



DEDICATION OF THE HOME OF THE CHIEF RABBI OF PALESTINE,

Mr. Fischel's gift to the Jewish Homeland, May 27, 1923.

Mr. Fischel presenting the key of the building

to Sir Herbert Samuel, British High Commissioner for Palestine.

The following is an account of the event as prepared by a government reported found in the Biography of Harry Fischel z"l:

On SUNDAY, SIVAN 12, 5683 (May 27th, 1923), an impressive consecration ceremony took place at Jerusalem when the Beth Harav and Synagogue especially constructed by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fischel at their own expense for Chief Rabbi Kook, was consecrated.

The ceremony was a most brilliant event and will remain a red letter day in the annals of Jerusalem.

There were present the elite of the Jewish and non-Jewish communities and also a number of American visitors who then happened to be in Jerusalem. The gathering was graced by the attendance of His Excellency, The High Commissioner and Lady Samuel. That day will long be remembered as it afforded, joy and honor to Mr. and Mrs. Fischel and rendered spiritual pleasure to the whole of Orthodox Judaism in Jerusalem.

THE DECORATIONS

The spacious courtyard of the Central Committee Knesseth Israel (Vadd Hakloli) was gaily decorated. At the entrance gate there hung a bluish-white banner bearing the inscription "Beruchim Haboim" (Welcome to the Visitors). On the outside balcony, one observed a signboard in gilt letters "Beth Harav and Synagogue built by Mr. (Israel Aron) Harry and Mrs. Fischel." The interior walls of the courtyard were covered by blue and white colored bunting and banners having inscribed thereon such Biblical verses as "This day hath the Eternal appointed, let us be glad and rejoice thereon." "Bless the Lord O House of Israel; bless the Lord O House of Aron." On the wall facing the gathering there hung two pictures, one of King George V, and the

other of the High Commissioner. Immediately beneath these pictures were thirteen tablets in the form of Mogen Dovids (Shields of David) with the lettering of the donor's name-ISRAEL ARON FISCHEL.

About 3:30 P. M. the courtyard was filled to overflowing. The gathering was representative of every class and phase of Jerusalem Jewry-Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Rabbis, Talmud scholars, business men, journalists, teachers-who had all been invited by the Central Committee Knesseth Israel to, participate in the consecration ceremony. The stairs and balconies were packed with the women of Jerusalem who had also come to participate in the day's festivity.

THE DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

On a specially arranged platform, there sat on plush armchairs the two Chief Rabbis, Rabbis Kook and Jacob Meir. The first row of chairs was occupied by the American Consul, Mr. Cobb; the Italian Consul, who is a neighbor of the Beth Harav; the American visitors now in Jerusalem, Messrs. Solomon Lamport, Margareten, Horowitz, Levin, Silversweig, and others. Of rabbis there sat on the platform Rabbi Schapiro of Dohbrawitz; the veteran Rabbi Moses Samuel Glasner of Klausenburg; Rabbi Reuben Braz, brother-in-law of Mr. Fischel, Rabbi Joseph Gerson Horowitz, Rabbi Harlap; Rabbi Zorah Epstein; Rabbi M. Tibotzinsky; Rabbi Meir Auerbach; the Wardens of the Central Committee Knesseth Israel; the Mizrachi Rabbis M. Ostrowski and Asof, and others. Among other notables present were Mr. Sultzkin of Melbourne, Australia, who was chairman of the proceedings; Dr. Judah L. Magnes of New York; Colonel Kisch of the Zionist Executive; David Yellin; Dr. Mazie; Professor Pick; Dr. Wallach; Dr. Salkind; Mr. Joseph Meyuhav and Mr. Kesselman. The organization of the meeting was under the supervision of Mr. J. Amdursky.

At 4 PM. punctually, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fischel arrived accompanied by their son-in-law and daughter, Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein and Mrs. Goldstein. They were followed by the Acting Governor of Jerusalem, Commander Luke and Mr. Edwin Samuel. The guests were received with musical honors.

Soon after, His Excellency, the High Commissioner and Lady Samuel entered the courtyard accompanied by aide-de-camp Mr. Cust and Miss Franklin. The band of the Blind Institution struck up the National Anthem and the whole gathering rose as a mark of respect. The Choir under the direction of Cantor Zalmon Rivlin then sang Beruchim Haboim. The High Commissioner took his seat between the Chief Rabbis and near Mr. Harry Fischel. The proceedings then began.

THE SPEECHES

Mr. Slutzkin, who presided, opened the consecration ceremony by delivering a warm-hearted address. He congratulated Rabbi Kook and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fischel on this auspicious occasion. He expressed the hope that the Beth Harav would unite all the forces of the Torah and create an impetus for further study and spiritual loftiness.

Chief Rabbi Jacob Meir then rose and in a learned and interesting address, dwelt on the Biblical verses "Honor the Lord out of your wealth" and "Read not thy sons but thy builders." "Hitherto," said Rabbi Meir, "Rabbi Kook had to move from place to place and house to house, involving many difficulties and inconveniences. By Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fischel's munificence, however, Rabbi Kook and his, family would now be able to live at ease and comfort in the Beth Harav, which had been erected for them. In connection with the Beth Harav, a House of Learning had also been built for study and worship which would bring honor to the Ashkenazic community." Rabbi Meir warmly shook hands with Rabbi Kook and wished him prosperity. He also congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Fischel, terminating his speech, with I the wish that "we should all be privileged to witness the reconstruction of our National Home, which could be attained only by the combination of all forces through union and organization."

Rabbi Duber Abramowitz of St. Louis, spoke on behalf of the Administration of the Vaud Hakloli (Central Committee). He invited Mr. and Mrs. Fischel to become inhabitants and citizens of Jerusalem. "Mr. Harry Fischel," he said, "is a great communal worker in New York and he is also treasurer of the Central Relief

Committee which subvents all the Yeshiboth, Talmud Torahs and Talmudic scholars in Palestine. The reconstruction of Palestine is part and parcel of his life and the erection of the Beth Harav merits much praise. Other institutions looked forward to Mr. Fischel's help, one of these was the new building of the Bicur Holim Hospital which was still roofless and required completion." Rabbi Abramowitz then handed the gold key of the Beth Harav and Synagogue to Mr. Fischel.

Mr. Fischel, on rising to speak was received with cheers. He seemed profoundly touched and speaking from notes in Hebrew, he said:

הוד מעלתו, הרב קוק, הרב מאיר, אורחים נכבדים, גבירות אדונים נכבדים.

אין די מילים בפי ברגע זה להביע את הודתי לאלקי ישראל על שזכני לבנות את בית הרב ואת בית המדרש, יכול אני להביע את רגשותי על צד היותר טוב רק בברכי את "ברכת שהחינו" הידועה לנו: ברוך. אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

לבי במזרח ואנכי בסוף מערב. ביתי באמריקה. והיה עלי לעבר ערך ששת אלפים מיל כדי להשתתף בחגיגה קדושה זו. הבאתי עמי את אשתי הטובה, את בתי, את חתני הרב גאלדשטיין ואת אחי אשתי הרב ראובן בראזת שיקחו חלק עמי יחד בשמחת היום הזה.

ועוד הבנין כבדני במפתח בית זה והעיר בזה שהבנין נגמר עתה מהמסד ועד הטפחות. ואחר שהבית ובית המדרש מיועד לשמש לטובת תושבי ארץ ישראל ושהוד מעלתו הוא ראש הממשלה בארץ הזאת, אני על הבנין הכפול הזה, רשאי אני לבקש את הוד מעלתו שיקבל את מפתח לזהב הזה וישמרהו בתור זכר ומזכרת למאורע השוב זה,

רוצה אני להשתמש בהזדמנות גם להודות להוד מעלתו בקהל-עם על הכבוד שהנחיל לנו בכבודו את חנוכת הבית הזה בנוכחותי, יהי נועם ה' על הוד מעלתו על שלטונו ועל תושבי ארץ-ישראל ויברך אותו ואותם בשלום ובטחון גמור ובשלום בל ימוט, אמן.

Mr. Fischel then translated his speech into English for the benefit of those who could not understand the Hebrew. It was as follows:

"Your Excellency, Rabbi Kook, Rabbi Meir, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"Words fail me at this moment to express my gratitude to the Almighty for granting me the privilege of building this Beth Harav and Synagogue. I can best express my feelings on this occasion by pronouncing the well-known Schecheyanoo prayer 'Blessed art thou O Lord, only King of the Universe, who halt kept us in life and host preserved us and enabled us to reach this time.'

"While my heart always beats for Palestine, yet my home is in America. I have, therefore, had to travel nearly 6,000 miles to participate in this holy celebration. I brought with me my good wife, daughter and son-in-law Rabbi and Mrs. Herbert Goldstein, and my wife's brother, Rabbi Rubin Braz, to share with me the joy of this day.

"The Building Committee has just presented me with the key of this house certifying thereby that this building is now completed. In view of the fact that this residence and synagogue are to be used for the benefit of the people of Palestine, and that Your Excellency, is the Chief Executive of the land, I therefore deem it fitting and proper to present you with the key, and designate you as custodian of this combined edifice. May I ask you, please, to accept this golden key and keep it as a souvenir and memento of this occasion? I want to take this means also of publicly thanking you for the honor you have bestowed upon us. May God grant you,

your administration and the people of Palestine continued security and peace."

The High Commissioner followed and delivered an address, which was regarded by the assembly as of great political importance. He said in effect:

"I congratulate the Chief Rabbinate, Mr. and Mrs. Fischel and the Jewish Community at large on this auspicious day. Among the many problems with which the Civil Administration had to deal on its establishment was the adoption of measures to place the Jewish Community both on its secular and on its ecclesiastical side, upon a permanent and regular basis. The question of the organization of the secular side was not yet fully settled. But the government had been able to establish, on an electoral basis, the Chief Rabbinate, and for the first time after an interval of many centuries, a Jewish Ecclesiastical Authority had been founded upon a permanent footing, based upon the desires of the community itself. It was fortunate that the choice of the community had fallen upon Chief Rabbi Kook and Chief Rabbi Meir, who upheld the dignity of the other religious communities in Palestine. His Excellency expressed the gratitude that was universally felt to Mr. and Mrs. Fischel for the most generous gift of the spacious buildings that they were dedicating on that day.

They were all aware what was the purpose of the policy of the British Government in Palestine in relation to the Jews. That policy had been, was now and would remain, the promotion of the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. To that end political action must largely contribute. Not less important was the work and sacrifices of the Jews themselves. The erection of buildings such as these was but an instance of that work. More necessary even than bricks and mortar were the numbers of the Jewish population and even more important than numbers was their character. Upon the character of those who already lived in Palestine and those who came from other countries to live there, upon the loftiness of their ideals and the soundness of their principles, depended more than on any other factor the success of the Jewish National Home. That was the key to Palestine.

The High Commissioner's declaration was greeted with applause. The Choir with Cantor Rivlin then sang the Psalm of the Dedication, accompanied by the band.

Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, then inspiringly expressed his sentiments in English and his address was translated into Hebrew by Mr. Isaac Abadi. Rabbi Goldstein in the course of his remarks said that it was customary in America. for members of the family and relatives participating in such celebrations to speak as briefly as possible. He touched on the past of the Jewish people and pointed out that its future existence depended on the Torah and its loftiness. He mentioned the fact that his father-in-law, Mr. Fischel, had crossed the ocean three times in his endeavors to help in the re-building of the country both materially and spiritually. He concluded his speech with a blessing for Chief Rabbi Kook.

Commander Luke, Acting Governor of Jerusalem, whose remarks were translated into Hebrew by Mr. Abadi, said:

"Permit me to thank the organizers of this celebration for inviting me and to congratulate Rabbi Kook. I hope he will be privileged to enjoy health in this new and beautiful house. I have also the honor of thanking the donors for their wisdom in choosing such a gift. I cannot imagine a finer and more appropriate form of philanthropy for Mr. and Mrs. Fischel, in this city, where the demand for decent residences is so great. It is undignified for persons occupying prominent positions and playing an active role in the people's life, to be troubled year in and year out with the housing problem. I hope that Mr. and Mrs. Fischel's example will be copied by others. I have no doubt that there will arise a Sefardic philanthropist who will also build a house for his Chief Rabbi. It is also possible to hope that the government will also follow suit and provide fine dwellings for its officials."

Mr. Cobb, the American Consul, was then called upon to address the gathering. He said, "It is for me a great and special pleasure that one of our citizens has done something great for Jerusalem. Two years ago Mr.

Fischel told me that he contemplated doing great things for the benefit of this country, and his smallest deed is the erection of this house and making it an endowment for the Jewish Community in Jerusalem.

"Since I have been in Jerusalem, and in the course of my work, I have had the honor of coming in touch with Rabbis Kook and Meir. I know the value of the great work they are doing and I also know that many American citizens have been benefited therefrom. I trust that they will be spared for many years to carry on this good work."

At this stage the guests were served with tea and refreshments, and the band played selections.

Dr. Joseph Klausner then congratulated Mr. Fischel. He spoke on the importance of the Beth Harav and other such buildings which tend to strengthen our position in Eretz Israel. Dr. Klausner pointed out the necessity of acquiring more land, as the importance of the National Home the Jews have obtained centered around the forty years' labor to this end and the land already acquired.

Mr. David Yellin congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Fischel and Rabbi Kook on the occasion of the opening of the Beth Harav. He said that such spacious buildings should also be erected for the Council of the Jerusalem Jews and the Jewish National Council.

The eminent Rabbi of Klausenburg, Rabbi Moses Samuel Glasner, spoke in a quivering and affected voice. He tearfully thanked the Almighty for having privileged him to come to Jerusalem to spend the remaining days of his life. The Beth Harav, which Mr. Fischel erected, would be a pride and an honor to the Jewish Community. He praisingly spoke of Rabbi Kook whom he had known in the Diaspora. He warmly shook hands with Rabbi Kook and also blessed the donors. Rabbi Harlap followed and delivered a learned address spiced with Rabbinical lore.

Rabbi Kook, who was received with great enthusiasm, opened with the Biblical text "What doth the Lord demand of thee but to do good, etc." With his usual profoundness he explained how Jerusalem was the source of joy. "The Key," he said, "that was handed to the High Commissioner, will also be a key to the inner soul of His Excellency wherewith to open up the gates of our Jewish National Home."

THE OFFICIAL OPENING

After the speeches, the High Commissioner and Lady Samuel, Chief Rabbis Kook and Jacob Meir, Mr. and Mrs. Fischel and their family and other prominent guests mounted the stairs leading to the Synagogue of the Beth Harav. The High Commissioner personally handed the golden key to Mr. Fischel who opened the doors of the Beth Hamedrash, throwing it open to the visitors. The Choir sang "Lift up your heads ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors." That moment was indeed an auspicious and impressive one. The distinguished guests then inspected the beautiful house of the Beth Harav of Chief Rabbi Kook. Around servietted tables the visitors regaled themselves with excellent refreshments and the High Commissioner drank to the health of the Chief Rabbi, to Mr. Fischel and the other rabbis. He then took a friendly leave of the whole company.

In the meantime Mincha was prayed in the Beth Harav by Rabbi Goldstein, after which the festivities were renewed in accordance with the programme. Rabbi Rubin Braz delivered a fine address in Hebrew. He touched on the suffering of our brethren in Poland and the Ukraine, and said that their only hope was Palestine. His speech was very inspiring and created a deep impression on the gathering. He was followed by Rabbi J. M. Tikotchinsky; Rabbi Menaham Auerbach; Rabbi Joseph Gerson Horowitz; Rabbi Polanski; and a young Talmudic student, Isaac Levi, who spoke on behalf of the students in the Beth Harav Centre. All praised the good efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fischel. The speeches were concluded by two boys of the Etz Haim Yeshivah who pointed out that they were the most interested parties at the celebration, since they were the future carriers of the Torah.

The evening service was then read, after which the company gave themselves up to festivity. It was late in the

night that the beautiful ceremony of the consecration of the Beth Harav was concluded and it made a deep impression on all who had the pleasure of being present. This day was indeed an auspicious one in the life of Jerusalem.