on the ground floor adjoining the new lounge. The need for bigger and better kitchen facilities has been a matter of concern to users for many years.
- (b) New secretarial offices and an ante-room to the Council Chamber. Both these improvements are very desirable.
- (c) To transfer the Succah to the space between the Communal Hall (stage end) and the rear of the Synagogue.

### Generally

- (a) In order to enhance the beauty of the Synagogue, it is proposed to replace all the plain windows with highly artistic stained glass. (Details and designs are set out in this brochure).
- (b) It is proposed to alter the central section of the Choir Gallery, thereby improving the view of the Ark and the stained glass window over.
- (c) It is intended to modernise the Heating Plant by the introduction of oil burning equipment and the renewal of boilers.
- (d) The Congregation's superannuation scheme is to be brought into line with modern requirements and placed on a firmer basis.
- (e) A History of the Congregation over the past 100 years is being compiled and written by Mr. Harry Levine. A synopsis of the History in brochure form, suitably illustrated, will be printed and a copy presented to every member of the Congregation.
- (f) Medallions commemorating the centenary will be distributed among the children of the Congregation.



*An Artist's impression of the proposed additions to the Communal Hall Buildings.*



## NEW WINDOWS FOR

IT has long been felt that the plain windows tend to detract from the quality of the rest of the building while the dignity and beauty of many modern synagogues are enhanced by their attractive stained glass windows. The Council has therefore consulted a firm of artists well skilled in this field of craftsmanship, with the view of replacing the existing windows with stained glass. This firm has devoted much time to study and research of Jewish symbolism and art and has put forward a comprehensive scheme of designs covering many phases of biblical history, the Festivals and Jewish religion. In the selection of subjects, our Chief Minister, Rev. Chaim Pearl has been consulted and his approval has been obtained. Brief details of the subjects to be depicted in the 24 main windows are set out on the opposite page.

The two small windows over the doors below the gallery will be treated to harmonise with the corresponding portion of the other lower windows with suitable subjects. As will be observed from the illustrations, our scheme provides for donors to have the right to dedicate a window to the memory of their dear ones. The dedication will be inscribed on the window.

Donors of £1,500 will be given the right to have a window at ground floor level and £1,000 will entitle a donor to be allocated a window on the first floor level (Ladies' Gallery). Any surplus which remains over the cost of the windows will be allocated to the Congregation superannuation fund in order to meet our obligation to provide adequate pensions for our ministers and officials and their dependents. It will be appreciated that donations for this part of the cenary scheme cannot be made by the usual covenant plan spread over seven years. The Council reserves all rights of control over allocation of particular windows and the wording of dedicatory inscriptions.

### L.1 THE SABBATH.

Main theme: Creation completed. (Dishon Sabot) or rest over the Universe.  
 Small medallions: Table joyfully set; Hands moving the candles.  
 (Design by Asha Hershman Studios)

# THE SYNAGOGUE

**LOWER LEVEL NORTH SIDE**  
Six Windows  
**JEWISH FESTIVALS AND  
SYMBOLISM**

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| L 1: THE SABBATH | L 4: SUCCOTH       |
| L 2: PESACH      | L 5: ROSH HASHANAH |
| L 3: SHAVOOTH    | L 6: YOM KIPPUR    |

**LOWER LEVEL SOUTH SIDE**  
Five Windows  
**JERUSALEM**

- L 7: JERUSALEM IN GLORY  
L 8: TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM  
L 9: INCENSE BEFORE THE ARK  
L 10: TEMPLE MENORAH  
L 11: GATES OF PRAYER CLOSING

**UPPER LEVEL NORTH SIDE**  
Seven Windows  
**THE CREATION**

- U 1: LET THERE BE LIGHT  
U 2: DIVIDING OF THE WATERS  
U 3: EARTH BROUGHT FORTH GRASS, HERBS,  
FRUIT  
U 4: SUN, MOON, STARS  
U 5: FISH OF THE SEA AND FOWL OF THE AIR  
U 6: BEASTS OF THE EARTH  
U 7: PARADISE

**UPPER LEVEL SOUTH SIDE**  
Six Windows  
**EARLY JEWISH HISTORY —  
BIBLE (Genesis and Exodus)**

- U 8: FLOOD AND ARK  
U 9: ABRAHAM'S ALTAR  
U 10: JACOB'S LADDER  
U 11: BURNING BUSH  
U 12: STRIKING THE ROCK AND MANNA FROM  
HEAVEN (a composite group)  
U 13: MOUNT SINAI AND THE GIVING OF THE  
TORAH

*Orders have been placed for two of the windows on the lower level, viz. L 4 (Succoth) and L 9 (Incense before the Ark). These windows are centrally situated on either side of the Synagogue. It is hoped that they will be completed and fixed in time for the High Festivals in September, thereby affording members an early opportunity of judging the effect.*



U 11 THE BURNING BUSH

*Medallions representing (at the top) the several occasions when the Rod of Moses turned into a Serpent, (below) the Hebrew coming into Blood, all as described in Exodus. (Design by John Handman Studios)*

# *This Glorious Hour...*

*"I pray that each one will make the resolution in his heart to do all he can to assist, so that when the Community will gather together at its Centenary service our rejoicing will be all the greater because we shall all have met the challenge of this glorious hour"*

**W**ITH these stirring words our Chief Minister, Rev. Chaim Pearl, ended his historic pronouncement on the first day of Rosh Hashanah 1955, when he outlined a scheme to commemorate the Centenary Year 1956.

Although economic conditions have compelled us to modify our more ambitious projects, the principle underlying our aim remains, namely that of commemorating our centenary in a practical way, by modernising and extending the facilities available for our religious and communal life.

It is a call to action. It is the challenge of our time. Can we emulate the vision and enterprise of our forbears of 100 years ago? For remember they built not for themselves alone, but also for us . . . Let us therefore seize this opportunity to rebuild in a manner worthy of our great heritage.

## **£50,000 SYNAGOGUE CENTENARY APPEAL**

To cover the cost of the various schemes outlined above, it is estimated that a sum of **£50,000** is required, exclusive of the cost of the new stained glass windows.

Many years have passed since our Congregation was last asked to provide a substantial sum for local needs. Hence it is with every confidence that we now launch our **SYNAGOGUE CENTENARY APPEAL**.

If you will help us, if you will do your best, we are content. So long as we have the right spirit, the desire to help, then we shall reach our goal.

There are many generous people in our Community, who would not believe it possible that they could subscribe £1,000, and yet, if they but realised it, they could, by paying only £82 a year for 7 years and signing a covenant.

So please remember to spread your gift over 7 years, thereby enabling you to rank among the 100 big givers who are needed to ensure success to our Appeal. Forms of covenant are available from the Secretary.

Smaller donations, too, are not only welcome but necessary, both for the amount they yield and in order that this effort may be truly representative of the *entire* congregation and not the gift of a few. Only in that way can it be regarded as a response from the *whole* congregation.

**HERE IS THE SCALE TO GUIDE YOU ON DONATIONS BY COVENANT :**

<b>YOUR GIFT OF</b>	{	1.    £4   2   3	Annually for 7 years with a covenant means you are giving	{	1.    £50	so long as tax remains at 8/6 in £
		2.    £8   4   6			2.    £100	
		3.    £16   9   0			3.    £200	
		4.    £20   11   3			4.    £250	
		5.    £41   2   6			5.    £500	
		6.    £82   5   0			6.    £1,000	
		7.    £123   7   6			7.    £1,500	
		8.    £411   0   0			8.    £5,000	

Up-to-date lists of donors will appear from time to time in the Birmingham Jewish Recorder and it is intended to reserve an appropriate space in one of the new structures (e.g., in the entrance hall of the new Children's Synagogue) for bronze plaques or panels to be prominently displayed, which will perpetuate the names of donors of £100 or over.

Donors of 1,000 guineas or more will be presented with a gold replica of the Centenary Memorial medallion. Donors of sums below this amount and not less than £250 will be presented with a silver replica of the medallion.

MAY WE GO FORWARD TO THE DAWN OF THE NEXT 100 YEARS WITH FAITH IN OUR CAUSE, CONFIDENCE IN OUR DESTINY, AND ABOUNDING GENEROSITY IN OUR HEARTS, FOR REMEMBER THAT EVERY CONTRIBUTION, HOWEVER HUMBLE, ENABLES US TO IMPROVE AND BEAUTIFY OUR BELOVED SYNAGOGUE, HELPS US TO BUILD A CHILDREN'S SYNAGOGUE, AND GIVES US THE MEANS TO PROVIDE GREATLY NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE COMMUNAL HALL.

*We are indebted to an anonymous donor for defraying the cost of this Brochure*

1856 — 1956



5616 — 5716

THE BROCHURE IS PUBLISHED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE BIRMINGHAM HEBREW CONGREGATION

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