

A SCULPTOR INTERPRETS THE BIBLE

Rich variety at Herman Wald's Exhibition

One of the most representative gatherings I have ever seen at an art show attended the opening of Herman Wald's exhibition, "The Bible in Sculpture," by Councillor Alec Gorshel, Deputy Mayor of Johannesburg, at the new Queen's Gallery, under the Queen's Hall in De Villiers Street, last Monday afternoon. The exhibition is being sponsored by the Histadrut Ivrit, whose chairman, Mr. N. Rutstein, paid tribute to the artist and welcomed the Deputy Mayor.

The Bible has fascinated Herman Wald as a source of artistic inspiration throughout the 20 years I have known him, and he has repeatedly applied his creative talents to depicting Biblical characters and incidents. Over the years, different aspects of the same subject have challenged his powers of imagination and execution. Thus, for example, there are several studies of Moses in this exhibition — from the massive stone head (No. 3) that was one of his earliest interpretations, to the austere "Moses and the Tablets" (No. 2), also carved in stone, that is one of his latest. A powerful bronze shows "Moses Inscribing the Tablets" (No. 14); a plaster study, intended for casting in bronze, depicts an older, more tired Law-giver in "Moses in the Amalekite War" (No. 16). There is an arresting carving of Job (No. 20) in limba wood, and a differently conceived Job in plaster (No. 21).

IMAGINATIVE WORK

There are some striking imaginative conceptions in this exhibition — the plaster "Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire" (No. 15), the daring "Creation of Eve" (No. 5), the bronze "Jacob's Dream" (No. 12), the lyrical beechwood "Song of Songs" (No. 19).

Epstein's influence is discernible in the impressive wood carvings of "Adam" (No. 4) and "Hagar"

(No. 10). Echoes of Millet's "Man with the Hoe" linger round the powerfully executed plaster study "Cain" (No. 7).

Readers will remember the photograph of Mr. Wald's late work, "The Four Matriarchs" published in the "S.A. Jewish Times" a couple of weeks ago. The original appears as No. 1 on the exhibition, and is notable for the amount of detail which the artist has worked into it — particularly the portrayal of great figures of modern Zionist history to represent the Twelve Tribes.

CHASSIDIC STUDIES

Among the best works on view are two abstracts, and a group of Chassidic studies. The abstracts are the polished bronze "Jacob Wrestling with the Angel" (No. 13), and the plaster "Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" (No. 6), with beautiful rhythm — plangent, suggestive of grief, yet enveloped with a feeling of consolation. In the two side figures blend in the upward flow of the central figure.

The Chassidic studies, cast in bronze and rendered in impressionist style, are a joy to behold — from the exquisite characterization of the three figures in "Talmudic Dispute" to the lyrical representation of the Rabbi and his Talmidim in "Simchat Torah Dance," the gaiety of the Klemorim in "The Musicians," the ecstasy of the man carrying on the Mitzvah of Hagbeh in "Raising the Law," and the plaster "Head" (which Wald could more appropriately have titled "Shmeck Taback").

This is an exhibition which deserves to be widely patronized. Some of the work on view should be acquired for representative collections. —E.B.

MR. ALEX THAL

In the Board of Guardians Century Message on page 20, the name of the chairman is inadvertently given in an early edition as Mr. Max Thal. It should read Mr. Alex Thal.