

# **Memories of the Kehillas Frankfurt of my Youth**



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z'l**

**Transcript of talk given by  
Mr. Willie Neuberger z"l  
to the Ladies Guild of the  
Golders Green Beth Hamedrash**

It gives me very great pleasure to give a talk here in Wohl Lodge with which I have been involved since the day I discovered that the site on which it now stands was up for sale. Any person who enters here can immediately feel the sense of peace and harmony which prevails and which gives happiness and contentment to those who reside here during their advanced years.

You might ask how it has come about that I am speaking here at all. Well, as you all know, I reside at the address where the Monday afternoon functions are organised and I hope you will allow me to pay a tribute to "the wonderful Nina" who puts so much energy and time into finding speakers for these occasions, which I can assure you is not at all easy.

Recently, after she had spent hours unsuccessfully phoning around to find a speaker, and in order to save on the telephone bill, I said to her that I would do it. "YOU??" came the very encouraging reaction. "What can you talk about?" I replied that I could talk about the Kehilloh of Frankfurt, which was acceptable, bearing in mind that for over fifty years plus Nina had heard plenty about it. So here I am and here is "FRANKFURT".

The usual thing that happens when I meet strangers is that they immediately say "Oh! You are from Frankfurt, aren't you?" Sometimes they ask me where I come from and when I invite them to guess the answer they always get it right. The undeniable fact is that Frankfurt has given those of us privileged to have been born and to have lived there a special status, and I hope that the reason for this will become clear to you by the time I finish my talk.

I cannot possibly tell you the whole history of Frankfurt in one afternoon. It spans over one thousand years and it will have to suffice if I mention that the presence of Jews in Frankfurt is first recorded in the years 700 to 800. The city was situated on a very important trade route as a result of which it became a great commercial centre and the Jews of Frankfurt were very much responsible for this development. During the hundreds of years of ghetto life they always had a well organised Kehilloh, and many of the most famous of our past Rabbonim were either born or lived there. Important and well-known seforim originated from Frankfurt which still today occupy first place in the talmudic literature of our times. Persecution, pogroms and slaughter, which often drove our people out of the city did not stop the Jews of Frankfurt from returning there and starting afresh, displaying enormous resilience. However emancipation under Napoleon and thereafter was a catastrophe for the religious Jewry of that period as it brought with it reform and liberal Judaism which threatened to destroy the orthodox faith. But Torah in its entirety never gets totally lost and in that dark period a group of eleven men banded together to found a "Chevra Shass" which freed them from the control of the reformers.

In 1851 those eleven men had the courage and foresight to extend a call to a rising star on the orthodox firmament to be their Rav and leader. He was the illustrious Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch zs"l, who had already taken up the fight against reform in

a number of his writings and whose teachings promised to make a lasting impact on the Torah observant but as yet small community. Rav Hirsch had combined his Torah learning with studies in theology at Bonn University where he had met his greatest opponent, Abraham Geiger, the propounder of reform Judaism who met his mettle in the Rav. In years to come the successors to Rav Hirsch, under who the Kehilloh grew by leaps and bounds, were his son-in-law Rabbi Solomon Breuer and subsequently Rabbi Horovitz from Hungary, the Father of Mrs. Zivi Hanstater amv"sh (o"h) who is still with us. He in particular brought the rabbonus closer to the members and to the youngsters of the community.

Rav Hirsch, with his great vision, stopped the rising tide of reform and by formulating the ideology of "Toroh im Derech Eretz" saved orthodox jewry in Germany from total oblivion. He appreciated that even for the most religious Jews the newly gained access to the wider world around was a great temptation but his "Toroh im Derech Eretz" principle gave their conscience an easy entrance to the world of culture, science and commerce, without having to forgo even one iota of their deep religious convictions. The way was free for those chareidim al devar Hashem to tudy at universities and to follow an academic career. Frum doctors, lawyers and teachers were badly needed at the time so that future generations could continue on their orthodox path of yiddishkeit. Rav Hirsch was extremely matsliach and soon after his arrival in Frankfurt some five hundred families had joined the fledgling Kehilloh., then called the "Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft" which survived until destroyed by the Nazis. A beautiful Shul was built, supported financially mainly by the Rothschild family, and some time later Rav Hirsch founded the famous "Hirsch Realschule". This school provided a thorough Torah chinuch as well as a secular education and was attended literally by generations. The epoch of Rav Hirsch is movingly described in a small book ("Memories of Frankfurt") written by the late Mr. Hermann Schwab o"h, who together with Rabbi Munk zs"l, founded our Kehilloh here in Golders Green.

Please allow me now to present you with a picture of Frankfurt as I knew it in my youth. At that time, the Kehilloh and especially the Shul were the centre of our lives. Most of the members lived in the eastern area of the city, in close proximity to the synagogue. As a general rule, families lived in flats and it was only a few of the wealthy who lived in houses, some of them actually being very beautiful. We loved our Shul which was built around 1905 to 1907, as the previous synagogue had become too small to contain the ever increasing number of new members who had joined us over the years. The building was the most beautiful synagogue in Europe.

It was erected not only with monetary contributions from all members, but equipment and appurtenances, such as the Oron Hakodesh, the Bima, the wrought iron gates and pews, were donated by individual members.

The story goes that one family, not noted for their generosity, were said to have donated the acoustics and the holes in the ladies' mechitzo! As the Shul was the lifeblood of the Kehilloh perhaps I may be allowed to dwell on it a little longer.



As you can see from the photograph, (above) there was an imposing entrance right opposite a park which surrounded the walls of what used to be the inner city Frankfurt and which in later years was used a lot for walks on Shabbos afternoons. Having walked over a large courtyard you would enter the Shul building through one of two wide arches, passing a large cloakroom on either side, fitted out as in a theatre, and manned by two attendants dressed in livery, top hats and gold braid. These attendants knew the hook number of each member and accordingly there was hardly a commotion at the end of services, when everybody wanted to retrieve their coats at the same time! There were also special hooks for the top hats which every married member had to wear and which they exchanged for their ordinary hat at the end of the service. Incidentally, top hats were also worn at, bar minon, levaivos, and most gentlemen kept a spare one at home for such events.





The inside of the synagogue (above) was vast and high, lit up by about eight hundred candle shaped bulbs on various candelabra and on two large copper pillars at the front of the Shul. The Bima, or Almemor as we called it, was in the centre and made of marble as was the pulpit and also an enormous edifice at the front of the building, surrounding the Oron Hakodesh. There were about one thousand two hundred men's

seats and six to eight hundred ladies seats with a very kosher mechitza of course. In a vast Beth Hachnoses discipline and decorum had to be strictly observed and maintained. Indeed, strict it was, supervised by the chief shammash, Mr. David Ginsberger, o"n, the grandfather of Mrs. Ellen Bowden and (lehibodel ben chaim lechaim) Mr. Bernard Kahn (z"l). He was a man of enormous dignity and tact but who ruled over the Shul with an iron hand. Talking was kept to an absolute minimum and children were not allowed to run around the Shul – in fact, they were only allowed to attend after reaching the age of four or five. Nobody was allowed to daven with their tallis over their head, other than the Rav, and he only for shemonei esrei. "Shockeling" was unheard of and once, when an over eager young man tried it, he was immediately spotted, tapped on the shoulder by Mr. Ginsberger, and told "Young man – we do not use force here!" The Rav as well as the Chazanim wore black gowns with snow white collars and they also wore black velvet caps. There was an Oberkantor, who you can see on this photograph (below) lighting the chanukah menorah, and there was also a Chazan Sheni and Baal Koreh par excellence, namely, Mr. Steinberger z"l, the late father of Mrs. Gitse Bondi, who taught hundreds of bar mitzvah boys their leining, me included, with great patience. To have three bar mitzvahs on one Shabbos was nothing unusual and once a month all those boys who had recently celebrated their bar mitzvah were assembled in front of the pulpit and were addressed by the Rav.



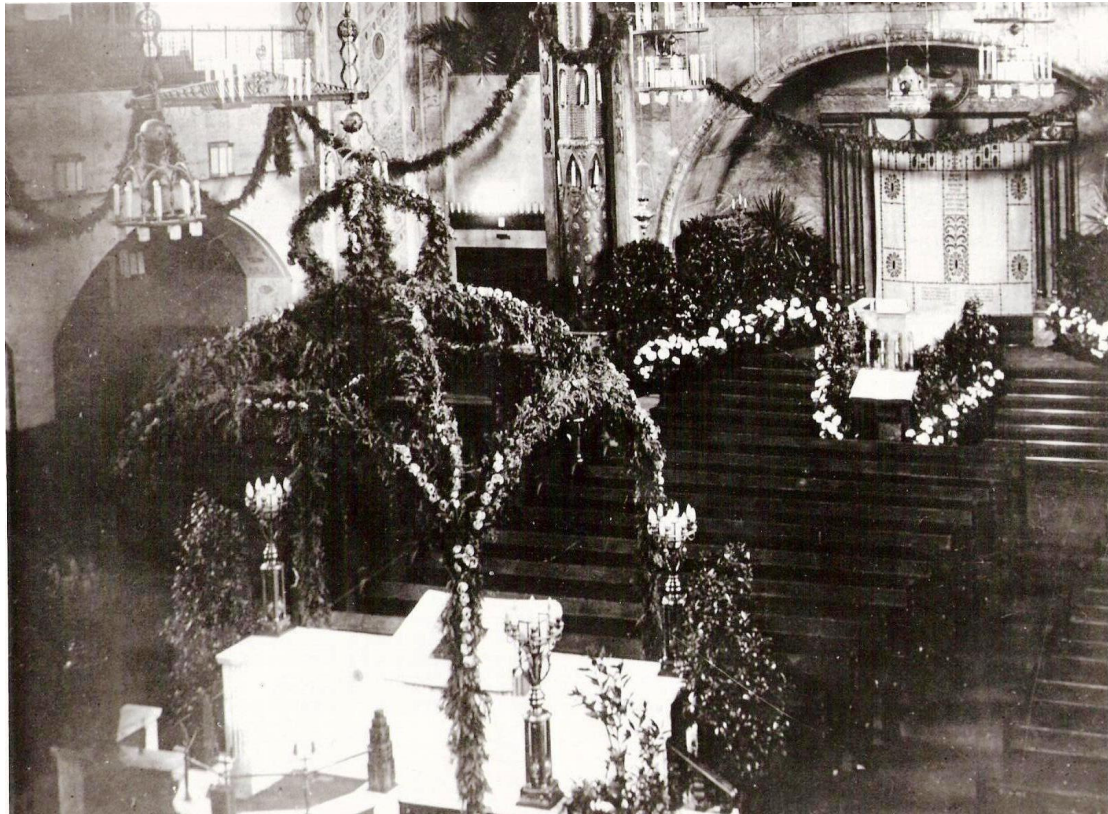


A well trained choir, consisting of gentlemen and boys beautified the services immensely. The choir was originally formed by Mr. Japhet who composed many negunim, some of which are still used today in many shuls. He was followed by a very artistic choir master who arranged a yearly concert in a concert hall with the Shul choir, together with a renowned Chazen from abroad as soloist. A very moving minhag took place when a young father would bring his one year old son to shul on his arm to present a new "wimple" for the Sefer Toroh in use on that Shabbos or

Yom-Tov, and would then go to the front of the Shul for the child to be bentscht by the Rav. On Friday nights the under bar mitzvoh boys were split. Half would stand by the Chazen as he made kiddush at the front of the Shul and the other half would be grouped next to the seat of the Rav where he would bentsch and shake hands with each of them – quite a long procedure. I feel it a shame that this minhag has not been maintained in our Shul any longer.

Apart from the Gabbe on duty, who would stand in a marble box, nobody would approach the Rav to wish him a Gut Shabbos, perhaps because it would have taken him too long if all seven hundred to eight hundred attendees would have done so. If you were fortunate enough to be given an Aliyah you were not “called up” by just having your name shouted out across the shul, but you were given a small plate with the number of your Aliyoh inscribed upon it i.e. Cohen, Levi, Shlishi and so on. These plates were made of copper for Shabbos use, red velvet for Yom-Tov and of course white for Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur. Needless to say one mishberach per person was allowed. As boys we knew the voice of every member and without looking up could identify by voice who had been given an Aliyoh, and who was davening in front of the Omud. There was no shortage of odd congregants! One particular one who comes to mind was known as the “Kehilloh Shote” and we boys knew the date of his Yahrzeits and had great fun listening to his odd davening. Every Yom-Tov had its own d’cor, and as you can see from the photograph (below), on Shevuos the Shul was filled with a display of flowers and plants which would have won first prize at the Chelsea flower show! The cost thereof, which must have been considerable, was borne each year by one particular member who never allowed his name to be divulged. On Succos the sea of lulovim carried around the Shul was indeed an impressive sight. Here again, we boys knew exactly who, every year, had the biggest esrog and who had the tallest lulov. The highlight of the year was of course Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur when all the desks were covered with white cloths, the Bima with a white silk embroidered cover, the very wide steps leading to the Oron Hakodesh with white carpet and of course the Oron Hakodesh itself with a large white Poroche, with gold inscription. Unless you had seen it, you could not possibly envisage the majestic view when the Oron was opened and displayed thirty or so Sifrei Torah, all in white mantles with glittering silver, some of it antique. It was of course even more impressive on Kol Nidrei night when hundreds of lights shone on a Beth Haknesses filled with about two thousand people, not an empty seat, with all the married men in their white kittels, and all others in white kappels.





Simchas Torah evening was also a very happy and impressive sight when, all members of various committees, and there were many of them, had been informed by printed invitation that they were to present themselves in front of the Oron Hakodesh for the first Hakofeh in dinner suits and top hats, of course. They were lined up on the stairs on both sides of the Oron Hakodesh in a semi circle with the Rav and the Chazan in the centre. They were each given a Sefer Torah to carry around the shul lead by the Chazan and followed by the Rav, who carried the small Sefer Torah which once belonged to Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch and which incidentally we now have in our Shul. Dancing, as we now know it, was not known and sweets were not allowed to be given to the children by individuals, although on Simchas Torah morning a generous sweet distribution from the Kehillah took place. All these scenes cannot possibly be forgotten by those who had the privilege to see them and participate in them.

The davening in Shul was of course based on the old Frankfurt minhagim which go back hundreds of years, and I have a sepher which lists them all. Everybody was familiar with the tunes sung on Shabbosos and Yomim Tovim and there was hardly a member, including the women, who could not hum them. The favourite tunes were the twenty five or so ones for Kaddish and also those sung on the Yomim Noroim, some of them sung by a layman Baal Tefillah, Mr. Seligman, the father of Mrs. Sheldon and great-grandfather of our Mr. Gerald Lewin.

The Kehillah did of course have many other facilities and institutions besides the Beth Hachinuch itself. For example, the mikve of the Kehillah was built under the Shul itself, and the keilim mikve resembled a small swimming pool, with a stone wide ledge. You can imagine how busy that area was during the week before Pesach each year!

A Yeshiva was founded by Rav Breuer z"l which was attended both by bochrim from the town who joined when they finished their schooling, and also by some young men who came from Poland and Hungary and who wanted to combine their Torah learning

with studies at Frankfurt university, a combination which they could not do in their home towns.

Amongst them was the late Mr. A. Bokor and Rabbi Dr. E. Wiesenberg (zs"l) who both achieved great heights in their learning. Some bochrin even came from London, for example Mr. Henry Lunzer and the Grodzinski brothers (z"l). The Rosh Yeshiva was Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer zs"l who later founded the famous Washington Heights Kehilloh based on the traditions of Frankfurt. Meals for the bochrin both during the week and also on Shabbosos were provided by various families.

The town did have an Eruv but its validity was not accepted by our Kehilloh and this was unfortunately a cause of deep division between the general community and ours. Indeed, a marriage between a member of our community with the daughter of a family who carried on Shabbos, relying on the Eruv, was frowned upon.

Other institutions included the Rothschild Hospital where most of us saw the light of day for the first time. It was of course administered on strict religious lines as far as kashrus and shmiras Shabbos was concerned, and the doctors who worked there were of the highest calibre, with well known consultants also at hand. In a separate building nearby there was a children's hospital, and there was also an orphanage under the management of a wonderful couple, Mr. and Mrs. Marx, who were like parents to the children under their care. Indeed, a number of children for whom they cared and who lived in the orphanage subsequently made their way in life in various spheres to the highest levels.

A clinic for geriatrics and incurables was in the charge of a Mr. and Mrs. Seckbach, and if there could be human Malochim they would qualify as such. It was a most moving moment when on Friday nights Mr. Seckbach would make Kiddush for all the patients, in a loud and beautiful voice, standing in the centre of the building, with the doors to all the rooms and wards wide open so that all could hear. I cannot recollect that there was an Old Age Home as such and can only imagine that elderly parents were cared for by their own children wherever possibly. I well remember that my own grandparents z"l were cared for by two of my aunts who by so doing forfeited their own chances to marry. (Note: These two aunts, Gitta and Rosa were sadly deported to Theresienstadt during the war. Hashem Yikom Domom.)

Apart from the Hirsch Realschule of which I will say a few words later, there was also a "Volksschule" for children with learning disabilities, or who were from under privileged families or without parents. The saintly Rector Falk z"l, the grandfather of our Rebbetzen Feldman, was its Headmaster. I should at this point mention that all the institutions in Frankfurt benefited greatly from the benevolence and generosity of the famous Rothschild family.

The kashrus supervision of the butcher, bakers, grocers, cafes etc. was in the hands of the venerable Dayan Posen zs"l who ruled very strictly over the many establishments including a first class hotel. Nevertheless, occasionally lapses did occur which from time to time, gave rise to great hilarity. For example a member once met Dayan Posen on his way home and said to him; "Dayan Posen, if you come with me down the street you will see one of your bakers being shaven with a razor". The Dayan immediately went, saw the baker, and went up to him and said; "Your licence has ceased from this very minute!"

Another example- it was the rule that shomered milk was delivered straight into people's kitchens by the milkman. However on Pesach an extra shomer had to accompany the milkman on his rounds. On one day of a Pesach, probably Chol Hamoed, the Dayan, while on his way to Shul saw the milk barrow unattended in the street, still loaded with one milk churn. Without any ado, the Dayan lifted it out of the

cart and spilt all the milk into the street. Strong measures indeed! The fishmonger shop was owned by Family Wallach, the family of Rebbetzen Halpern (o'h) and to attract customers there was a large notice in the window saying "From Mode Ani to Hamaloch, not a day without Wallach"!

The Kehilloh was a tightly knit large family, and both good and bad times were shared, with help and support being given when and where needed by individuals and by organisations. The Ladies Guild of the Kehilloh generated a lot of charity and they also ran a very successful club for girls of school age and older who either came from poorer families or from large families who had little accommodation. These young ladies received a meal after school, and they were supervised whilst doing their homework and they participated in all sorts of activities arranged for them. Their yearly Chanukah party was their highlight when they were presented with new clothes, toys and games. Bar Mitzvah boys from under privileged families were given brand new outfits and I remember my Mother o'h, a very active member of the Ladies Guild – we are in that business already for the second generation – obtaining suits for free from a store whose owner was completely non-observant, but considered this to be his only mitzvo!

When I say that everybody knew each other, you must remember that many families shared the same surname, such as Kahn, Levy etc. This could lead in theory to confusion, so in order to avoid the problem, some people used to attach their trade name to their surname. For example, Kohlen Moses, Kartoffel Oppenheimer, Eier Kahn and Silber Posen, some of these families most probably being known to you. There was however one family, consisting of four brothers, who had the surname of "Eschwege". Fortunately, one of them was the main secretary of the community, and he was known as the "Kehilloh Eschwege". One of the brothers owned an opticians shop and of course he was known as the "Brillen Eschwege". A third brother loved to daven at the Omud and he was known as the "Tefilloh Eschwege", whilst the fourth brother was a meek and very quite gentleman and was therefore known as the "Stille Eschwege". So there you have it: Kehilloh, Brille, Tefilloh and Stille!

Amongst the outstanding establishments in Frankfurt was the Hirsch Realschule. The front of the building housed the boys' school whilst the girls' school, of equal size, was at the rear. There was of course strict separation but who could prevent "meeting by sheer coincidence" on the way home from school? The school offered a thorough Torah education alongside a then modern secular programme, up to the age of fifteen years for all pupils. Those who wanted to study for an academic career and study at university would have no choice but to then enrol at one of the local non-Jewish gymnasiums, where they had to attend lessons on Shabbos mornings, without any exceptions being made. However this did not present a great problem as a routine was worked out for these youngsters which included krias hatorah of the parshas hashovuah during the afternoon.

The teachers at the school were mainly, middle aged, but some were older and they had taught generations before us. They were mostly great lamdonim yet some of them carried the title "Professor Doctor" and had to be addressed as such. Discipline was extremely strict, starting with the school caretaker who every morning would look at our clothes and point out any speck if there was one. Many a time he would send a child home to clean himself up. He was indeed one of the Chassidei Umos HoOlam.

It was to the caretaker to whom everyone would sell their Chometz before Pesach in the form of a printed contract which was handed over with the key for the room where the Chometz was locked away. Can you imagine what went on there on Motzoei

Pesach when the whole Kehilloh came to retrieve their key, although some members did stop first at the nearby pub for a drink of beer on their way home.

Many ex-pupils made their name all over the world as Rabbonim and in the fields of commerce and science. To name just a few, there was Rabbi Shimon Schwab zs"l, the former Rav of Washington Heights Kehilloh in New York, and in South Africa it was the late Dr. F. Homburger z"l who built up the orthodox community. In Israel, the position of State Controller, a position which can only be filled by a person of greatest integrity was held by Dr. Nebenzahl o"h and there were many others, especially from earlier generations who came to the fore as bankers and industrialists. With us today we have some of the descendants of these prominent personalities, such as Mrs. H. Wahrhaftig (o"h), a descendant of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch zs"l, as well as several others.

Unfortunately our social relations with the large number of Polish immigrants to Frankfurt are not to our credit, but in our defence, I must say that their physical needs were generously seen to by our members.

Most families of the Kehilloh had a source of parnosoh and indeed there were a large number of family firms and businesses who only employed shomrei Shabbos staff. Literally hundreds of employees worked for a huge metal company, Beer Sondheimer, who were located in an enormous building which also housed its own synagogue. It was a firm of world wide renown and it even absorbed those unfortunates who were really unemployable and who were given "work" in what was known as the "Rachmones Department". Generally speaking, in Frankfurt the business world, the banks and the big stores were mainly owned by Jewish owners who gave employment to thousands of people. There were friendly relations with the non-Jewish population and many wealthy Jewish families contributed to every establishment in the town, be it museums, the university, hospitals, theatres or opera houses. In fact their contributions were so generous that some of these establishments would never have been built without Jewish support. I have a photo (below) of the Memorial Tablet which hung in our school, listing the names of former pupils who gave up their lives during the First World War, some of them volunteers; such were their feelings of duty to "the Fatherland". The reward received for this duty is known to all of you!



1914 DIE DER KRIEG UNS NAHM 1918

זכרונם לברכה

ADLER, JOSEF  
APELT, MENDEL  
AUERBACH, HEINRICH  
BEIFUS, SIEGFRIED  
BENDER, LUDWIG  
BENDER, NOA  
BERGER, ISI  
BICKHARDT, SALOMON  
BING, LEO  
BING, MORITZ  
CARO, ADOLF  
DANNENBERG, ALFRED  
DANNENBERG, MANFRED  
DOMBROWER, JAKOB  
DÜRKHEIM, CARL  
ELLERN, HEINRICH  
FEIST, MARTIN  
FRENKEL, MAX  
FRIEDMANN, SEMMY  
FROMM, FRITZ  
GOITEIN, HARRY  
GOLDSCHMIDT, HERMANN  
GOLDSTEIN, HERMANN  
GRÜNEBAUM, JULIUS  
HERRMANN, JULIUS  
HIRSCHBERG, MORITZ  
HOFMANN, ERICH  
JGERSHEIMER, MAX  
JAPHET, MAX  
JEIDEL, BENJAMIN  
JEIDEL, JOSEF  
JEIDEL, SIEGFRIED  
KAHN, LEO

KÖNIGSHÖFER, EMANUEL  
KÖSTERICH, OSKAR  
LEDERMANN, ALFRED  
LEVITA, JAKOB  
LINDENBAUM, SAMUEL  
LOEB, JULIUS  
LOEB, SALLY  
MAINZ, ALFRED  
MICHEL, SALLY  
MÖLLER, JOSEF  
MOSES, SALLI  
NEISS, SALOMON  
NELKEN, LAZAR  
NEUMANN, CARL  
PESEL, ERNST  
PESEL, LEOPOLD  
PLAUT, DAVID  
POSEN, JAKOB  
RAPP, ERNST  
RAPP, LUDWIG  
ROSENHEIMER, SALLY  
ROSENTHAL, ISIDOR  
ROTHSCHILD, MEIER  
SCHAMES, ISAAK H.  
SEEMANN, LUDWIG  
SILBERMANN, ISAAK  
SONDHEIMER, ISAK  
SONNENBERGER, MAX  
UNNA, MOSES  
WALLACH, DAVID  
WOLFE, BENNO  
WOLFF, MARTIN  
ZINKES, LUDWIG

זכרונם לברכה

My friends, I could continue talking to you for much longer but it would become even more boring than it has been already. For me, this afternoon has been a wonderful opportunity to relive my youth yet again. Perhaps it is the duty of those of us who were privileged to live in Frankfurt to keep alive the memory of that wonderful and outstanding Kehilloh which has disappeared from the face of the earth, but which has given us the chisuk to continue its teachings in the wonderful Kehilloh which we have here and for which we must be so grateful.

**SPEECH GIVEN BY OPA Z”L AT THE ANNUAL SEUDOH OF  
THE G.G.B.H. CHEVRA KADDISHA IN CHESHVAN 5759 (1998)**

When I was first approached to speak to this illustrious audience I felt that I could not possibly accept such a great kovod. However when I realised that the approach had come not only from the Chairman of the Chevra Kaddisha, but also from the Rosh Hakohol of the Kehillah, and not being adverse to some kovod, I changed my mind and quickly accepted before anybody else would be offered this great honour.

I have had the great fortune of addressing the Chevra in the past but never before in my capacity as a member thereof, which I have been privileged to have been for some 40 years. My first recollections of a Chevra Kaddisha stem from my youth when I was a trainee at a bank in Frankfurt, owned by two frum partners. They were not known for their generosity, and in fact, when the famous Shul building was constructed, a rumour was circulated that they had paid for the acoustics and for the holes in the “gitter” ( mechitzo) of the Ladies Gallery! However, one of those partners was a member of the Chevra and even though, to save minimal expense, he would never come to the office by tram or car, nevertheless, when it came to the annual Chevra Seudoh, he would not hesitate to hire a horse-drawn carriage to take him to the event. I can still picture him in my mind, dressed for the function in a tail coat with a white tie, an opera cloak, a top-hat and silver topped walking stick. He made no economies for that special occasion!

I am fortunate to have inherited from my past good friend, the late Mr. Peretz Mosbacher z”l, the menu of the Chevra Seudoh held in Frankfurt in 1930. I will read it out quickly so that you will be able to judge for yourselves whether our menu here this evening also entitles us to be called “Gourmets”. It might also give our ladies some ideas as to what they should serve next year.

( I remember that at this point Opa z”l read out the menu from a printed menu card, but despite an intensive search, I have been unable to find it – MN)

Bearing in mind that we are a Chevra Kaddisha, I can truly say of it “Dos heist gelebt”!

On a more serious note, rather than delivering a Devar Torah which I leave to the Talmidei Chachomim of our circle, I would like to share some recollections with you. Our Chevra was founded some 62 years ago on the initiative of the late Mr. Hermann Schwab z”l, who was one of the pillars of the then recently founded Golders Green Beth Hamedrash and whose ideas and visions as to how an orthodox kehilloh should perform are as valid today as they were then. Over very many subsequent years the leading figure of our Chevra was of course the late Mr. Bernard Jacobson, z”l, who for very many years ensured that the Minhogim under which we operate should not be changed or altered in any way, and that no new customs, stemming from any mysterious source, should be introduced. As a result of their efforts we have a Chevra Kaddisha which has attracted loyal members of our Kehilloh who understand the importance of the Avodas Hakodesh which we pledge ourselves to undertake, and who are ready and willing at all times to be called upon to carry out our holy duties with tact and dignity, fortunately once again, under the guidance of a Jacobson. These

same sentiments apply equally to our Ladies Chevra who, for their part, are also guided by a devoted President.

It was a most wonderful and appropriate idea of the then Gabboim of the Chevra to fix the date of the destruction of the Botei Kenessious in Germany, an event which still today, sixty years thereafter, fills our hearts with pain, as the most appropriate day for the annual Taanis of the Chevra, followed by our Seudoh. In this way we can suitably commemorate our grief over what we have lost and at the same time consider our hopes for the future. My thoughts go back to the Shabbos in November 1938, when I was already in London, and received a postcard from my late Mother o”h who was still in Frankfurt. ‘All’ it said was- and what an ‘All’ – “Die Friedberger Anlage ist in Feuer”! The Friedberger Anlage was in fact the road on which the famous Frankfurt Shul stood and it was by a park. At first we could not understand why my Mother o”h should send us a message that the park was on fire! It was only after Nacht that we learnt what a terrible episode had started in the history of our people. At that time it was only wood and stone that had been destroyed together with thousands of irreplaceable Klei Kodesh from all over Germany. We could not possibly imagine that in the following few years nearly every single Kehilloh on the continent, and there were thousands of them, would be wiped out with millions of Kedoshim and Tehorim being murdered, their neshomos going to the Olam Haemess without the attention of a Chevra Kaddisha and without even reaching a Kever Yisroel. Perhaps we should bear in mind these of our brothers and sisters , Hashem Yinokem Domom, on each occasion that we are, Chas Veshalom, called upon to perform our Avodas Hakodesh, and thereby hopefully contribute to their peace in Gan Eden.

Finally I would like to share a thought with you that came to my mind this last Simchas Torah, when we celebrated so beautifully and when we heard our children, bli eiyen hora, and many adults singing Hamaloch Hagoel so wonderfully and movingly. I thought to myself as to how many nissim our generation have experienced, and especially the ness that we have been zoche to rebuild Kehillos all over the world – Kehillos founded with great messiras nefesh by the very same people who had to rebuild their own lives after the war, but who realised that, without a community of yereim ushleimim those of us who survived the Holocaust bechessed Elyon, would not have a future as yehudim.

We at the G.G.B.H. are particularly fortunate of having had, both in the past and now in the present, spiritual leadership of the highest level to which is added devotion to the Kehilloh of people, both young and old, who are of the greatest integrity and ehrlich frumkeit. Every facet of our religious life is attended to, and we are blessed with schools which are amongst the best in the country. We have an impressive Shul building where the lights never go out (literally!), with a Mikvah, a Beis Hamedrash and a communal hall. We have a programme of Limmud Hatorah and Shiurim for both young and old and we also provide sheltered accommodation in a beautiful home for our aged members. I must of course also mention our Ladies Guild which, as is known only to a few, gives tremendous financial support to many families, and especially to Kallos, in Golders Green, other areas of London, and in Eretz Yisroel. One must also consider the enormous amount of chessed and zedokoh, support for yeshivos and other institutions, which is generated by our kehilloh day in and day out.



How grateful we must be to the Ribono Shel Olom that we have been saved to experience all this. May we all continue to play our part in the Kehilloh, which is the centre of our lives, as charedim al devar Hashem, and may the Ribono Shel Olom grant us the good health and koach to do so.



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