



בית הכנסת בעריא

**BEREA HEBREW  
CONGREGATION**



Rabbi Aloy, primarily in his capacity as the gifted, energetic and superbly capable Registrar of the Beth-Din, but also in his other manifold capacities. My respect for him developed into admiration, my admiration to affection and esteem, and the bonds which were forged between us during that period have not been affected or diminished by the physical and geographical distance which has separated us during these five years since I relinquished my office.

I confess wholeheartedly that I write not objectively but out of esteem, as a dear friend. But who can write otherwise of him? Everyone is his friend, as he is a friend of all. And I can think of no better phrase to express what might appear to be the complications of his many-sided character than to apply to him just that phrase "Cold Fire". For he is remarkable in that "coldness", as he is in his "fire". That "coldness" of logic and method exemplifies all the manifold aspects of his administrative activity.

He is the secretary, the Registrar, the taskkeeper, the recorder par excellence. When Rabbi Aloy undertakes a job of work, he can be relied upon to carry it to its successful conclusion in an utterly exemplary manner. His books are a model, his filing system without peer, his records up-to-date and classified, his mind tidy and orderly, each item carefully tucked away in its proper compartment ready to be produced at the desired moment. So far that seems to be the picture of an almost inhuman — human computer. And although I do not know many parallels, the type is a well-defined one, that of the perfect civil servant, the model functionary, the book-keeper, the accountant, the executive director.

#### IN CLASS BY HIMSELF

But what puts Aloy in a class all by himself is the remarkable combination of that "cold" with "fire". In his heart and his soul there burns a fierce fire and passion, a passion for Judaism and for Torah, a passion for the underdog, the poor, the afflicted, the unfortunate, those from whom God would have seemed to turn his face. The cold massive mind goes together with a soul that burns with compassion.

A Get is arranged at the Beth Din. Without a hitch the complicated pro-

cedure goes through. The sofer, the witnesses, the Dayanim, and if necessary, the messenger and the appointment of a messenger abroad have all been duly arranged. With clock-like precision, the ceremony goes through. Another routine job successfully accomplished as a result of his efficiency.

But only I know the number of occasions when without the compassion of Aloy and his determination to staunch "the tears of the oppressed who have none to comfort them" it would never have taken place; when the recalcitrant husband refused to give the Get, or the obdurate wife to accept it. With that unflagging energy and persuasive ingenuity he tackled and tackled knowing no rest, until at last he succeeded in persuading them to do the right thing. The burning fire of righteousness refused to be quenched.

It was that same fire which made him, despite the heavy burden resting on his shoulders, to undertake to visit the hospitals, to accept the Chaplaincy of the prisons, and what cheer and comfort he brought them, and how many were the genuine outpourings of gratitude from the recipients of his kindness.

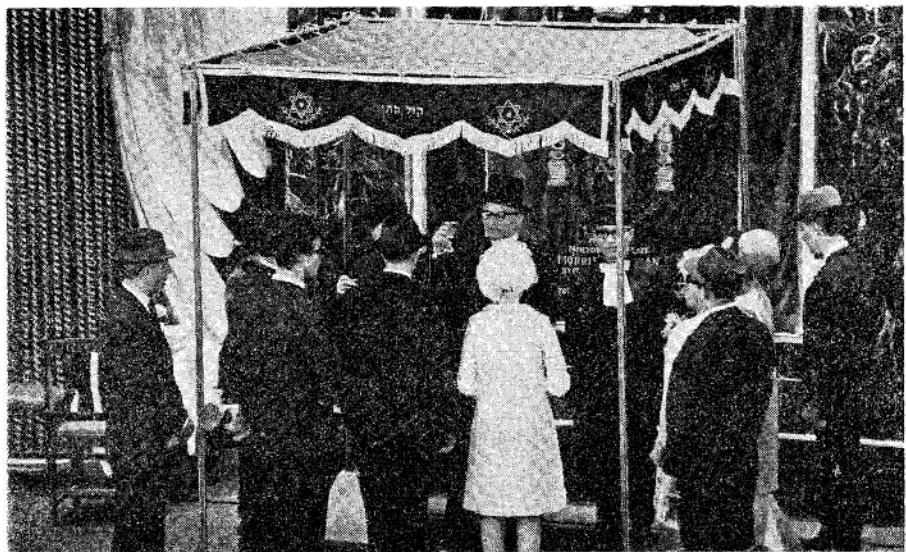
#### CUTS RED TAPE

Aloy's contacts with Government Departments are unique, and naturally

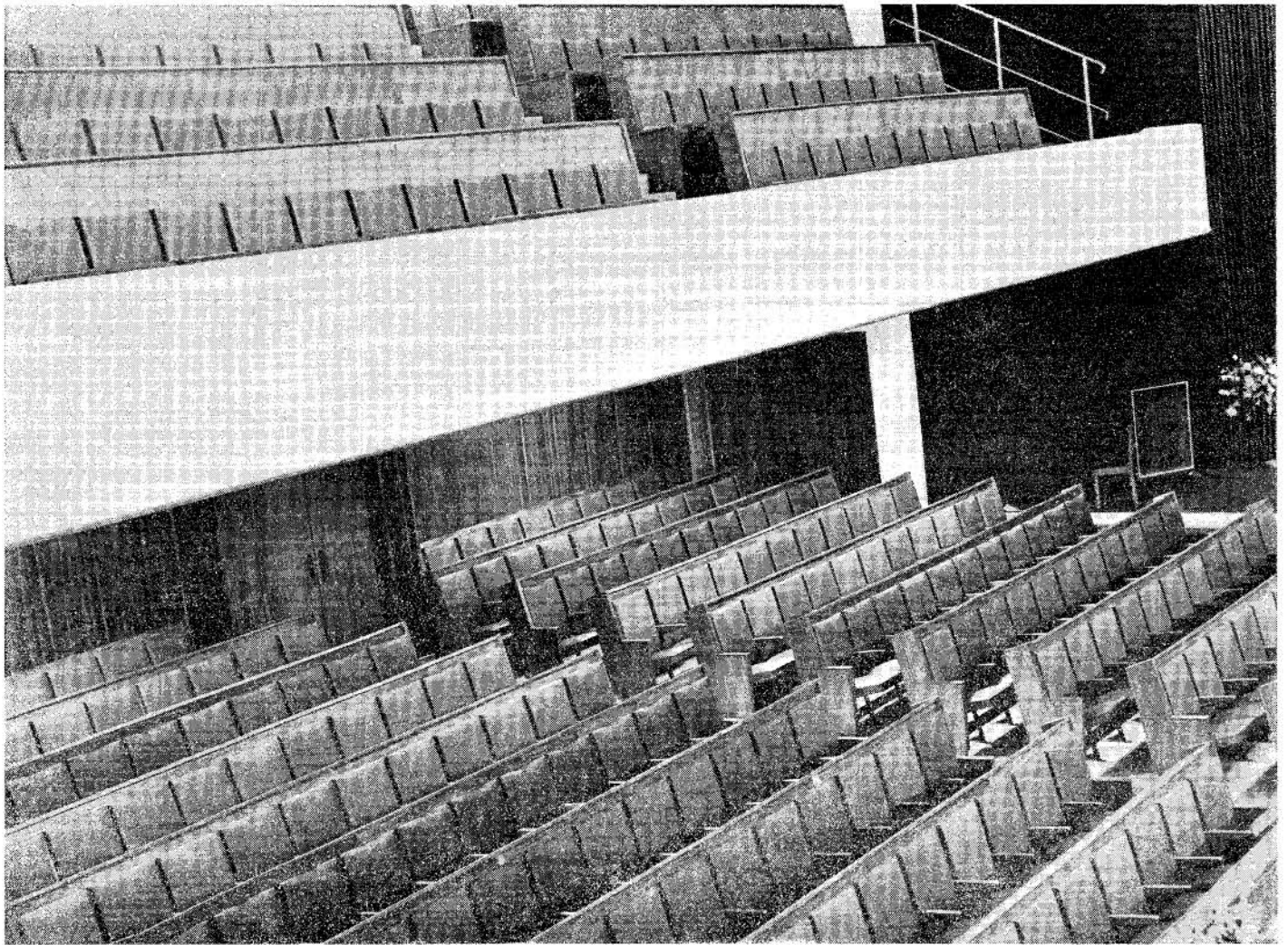
he confines his activities in this department to getting a concession, obtaining a favour, doing a kindness to someone caught up in the red tape of bureaucratic administration. Where others have succeeded in storming the portals — and have failed to do so — he invariably causes them to fall like the walls of Jericho. And his only weapon is the shofar of his winning smile and persuasiveness. As a result, he is on terms of eternal personal intimacy with Cabinet Ministers, such as Tom Naude, and other high civil servants. All doors are open to him.

Rabbi Aloy is an outstanding example of the truth that it is always the busiest man who finds time to do more. Rabbi of Berea, Registrar and executive of the Beth Din, representative of Chabad, Prison Chaplain — those and a host of other duties, each one of which could be regarded as a full time job. He fulfils to perfection and to the utmost satisfaction and admiration of those to whom he truly gives his services, and always finds time for a special task which needs compassion and efficiency.

The South African Jewish community as a whole, the Beth Din and the Berea Synagogue in particular, are richly blessed with this ideal all-merciful servant of the community. May the fruit of those blessings accrue in ample measure to him.



Rabbi Aloy solemnises at the first Chupah in the Berea Synagogue



A special engineering technique was used to eliminate obstructing pillars.

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE BEREA SYNAGOGUE

**T**HE year 5728, when the first New Year services will be held in the Synagogue, will be an important milestone in the life of the Berea Hebrew Congregation. Some years ago it was realised that the old Synagogue was going to be too small in the future. Many schemes were prepared for altering and enlarging the existing premises and when ultimately a scheme was decided upon, it was found that the existing premises were structurally unsound and in the interests of public safety should be demolished.

This of course meant that a new Synagogue would have to be built. To decide on this course of action was no easy matter, but the decision was

**An architect deals with the problems that had to be resolved in the building of the Synagogue. A special engineering device was employed to support the overhanging galleries without obstructing pillars. A sense of dignity and the traditional has been preserved, without overdoing embellishments.**

taken. The culmination of this bold step is at hand, and the congregation look forward proudly to consecrating their new Synagogue and holding the New Year services in a building which can compare with similar edifices in

other suburbs.

When the planning of the new building commenced, the site presented a few problems. There were also Town Planning and Township Owner's requirements to be complied with, which together curtailed free planning on a none-too-big site. These requirements to a certain extent restricted the scope of the planning and necessitated considerable study into making the best of the space available.

The requirements upon which the whole plan was based called for a seating capacity of approximately 1,000 persons, 600 on the ground floor and 400 on the upper floor. As a result of the number required on the upper floor, problems arose as to how to



support these large overhanging galleries without any columns. This was solved by the engineers who substituted a steel structure in place of the reinforced construction in concrete, which was originally planned.

It was decided that the Main Entrance should be in Tudhope Avenue as previously, with a subsidiary entrance in Doris St. The Ark was to be in the east wall flanked by seats on either side, facing north and south respectively. This was considered the most suitable arrangement and is the same as the old Synagogue.

For administrative purposes a large office was needed, and it was decided to place this on an upper floor at the east end, together with the choir room, cloak room, and Rabbi and Cantor's offices.

#### A CLEAR VIEW

Unimpeded sight lines to the Bemah and Ark from every position in the Synagogue was a very important factor which had to be considered most carefully. The stepping and seating of the seats was designed with meticulous care, not so much on the ground floor as on the ladies gallery where building by-laws concerning height of steps and parapet walls had to be complied with. A Synagogue is probably unique in that it is a public building for a large assemblage of persons where more than one visual focus is required. This fact also complicates acoustic control which necessitates the use of acoustic materials on various surfaces.

Circulation during peak periods has been amply catered for. The main entrance from Tudhope Avenue is via wide steps on to a spacious terrace leading to five doors having access to the entrance foyer. There are two additional doors in Doris St. and also two escape doors, one to Doris St. and one to the north lane. The office staff, Rabbi, Cantor, and choir boys have a separate entrance also from Doris St.

In order to cope with any celebrations in the succa, which is situated on the north east corner of the stand, a kitchen has been provided in the main building, adjacent to this corner.

#### ENTRANCE FOYER

The entrance foyer has wood panelled walls and a marble floor. Leading from it are two staircases to the ladies gallery. In addition the ladies gallery

## THE ARON HAKODESH

By HERMAN WALD

When I was approached to design the main wall of the Berea Synagogue, I felt that I was faced with a number of problems. It is no simple matter to reconstruct a conception derived from Biblical days, when the Covenant was carried in the desert. One of the greatest artists of them all from antiquity was approached to make a carriage for the Covenant. His name was Bezalel, who did the carving of the Cherubim in which the Covenant was carried. I have attempted to reinterpret the conception that Bezalel used.

I had to take into account that the Law forbids the use of living figures in sculpture, so I could only use the non-figurative part of the Cherubim theme — namely, wings to embrace the Ark in which the Law is carried. On the tip of the wings will be inscribed, the essence of it all, the Ten Commandments, as if floating in air. The aim is to give the impression that the message they carry is floating across the whole world.

The chains, which form the background of the Aron Hakodesh, symbolize the continuity and strength of the Jewish nation—the Golden Chain, as it is known in Jewish lore.

I hope I have done justice to that spirit, which Jews all over the world look up to with reverence and which kept them going through 2000 years of exile. Another interpretation — my own — is that the Chains are the link between Man and God.

is served by two concrete enclosed fire escape stairs so that even at rush periods movement in and out of the Synagogue should present no problem. Numbers of cloakrooms for both sexes are situated throughout the building at strategic points. The bride's room, which leads off the main foyer, has its own cloak room.

As storage space seems to be at a premium at most Synagogues, store rooms have been provided at the various levels. An airconditioning plant has been installed which at the moment will cater for changes of air only, but provision has been made for the future addition of heating and refrigeration if necessary. Floor finishes are lino in the corridors, wood block under the seats and thick carpet over all aisles, bemah, and dais.

Perhaps the greatest feature of the Synagogue is the Ark and East wall designed by Mr. Herman Wald. This is most impressive, and to students of Jewish biblical history, of great significance. The Ark is described by Mr. Wald in the panel that goes with this article. A small synagogue and mishna room has been designed on the ground floor with direct access to Doris Street and will be available for daily prayers and study. Access to this is independent of the main Synagogue.

#### EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS

The external elevations are in the main terrazzo in situ with a face brick plinth to window sill height. The Tudhope Avenue elevation is a composition of bronze metal work and terrazzo, with a bronze solar screen over the first floor windows to counter the glare of the west sun. Glazing to these windows and the main entrance doors is in a blue tinted obscure glass.

The Doris Street elevation windows are screened with pre-cast terrazzo screens incorporating a sign of David motif. This screen will cut out to a certain extent traffic noises from Doris Street. The intention in the design of the elevations was to preserve a sense of dignity, and at the same time to introduce some of the traditional insignia without overdoing embellishments.

As the building is situated in a densely populated residential area surrounded by many blocks of flats, it was decided to suit the design to the pattern of the existing buildings, thereby creating a structure in keeping with its surroundings.

The garden, which will be designed by a landscape gardener, will frame the whole project in a soothing and picturesque setting.

## THESE PEOPLE HELPED BUILD THE SYNAGOGUE

### **MR. H. B. JUDES** Chairman, Building Committee

Mr. H. B. Judes was appointed Chairman of the Building Fund, in May, 1965. He has been the guiding spirit of the whole project and has dedicated himself to see the building project launched and carried to final fulfilment. He planned various projects such as the Foundation Membership and the Brochure in order to raise funds; was personally responsible for the administrative duties involved; and undertook personal canvassing and the organisation and supervision of the building.

### **MR. E. SELIGER** President of Congregation and Treasurer of Building Committee

The office of President during the last two years has been an onerous and difficult one. In addition, Mr. Seliger undertook the treasurership of the Building Fund. He carried out these duties with devotion and sincerity, and was always in the forefront in raising funds and interviewing members. He spent a great deal of time canvassing members. The Congregation is greatly indebted to Mr. Seliger for his services.

### **MR. M. BERZACK** Vice-Chairman, Building Committee

Mr. Berzack undertook the office of vice-chairman to the Building Fund in April, 1966. As from February this year, he suggested weekly on-site meetings, and this was instrumental in expediting the completion of the Synagogue in good time. His practical experience, drive and energy have been of great assistance to the Committee.

### **MRS. D. M. GREENBLATT** Secretary, Berea Hebrew Congregation

The services of Mrs. Doreen Greenblatt, the secretary of the Synagogue, has been of the utmost value to the Building Committee. Her knowledge of each and everyone of our 460 members, has been most invaluable for the compiling of lists of members to be canvassed. She was in complete charge of all the clerical work concerning the Fund, and although she suffered a great personal bereavement in the loss of her dear husband, her devotion to duty never flagged.

## THE LADIES GUILD

The Guild has been in existence for a number of years, and the ladies under the very able chairmanship of Mrs. Hilda Serebro, have done yeomen service in beautifying the Synagogue for weddings and certain Holy Days by their exquisite floral decorations. Through their efforts the Synagogue funds have benefited handsomely. Furthermore, the ladies have always been responsible for all the excellent catering arrangements during the Succoth Festival and other functions.

As far as the new Synagogue is concerned, the Ladies Guild sponsored a concert, given by Miss Miryam Mandel, for the benefit of the Building Fund. The concert was a great success and the ladies handed the Synagogue a cheque for R1,000.00, which is to be used for furnishing the Brides Room in the new Synagogue. The concert entailed a tremendous amount of organising, and special credit must go to Mrs. Ann Mann.

The Chairlady, Mrs. Serebro, has left for Israel, to visit her son and family. The Executive and Council wish her a very happy trip and a safe return home.



**Mr. M. Berzack**



**Mrs. D. M. Greenblatt**



**Mrs. H. Serebro**