



# Betar Australia

The Evolution of a Zionist Youth Movement  
(1948-56)

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# BETAR AUSTRALIA – THE EVOLUTION OF A ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT (1948–56)

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## Foreword



Photo 1: Shimshon Feder

On 29 June 1989, the Australian Betar olim in Israel held a memorable function where approximately one hundred Betarim gathered to celebrate forty years of consecutive Betarian activity in that far-off land, Australia. There were probably many more who for various reasons were unable to attend. The 1948–49 Betar Camp at Woori Yallock served as the starting point. However, this is not the true beginning of Australian Betar; it is but a convenient point from which one may recall the sequence of events which led to Betar's growth.

It is not my intention to chronicle the history of Australian Betar but to offer recollections of one who was intimately involved in the formative and subsequent years and gained a certain insight into Betar's advance forward from stumbling infancy through a period of painful adolescence to maturity. I am aware that Europeans who migrated to Australia, particularly Melbourne, planted the original seed of Betar in Australia in the 1930s. They found a common ground in a strange land by recreating a social framework that they had experienced in Europe to help them overcome the difficulties of being absorbed into a new society. Furthermore, in addition to having been members of Betar in Eastern Europe, they had a common language that they all understood and spoke – Yiddish.

One may ask, why write about Australian Betar at all? Has it any significance, who needs it – what purpose can it serve? To answer this I must recount an incident which indirectly led me to write this account.

While on shlichut on behalf of Betar in Australia between 1961–64, I was asked on many occasions by the young leaders of the movement to tell them about what I remembered of the early years of Betar in Australia. They expressed a natural curiosity to know how and why Betar was established. I realised that in addition to

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the interest it generated, it could serve as an important educational instrument. These young madrichim were actually interested in their own beginnings, so much so that, during the second Course Artzi for leaders held in Brisbane in January 1964, I delivered a series of lectures on the topic. I was pleasantly surprised to find them hanging onto every word as though it were “the Law from Mt Sinai”. I was usually followed by a lively period of questions, answers and comments which stretched late into the night.

Just as I was about to leave Australia in May 1964 to return to Israel, the Hanhaga Artzit asked whether I would be prepared to put these events on paper.

And now, after twenty-five years, following that memorable evening, I rummaged around among the junk that one invariably collects over the years accumulating dust and came upon the draft that I wrote back in 1964, together with a section written by Jack Mirjam. The intention had then been to produce some sort of booklet for “posterity”. However, the notes lay forgotten over the years gathering dust until now. And today, with an additional twenty-five years hindsight, I reread those notes and transported myself back for a moment to that distant period of our youth when we felt that “great things had to be done” – a period of intense activity when ideals fired our imagination and spurred us on to greater efforts.

Here and there I have made some minor corrections or added a point or two of explanation. However, it is basically the same. It encompasses a period where every day something new was achieved, an obstacle encountered and overcome, periods of despair, anger and at times frustration. And so, on with the story.

### Background

Jewish immigrants to the shores of Australia brought with them not only their religious beliefs, but also their political philosophies. This was apparent in the



Photo 2: Zeev Jabotinsky

large number of small Jewish organisations of a voluntary nature which sprang up in Melbourne, especially during the 1930s brought by the influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, Poland in particular. One could find Jewish Communists, Bundists, Socialists and the various Zionist movements – all attempting to create a necessary cultural and social framework to make up for their inability to be absorbed into the mainstream of Australian society due to language and cultural barriers. I remember as a young boy living in Fitzroy, which might have had about thirty Jewish families at the most, the latter years of the “depression” in Australia which preceded the outbreak of World War II. The average Australian was finding it hard to eke out a decent living for his family; so one can visualise how these new immigrants fared. They had to compete with a

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somewhat hostile society, which regarded the immigrants suspiciously and often referred to them as “bloody foreigners”.

The immigrants maintained a closely-knit community and sought to live near one another in the suburbs of Carlton, Brunswick, and Fitzroy. Here was the crucible which led to the crystallisation of the various Zionist movements that tried to emulate their European counterparts. They maintained correspondence and in turn were ideologically sustained. Also, their branches in Palestine contributed by sending from time to time an emissary to collect money for the Yishuv (as it was then called) and to “bring the word” to that far-flung Diaspora. All this came to an abrupt end with the Holocaust and destruction of those flourishing Jewish centres in Eastern Europe. After 1933, the door of Europe was sealed tight and no one could escape. This state of affairs isolated the community from the rest of the world and was to remain in force until 1946, when a small trickle of survivors reached Australia to add to the small community which had been static during those turbulent years. Much more could be written about the period covered, but it is not my purpose to deal with the Jewish community in all its ramifications, only to use it as an introduction to the topic at hand.

I recall as a young boy, about eleven years old, being asked to play the accordion at a Revisionist Oneg Shabbat. This was in 1943. My parents had instructed me to learn Hebrew songs on the accordion for their own enjoyment and the pleasure of their friends who invariably used to meet on Sunday afternoons, And so it came about that Mr David Abzatz took me in hand and introduced me for the first time to the Jabotinsky movement. David Abzatz, in addition to his wide communal involvement was also a prominent leader in the Revisionist movement and possessed a fine singing voice. The Revisionists together with Betar had the use of a premises in Faraday Street, Carlton, and called it “Jabotinsky Hall”. These functions took place on Saturday night.

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**Photo 1: 1943 Revisionist Organization in Melbourne**

This particular one was well attended, with fifty to sixty participants. The opening ceremony included the Havdalah and lighting of the seven-branched Menorah. There was also a picture of Zeev Jabotinsky hanging on the wall. I subsequently learned that it was made by the father of Shmuel and Gwen Gorr and later found its way to the Betar offices at Beth Weizmann. On that one and only occasion I played a medley of Hebrew and Yiddish songs and accompanied David Abzatz. I did not pay particular notice to this episode. It was just another Jewish function where I had been asked to participate. Jabotinsky Hall was soon after requisitioned by the Australian Army and what happened to Betar after that is unknown.

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**Photo 4: Yosef Steiner**

My next contact with Betar took place some five years later, towards the end of 1948. In the intervening period it may be surmised that whoever had been in Betar, had finally settled into Australian urban life, the social need becoming less relevant. The ideological content, which must be the cement that binds these people together, was either weak or absent. The life and death struggle then going on in Eretz Israel did not seem to affect them too much. It was happening so far away. A new life had to be built in post-war Australia. They had barely survived one Holocaust, so why should they put themselves in the firing line. I remember reading the daily newspapers during that period; and although I was deeply upset by the events, it did not directly affect me. It was not at the top of my personal agenda. I read what the local press had to say about the Haganah, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Group, but had no idea what they stood for. For the handful of Betar members at the time, the struggle was academic, since no one volunteered to go and fight for the Jewish State. I have as yet not heard of a single Betari who left Australia before the establishment of the State of Israel to participate in the struggle for statehood. This is in no way meant as a criticism but to state a blunt fact. Betar did not motivate anyone. It was just existing till it would gradually disappear into oblivion.

However, after World War II, Betar's situation was temporarily remedied by an influx of immigrants from the displaced persons camps in Europe, which revived the movement once more. From this one may surmise that there were as yet very few second generation Australians in Betar. There was no common ground. The "new arrivals" all spoke Yiddish and unlike us – those born in Australia – ideologies were a part of the older generation, our parents. This was unnecessary to our way of thinking and had nothing to do with Jewish life in Australia.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, World Betar found itself without a leadership. The death of Zeev Jabotinsky had left a void which could not be filled. The great Betar centres of Europe were no more and those members of Betar who had fought in the underground struggle who possessed national leadership calibre either became members of the Knesset or sought to re-establish themselves and their families after having been fugitives for many years.



**Photo 5: Jack Mirjam**

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In 1948 Melbourne Betar apparently reached the obvious conclusion: that in order to bring new blood into the withering movement, a large summer camp must be organized. This idea was promoted by Yosef Steiner, who had recently arrived in Australia. By strange coincidence, or fate, Yosef Steiner, a Betari from Europe, Jack Mirjam, and Shimshon Feder met each other for the first time in 1948. This curious merger of a New Australian arrival with two Australian raised youngsters became afterwards the nucleus upon which an entirely different Betar was to emerge.

### The first summer camp: 1948

The first meeting I ever attended was a pre-camp gathering at the Toorak Synagogue. I learned about the camp from leaflets distributed by school friends of mine. Like all Jewish parents, mine too were interested in their son going to some Jewish cultural organisation. They had tried back in 1945 to send me to Habonim. It ended in disaster. I found it boring and uninteresting. After a few weeks of fruitless participation I slowly drifted out and left. So now they tried again. I am not sure whether my parents appreciated the difference or knew what Betar was. The main thing in their minds was that a boy of sixteen should be in a Jewish organisation. And this is how I came to be at the Toorak Synagogue in that month of December 1948. Seated at a table in one of the classrooms were three individuals, two who spoke English and a third one who looked on and said nothing, The two who spoke English were Shimshon Kamil and Sam Gold, while the silent observer was Yosef Steiner. They all wore a uniform pockets and



**Photo 6: First Betar Camp, Woori-Yallock 1948-49.**

**L to R: Sam Gold, Shimshon Kamil (Mefaked Ha Machaneh), Scout, George Ginsbourg, Eric Stock, Milton Klinger. Front: Scout, Shirley Baum, Scout.**

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collar-points trimmed in blue. They also wore black ties, jodhpurs and riding boots. This was, I was later to learn, a relic of European Betar. In the free and easy-living Australia it seemed somewhat out of place. Nevertheless 109 youth attended the first Betar camp at Woori Yallock. There was also a contingent from Sydney, led by Hans Dreyer, who had independently begun to organise Betar in Sydney. The important thing that must now be stressed, is that while the leadership was still predominantly European orientated, for the first time, the young participants were Australians. However, none of the participants had previously heard of Betar. This camp must go down in history as being the event which ushered in a new era, though as yet still unknown to those who were to become Betar's future leaders.

The Mefaked HaMachaneh was Shimshon Kamil, a Betari from Austria who had reached Palestine, joined the Jewish Brigade and after demobilisation joined his parents, who had settled in Australia. He had a military bearing and cut a fine figure. I remember being over-awed and kept a respectful distance. He made a profound impression upon me, a youngster barely sixteen years old. It was a great event when he spoke to a mere camper. I am convinced that had he led the movement after the camp for a few more years, not only would every camper have remained, but Betar could have grown much faster than it did, permitting the younger generation to gradually develop their potential instead of suddenly having responsibility thrust upon them.

Program wise, the camp was nothing extraordinary, except that for some reason the spirit was excellent. Most of the participants met each other for the first time at this camp. I can't remember anything of consequence learned at the camp. We all had a good time. I was put to use playing the accordion and managed to learn two or three Betar songs which had little significance to me. Yosef Steiner was somewhat limited by his inadequate English. He was able to converse with the other leaders, most of whom spoke German. In the meantime we enjoyed ourselves and made new friends. Jack Mirjam and I met each other for the first time and instantly became close friends – a friendship that has remained unbroken to this very day. The camp leaders did not realise it, that at this camp they held an untapped source of potential leadership but failed to utilise it to build Betar. It seems today that this was in effect their "swan song", their departure from Betar. They held the key but could not capitalise on the enthusiasm of the campers. One by one after the conclusion of the camp, the leaders disappeared from the scene until around March 1949, only three leaders remained: Shimshon Kamil, Sam Gold and Yosef Steiner – the first two looking for someone to hand over to. All attempts to reorganise the 109 Melbourne campers met with little success, primarily because even if they had succeeded they would not have known what to do with them. I have strong doubts as to whether they had any idea about how to go about educating a youth movement and to imbue it with ideals. From that entire camp, only one group of youngsters was formed – called the Ben Yosef group for the sixteen- to eighteen-year-old members, of which Jack and I were participants.

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**Photo 7: Woori Yallock 1948: Standing in line for lunch**

The whole group of youngsters below that age was not considered important enough. However, from the outset the Ben Yosef group comprised close to thirty youngsters. Meetings were held on Wednesday evenings at Herzl Hall in Drummond Street, Carlton, not far from the ill-fated Jabotinsky Hall. This property belonged to the Zionist Movement in general, but by that time it was used only by Habonim on Saturdays and Betar during the week and on Sundays. Since Carlton was still the centre of Jewish activity around the Kadimah Hall, Herzl Hall was the centre of Zionist activity. I might add, that at that time there was still in existence another group in Betar called “Otzaron Betar” which was made up of senior Betarim, the last remnants of the European era of Betar. By June 1949 they had disappeared from the Betarian scene, reappearing as individuals at Jabotinsky commemorations.

The fruits of the camp had been squandered so much so, that in May 1949, due to the critical situation in which Betar found itself, an extraordinary General Meeting of senior Betarim was called to deal with the very existence of Betar which was by now delicately hanging in the balance. The meeting was held in the upper Kadimah Hall. About fifty people attended. Yosef Steiner took the liberty of inviting Jack Mirjam and myself to attend as delegates of the younger generation. Had I been asked for an opinion, I wouldn't have known what to say. Both of us just listened to the discussion taking place.

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What stands out in my mind today is the picture of Sam Gold (the only Australian in the leadership) opening the proceedings. In a pained voice he said, “We have a dying baby in our hands called Betar, whose fate will be sealed at this meeting”. He then called upon all the Betarim to redouble their efforts to keep Betar alive. There were many speakers who said what had to be done. The meeting dispersed and Betar slid back to its lethargic existence. At that crucial meeting, there were only three people who took Betar seriously: Yosef Steiner, who immediately understood the gravity of the situation, and two potential recruits, Jack Mirjam and Shimshon Feder, who were ready, though completely unprepared, to step into the breach.

### **The 1949 Independence Day celebrations**

The Independence Day celebrations jolted me into taking Betar seriously, and to seek answers to unanswered questions. Why was Betar ostracised by the leftist movements? Not only that, why was Betar so vehemently hated? And by the same people I had grown up with during my youth. I could not understand it at first. This was alien to the Australian way of thinking. Where was the fair play? The facts of this episode bear witness to the deep ideological rift which had reached the Zionist youth movements in Melbourne. The Zionist Youth Council was composed of the following movements: Betar, B’nei Akiva, Habonim, Hapoel Hatzair, Hatikvah and Young Mizrahi. It goes without saying that all the movements were influenced by the events in Israel, the newly founded State, but most of all by the bitter inter-party strife still prevalent at the time – a left-over from the Zionist Congresses just before the outbreak of World War II. It now reached the shores of Australia and was fomented by the shlichim dispatched by the ruling party, Mapai. The only shaliach at that time in Melbourne was Ehud Lederberger from Habonim. The Zionist Socialists were determined to maintain their control over Zionist affairs in Australia. Diametrically opposed to them was a small, weak, and barely alive Betar, and it had to be besmirched in the eyes of the community.

The celebrations were held at the Exhibition Hall and was to take the form of a mass rally in support of Israel, with an attendance of several thousand people. All the youth movements were to appear en masse on the stage. Prior to this, the Zionist Youth Council had taken a decision to appear in white shirts. The Betar delegates argued, that on such a national function they would like to appear in Betar uniform. Another decision was taken, that only those with white shirts could appear on the stage. The Betar delegates, while not agreeing with this decision, would abide by it and not appear on the stage but would attend the function in Betar uniform, remaining in the body of the hall.

On the evening some forty Betarim came in uniform, which at time consisted of khaki shirts trimmed in blue, and in an organised body joined the public in the hall. Meanwhile, some 300 youth in white shirts were invited to take their places on the stage.

The State Zionist Council, organisers of the function, were unaware of the decision of the Zionist Youth Council. Just before the beginning of the function, Mr

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S. Wynn the President, approached Yosef Steiner and inquired why the Betarim were not on the stage, and was told of the Zionist Youth Council decision regarding uniforms. Mr Wynn then instructed Yosef Steiner to take the Betarim onto the stage. As soon as the Betarim ascended the stage they were jeered at by the youth on the stage. The Habonim shaliach then threatened the organisers that unless the Betarim were removed from the stage, the organised youth would demonstratively leave the stage. Here was a dilemma facing Mr Wynn and the General Secretary, Walter Duffield, who, after having invited the Betarim, had to rescind the invitation. The rank and file Betarim already on the stage had no inkling of what was going on behind the scenes and refused to leave the stage, whereby the organised youth on instructions from the shaliach began preparing to vacate the stage. After some heated discussions between members of the Revisionist Organisation, Walter Duffield and Yosef Steiner, the Betarim were instructed to leave the stage after a policeman on duty at the hall requested them to do so. Some of the senior Betarim did so reluctantly, viewing the action of the organised youth as having clear political implications.

However, the incident had other repercussions. Today, on looking back, one cannot fail but see the “classic” trap that Betar fell into, a repetition of countless similar provoked incidents by left-wing organisations of the pre-State days in Europe and Palestine. One of the top leaders of Habonim, Pinchas Rosenkranz, in conjunction with their shaliach, had, prior to the function, printed a leaflet called “Betar disrupts the unity of the Jewish People”, which went on to explain how Betar disregarded the decision to wear white shirts on this evening and thus broke the uniformity of the Jewish youth. These leaflets were then showered down on the public from the upper balconies.

Another incident that marred the evening was the performance of the Australian Jewish singer, Maxwell Cohen, who made the mistake a selecting a song with a German text. Any of the Jews in Melbourne, who had barely survived the concentration camps of Europe, brought with them to Australia the bitter memories of that period and the German language sung on Israel’s day of independence, brought in its wake calls from the audience to stop the performance.

There is, however, a bright side to this otherwise unfortunate event. The aftermath of this Independence Day celebration resulted in a series of statements in the Jewish press by Betar, the Zionist Youth Council, and the State Zionist Council, which continued back and forth for several weeks. Within the Zionist Youth Council a meeting was convened whereby Betar was expelled by a bloc vote of the leftist organisations; and to somehow even the score, Pinchas Rosenkranz, the Habonim leader, was censured and suspended for three months for his illegal action with the leaflets. Betar received maximum press coverage and gave the impression that we were larger and better organised than in fact was the case. At least in the press and the eyes of the reading Jewish public Betar existed. All these events had a profound effect on me at the time. We were the “underdogs” and it gave us all a fraternal sense of “belonging”.

### The first seminar

The movement in the year 1949, without a leadership, like a rudderless ship, was going around in circles and getting nowhere. Time was running out and it would be impossible to remedy the situation unless something was done. Those few youngsters still in Betar would become disheartened and leave. Yosef Steiner was convinced, after having witnessed the train of events since the 1948 camp, that the only way to build Betar was from the bottom up and, above all, from locally trained leaders who understood and had the mentality of Australian youth. And so it came about that an attempt was made to organise the first leadership seminar from among the members of the sixteen- to eighteen-year-old Betarim of the still existing Ben Yosef group. Six people were selected to comprise the seminar: David Barkman, Sally Burstin, Michael Oberman, Isi Plachinsky, Jack Mirjam, and Shimshon Feder. The seminar group gathered for the first time in the office of a clothing factory where a lecture was delivered by Eric Stock (a medical student at the time) on the topic "Psychology of leadership". This was his first and last appearance. Following this there were another four or five meetings which dealt with nebulous matters unrelated to leadership training, the needs of Betar, let alone to teach us what Betar really was. In short, there was no program.

From this, it became apparent that the organisers themselves were in a vacuum and had no idea how to go about implementing a thought-out and balanced program. Furthermore, the first World Convention of Betar since the outbreak of World War II and death of Jabotinsky had just taken place. There were many issues to be clarified, above all, what was the role of Betar now after the establishment of the State of Israel. All this we found out much later. At the time we were just going through the motions, not knowing where or why.

After a few weeks of useless seminar meetings, the group dwindled down to two people who still showed a spark of interest – Jack Mirjam and Shimshon Feder. By now, the senior leadership had virtually vacated the stage, leaving Yosef Steiner in charge and two potential untrained leaders.

## **Activities**

Whoever still remained in the movement was reorganised under Yosef's direction and the movement began to take shape. In June 1949, a function was held to commemorate the anniversary of Ben Yosef at the home of Sam Gold, where a "living paper" was presented. A publication, our first, was printed for the occasion and thus we were introduced for the first time to that wonderful feeling of being part of producing a movement magazine. It was a primitive effort, amateurish – but most satisfying. During that same year, a successful Jabotinsky function was held at the Kadimah Hall. All the inactive "old boys" of Betar were mobilised for the occasion who, together with the new youngsters, made an impressive turnout. For



**Photo 8: The first Hashmonaim group.**

**Back L to R: David Black, Gideon Herschberg, Yosef Steiner, Leah Feder, Shimshon Feder. Front: Richard Flantz, Mary Abzatz, Wally Black.**

Israel, the Zionist movement, to fill the void created by that ill-fated seminar. And so, in August 1949, after barely eight months' membership in Betar, we were sent out to try and form the first junior (Hashmonaim) group in Betar at Herzl Hall, Carlton.

Week after week we went to Herzl Hall, but no chanichim came. We were left to contemplate where we had failed and why nobody wanted to join Betar. After some time we both arrived at the only possible conclusion. If we were at all going to succeed in establishing a group we must have a foundation, a start. So we did the next best thing. We organised our brothers and sisters. The first three members of the Hashmonaim group were Phillip and Gwen Mirjam and Leah Feder, plus a lone remnant from the Woori Yallock camp, Miriam Libovsky, who regularly came week after week from far-away Williamstown to Betar meetings. This group gradually increased to twelve members by the addition of a few youngsters from St Kilda,

the first and last time we saw that legendary figure, Rabbi L. A. Fal, Chaplain of the Jewish Legion, who especially came down from Sydney to address the meeting. It was at this function that we began to learn something about Zeev Jabotinsky.

It was around this time that Betar took the bold step in attempting to establish a junior group. The two potential leaders still left were given publications to read. We devoured everything we could lay our hands on. We were hungry for anything that had to do with Betar,

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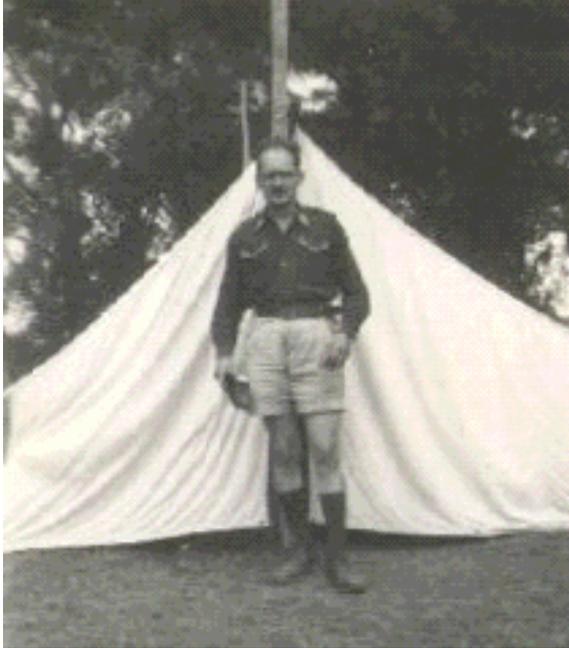
among whom were Gideon Herschberg, Henry May, Richard Flanz, Zvi and Wally Black. Each meeting invariably began with a half hour of “Tass” followed by a short lesson in Ivrit, general Hebrew songs, and group games. After some time we received the text of the first verse of Shir Betar, which we diligently taught the group. At that time, no one in Australia knew the other verses. A sicha was invariably given after preparation on the well-worn evergreen topics – Trumpeldor, Tel Hai, Ben-Yosef and occasionally on Jewish festivals when they occurred.

Despite the severe educational deficiencies facing the two madrichim, there was enthusiasm, dedication and will-power. The group continued to exist. By this time the sixteen- to eighteen-year-old Ben Yosef group, which had shown so much promise after the Woori Yallock camp in 1948, disappeared blissfully from the scene due to a lack of suitable activity and, above all, no madrich to lead them. As there was no senior leadership, there was no senior movement. There was no Netzivut (today, Hanhaga Artzit) and no Mifkada. But amid all this confusion, there was a certain amount of order. Minimum duties were carried out. Correspondence was begun and maintained with other Betar sniffim, especially South Africa and the United States, and we were on their mailing list. Both sniffim at this time were at their peak and we eagerly awaited and lapped up their publications, reading them from cover to cover over and over again.

In Melbourne, we kept the image of Betar alive by submitting articles and club notes (free of charge) in the Jewish press. Curiously, the first Betar oleh went to Israel at that time – Leon Kestin, who was not a product of Australian Betar but one of the European Betarim who decided to go on aliyah. Despite all the negative aspects of that fateful year of 1949, Betar was still alive and hanging on by its teeth. The second Betar camp was at Woori Yallock in the summer of 1949-50. After Melbourne Betar’s leadership’s inability to capitalise on the successful camp of the previous year, history did not repeat itself. This camp is significant insofar as it was the first camp where all the participants were members of the movement. We just did not succeed in drawing outside participants. All in all there were some thirty-five people at the camp, including a small contingent from Sydney, led once again by Hans Dreyer. Mefaked Ha Machaneh this time was Yosef Steiner, Sgan Mefaked (and cook) Hans Dreyer and the madrichim – Jack Mirjam and Shimshon Feder as well as Michael Oberman and David Barkman who were inactive all the year but agreed to help out at camp. This was the last time they participated at any Betar activity.

It was a camp in the true scout tradition. Betar had very little equipment and apart from the cooking utensils, all the equipment from the previous camp had been rented. So we had to buy eight four-man non-waterproof tents without the outer protective fly. This was all Betar could afford. The prep. party consisted of Shimshon Feder, who was dispatched alone with the equipment, which was loaded onto the truck of a former Betari. Jack Mirjam joined him that night. And that was the prep. party. The two madrichim set up the entire camp at Woori Yallock and two days later the campers arrived with Yosef Steiner and Hans Dreyer.

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**Photo 9: Hans Dreyer, Mefaked Machoz Sydney, 1948-53**

By this time, we had acquired a far greater knowledge of the movement and its history from the material received from other sniffim. We were able to organise a better balanced educational program which was, while far from being perfect, quite adequate for the needs of the young chanichim. We were able to teach the campers at least something about Betar, or rather what we imagined Betar to be. There was activity all the time, some of it impromptu, but above all we were getting somewhere. All the cooking and food preparation was carried out by Hans Dreyer and the campers on a hot-plate heated by wood chopped by the campers, all in the open air. The river was used as a refrigerator and everything else was constructed by the campers themselves. An 8 mm film of camp activities was taken by Yosef; it

was the first in a series. We felt at the time that we had managed to consolidate our meagre human assets.

### **A new crisis – the first Kenes Artzi**

Following the camp, Melbourne Betar found itself with some twenty-five junior members. The camp hadn't gained us many new members, but neither had we lost any. Sydney Betar, through the independent but persistent efforts of Hans Dreyer, also began to show signs of life. Both centres were still operating independently throughout the year, with the Sydney people journeying down to Melbourne for the camps. As yet nothing was done to weld the two centres into a federal body under a central leadership. No one felt strong enough to bring it about.

As was pointed out earlier, Betar had no officially recognised leadership. It had a spontaneous leadership. All those now leading Betar had stepped in to fill a vacuum. They had never been elected or appointed. It is not at all certain whether anybody cared or knew what was crystalising in that far-off land, Australia. Furthermore, it is almost certain that World Betar knew nothing of the demise of the 1948 leadership, nor were they informed. Otherwise they would have called for a Kenes Artzi, or if that was not possible, appointed a temporary leadership.

Yosef Steiner felt that real leadership knowledge could not be acquired in Australia, since there was no authority on Betar matters. He decided to submit his candidature to the Zionist Federation as a Machon student. He also probably felt that in Israel he would come to grips with the problems facing the movement, so that upon his return Betar could go forward in a new direction.

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Thus, in June 1950, the first Kenes Artzi of Australian Betar took place. From all my subsequent discussions with Betarim active prior to 1948, no one had heard of a Kenes Artzi or elections. People just filled positions of leadership as the need arose and disappeared when they felt that they had had enough or that it was taking up too much of their time. Worst of all, they were not accountable for their actions. From Yosef Steiner's point of view, it was understandably vital that he should arrive in Israel carrying with him some form of authority vested in him by the Australian movement, however fragile it was. The world movement would accept him as Australia's Natziv if some formal representative gathering would elect him.

I remember receiving in the mail a small slip of paper notifying me of the Kenes Artzi and that I, together with Jack Mirjam, should assemble all the members of Betar Hatzeira for the opening Misdar which was to take place at 9.30 a.m. The agenda comprised two items only – a discussion to be followed by the election of the Natziv. No one thought of questioning the validity of the Kenes, nor had they the faintest idea how a Kenes should be convened. In other sniffim we later learned Betar had a long-standing tradition of properly run conventions. This one was a pure Melbourne affair, which did not take into consideration the existence of Betar in Sydney. No delegates were submitted and elected, no printed reports were published. There was no age limit for the participants. Anybody who possessed a Betar uniform was eligible to attend with full voting rights. As a result, even some nine-year-old Hashmonaim attended. A Nessiut was not elected by the delegates. Instead, Yosef Steiner arranged for Shimshon Kamil to chair the Kenes. All in all it was, in retrospect, a tragi-comic affair which by that curious twist of events gave birth somewhat later to the present-day traditions of elections and submitted reports by those holding office and being responsible to those who placed their trust in them.

At the prescribed time, 9.30 a.m., on that Sunday morning in June 1950, Herzl Hall was filled with twenty-five Hashmonaim and their two madrichim awaiting the imminent arrival of Yosef Steiner and Shimshon Kamil. The impatience and anxiety gave way to disgust when two hours later they arrived without even an explanation, let alone an apology why they had kept the Kenes waiting. This lack of consideration already set the tone of the Kenes where even some of the younger Betarim were becoming hostile. On looking back today at this Kenes, there was not even one redeeming feature which could point to some achievement. There was no education report, no financial report. In fact, there was nothing to report. There was, however, as usual, to overcome the lack of what to report a discussion as to what Betar should do. But since the majority of the participants were Hashmonaim, this precluded any fruitful discussion. One of the younger members, David Black, requested permission to speak and addressed the Kenes on the issue of personal example and that leaders while at a Betar function should eat only kosher food.

The absence of a proper agenda led to these obscure and at times irrelevant topics. This short address, coupled with the disappointment and lack of consideration which they had been treated by the two senior leaders, and fired by

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their own immaturity, reached a climax when finally the election of the Natziv was announced.

There was only one candidate, Yosef Steiner. The atmosphere was bristling with animosity. No other nominations were put forward. The chairman, Shimshon Kamil, called for a show of hands in favour of Yosef Steiner. No hands were raised. Who was against? Once more no hands. Then Shimshon Kamil raised his hand for the candidate and thus Yosef Steiner was elected by one vote and twenty-seven abstentions as the first Natziv of Australian Betar. One may now ask what would have happened if twenty-seven hands had been raised against the candidate as a vote of no confidence? It is really hard to say. The outcome showed that there was something lacking all around. The participants were inexperienced and immature and lacked movement background. But worse still, the two senior leaders who should have been able to sense the mood of the participants, whatever their shortcomings, completely ignored and underestimated their value to the movement. Since Shimshon Kamil's role at the Kenes was only symbolic, Yosef Steiner in any case was left with the small movement to carry on the work.



**Photo 10: At Yosef's Farewell, June 1950. L to R: Gideon Herschberg, Richard Flantz, Charlie Flanc (Richard and Charlie are cousins, not brothers, hence the different spelling), Michael Oberman, David Barkman and Shimshon Feder**

If the Kenes could be called a crisis, it was indeed minor to the crisis that was about to follow. A few weeks after the Kenes, Yosef Steiner left Australia as its first Natziv to participate in the Machon Course for one year in Israel and left the two madrichim, Shimshon and Jack, to run the movement. We had just emerged from a disastrous Kenes Artzi and now the three leaders were reduced to two inexperienced but enthusiastic and willing Mefakdim.

### **The battle for survival**

Being left on our own, we did not even have the benefit of someone to consult, if only for advice or guidance. We suddenly found ourselves dealing with problems of organisation, education, finance and publicity even if only on a small format. We were not full-time workers for the movement but it would not be far from the truth to state that most of the time we had at our disposal apart from the hours occupied by our outside work for a livelihood, we spent in thinking, planning, and dreaming of a large movement, without knowing how or when this would come about.

A short time beforehand, the State Zionist Council had acquired offices at 77 Bourke Street in the city, and the Revisionist Organisation was allocated a small cubby-hole of an office at the rear of the building. Since the Revisionists had no regular activities, we occupied the office and turned it into the nerve centre of our activities and the place where we could store the educational material. At long last Betar had an address. On the positive side, it may be added that notwithstanding the negative effects of the Kenes, we managed to keep the Carlton Maoz going, even to the extent that its membership gradually began to increase. We were not drowning, but our heads were barely above the water.

Around two weeks before his departure for Israel, Yosef left us with another legacy. One day we came in to the Betar office and found stacks of printed magazine covers in different colours as well as a sizeable amount of duplicating paper donated by Mr S. Roth, who, I found out later, had been one of the early Revisionist leaders in Melbourne but was now inactive. And this is how the movement magazine *Haderech* started. Yosef also left us with a decrepit small hand duplicator manufactured at the turn of the century somewhere in the Austro-Hungarian empire. But there was no typewriter.



**Photo 11: Theo Balberyszski**

The inaugural issue was published by us with Yosef in June 1950. The only previous experience we had was the publication of the Shlomo ben Yosef booklet a year before. However, we had to make use of the paper and the stacks of *Haderech* covers. In this way we began to produce *Haderech* with the content and technical production gradually improving as we gained experience. One difficulty that could not be overcome was that reams upon reams of duplicating paper had to be wasted in order to print 100 copies. The old duplicator was not up to it. The stencils crumpled and tore in the middle and had to be glued together. It can now be revealed that Betar had no typewriter and to produce *Haderech* two intrepid editors worked at night after all the Zionist office staff had gone home. We used the typewriters of all the offices – J.N., WIZO, Magen David Adom, Friends of the Hebrew University. Unbeknownst to them, they all became silent partners in the production of *Haderech*. In any issue of *Haderech* of that time, one can find at least six different typefaces, with the line drawings done by Jack Mirjam. Nevertheless, we always met the deadline

and *Haderech* came out month after month and was enjoyed by the young members of Betar. In one year we managed to deplete a two-year supply of paper. The Betarim also participated by forwarding articles and whoever was in Betar at that time felt part of *Haderech*. With the return of Yosef and the experience gained by the now “veteran” editors, *Haderech* took on a different and more professional format and was later on, under the editorship of Theo Balberyszski, to become one of the finest magazines produced by any movement.

The activities of the movement were regular and stable. The Carlton Maoz was now holding its own. On paper we had about thirty members, out of which an average of twenty attended Sunday afternoon meetings. We now felt strong and confident enough to attempt to start another group. A number of Betarim who lived in St Kilda and Elwood, who enthusiastically travelled to Carlton week after week, were now taken out of the Carlton Maoz. Mr S. Roth assisted us by obtaining the use of a classroom at the Caulfield Synagogue in Inkerman Street. Jack Mirjam took this nucleus of Hashmonaim and started the Caulfield Maoz, while I remained in charge of the Carlton Maoz, which continued to function well and after a short time replenished the depleted ranks. By the end of 1950, we had two functioning Maozim of Hashmonaim and *Haderech*.

As the month of December 1950 crept closer, we were faced with a serious problem. What were we going to do about organising the annual camp. Neither of us had ever organised a camp on our own, let alone run it. We felt unable to meet the demands required to run a successful camp. For should we fail, we were in danger of losing those Betarim that we had nurtured so carefully and diligently.

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Furthermore, at this time there were no other madrichim other than ourselves, so we could not expect any outside assistance. Regrettable as it seems, that year was the only year since 1948, that Betar failed to have an annual camp. Also during that same year a severe polio epidemic broke out in Victoria. The government issued precautions to all people intending to go camping. The two young leaders found this a convenient excuse not to hold the camp.

Another aspect which bears mentioning and is directly connected with the camp was the question of finances. It must be remembered, that when Yosef left for Israel, Betar had no bank account and no money. Neither were there any outside sources of income. Movement subsidies were as yet unheard of. When Yosef handed us Betar, we were literally penniless. At times, some of the day-to-day running expenses were paid from our own pockets. Even had we been confident enough to organise a camp, the basic organisational structure was non-existent. During that year, the two madrichim industriously collected membership fees every week from the chanichim. This may have had educational value but we only managed to accumulate the “vast” sum of £25. It was kept in a tin box at the Betar office and made up of small change. Then, one day after a year’s absence, Shimshon Kamil came into the office and showed us an old debt from the *Jewish News*. And so we reluctantly had to part with the sole finance we had.

### **The machon student returns**

Around the latter part of 1951, Yosef returned. The movement held a welcome function which twenty-five Betarim attended. Not even one of the former senior Betarim made an appearance. The break was now clear and definite, and firmly established who were to be Betar’s guiding influences. Yosef decided not to set up a Netzivut but rather a Federal body which he called the “Vaada Artzit” (Federal or National Committee), something hitherto unheard of in Betar and not part of the legal structure of Betar. However, it was not important at the time. Contact was resumed with Sydney, though at that stage Betar had not attained the level where exchange of personnel was possible between the two centres. The three leaders constituted the Vaada Artzit and at the same time acted as the Mifkada of Melbourne. This body was as yet not officially recognised by Sydney, although they never voiced any objection. They looked upon Melbourne as the more developed centre and accepted that the leadership should naturally be there.

The Melbourne “troika” then set about organising the annual camp at Woori Yallock. The camp was this time given a theme: “Fifteen Days in Israel”. The experience gained over the past three years enabled us to produce an excellent program. As always, Sydney sent a contingent. It was not a large camp by any standards but a good one. Betar got itself two new acquisitions in the persons of Louis Paper and Moshe Bush, who were our age and did a lot of good work in helping us run the camp, and later became active leaders in Melbourne Betar. We still could not make inroads into the Jewish community and draw potential campers from among the non-organised Jewish youth. Once more, this was an internal Betar camp. It was an obstacle in our path which took another two years to overcome and enabled Betar to break out of its involuntary isolation. The

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improvement in education and spirit at the camp were exceptional. Hand over fist we gradually began to acquire camp equipment. Hitherto, camps had been run at a loss. This camp showed a small profit, which we ploughed back into equipment. We had no storage space of our own but obtained the use of the second floor of a factory to store our hard-earned camp equipment.

### Consolidation begins

During 1952, with the co-option of Louis Paper and Moshe Bush, Betar in Melbourne received another important addition in the person of Dora Hirsh, later Dora Steiner, who was eventually to become the first Gizbar of the Netzivut. We now began to work administratively in a more orderly fashion by decentralising and allocating specific spheres of activity. Yosef had made many contacts in Israel and with leaders of other Betar sniffim; and so a constant stream of correspondence began to flow in and out of the Betar office. We had hoped that Yosef would now devote a lot of time to improving the educational standard in the movement, which was to our way of thinking Betar's greatest deficiency. However, unfortunately, he occupied himself primarily with organising the framework and paid scant attention to the content. The pressing need was for good, well trained madrichim to develop an educational movement designed to achieve goals. We had expected that the year in Israel would have given him the tools to do the job. New Maozim – the key to Betar's development – would still have to wait their turn. *Haderech* now became a department on its own under the editorship of Jack Mirjam, assisted by three of the younger members, Gideon Herschberg, Leah Feder, and Adrian Rawlins. Its standard and content improved from month to month and became a magazine "by the movement for the movement".

Melbourne was now running efficiently, There was some form of hierarchical structure and chain of command. In addition to running the Carlton Maoz, I was placed in overall charge of Melbourne's educational activities. It was at this time that we established yet a third Maoz, in Brighton, which was led by Dora Hirsh. We now felt the time was ripe and we were strong enough to bring Sydney into the overall framework. As phase one of this plan, an official invitation was extended to the Vaada Artzit to come to Sydney and meet with the local leadership. Consequently, in the latter half of 1952, Yosef Steiner, Shimshon Feder, and Jack Mirjam flew up to Sydney for three days to discuss with Hans Dreyer and other Sydney personalities matters of mutual interest. This was the first time any of us had ever left Melbourne, let alone travelled on a plane to Sydney. At the time, I felt that I had arrived a different country. It was so unlike Melbourne. It was also the first time any of us had flown in a plane, which in itself was quite an experience. In addition to questions of closer cooperation, one of the top items on the agenda was an attempt to hold for the first time a large interstate camp in Sydney. In this way we would achieve two objectives.

Firstly, Betar Sydney would have its own camp and, if successful, would be able to build the movement which was at the moment stagnant; and secondly, Betar Melbourne would at last be able to break out of its communal isolation by encouraging youth outside Betar to participate in an interstate camp, which at that

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time was novel and attractive. The Sydney leaders said that up till now they had always traveled down to Melbourne and should be given the opportunity to organise the camp without the assistance of Melbourne and that they could guarantee a large participation. The Melbourne delegation had no idea of the structure and workings of the Sydney movement, how it operated or for that matter, the experience and capability of its leaders. If they said they could do it, so be it. Sydney was to us a strange land which we only began to comprehend much later. Hans Dreyer told us that he possessed some land in the picturesque Blue Mountains in the vicinity of Mount Victoria.

As time was short and the Melbourne delegation could not stay longer than three days, it was stipulated that the Sydney people should check out the site and, if suitable, they should go ahead with the organisational arrangements. Melbourne would organise its Maozim, permitting the over fourteen-year-old chanichim to travel to Sydney and complement this group with outside participation. However, Melbourne also wished to organise its own junior camp for those not attending the interstate camp, which would be held, not before, but after the Mount Victoria camp, and which would get maximum attention and not interfere with the publicity campaign to attract outside campers. Hans Dreyer and Bob Shteinman were to carry out the arrangements.

During our stay we were introduced to a number of other people connected with Betar, among whom were Alex Auswaks, Gershon Mossensohn and one somewhat shy and reticent youth named Larry Sitsky who was later destined to play a leading role in the future development of Sydney Betar. Another character who featured in or behind the scenes was the bearded and elusive Immanuel Holding, who looked like a prophet from a different world, and of whom stories have been told that have turned him into something of a legend. He would from time to time surface, make a brief appearance at Betar activities, standing on the sidelines taking it all in and then disappear without a trace. From time to time apocalyptic letters, notes, or messages would mysteriously appear on the tables or pinned to the door of the Betar offices, which were critical observations of the way Betarim behaved or acted in public. They were always written in descriptive and flowery prose.



Photo 12: Larry Sitsky

All these diverse characters were part and parcel of Sydney Betar. The composition of the two centres was entirely different. Melbourne, as mentioned earlier, was made up of youngsters who, though Australian born, were descendants of Eastern European migrants, whereas Sydney had a large number of Central and Western European elements; and after 1948 Sydney received a sizeable number of Jews from China from the cities of Tientsin, Shanghai and

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Harbin after the fall of Chiang Kai Shek. These elements from China had been members of the Betar movement and made up the early nucleus of Sydney Betar. This was the situation prior to the interstate camp in Sydney. The three of us returned to Melbourne and began working in earnest towards this camp which showed signs of being, by the standards of that time, a large camp.

In December 1952 the movement celebrated the marriage of Yosef Steiner and Dora Hirsh, who afterwards proceeded to Sydney for their honeymoon and to check on the final camp arrangements. The remaining Melbourne Mifkada members took in hand the arrangements for the Melbourne contingent as well as the organisation of the subsequent junior camp.

The Melbourne contingent numbered around thirty-six, and on arrival at the campsite found to their dismay that the camp was still in the process of being set up. And so, the Melbourne campers, especially those who had some experience in camp preparations, assisted in putting up the camp, a task which lasted late into the night and was still far from complete. Unknown at the time to the Melbourne contingent, relations between Yosef and the Sydney leaders, particularly Hans Dreyer, had deteriorated over a number of issues, among which stood out the poor organisation and matters connected with the camp's finances. Instead of being ironed out at the beginning, these issues were permitted to continue and fester, affecting the running of the camp. No matter who was right or wrong, the camp was Sydney's and thus their responsibility. Therefore, it was only fair to assume that they should be the authority. Matters deteriorated to a battle for supremacy between Yosef Steiner and Hans Dreyer. Some of the senior participants aggravated matters by taking sides.

We from Melbourne, out of bitter experience, had already learned the lesson of organising a camp without an educational program. Here we had eighty-eight young Sydney campers, and another thirty-six from Melbourne, excellent human material, and there was no camp program to follow. The Sydney leaders had not requested assistance in preparing the program, therefore we assumed that they had matters under control. From the beginning nothing went right. The site was a poor one by any standards. It was located in a little valley and had no drainage facilities. Moreover, no one had bothered to inquire about the average rainfall in that part of the Blue Mountains.

On the third day of camp it started to rain heavily, with the level of the water gradually rising. The tents also began to leak and stretchers collapsed. Any organised activity that had hitherto existed completely fell apart as everybody was occupied by either plugging holes in the tents or fixing collapsed stretchers. Also there was no high flat ground to move the tents. It was the classic example of where not to build a camp. After three more days of sleeping in leaking tents and broken stretchers and a submerged kitchen area, it was decided to leave everything as it was, with the exception of the campers' personal belongings, and evacuate everyone to the local township in the hope that when the rain ceased, normal activities could be resumed. In the midst of all this tempers rose, nerves became frayed and insults were hurled from both sides.

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The campers were billeted in the Mt Victoria Shire Hall which, being the only large place of assembly in the area, served many purposes including a cinema. After the screening of the film, blankets were rolled open and the campers went to sleep. During the day we tried to conduct some indoor activities. Most of the campers had by now contracted severe head colds. Spirits were really low with no sign of the rain letting up. By now, Hans Dreyer and Yosef Steiner were hardly on speaking terms. At the height of all this, Yosef Steiner decided to call for a Kenes Artzi on the spot. At the time, it was impossible to understand his motives for this unexpected and unnecessary Kenes Artzi. Perhaps he believed that his overall authority was slipping from his grasp and that a revolt in Sydney was brewing and would erupt at any time. Furthermore, all the time and effort invested in bringing the two centres closer together would be in vain unless something was done to bridge the widening gap. It was probably Yosef's assumption that in order to forestall this eruption, the best course to take would be to call for a general gathering of all the leaders of Sydney and Melbourne and reach some agreement of mutual cooperation and perhaps reshuffle the Netzivut.

The Sydney leadership reluctantly agreed to this "closed" Kenes, the second unorganised un-Betarian Kenes of Australian Betar, held in the coal-cellar of the Mt Victoria Shire Hall with the participants sitting on sacks of damp coal. The Melbourne participants included Yosef and Dora Steiner, Shimshon Feder, Jack Mirjam and Louis Paper while from Sydney—Hans Dreyer, Bob Shteinman, Larry Sitsky, Alex Auswaks and Immanuel Holding. The size of the cellar was about 30 square metres and lit by a naked light bulb. This was the composition of the second Kenes Artzi held in January 1953, an unusual Kenes by any standards.

The main topic under discussion was who was going to lead the movement after the camp. The Sydney leaders made it quite clear that they could not and would not follow the leadership of Yosef Steiner after his behaviour at the camp. They also threatened to cease all contact with Melbourne, the seat of the Netzivut, unless matters changed. A prolonged and bitter discussion then took place on the topic of the camp where mutual recriminations were hurled at one another. It was understandably clear that this camp, which Sydney had hoped would bring an increased membership, was doomed, and a certain amount of blame was placed on the shoulders of the Melbourne leaders.

The discussion now turned to the vital issue at stake, namely, who would be the incoming Natziv. One thing was agreed by all. The Netzivut would have to remain in Melbourne. The question had to be decided between two candidates—Yosef Steiner and Jack Mirjam. The third possibility, Shimshon Feder, was out of the question as three months previously, he had been nominated and approved by the Zionist Federation as Betar's second Machon student and would in any case be leaving Australia in three weeks time together with Louis Paper, who was to attend the World Betar Academy. It was thus agreed that Jack Mirjam should assume the mantle of Natziv. Even this was accepted by the Sydney leaders with misgivings - Melbourne was not to be trusted. Their feeling was, that as long as Yosef loomed in the background, it would not be possible for the two centres to come closer. On

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the other hand it would not be feasible to expect that Yosef not fulfil an important role in the running of the movement and exert influence, even though he expressed the desire to ease up. Further discussion was pointless, and on this pessimistic note the second Kenes closed.

The latter days of the camp showed an improvement in the weather and an inter-Machoz sports day was held on the Shabbat preceding Visitors' Day. On Visitors' Day itself, it promised to be a fine day, so we decided to return to the campsite and try to put it into some type of order.

However, towards noon, the sky blackened and it began to hail. Within minutes the camp was laid flat to the ground. This was the final blow in a chain of disasters which befell the ill-fated camp. As pointed out elsewhere, we did not have much time to ponder over this matter as we all had to return to Melbourne, I to prepare to leave for Israel, Yosef, Dora and Jack to run the junior camp, which was quite successful.

Before concluding this somewhat turbulent period, it would be worthwhile mentioning a few of the activities of an external nature. From the outset, we tried unsuccessfully to organise Ongei Shabbat with the participation of the general community so that Betar would not only be heard but seen. We had no experience and were as yet inept in organising artistic programs. We sought and got the cooperation of the Revisionists in these ventures, but apart from them and the Betarim, there was no outside interest in what Betar did and the Jewish public did not respond. We hired the Kadimah Hall for these functions, and usually ended up with a deficit as not more than thirty people came. It was most disheartening. We were extremely envious of Habonim who had dancing groups, large membership and public support. They had shlichim and a large number of Machon students who injected spirit into the movement. We had none of this.

Nevertheless, in 1950, we organised a series of functions under the heading "Betar Week" where every day, usually in the evening, a different type of public function was held. Betar Week opened with an exhibition about Betar and set out in the upper Kadimah Hall. We put a lot of effort into this exhibition, including, for the first time, an attempt at publicity. Among the other events was a public debate and a Betar dinner. Another important though unrelated event also occurred in 1952 and was referred to in Betar circles as the "Giesecking Affair".

## Pigeons at the Melbourne Town Hall

In March of that year, the pro-Nazi German pianist Walter Giesecking was scheduled to give a number of concert recitals at the Melbourne Town Hall. For several weeks preceding his arrival there were letters in the press calling on the Jewish community to boycott the concerts. There were also demonstrations outside the Town Hall organised by the Communist Party and by some of the left-wing Jewish organisations. These were usually quickly and effectively dispersed by the police. What were we going to do about it? A discussion took place among the activists from among the Zionist youth movements. Firstly, it was agreed that any action taken could not be done with the knowledge of the senior Zionist bodies as they would never sanction anything other than newspaper protests. Therefore,



Photo 13: Walter Giesecking

the Betar leadership - Yosef, Dora, Jack, Louis Paper, David Mayer and I - together with some of Habonim's "activist" madrichim, including Shalom (Sol) Solly and Yitzhak (Isi) Fine, decided that the only effective way to disrupt the concert was to do something to cause a commotion inside the hall. The idea was brought up and agreed that two pigeons would be released inside the semi-darkened hall during the recital while the remainder of the participants from the balconies, would throw "stink bombs" onto the stage. Yosef undertook to purchase the pigeons, Shalom Solly was to release one and I the other. So on that very warm March night we all met at 77 Bourke Street for a final review of the "action" before setting it in motion. Accompanying me was David Mayer whose job was to "cover" me by opening a newspaper over my arm while I released the pigeon. A similar technique was to be carried out by Shalom Solly and Yitzhak Fine. We entered the main hall without being detected, with the pigeon in a shoe box strapped to my wrist with a raincoat draped over my arm to conceal the box.

**March 3, 1952: With the call that "We want no Nazis in Australia!" Jewish demonstrators greeted German pianist Walter Giesecking the airport Melbourne. On invitation the Australian broadcast does tour of the artist through the continent. – Excerpt from a German chronicle.**

I recall my mother seeing me leave the house in a dark suit and tie and carrying a raincoat. She asked me why would I need a coat on such a warm March night. I mumbled something incoherent and left. It was hoped that the release of the pigeons would cause a disturbance and that Yosef would stand up and fall into a faint, whereby Dora would call for help. While all this was going on, the stink bombs would be dropped onto the stage, emitting a foul smell. That was the plan; but nothing ever goes according to plan.

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The lights dimmed, Giesecking walked on to the stage and the concert began. Apparently, the pigeon of Sol Solly couldn't wait for the appropriate time and wanted to get out, They had to release it before the prescribed time. They were seen and immediately grabbed and escorted outside. There was a minor commotion. I therefore had no other alternative but to release the pigeon, The first pigeon released by Shalom Solly and Yitzhak Fine flew a few feet in the air and then promptly landed on someone's lap, the second one flew up and lodged itself in the chandelier. We were not noticed as everyone was looking in the direction of the other pigeon. We nervously remained seated till the intermission after which we never returned. Yosef was told to sit down and not get excited. The stink bombs thrown by Jack and Louis from the balconies "plopped" on to the stage. They neither exploded nor emitted foul smells. It must be said that Giesecking kept cool and calm. When the commotion occurred, he looked up for a few seconds and kept on playing.

The aftermath was more interesting than the incident itself. The next day it received press coverage in all the morning and evening papers. I even managed to salvage a "flier" from outside a newspaper shop. I simply lifted it out of the wire frame. It read in thick bold type "PIGEONS RELEASED AT GIESECKING CONCERT". That same night a cartoon in the Melbourne Herald showed two men on their way to the Giesecking concert. One had a shotgun under his arm. The caption beneath the cartoon read: "I hear they are going to release wild ducks tonight."

There was, of course, another problem. How to get the second pigeon down from the chandelier and whose duty it was. A few days later a picture appeared in the newspaper showing a smiling Town Hall official holding the white pigeon which had been successfully rescued from the chandelier. There was yet another cartoon showing two pigeons talking to one another. One asks the other, "Henry, where have you been since Tuesday night?"

We were elated and pleased with ourselves even though the results were not as earth shattering as we had planned. At least we had tried to do something. We made ourselves "scarce" by organising a weekend camp a few days later at the Maroondah Dam for Hashmonaim and Kanaim. The individuals who participated were afterwards reprimanded by senior Zionist officials, but that was all.

The year 1952 was relevant for yet another reason, which had a far-reaching effect on the development of Betar, though its origin had nothing to do with Betar, but rather Habonim. Inside Habonim, which had been up to that time a "general" type of Zionist youth movement, a group of top leaders was crystallising with a more extreme Zionist-Marxist philosophy, and included Dov (Frank) Golembowicz, Shalom Solly, Yitzhak Fine, Zvi Solow and Sam Weisel, just to mention a few. The shlichim sent out from Israel were usually from the Mapai party and were moderate Socialists. This above-mentioned group, it seems, was working clandestinely within Habonim, threatened to undermine the entire structure of Habonim, and wielded considerable influence. As one of their first efforts, while still in Habonim they

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published a Hashomer Hatzair version of the Bible where the word God, whenever it appeared, was omitted. It was printed on the duplicator in the Zionist offices. It was later commonly referred to as “The Godless Bible.” It fell accidentally into the hands of people outside Habonim before its educational “message” could be put into effect. The result was that the group was prematurely uncovered and the shaliach Gershon Epstein had them expelled from the movement. They did, however, succeed in taking with them several upcoming madrichim to form the breakaway group which then became Hashomer Hatzair.

Habonim was now not as all-powerful as beforehand. A considerable number of able madrichim had been expelled, which caused an overall weakening of the movement. During this period, Betar was quite stable though not large and B’nei Akiva was emerging as a force to be reckoned with. Habonim was losing its grip as a result of the internal rift. Now was the chance to take advantage of this momentary lapse. It was a power struggle in the full sense of the word. For well over a decade Habonim had virtually controlled the Zionist Youth Council. Since they were the biggest, the bulk of the State Zionist youth funding went to them. They were the only ones who received shlichim and had the majority of the Machon students. Betar and B’nei Akiva were tossed a “bone” from time to time. But more than all this, Habonim held the key position of full-time organising secretary of the Zionist Youth Council, who was a full-time salaried employee of the Zionist movement. It meant in real terms that the person sitting in the Zionist office and receiving a salary with all the facilities at his disposal and, coupled with the assistance of a shaliach, could create for Habonim all those activities that the other movements had to do on a voluntary basis only. The funding available to them plus the shlichim and Machon students put them way ahead of Betar and B’nei Akiva. This Habonim monopoly now came to an end. By the middle of 1953 a different political set-up existed in the Zionist Youth Council.

At this stage it might be worthwhile digressing from the chronological sequence to deal with a number of factors indirectly related to the development of Betar during this crucial period. I refer to outside bodies with which there was mutual contact, though not always harmonious.

### **The Revisionist Organisation**

Relations with the Revisionists were generally somewhat ambivalent. From time to time there was cooperation while at other times there was tension and even hostility. The tension, strange as it may seem, was at its worst when Betar was in its life and death struggle for existence.

Aside from the isolated contact back in the 1940s, my real first association with the Revisionist movement was in 1949, when together with Yosef Steiner I observed an executive meeting held at the home of David Abzatz, who was at that time the secretary of the Revisionist Organisation. About a year later, this outstanding personality passed away. David Abzatz’s name was attached to many communal and cultural activities; but above all, he was always recognised as a

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leader within the Jabotinsky movement and as such commanded the respect of all who came in contact with him. Over the ensuing years, the Revisionist executive was composed of the same personalities who met from time to time.



Photo 14 S. Stock

At the head of the movement stood S. Stock who was the “anchor” that held it together. The rest of the executive included Yehuda Honig, a soft-spoken outstanding intellectual, Ernst Skall and Eisenbruch. Around the mid-fifties another outstanding intellectual reached Australia, Dr M. Verstandig and was coopted to the executive. As individuals, each in his own way was a personality and had either been in Betar or the Revisionist movement in pre-war Europe. But in Australia, they failed to attract any new followers and always remained a small group.

As far as Betar was concerned, the only true basis for cooperation was the mutual ideology of Rosh Betar. There was no understanding on their part for the practical needs of Betar. At our most difficult crossroads, no one held out a helping hand. They failed singly to comprehend our sincerity and devotion and we, on the other hand, resented their attitude. At executive meetings which we attended, as a matter of regularity Betar appeared on the agenda, its problems and complaints heard and noted, then promptly forgotten. Betar was a formality and one had to go through the motions As young leaders we took this matter seriously and reacted towards them with a certain disdain. After a while we reached the conclusion that Betar should disregard them and not expect salvation from this quarter. Later on, their attitude changed, and their respect for Betar and its leaders became more apparent.



Photo 15: E. Skall

S. Stock, who was the President of the Revisionist Organisation throughout this entire period, was a man of exceptional capability in the field of organisation and finance. In later years he became the Director of the United Israel Appeal, Treasurer of the Zionist Federation and directed its operation on a national scale with enormous success. There can be no doubt that the Jabotinsky movement in Australia could have become a large, if not the dominant movement in the Jewish community, if this energy and talent had been invested in building a virile Revisionist movement.

Mr. Stock, when he held a seat on the Zionist Federation, was most influential in helping Betar get its first shaliach, Elazar (Gad) Pedhazur. But at the time we are referring to, we were still small, we needed financial help not only to run Betar, but more so, to acquire camp equipment. We could not produce educational material since there was never any money. In the years 1949-53, it was a vicious circle from which we could not extricate ourselves. We pleaded with the Revisionists, who sometimes gave us a small amount to keep us quiet. But for the most part,

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our calls went unheeded. Two important lessons may be learned from this episode with regard to Betar. Firstly, create leaders who are prepared to be devoted to the ideals of the movement and capable of educating a young generation of Betarim, and secondly even more important, Betarim should seek support everywhere but depend only upon themselves.

### **Polemics within the Australia Zionist Youth Movements**

Youth, with all their idealism, can be utterly cruel with regard to those holding contrary opinions and ideals. Betar, being the direct “heirs” of the so-called terrorists in Palestine, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, were given similar treatment in Australia by the official Zionist movement as our counterparts in Israel were treated by the Jewish Agency. The bulk of the financial support contributed by the Jewish people as a whole and allocated to youth affairs went directly to Habonim in various ways - shlichim, machon students, organising secretaries in Melbourne Sydney and Perth, the financing of a Hachshara Farm for over two decades where a handful of olim were supposed to get training for life on a kibbutz. In those days at any one time there were three Habonim shlichim in Australia and no other shlichim whatsoever. Betar’s seat on the Zionist Youth Council in Melbourne was used as a platform to treat us with contempt and derision. At times, when Jack and I were sent to represent Betar at these meetings, we got the feeling that it was an utter waste of time since matters had already been decided beforehand. It might be said that others were offered slightly larger allocations and they too jumped on the bandwagon, which kept them subservient. B’nei Akiva’s hands are not particularly clean in this regard. We may now take up the narrative and go back to 1953. Things were about to change and 1953 was to become a milestone from whence there was no looking back.

At that time, the Australian Zionist Youth Council, whose seat was in Sydney, knew very little about Betar as Betar was operating mainly in Melbourne and its leaders were not well-known outside Melbourne, while Habonim had centres all over Australia - Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane. In the middle of 1953, matters took a turn. Firstly, the State Zionist Council moved out of its cramped offices at 77 Bourke Street and moved to the more spacious site at Beth Weizmann in St Kilda Road where there was room to breathe. Betar received a small office to conduct its activities. Inside the Zionist Youth Council in Melbourne, Betar was getting fed up with the manner in which it was being treated. By this time, a change within the leadership of B’nei Akiva had taken place. Hitherto, the leaders of B’nei Akiva in Melbourne had been Arnold Bloch, who laid the foundations, and one of his disciples, though somewhat younger, Isi Leibler. Arnold Bloch at this time vacated youth movement activities. Yosef Steiner and Jack Mirjam, who were representing Betar (as I was in Israel on the Machon) decided to bring matters to a head. They informed the Zionist Youth Council that henceforward Betar would send two new representatives. At the next meeting of the Council two young Hashmonaim appeared as the representatives of Betar on this august body. If they wanted “to play games” with Betar we would give them youngsters with whom to play games.

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As a result, Yosef and Isi Leibler met to reach some compromise. Betar's demand was that the position of Zionist Youth Council Organising Secretary should go to Betar. Habonim was at that time, as mentioned before, going through a period of reappraisal after the expulsion of its Marxist-oriented madrichim. It is quite possible that Isi Leibler thought it advisable to "switch" horses midstream, and thus a new coalition was established which created equilibrium within the Council. No longer was Betar alone. Yosef was elected the incoming Organising Secretary while Isi Leibler's position as Chairman remained secure. The two movements then began a period of mutual cooperation which allowed Betar to not only consolidate its position, but to wield influence on decisions taken - and above all, to reap the benefits of a full-time salaried official who, in his capacity as organising the work of the Council in general, could find ample time and devote his energies to Betar.

Its effects were soon felt. By the time I returned to Melbourne in March 1954, Betar was in a healthier position. There were three groups functioning at Beth Weizmann, which was now called Maoz Merkaz, a group at the Toorak Synagogue, another group in Brighton, a group in Camberwell, and Kew. The premises at Herzl Hall were condemned as unfit for use. The Kadimah was used for a while, but after the shift to Beth Weizmann, its members were absorbed into the Maoz Merkaz; thus the first Maoz at Carlton went out in a blaze of glory, its members were to take up leading positions in Betar during the ensuing years.

The efforts invested in "the lean years" 1949-52 were now bringing results. The young Hashmonaim who had survived had now matured. A better organised madrichim seminar was held and a new generation of madrichim was emerging, among which were Allan Morris, Phillip Mirjam, Leah Feder, and Aaron Ninedek as well as Adam Fliegelman - all products of the Carlton Maoz, not to mention Henry Kranz and another group from the other side of Melbourne.

At this juncture, a new personality appeared on the scene who further enhanced Betar's leadership - Theo Balberyszski. His arrival was indeed timely. Up to that time, he had been active in Jewish youth affairs and stood at the fringes of the Zionist youth movement. His entry into Betar during 1953 gave Betar an excellent public speaker whose voice was not only heard but given attention, as well as the benefit of his experience as the editor of *The Catalyst*, the magazine of the then Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. *Haderech*, which was now a department on the Netzivut, came under his editorship, thus releasing Jack Mirjam to take on other activities. Although it was still a duplicated magazine, its content and format changed, so much so, that even now, on looking through the various editions, one has a sense of pride in the advance made from the primitive stumbling steps audaciously undertaken in 1950 to produce a movement magazine, to the editions which came out now regularly every month. Even after his aliyah in 1953, *Haderech* for some years later continued to play a central role in the movement. From being a Melbourne magazine, it became the magazine of the whole Australian Betar movement. I would not be wrong in stating, that in subsequent years, when the Netzivut or Federal leadership went to Sydney, *Haderech* went with it. Betar now had a strong top leadership; but more than this, it had a healthy

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structure of maozim and chanichim; it possessed a magazine equal if not better than the other movement magazines, and it had madrichim.

To sum up this chapter concerning local Zionist youth affairs and Betar's relations with the Revisionist Organisation, it should be remembered that the improved conditions did not occur overnight, but were the result of persistent combined efforts of everyone who was part of Betar at that time - from the youngest Hashmonaim member to the top leadership. Each one, by being part of that close family contributed their share. One could not have succeeded without the other. From now on, at Revisionist executive meetings, Betar's views were taken seriously and in local Zionist activities the name Betar, if not yet completely accepted, was treated with respect.

# Betar Australia—1948-1953

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There are many reasons for writing on this subject, the main ones being -

- (a) The social development of a youth movement - its beginnings, tribulations and reasons for continuance in the face of fantastic difficulties
- (b) The realities facing a movement, its ideals, problems of education, organisation and its public image
- (c) Its financial problems and means of overcoming them; at times being a clash between ideals and practices
- (d) Its internal struggles and problems of personality, identification, and clashes
- (e) The reasons for youth devoting their time and labour to these ends. This study should therefore be educational, informative and of historical value.

I am making these observations in order to explain that I do not wish to delve too much into many of the personal differences and clashes that came about throughout the years of the movement's existence. Each of us has his faults and abilities. We were able to take and utilise as well as combine all these abilities, the faults being minimised through the unity of practice and results.

Throughout my account, I may sometimes be led off the path by endeavoring to explain the personalities of those involved and of the reasons for the actions which they undertook in order to give the most thorough picture of the period being presented.

I have read the account so far prepared by Shimshon and agree with the contents. We must, however, understand the differences right from the very beginning, of those having a European ideological orientation, and that which came later, namely, the distinct Australian Betari - his personality, education, ideology, and attitude to the movement.

When those who attempted to develop Betar in Australia began, they pictured a movement along the lines of the past of its organisational and militaristic structure. They believed it would be simple to begin a movement based on European techniques; a senior political movement pressing oodles of finance upon its younger participating members who would in turn prepare the youth movement by means of attractive facilities and activities. The strict military discipline would ensure its hierarchical framework. The idea that Australian youth would and could

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be uninterested in Zionist and Revisionist philosophy did not enter their minds and so, a nucleus was formed of ex-European Betarim, most of them in their twenties, and some even older. They indulged in social and very minor political activity. A military training program was attempted in secret - but not one single member went to Israel.

Yosef Steiner deserves praise for his far-sighted attitude to the movement. It was he who struggled against fantastic odds to begin a movement based on youngsters (Hatzeira) to ensure continuity. Since this is the story of an idealistic youth movement, we must try to understand the driving forces behind those who gave up their personal time and also careers for the sake of an extremely vague ideal.

Yosef was an idealist from Europe. His memories of the great movement which had existed prior to the war, plus his reverence for those personalities he had befriended, prepared his background to the movement. His personal interest lay in organisation and its problems. His past experience with some of the great exponents of youth movement organisation led him to make it his pet and basic interest. His movement education and ideological knowledge were only basic and his ability to pass this on to others was limited.

As the movement progressed, this became less important as others learned more and more about the movement. But in the formative years it presented one of Betar's greatest problems - an ideological movement with a very skimpy knowledge even of the reasons for its existence. However, personal motivation led to the release of a great amount of stored energy that had been previously held back. The amount of work and fruitful energy thus released was amazing. This ability to drive himself and others led to the formation and development of Betar and its later strength and vitality. How much was personal and how much was ideological was represented by a very thin dividing line. As development led to progress, it also led to controversies and their repercussions were many. Whatever transpired, I wish to say now, that the Australian movement would never have come to be had it not been for his driving force and personality, sometimes disliked but not unrecognised.

Passing now over the details of the beginning of the movement which have been dealt with by Shimshon, it was obvious that Yosef was left with two extremely young, though keen recruits. After the abortive seminar of 1949, the only remnant of Betar was the combined though diverse personalities of Yosef, Shimshon and myself. It was Yosef's personality and drive plus a great challenge which drove us to lay the groundwork for the movement.

The work entailed, for example, in the organisation of "Betar Week" in March 1950; and the exhibition, which was part of it, gave the necessary impetus for that which followed. This exhibition was an unqualified success, possibly the best single display that Betar Australia has ever presented. All the work was done by three amateurs, with the final touches to the display carried out by an interior decorator.

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As Shimshon has already pointed out, a group was started in Carlton, which was to become the nucleus of the movement. Again to explain personal involvement in order to find out what makes a movement “tick” - to see how young people become devoted and give all that there is to give; especially in this extremely materialistic period, I feel it of utmost importance that our motivations be understood. Shimshon and I became involved with Betar for a number of reasons, among which are the following:

- (a) For different reasons, we felt that a specific Jewish problem existed. We at first only understood the elementary aspects of Zionism and I was far from Jewish tradition. But this problem did affect us, and through the movement we recognised it. Shimshon had the advantage of an advanced knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish history learned from early childhood. However, we embarked on a course of self-education and orientation. Of course, the more we learned and understood, the more we wanted to know. It was an insatiable thirst. The result was knowledge, at first extremely garbled and uncertain, but the seed had been planted. Speaking personally, I felt from the beginning an aversion to propaganda and dogma. This attitude felt by Shimshon and me at the time was the start of a specific Australian Betar attitude to the movement: the desire to sift fact from fiction and the will to seek proper methods of education; a fair and complete understanding of our movement and other movements and why our Zionistic approach was preferable; a more easy-going attitude to Betar’s military structure, though not against discipline. But the notion that a leader guides, not orders, and the diminishing role of external militaristic paraphernalia were important elements, without negating Betar’s tradition and respect for its smart uniform.
- (b) The challenge of creating - this being a personal and idealistic ambition to succeed, bringing out the best in us and giving it to others.
- (c) The self-respect and higher feelings one obviously gains when one is giving. And by giving, also receiving.
- (d) The enmity from former colleagues and acquaintances due to an inexplicable prejudice against something not understood even by themselves. Thus again we had to face the challenge to make respectable a movement which had every natural right for respect.

By the time Yosef left Australia for the Machon in 1950, the real foundations were already established, if not yet firmly then at least tangibly. Achievements were few by any standards, but they were attained and were to hold the two of us together in the ensuing months. At times, all we had was this meagre success plus the routine work entailed in producing *Haderech*, and the running of one (and later on, two) Hashmonaim groups. Again, I feel it was the personal challenge that held us together and led to greater achievements later on. We craved educational

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material and ideological explanations. Yosef, instead of having this material sent from Israel during his stay there, left us to our own immature devices. How we continued in the face of all these obstacles, I cannot understand. During this period, we have to appreciate the work put in by Louis Paper and Moshe (Michael) Bush who assisted us in the activities.

With the return of Yosef in 1951, we felt the time had come to either expand or cease to exist. The 1951-52 camp, "15 Days in Israel", was a great success with a contingent from Sydney of twelve led by Hans Dreyer. A closer cooperation began, which we felt was to bode well for the future of the movement in Sydney and led to the invitation extended to us later in 1952 to fly up and discuss the holding of the subsequent Mt. Victoria Camp.

In Melbourne, activities reached a high point after the "Giesecking Affair" with a successful, first weekend camp at Maroondah Dam for Kanaim. It laid the groundwork for future weekend camps and seminars, giving a tremendous boost to the spirit and comradeship within the movement.

At this time, Betar felt that it should branch out a little into public relations with the senior youth movements. Throughout 1952, we regularly attended the meeting of "Banativ" a senior Zionist youth group. At one stage, I was even elected to its executive. People began to hear more about Betar from people in Betar and our standing in the community rose steadily.

The Giesecking episode, mentioned earlier, brought us into the spotlight and focused humorous attention upon us personally. Others had only distributed leaflets or demonstrate outside. Humour or not, it was attention and that was what counted. This, plus continuous public relations, letters to the press, advertisements, all began to make Betar "kosher". Sure, we had uniforms and marched, but it was now respectful antagonism towards Betar. We had become accepted.

Riding on a cloud of what we felt was success, Yosef, Shimshon and I, after a lengthy exchange of correspondence with Sydney, flew up there to organise our latest trump card - a camp in Sydney. We met with the Sydney Mifkada, Hans Dreyer, Bob Shteinman, Alex Auswaks and Immanuel Holding. Again I stress the atmosphere of wanting to get ahead, for it was this that let us be lulled by the continued assurances from the Sydney people that the campsite that had been chosen was an excellent one and that there were really no problems. So we returned to Melbourne and the future looked bright, at least so in Melbourne.

Before going further into this period, let us take a look at what existed in Melbourne up to that time. In Melbourne there were four groups. The Mefaked Machoz was Shimshon Feder who also acted as Mefaked Maoz Carlton and assisted by the madrichim Louis Paper and Moshe Bush. There was a new Hashmonaim group in Brighton led by Dora Hirsh (Steiner). In Caulfield, Yosef also led a group and was assisted by Eva Offman and in Toorak, I led the Maoz and was assisted by Henry May and Charles Planz.

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The Mt. Victoria camp has been dealt with elsewhere by Shimshon, but I would like to make the following observations: I have always felt an aversion to blind extremes in any form whatsoever and have always maintained that people can come together whatever the causes of separation. At first, this was basically a youthful premise, but even later throughout my career, as at present, I feel this is so. Extremes of any form are ill-advised without taking into consideration the ideas and feelings of the other side.

And so, throughout this camp, I made it my duty to try and bring the antagonists together in order to see the camp through. At times I succeeded, other times I failed. I believe it was partly because of this uncommitted attitude that made me, despite my youthful age, the person who was chosen, after a hectic Kenes, to be the second Natziv. Looking back now, I also realise that I was made the tool of both parties and used accordingly. Had circumstances been different it would not have been so simple. But, as it turned out, I received a merciless drubbing from all concerned. I do not wish to go into the events of the last few days of the camp. The differences reached a climax, the dislikes even blew into violence; and this I feel should remain an unhappy closed chapter.

The basic cause of dissension, apart from rivalry between Hans Dreyer and Yosef Steiner was, among other things, finances. The camp, due to the large participation, was a financial success and Yosef who entertained the dream of becoming the full-time organising head of Betar “arranged” the books so that Melbourne in the final analysis did not contribute at all to the finances of the camp. Perhaps his motives were honorable with the future of the movement being his direct objective. But so too were the motives of Hans Dreyer, who felt that Sydney could now continue to develop providing they had the necessary funds.

As I have pointed out earlier, both Shimshon and I had very early in our work in Betar, learnt the obligations of a leader. We had taught ourselves many things - songs dances, scouting, and almost all other matters pertaining to the running of a movement except one - finances. Yosef managed to handle matters to Melbourne’s benefit. So, after the Mt. Victoria camp I found myself in the following position: Yosef declared that he was tired of work in Betar and would not continue in any other capacity than that of madrich at the Caulfield Maoz. With Shimshon Feder and Louis Paper in Israel, I was left holding the movement, namely - organisation, correspondence, internal and overseas education, as well as the Melbourne Machoz. It could thus be seen that the gun levelled at my head was loaded and poised and I had no other choice but to play ball. Correspondence lowered the already brittle interstate relationship to nothing, and I feel that, had it not been for the younger and extremely active section of the Sydney movement, it would have completely collapsed.

By the time of my next trip to Sydney in April 1953, the position was extremely poor. However, during the few days of my stay there, the position somewhat improved. I attempted to hold as many meetings as possible with the Mifkada as well as the younger elements. During this period I gained an insight into the main differences and tried to pacify those who were upset.

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Upon my return to Melbourne, the position worsened considerably. Once more, neither of the two leading protagonists were willing to compromise and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, a personal hate campaign was levelled at me and any friends that I still had left in Sydney. I do not wish to further elaborate on this painful episode, since others also have just as good a memory of these events. The culmination of it all was my “voluntary” resignation as Natziv before the natural expiry of my term of office and the appointment of Yosef Steiner as the Acting Natziv until the next Kenes.

After a great amount of negotiation between Melbourne and Sydney, Bob Shteinman was appointed the new Mefaked Machoz Sydney. With the conclusion of this internal strife, Sydney began to grow in rapid strides. As I had felt from the beginning, Sydney had more potential than any other centre in Australia for the development into a well organised Zionist youth movement. Due to the energetic efforts of the new Mifkada, led by Bob Shteinman, Larry Sitsky, Alex Auswaks and Jesse Trachtengertz, here too as in Melbourne a few years earlier, younger chanichim were gradually joining Betar. A year later, this gradual growth was further exploited when Shimshon, after his return from Israel, went to Sydney for an extended period to organise the first proper intensive though still small madrichim seminar.

During 1953, the Melbourne Machoz began to grow. It was during these months that we gained one of the best acquisitions to the movement in the person of Theo Balberyszski. He was well known in Jewish circles and represented the Coburg Jewish Youth Centre at the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council. We made his acquaintance there and became friends. His attitude towards Zionism was at that time crystallising and looking for expression. Since he was not a Socialist, he could not fit into any of the other movements; and so he found himself in Betar, where he fitted admirably. Theo's later work for the movement was incalculable, his devotion selfless. The leadership group that emerged in 1954 was now mature and capable.

Throughout 1953 we maintained correspondence with Shimshon and Louis in Israel. At last, we were able to receive from them material and answers to pressing ideological and educational questions. This period can be regarded as the starting point in the search for some distinct contribution from the Australian movement to Betar's ideological development. This striving was to continue over the ensuing years, particularly in the Melbourne Machoz, which was the ideological nerve centre of Betar. We attempted to translate Betar's ideology into practical ends. One of the ideas put forward was that Australian Betar should run a Youth Village in Israel, staffing it with all the necessary personnel, teachers, vocational experts, psychologists etc.

Looking back in retrospect over those years, I feel that the blame, if any, which caused these personal soul searching, should be placed on the shoulders of the World Betar movement in Israel. Louis Paper became disheartened during his year in Israel at the Betar Academy, and sometimes I wonder how Shimshon, on his own at the Machon, survived. Ideological problems were bypassed with flowery

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phraseology; open discussion was limited. It reflected a movement that was off course and living in the past. We in Australia, after 1954, developed our own particular Betarian approach. It was also at this time that we reached the peak of understanding Betar's aims and goals, except that the movement could not have survived such a drastic change. However, during Gad Pedhazur's shlichut between 1955-58, Australian Betar came as close as ever in completely revising Betar's ideological approach.

Nevertheless, returning to 1953, nothing could go wrong. Yosef became the full-time organising secretary of the Zionist Youth Council, replacing Sol Woodman from Habonim. Theo Balberyszski was co-opted to the Melbourne Mifkada and Dora Steiner had by then built the Brighton Maoz.

Yet another step forward at this time was that Yosef took over teaching Hebrew at the Kew Sunday School. The immediate result was the establishment of another Maoz in Kew. I took over this new Maoz, but the group never really got on to its feet due to the lack of a permanent meeting place. The Maoz eventually became Maoz Camberwell.

The latter half of 1953 was taken up in organising the summer camp, the beginning of a Madrichim Seminar, but primarily in the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of Betar celebrations. This function was the most successful youth function up to that time in which I had ever participated. Major Samuel Weiser, an excellent public speaker from Israel, was the guest of these celebrations. With careful planning, the program, financial organisation, and personnel involved made it an outstanding success. The list of patrons on the official invitations was a complete cross-section of the Melbourne community, its leaders in all spheres of activity. Last, but not least, the program presented by Betar was of a very high standard and very enthusiastically received by the public. All those present were witnesses to the fact that this youth movement called Betar was capable of handling a public function with foresight and planning—the combined result of which now presented Betar in a more gratifying light.

Again and again you will feel throughout this narrative, the desire by Betar's leaders to become accepted and recognised by the community. Today, Betar is an integral part of Jewish life in Australia. The prejudice of the old European factions and the Anglicised Jewish community not to be associated with any form of radicalism led to Betar's ostracism. The very same leaders who had previously derided us, now willingly lent their names and associated themselves with our activities.

With the conclusion of this memorable function, we now set about organising the thirtieth Anniversary Camp, which was also a resounding success. One of the contributing factors was the friendly and competitive attitude which now existed between Betar and B'nei Akiva. Mention should be made at this stage of the activities of the first group of madrichim, the first Australian trained leaders who had begun to take on responsibility - Gideon Herschberg, Henry Kranz, Ben Schneider, and Allan Morris. Another personality who made his appearance on the

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Betar scene was David ben David, a name which became synonymous with Betar camps which followed. We were riding on the crest of a wave and more was to come. Shimshon and Lou were expected back in March 1954, so things were looking up.

By now, a large number of senior Betarim was to lay the foundation of our first B'nei Etzel group after the camp. In Sydney, the work carried out by the seniors who had remained led to the culmination of a successful Junior Camp of about thirty participants. As a result of this camp, further expansion took place with the establishment of a new Maoz in Strathfield.

After the Melbourne camp, in addition to the above, preparations for future development of the movement were begun with the reorganisation of the Melbourne Machoz as follows:

- Maoz Merkaz Beth Weizmann - three shichavot: Hashmonaim, Kanaim, B'nei Etzel
- Brighton - two shichavot: Hashmonaim, Kanaim
- Carlton - two shichavot: Hashmonaim, Kanaim
- Camberwell - two shichavot: Hashmonaim, Kanaim.

With the return of Shimshon from the Machon in 1954, the movement again took a step forward, consolidating its strong position. It is impossible to accurately describe the activities during the rest of that year. A tremendous amount of enthusiasm and high spirits was felt throughout the movement. *Haderech*, now being edited by Theo Balberyszski, was another feather in our cap. New names and faces appeared in Betar. No longer did the original three have to carry everything on their shoulders. The movement began to relax and release the tension of the previous five years. A milestone had been reached.

During the short period preceding the 3rd Kenes Artzi in June 1954, among other things, there was a weekend camp at a new site called Kinglake West, a site that was to feature prominently in the history of Betar camping and where the first interstate camp was held after the Mt. Victoria Camp. It set the stage for future successful interstate camps in Melbourne and Sydney.

In summing up this chapter, I might remark that 1953 started off at a very low ebb after I had been placed in a position with no other alternative but to resign. But we were resilient and, as can be seen, after a few months gradually began to grow both in Melbourne and Sydney. We were able to put aside personal differences, organise the thirtieth anniversary celebrations and look forward to the future. This was perhaps due to the fact that we could see new faces in Betar that were helping to share the burden and that in the end it was all worthwhile.

# Betar 1954–56

Shimshon Feder

As can be seen from Jack Mirjam's comments, the second Kenes Artzi elected one of Betar's leaders to fulfill its highest leadership position, yet others sought to undermine it. At one stage, it seems that the personalities realised that something greater was at stake. All that had been achieved might be lost in fruitless arguments. Everyone rose to the occasion, put their differences aside, and went back to work.

Now, in 1989, some thirty-six years later, we can see that the immaturity of the early period of Betar had passed and was replaced with greater foresight. The period which now follows, the three years 1954–56 may be regarded as years of prolific activity in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. The leadership worked day and night, everything we touched turned to gold.

In January 1953, Louis Paper and I departed for a year in Israel, he to attend the Betar Academy (later known as the Course Shiltoni) and I as the sole representative of Australian Zionist youth at the Machon in Jerusalem. I write about this for an important reason - to point out the ideological void which existed in Australia. Yosef, after his return, had deliberately avoided the issues, But they could not be put aside indefinitely. During that year in Israel, we came face to face with hard facts and how little we knew.

I was introduced to my first blow about four weeks after my arrival. Israel Betar was holding its Kenes Artzi. As a guest from that far-off Snif, Australia, I was asked for my considered opinion on the pros and cons of Giyus Betar, border settlement, Betar service in Nahal units, and desired changes in the structure of Betar. I was so taken aback by my ignorance on such matters which to them seemed so natural, I mumbled a few words. From then on I made it a point to start asking and learning. So, in addition to Machon studies, I had to start learning what Betar was really about. Louis Paper, a close childhood friend and now also in Betar, went through a more trying experience. He participated in the Betar Academy for a period of four months. His knowledge of Betar ideology was less than mine. At the end of each week we would meet and exchange information we had gathered.

When I left Australia, my mind was made up on yet another thing. Betar Australia could never survive a repetition of the two previous attempts at a Kenes Artzi. Among the first tasks to occupy me was to learn how Betar Kenassim should be organised and then adapt them to Australian conditions.

Returning to Australia in March 1954, Yosef, the Acting Natziv, reorganised the Netzivut, which was divided into specific departments. In addition to filling the position of Natziv, Yosef dealt with external correspondence and World Betar; Jack Mirjam - Tarbut; Shimshon Feder - Chinuch and Hadracha; Theo Balberyszski - Mazkir Pnim and *Haderech*; and Dora Steiner - Gizbarut and Kranot. This state of

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affairs continued for the ensuing fifteen months, gave us stability and allowed us to reassess Betar's problems, iron out difficulties within the Netzivut (of which there were many) and plan for the future.

The first and most pressing need in 1954 was the holding of a proper Kenes Artzi. At a Netzivut meeting, Yosef suggested that I should undertake this task and everybody concurred. I agreed, with two provisos:



**Photo 16: Opening Ceremonies 3rd Kenes Artzi, Melbourne, June 1954**

**Back (L to r): Theo Balberyszski, Dr. M. Verstandig, Mr. S. Stock, Yosef Steiner, Dora Steiner, Jack Mirjam. Front: Benzion Eisikovitch, Dianne Rubenstein and Gary Stock (backs to us), Anne Entenberg**

- 1 That I should be officially appointed to head the Vaadat Bechiroth (Elections Committee)
- 2 That the Committee should be separate from the Netzivut, completely independent, without interference of any kind; and given complete freedom in organising the Kenes. Each department would be obliged to submit a written report to the Kenes on its activities, which would be published and open to criticism. Special emphasis was to be laid on the financial report, which, because of past experience, had caused so much distrust between Melbourne and Sydney.

As the first step, Phillip Mirjam and Allan Morris, two upcoming junior madrichim, were co-opted to the Vaadat Bechiroth. These two had come with us through the

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lean years of 1949–53. This committee in effect laid down the foundations on which future Kenessim were modeled. The elected delegates had to comprise two-thirds of the Kenes and those holding office one-third. There were to be observers too, from those not elected, with the purpose of seeing how Betar ran itself and as a means of educating future potential delegates. We introduced all those educational values of democratic elections. In this respect, we were far ahead of all the other movements which only paid lip service to notions of democracy and free speech. Betar now implemented it.

For the first time in any Zionist youth movement, we introduced the publication known as *Views and Opinions*, an open forum on matters of ideological and general Betar Australia issues, completely free of censorship. This was to give the delegates an introduction and idea of the issues to be discussed, so that they would have sufficient time to develop their ideas and thus contribute to the Kenes. Since this was the first Kenes of its kind in Australia, delegates were to be elected on a shichvah basis and not, as yet on, a Machoz basis. But it was a large step in the right direction. No longer would the leadership run the Kenes. The Kenes would be sovereign and elect a Nessiut Praesidium.

In the preceding paragraphs, I briefly mentioned ideological problems which faced Louis Paper and myself. Betar Australia would have to come to grips with these questions. I will now refer back to the year in Israel in order to allow the reader to comprehend the dilemma in all its ramifications.

As an attempt to give some flesh and bones to the post-State Betar, two Betar Sniffim took on practical tasks to give them some educational basis for their existence. Betar in Argentina, and to a lesser extent in the United States, decided to project all their efforts at settling Israel's indefensible borders as one of the most pressing national needs of 1949. Arab infiltration and murder were carried out daily across the borders in wholesale fashion with heavy loss of life and property. Jewish settlement was sparse. These Betar Sniffim also clothed the idea of border settlements as the future "springboard" for the eventual attainment of Shleimut Hamoledet, one of Betar's ideological tenets. Israel Betar, on the other hand, did not follow this trend. Instead, they set about establishing educational Youth Villages, one in Beer Yaacov and a second one in Herzlia, which would undertake to educate orphans and new immigrant children in the spirit of Betar, contributing directly to that other important Betarian concept—Shleimut Ha'am which was so vital.

The 6th Kinus Olami (World Convention) of Betar was to take place in 1953. Louis Paper and I were Australian Betar's delegates - in itself a historical landmark. It took place in August of that year and brought an open clash between the settlement faction and the veteran Israel delegates. The Latin American Sniffim demanded aliyah of Betarim at the age of eighteen, a totally unacceptable idea. While I had the greatest admiration for those Betarim at Mevoot Betar, and their strategic value, I could not envisage Betar Australia toeing the line if such a resolution was adopted. Another issue which vexed us considerably, especially Louis Paper, was that of compulsory Giyus Betar. Hitherto it had been an

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educational concept and Betarim volunteered for Giyus. Some delegates wanted to make it compulsory. Australian Betar was not ready to accept such dictates. In the end the resolution of the Mevoot Betar and Latin American Sniffim was rejected and in its place the vague concept of “Trumpeldorian Chalutzit” was passed. It encompassed everything and nothing.

All this is written in order to point out the predicament we found ourselves in after our return to Australia. What were we going to tell those eager and enthusiastic Betarim? We opposed compulsory Giyus for two reasons: firstly, there was no reason for it, since the new State of Israel mobilised its eighteen-year-old citizens. There was compulsory army service. The second and more important reason was that we thought the Betari should be given the choice of deciding what he thought could be his best contribution to the State. If his Betarian education had been good, then he would make the right choice. There was absolutely no need to set up a committee to arbitrarily decide where to send the new Betar oleh after his arrival. There was such a committee and it failed miserably. Most Betarim in Israel did not undertake Giyus.

With regard to the Diaspora, Betar also had an aliyah law, that upon reaching the age of twenty-one, a Betari was obliged to go on aliyah or leave the movement. While understanding the motivation for this - that aliyah is the crowning achievement of his Betarian education in the Diaspora - the Betari could not be an automatic cog in a wheel and upon reaching the age of twenty-one pack up his bags and leave Australia. Matters were much more complex. At that time, the world Betar leadership hardly knew the Golah and was unable to comprehend its specific problems. We in Australia were just beginning to emerge as a strong Zionist youth movement with dedicated people. If this idea was to be implemented then one of two things would happen: the entire present Netzivut would leave for Israel and the movement in Australia remain a body without a head, or the leadership would have to resign from Betar.

### **The inevitable collision between theory and practice**

On his return to Australia, Louis Paper was very blunt and to the point. In this respect, the conservatism shown by Yosef can only be matched by the inability of the world leadership to understand the Diaspora. It was most disheartening that when Louis Paper spoke of his opposition to compulsory Giyus and aliyah, Yosef treated him as a heretic and Louis was told to “reconsider” his approach. Louis Paper was left with little choice. When I arrived back a month later and told a similar story, the rift between Louis Paper and Betar had already widened and the clock could not be turned back.

*Haderech*, now under the editorship of Theo Balberyszski wished to include a new section in the magazine called “Open Forum” to discuss Betarian problems. He requested that I write an article on any controversial subject. I chose the question of voluntary or compulsory Giyus. I attacked the compulsory law as being contrary to the very spirit of Betar. Before the article was printed, it was severely censored by Yosef, and I was asked to delete several paragraphs that were critical

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of the world leadership. There was a heated debate. In the end, I relented and the article was printed in its abridged form. I was however content in the thought that some penetration had been made which could be widened later on, as was the case. It would have been disastrous at that time to bring matters into open conflict, as has been noted in the case of Louis Paper, who was slowly drifting out of Betar, which was a profound loss. Some time later, Yosef too came around to this way of thinking. However, at the time matters were tense.

This is not all. The question of “toeing the line” became the subject of several stormy Netzivut meetings in the period just preceding the 3rd Kenes Artzi and immediately after it as well. The Natziv, Yosef, claimed that as representative of Shilton Betar, he was obliged to carry out the instructions of the Kinus Olami. While this was theoretically true, other members of the Netzivut asserted that nevertheless opinions should be permitted to be freely aired on all matters pertaining to Betar, ideological and otherwise. In the end Yosef backed down. He realised that we had already lost Louis Paper; also, the lamentable 2nd Kenes Artzi in Sydney eighteen months earlier was still fresh in his mind; and it would be disastrous to have the majority of the Netzivut opposed to his leadership.

By the time the 3rd Kenes Artzi took place in June 1954, Bob Shteinman was in full control of the Sydney Machoz and things were on the mend. Most important, Sydney had several junior groups. Melbourne Betar, as mentioned earlier, held for the first time elections to the Kenes. Sydney’s structure was still too fragile to withstand an election. Instead they sent a delegation that included Bob Shteinman, Larry Sitsky and David Cukierman. They were unaware of the ideological debates within the Netzivut, nor for that matter, the junior madrichim of Melbourne. Whatever the feelings of the individuals in the Netzivut, a split had to be avoided. All matters would be hammered out internally. Any partisan canvassing based on internal friction within the Netzivut before the Kenes was unanimously rejected. Any convincing would have to be done at the Kenes itself. Therefore, when the Kenes assembled at Beth Weizmann, there was a festive dinner for the delegates and a cordial atmosphere. Greetings from the Revisionist Organisation were delivered by S. Stock and M. Verstandig. The traditional Menorah was lit by two young Hashmonaim, Dianne Rubinstein and Gary Stock. The first ever Betar dance group performed. It was a modest and well balanced program by Betarim for Betarim. Parents of the Betarim were also in attendance.

As stated earlier, this was the first Kenes where proper reports were presented, discussed, criticised and resolutions passed that would be binding on the incoming leadership. For the first time, ideological questions were raised. Since the junior madrichim were not aware of these problems, the Kenes spent much time in soul searching and trying to come up with solutions that could be adapted to Australian Betar. The Kenes was very encouraging, insofar as no matter what was discussed everyone had the best interests of the movement at heart. Gone was the animosity between Melbourne and Sydney. The Sydney delegates explicitly stated that they had come to the Kenes to learn. The resolutions regarding the internal organisation of the Mechozot were non-partisan and fair and reflected the best interests of the movement. Criticism was accepted fairly and Betar could pride itself in being able

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for the first time to conduct its affairs in an orderly fashion. The nomination and election of the incoming Natziv was carried out according to the Constitution of Betar.

And now for the first time in Australian Betar's history, we had a Natziv who was constitutionally elected. World Betar had been in contact with the Vaad Bechirov, followed the Kenes preparations and had confirmed its convening. Following the Kenes, Yosef Steiner constituted the Netzivut and with the experience gained over the time, the movement now had smooth-working departments functioning. Yosef, in addition to heading the movement, continued from the office at Beth Weizmann as Organising Secretary of the now Australian Zionist Youth Council, which had shifted from Sydney to Melbourne, and which meant larger budgets and again a fairer distribution of Zionist funds on a national scale.

Sydney, too, would be in a position to benefit from this shift of venue. In addition to general youth work on behalf of the AZYC, Yosef was now able to devote much time to what he did best: organisation. Theo Balberyszski was Mazkir Pnim and dealt with the relations between the Melbourne and Sydney Mechozot as well as continuing the editorship of *Haderech*, Jack Mirjam took over Tarbut (Cultural activities), Dora Steiner, Gizbarut and Kranot Funds, and I was placed in charge of Chinuch and Hadracha. Here we had a team where each individual was doing the job for which he was best suited. Theo Balberyszski also led the Melbourne Machoz.

In addition to the Netzivut department, each of us also acted as madrichim within the Machoz in order not to lose contact and keep our fingers on the pulse. Melbourne had a large body of new generation madrichim, though still young but with great potential. Moreover, the Kanaim and B'nei Etzel groups were growing and again we could look forward to future potential central leaders, among whom were Eric Aufgang, Betty Brisson, Harry Stuart, Raphy Star, Abie Spigler, and John Goldlust. These are but a few among a long list of youngsters coming up through the movement's ranks. They were all still very young but looked like leadership material in another four to five years. Melbourne during the latter half of 1954 had an active membership of about 120 Betarim.

### **The development of the Sydney Machoz**

Now that Melbourne was running smoothly, the time had come to assist the Sydney Machoz. Jack Mirjam pointed out perceptively that to his mind Sydney had the greater potential. Melbourne was always "seething" ideologically. Sydney at that time remained aloof - but they possessed the ability to eventually supersede Melbourne in every sphere. All they needed was a push in the right direction. It was at this stage, after the constitution of the Netzivut, that a long discussion took place on what to do about Sydney, which was eventually to have far-reaching consequences in the development of Betar. It was proposed that I go up to Sydney. We had learned that the key lay in having good and dedicated madrichim. Alas, they had good and dedicated madrichim, but what was lacking was education and training. Now was the time.

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That is how it came about that in August 1954, I took leave of absence from work and went for an initial period of six weeks to Sydney to organise the first madrichim training course (Seminar). At first I was to seek employment in some factory and work for Betar spare time. The Netzivut out of its still meagre funds paid for incidental expenses but I was supposed to maintain myself.

At that time, the Seminar group included among others, the Mefaked Bob Shteinman, Larry Sitsky, Brian Address, and David Cukierman. Things progressed quite well but time was short. I asked Melbourne whether they could finance my full-time working for the movement. They agreed and thus I was able to extend the visit to twelve weeks. Larry Sitsky stood out as the person best suited to succeed Bob Shteinman. During my stay there, I met yet another person who was “hovering” around the fringes of Betar and somewhat undecided. It was Danny Rosing. He was not a member of the Seminar at the time but often came over to where I was living in the evenings and we held lengthy discussions on Betar. Later as the Sydney Machoz expanded he was to lead the Netzivut, which in 1958 went from Melbourne to the largest Machoz - Sydney. By that time too, young Betarim from the North Shore, particularly Strathfield, John Ziegler and Henry Bishopverder and in the eastern suburbs Naomi and Clive Kessler, Alfie van der Poorten, Ian Groden, Sol Yezerski and a host of others were to make Sydney Betar the largest Zionist youth movement in that city.

On my return to Melbourne I had to seek new employment as the place where I had previously worked was not interested in employing someone who from time to time disappeared. Nevertheless, I presented a long and detailed report to the Netzivut on the Sydney visit. Among the recommendations was the difficult but necessary decision to replace Bob Shteinman. Larry Sitsky, who had now been active for some time and was well liked and capable, had all the qualities to become the next Mefaked Machoz. He had been a Betari still in Tientsin, China and was able to bring the new younger madrichim within his orbit. We were not wrong in this decision; Sydney soon began to spurt forward.

Bob Shteinman took the decision well. Theo Balberyszski as Mazkir Pnim went up to Sydney after my return to Melbourne and effected the necessary changes. A new Mifkada took office. It should be recorded that both Hans Dreyer and Bob Shteinman, whatever their shortcomings, which we all have, kept Betar alive in Sydney during the most difficult periods. And if now Larry Sitsky could start to really build the Sydney Machoz, it was mainly due to the sincere and stubborn devotion to Betar of these two people. For many years after, even though they held no official positions or active leadership, they assisted Betar, which was not the case in Melbourne when we refer to the old leadership of 1948.

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The Netzivut as a cohesive body was working well and a steady stream of educational publications was forthcoming. On looking through the vast amount of material published by us, it can be understood that our madrichim could give the Maozim better balanced and interesting activities. We also held refresher courses for madrichim. In Melbourne we initiated a series of activities which were to



**Photo 17: Pinchas Mirjam**

become synonymous with Betar and had far-reaching results, among which was an intermediate stage known as the “Study Group” of selected potential madrichim as a stepping stone to the Seminar. Instituted also was the “Darga” system for madrichim and examinations in order to receive the sought-after title, which gave the Betarim the satisfaction of achievement. The Betar office at Beth Weizmann was humming with activity nearly every night of the week. Madrichim were coming in after school to help edit *Haderech*, or print educational material. Work parties were organised to look after the camp equipment in readiness for the camp. A small door was discovered on the outside of Beth Weizmann which led under the floor of the building. We converted a section of this area into a camp-store, installed electricity and had ourselves a handy and inexpensive camp store.

Mifkada and madrichim meetings were held after the regular Maoz activities. New songs, dances and games were taught. We were able to buy new camp equipment which was kept in our newly acquired store. We had also enough manpower to delegate a madrich who made it his task to maintain this valuable equipment. There were working days when Betarim came voluntarily to do repair work on the equipment. As we moved toward the end of 1954, Betar in Melbourne and Sydney was a pulsating movement. We were now recognised as the second strongest movement in Australia. The stage was now set for the annual camp, which promised to be the largest Betar camp ever held. The camp publicity internal and external was of a high standard with a steady stream of “Nudnik the Shmendrick Camper” pamphlets keeping the young Hashmonaim and Kanaim at fever pitch.

### “Camp is Best at Kinglake West”

This camp set the tone for many subsequent camps. The site was excellent, and



Photo 18: To Whittlesea to give back the flag

the pre-camp organisation ran smoothly. The camp educational program, which was in a thick volume based on a specific topic for each day, provided the madrich with all the relevant material at least two weeks before camp in order to prepare himself. For the first time, we had a large contingent of madrichim and B'nei Etzel from Sydney. As mentioned earlier, the “Nudnik” pamphlets before the camp now became the forerunner of the now famous camp film, which starred Aaron Ninedek and other madrichim and was filmed by Yosef. Its title was “Nudnik the Shmendrik Camper” and it was shown and enjoyed for at least two decades afterwards. At the camp itself, a daily newspaper of a humorous nature was published and edited by Phillip Mirjam under the nom de plume Pinchas Mcfarfel.

We instituted also, for the first time in any movement, a new educational medium by printing camp money based on Israeli currency and used by the campers to purchase at the camp canteen. The large contingent from Sydney succeeded in welding close friendship between the two Mechozot. Melbourne hosted the Sydney campers in their homes for several days before their return to Sydney. The year 1955 which had just begun after the camp found Betar in a generally sound position.

One incident, which aroused a lot of spirit at the camp, was the raid on the Hashomer Hatzair camp and the taking of their flag as prize. One of the Betarim, David Mayer, in the middle of the day, drove his small car on to the parade ground, took the flag down from the mast and promptly drove off with no one the wiser. Hashomer Hatzair later lodged an official complaint with the Whittlesea Police after which we received a summons to present ourselves at the Police Station to return the flag. On the prescribed day, most of the campers were packed onto trucks to take part in the ceremony



Photo 19: Triumphant return from Whittlesea

when the flag was officially handed over to the police who in turn were to give it back to Hashomer Hatzair. The “solemn” event was also filmed by Yosef, with Theo and Jack bearing the flag and walking between two rows of Betarim, at the end of which stood the uniformed policeman and the Hashomer leaders. The country policemen, not understanding why two Jewish youth groups were at odds

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with each other, received the explanation from the plaintiffs that Betar was a “different” religion. However, at the next meeting of the Australian Zionist Youth Council, Hashomer Hatzair demanded that Betar hand over the film so that it be confiscated.



Photo 20: Kinglake West ‘legal tender’.

It was not long afterwards that we produced the Betar printed publicity newspaper which featured the leaders of Melbourne and Sydney as well as Betar’s activities in the two centres and widely distributed among the Jewish community. We were now moving

towards the close of Yosef Steiner’s term as Natziv. Due to Betar’s rapid growth the time had come for the movement to receive, as was now its right, a Betar shaliach. Contact with the World Betar leadership in Israel was conducted to make representation to the Jewish Agency’s Youth and Hechalutz Department. S. Stock, who now had influence in the Zionist Federation, began applying pressure and finally it was agreed that Betar should receive its first shaliach, Elazar (Gad) Pedhazur, whose personality was to have a profound effect on the movement’s development for years to come.

Soon after camp, Jack Mirjam left for Israel as Betar’s Machon student. No one was co-opted to the Netzivut in his place. Instead, Theo Balberyszski relinquished his position as Mefaked Machoz Melbourne to devote his time to Netzivut work, while Allan Morris was appointed Mefaked Machoz.

### The Chagigah and 4th Kenes Artzi

The next large event to occupy us in the year 1955 was the forthcoming “Chagigah” in Melbourne, which was to be the opening function of the 4th Kenes Artzi in June. There was a large contingent of elected Sydney delegates as well as leaders holding office, a delegation nearly as large as that of Melbourne and led by the Mefaked Machoz, Larry Sitsky. The Chagigah itself was long remembered by those who participated as an artistic event of the highest order put together by a youth movement. It was held at the Samuel Meyers Hall which was packed to capacity by parents and friends of Betar. At last we did not have any problems in filling a hall, which was in itself gratifying. There were Kanaim and B’nei Etzel dancing groups, plays, musical performances, a breathtaking gymnastic display; for the first time, also a Betar choir. The Mefaked Machoz of Sydney, Larry Sitsky, today a pianist and composer of world repute, gave a piano recital and received a standing ovation. The entry of the Betar flag parade left everyone breathless. The Chagigah, as an event on its own, received an independent press review which was quite complimentary.

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**Photo 21: Chagigat Betar - June 1955 - The Betar Choir**

**Back (r to l): ?, George Reinisch, Louis Perlen, Sam Offman, Eric Aufgang, Ben Schneider, Henry Grossbard. Front: Judy May, Sandra Greenspan, Freda Lasher, Leah Feder, Miriam Shayer, Edith Light, Regine Rozenes Conuctor Extraordinaire: Shimshon Feder**

This Kenes was the largest held to date. The “Views and Opinions” publication, which had made its first appearance prior to the 3rd Kenes Artzi, was once again published, this time with far greater participation from the now large Sydney Machoz. This was to be Yosef and Dora Steiner’s last Kenes as they were going on Aliyah at the end of 1955. Throughout the discussions at the Kenes, the underlying theme was to find practical means to fulfill the aims of Betar and to be able to educate towards a particular focal point in Israel to which Betar olim would be drawn. In themselves, the debates were stimulating though unable to produce any direct results. Delegates were divided into committees to discuss and submit resolutions on a host of topics to the full plenum. As has become tradition, the last session usually goes on late into the night and early morning when the Kenes reaches its climax with the adoption of resolutions and election of the incoming Natziv. The 4th Kenes was now drawing to a close and nominations for Natziv were called. My candidature was proposed for the position of incoming Natziv and Theo Balberyszski’s name was also put forward, fulfilling the requirement that there be more than one candidate.

Unknown to me at the time, the Sydney delegation was convinced that I was under the influence of Yosef and if elected would not be able to steer Betar on an independent course. Also, the Melbourne delegation was split on this issue. It only went to show the resentment and animosity that many of the delegates still felt towards Yosef, which had begun way back in 1952 and had continued for another

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three years. Thus, it came about that there was an extremely strong “lobby” for Theo from both Mechozot. Strange as it may seem, the heated debates and arguments, which may now be revealed, nearly caused the resignation of some members of the Netzivut on a number of occasions, never leaked out from the meetings. Our brothers, and sisters were never made party to the conflicts. Moreover, never at any time did a member of the Netzivut, including Yosef, use the internal struggles as a personal platform to gain support, personal or otherwise. The movement was much too close to all of us to play such dangerous games. The lesson of Mt. Victoria was still fresh in our minds.



Photo 22: Opening Ceremony – 4<sup>th</sup> Kenes Artzi, June 1955. Flag Bearers: L to R: Adam Fligelman, Benny Schneider, Ken Hamer, Lionel Zeligman, Henry Kranz (?). Seated: Sam Moshinsky – Melb Jewish Youth Council, Louis Waller – B'nei Akiva, Shimshon Feder, Dora Steiner, Yosef Steiner, S.Stock, Rabbi Rappaport, Nathan Beller -JNF, Larry Sitsky (partly obscured)

However, one must bear in mind, that at times the image projected by Yosef was a negative one - but in so doing, many people tend to forget all the other aspects of his invaluable contribution to the movement, without which it could not have attained the success it did. Thus, it came about that unintentionally I was to become the victim of circumstances by not being elected - not because of not being a suitable candidate but because of the fact that I had been nominated by Yosef. Theo, on the other hand, had his feet in both camps. He, unlike me, was a party to the lobbying; but on the other hand knew that if I were elected the movement would be able to develop independently irrespective of Yosef's presence.

Nevertheless, he allowed the tension to mount without disclosing his real intention. At the last minute in the early hours of the morning, just before voting

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was to take place, in a speech to the hushed Kenes, he declined the nomination and called upon the Kenes to place their confidence in the proposed candidate. On looking back now after many years, it is obvious that had Theo stood he would have been elected and I, without hesitation, would have been glad to serve in any capacity. By declining the nomination, he showed he felt the same. The vote was then taken and I became the fourth Natziv of Australian Betar.

The new Netzivut was set up. Yosef and Dora agreed to serve for the short time till their departure and ensure the smooth transfer of authority for the first time. I felt the need to bring the Sydney Machoz closer to the overall running of Australian Betar. Therefore, I approached Larry Sitsky immediately after the Kenes and asked him whether he would be prepared to serve on the Netzivut as well as Mefaked Machoz. He agreed and to give his position meaning, the important department of *Haderech*, our national magazine and mouthpiece, shifted from Melbourne to Sydney with Larry becoming its editor.

Melbourne, too, underwent reorganisation. A new Mifkada was appointed, made up entirely of madrichim who had risen up through the ranks over the year. The new Mefaked Machoz was Henry Kranz, who gathered around him a group of madrichim, the calibre of which Melbourne had never seen. Relations between Melbourne and Sydney were now on a friendly and personal footing, which helped overcome the obstacle of distance and communication. Larry Sitsky and I had been good friends since back in 1952 and the mutual confidence now spread throughout both Mechozot. In addition to being consulted on vital Netzivut decisions, there was now a regular interchange of personnel travelling between Melbourne and Sydney and Larry Sitsky was as informed as if he had been present at meetings. Larry, in turn, appointed a young Mifkada in Sydney in which Brian Address, Danny Rosing, David Cukierman, Shlomo and Tommy Traurig were but a few among an excellent cadre of leaders who were destined to shape the Sydney Machoz for years to come. It is not for me to tell the story of Sydney's tremendous growth from the eastern suburbs to the North Shore. It should be recorded in more detail by those who were directly connected with that era.

## **Gad Pedhazur arrives in Australia**



**Photo 23: Gad Pedhazur**

Another important milestone in the history of Australian Betar was in July 1955, when we welcomed the first Betar shaliach and his wife, Geulah. Without knowing it at the time, this was perhaps the greatest contribution that World Betar made to the Australian Movement. Much has been said and written about this outstanding personality. However, it must be borne in mind that his immeasurable contribution could never have come about had not the movement reached a stage of maturity and growth to receive and reap the benefit from his personality and influence. There was a strong Netzivut and two Mechozot made up of the best madrichim the movement had known. The timing was perfect. He had good people to work with in both cities. Moreover, the

Sydney Machoz in particular was now moving towards becoming the largest and most active movement in that city, much to the consternation of Habonim and a fledgling B'nei Akiva.

## **The Zionist Federation Youth Commission**

In Melbourne, Betar and B'nei Akiva were growing and gaining recognition within the Zionist movement as well as the general Jewish community. Since 1953, when Habonim underwent its ideological crisis, great efforts were made to bring it back to its former strength. Though still the largest single movement in Melbourne, the gap was gradually closing. They were still riding on past glory but it was not enough for the year 1955.

As mentioned earlier, Yosef controlled the key position of Organising Secretary of the Melbourne-based AZYC, and Isi Leibler of B'nei Akiva was its chairman. Financial allocations were now being distributed fairly between the youth movements. However, on the Council, in all crucial debates, Habonim were always outvoted by the coalition. The boot was now on the other foot. Unused to this treatment, they lodged a complaint with the Zionist Federation, which in turn set up a Youth Commission (which we jokingly referred to as the "Petrov Commission", named after the Australian Government Commission set up at that time to investigate the Russian spy-defector) to investigate the complaints and report on its findings to the Zionist Federation.

The Federation appointed J. Solvey, T. Mahemoff, and I. Kipen as the Commission. Betar was no longer the "whipping" block. We had emerged from that bitter period unscathed and experienced. We could hold our own in the bitter debates. The various movement leaders were called to "appear" before the Commission individually and were asked questions on inter-movement relations. We had no problems in stating our case, since we were only receiving now that which had been denied us over the years. In fact, we were audacious enough to

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point out that the Zionist Federation itself was partly to blame, including the gentlemen sitting on the Commission, since they only acted when Habonim had grievances, but had permitted them and their shlichim to ride roughshod over everyone else for years.

This investigation continued intermittently over a period of about two months and like most similar commissions, its findings (which we never became acquainted with) were no doubt dutifully filed away for future reference. One thing, however, did emerge. The Commission must have realised that the real grievance, though never stated outright, was the key position of Organising Secretary, over which Betar had been in complete control for the past three years. Therefore, the Federation decided that after Yosef's departure for Israel, the position of Organising Secretary would be abolished. Instead, the money would be divided equally among the movements to employ their own organising secretaries.

This new arrangement did not worry us. By this time, the Betar Shaliach had arrived and settled down. In Melbourne alone, at the Maoz at Beth Weizmann, Betar had two large senior B'nei Etzel groups numbering about eighty chanichim, several Hashmonaim and Kanaim groups operating at Toorak Synagogue as well as Brighton, and Caulfield, a Seminar for madrichim, a Study Group—all this not counting the Mifkada and Madrichim. Our average overall attendances at Sunday meetings was close to 250 chanichim and madrichim, which for Melbourne was quite good indeed.

### **The second Kinglake West Camp, 1955-56**

Again, this was a large camp, equal to the previous one with the majority of participants made up of regular Betar chanichim plus an additional number who participated for the first time. This was the first camp without Yosef and Dora, whom we had farewelled not long before on their departure for Israel. We felt strong enough not to have the presence of the shaliach at camp, which was an exclusive Melbourne camp. After consultation with Larry Sitsky and the Shaliach, Gad Pedhazur, it was agreed that Melbourne could manage on its own and Gad went to Sydney to give them the benefit of his experience. Theo Balberyszski also went to Sydney to assist Larry and Gad. The Sydney Mifkada in addition to Larry now had Brian Address, Danny Rosing and David Cukierman who together organised the first large independent Sydney camp since the attempt at Mt. Victoria. Gad remained in Sydney after the camp for a prolonged period, returning to Melbourne in June 1956.

His effect on Sydney was momentous. As in Melbourne, so in Sydney, Habonim for years the strongest movement was gradually being over-taken. Where before they had filled the key position of Organising Secretary, our next achievement was to have Larry Sitsky, the Mefaked Machoz, elected to this position, so where Yosef left off in Melbourne, Larry was able to take over in Sydney.

### Melbourne's ideological crisis

However, not everything was smooth sailing. There was one event in 1955 which caused a “jarring” note to our activities and was to have subsequent serious and unfortunate repercussions. Around September 1955, just as the new Netzivut was “settling in” we were paid a visit by Yaacov Liberman, head of the English-speaking Department of World Betar. Apart from the ceremonial part of his visit and publicity it generated, he spoke to the Melbourne leadership and called for an



**Photo 24: Reception for Yaacov Liberman (World Betar Executive) Melbourne, September 1955**  
Back (l to r): Aaron Ninedek, Alan Morris, Ken Hamer, Shimshon Feder (Natziv), Eric Aufgang, Sam Offman, Ben Schneider, Philip Mirjam, Adam Fliegelman, Elazar "Gad" Pedhuzur (Betar Shaliach), Yosef Steiner Front: Dora Steiner, Leah Feder, Yaacov Liberman, Rosette Landerer, Miriam Libovsky

implementation of the compulsory aliyah clause mentioned earlier, which we had always tried to circumvent. While many of the madrichim had intentions of going on aliyah, no one, especially those intending to study at university (the large majority), was prepared to set a date for their aliyah. It placed everyone in the position of either-or. From the outset it had been our conviction that you could only educate Betarim towards aliyah, but there was no way to compel anyone to do so. Habonim and Hashomer Hatzair also had movement laws regarding Hachshara and preparation for Kibbutz, which seriously depleted their ranks, especially the senior levels. Betar was not a kibbutz-orientated movement, which made this whole “exercise” of Yaacov Liberman superfluous.

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As a result, a number of leading madrichim in Melbourne began to lose enthusiasm, feeling in all honesty that their position had become untenable and that they could not work for the movement with such a clause hanging over their head. Thus, some of the best senior Mefakdim gradually ceased active work and drifted out of the movement, among them Henry Kranz, Adam Fliegelman, Allan Morris and Ken Hamer, all of whom who had grown up in Betar. It was indeed a pity and completely unnecessary. Liberman's visit, instead of boosting and encouraging the movement towards aliyah, created a mood of despondency which neither Gad nor I could overcome. I had only recently assumed the position of Natziv. Jack Mirjam was in Israel, and Yosef and Dora were on the verge of leaving on aliyah. Thankfully, it was a short visit, and to Melbourne only. He returned to Israel and we were left with a sour taste.

Jack Mirjam returned in February 1956 and a month prior to that, Aaron Ninedek and Leah Feder left Melbourne as Betar's Machon students (the first time we had sent more than one). Despite the serious losses sustained as a result of Liberman's visit, we were still in a strong enough position to permit two senior leaders to go on Machon without seriously affecting the Machoz.

In June, after a successful stay in Sydney, Gad returned to Melbourne for the 5th Kenes Artzi. The Netzivut was able to report that in general the movement was in a stable position. Betar's finances were in a healthy state. *Haderech* was being successfully produced in Sydney. The ideological crisis resulting from the Liberman visit was gradually receding. The camps had been successful in both Mechozot, numerically and financially. I point this out not in order to offer praise to those people who made it possible but to point out rather that the 5th Kenes Artzi now elected Jack Mirjam as the incoming Natziv under completely different circumstances to those under which he was "elected" at Mt. Victoria at that regrettable 2nd Kenes Artzi.

With the new Netzivut under Jack Mirjam and the shaliach, Gad Pedhazur, now stationed in Melbourne to assist, further reorganisation took place. Apart from the Natziv, Theo Balberyszski and Larry Sitsky, I agreed to serve in any capacity for a limited time as in December, I was to go on aliyah with the first Garin Aliyah of Australian Betar, which also included: Benny Altman from Melbourne, David Cukierman, one of Sydney's most active Mefakdim, Freda Shultz, a madricha, and Moshe Alexander (all from Sydney), and our first oleh from Brisbane, Leslie Guralnek. I was requested to work full time for the next six months and thus became Betar's Organising Secretary in Melbourne, assisting together with Gad Pedhazur, the organisation of Betar's annual camp, which promised to be a large one at Wonga Park. By the time it took place, we were on our way to Israel.

### **Betar establishes a new Machoz - Brisbane**

These lines are being written in March 1964, after having just concluded one of Betar's most memorable events, the 2nd Course Artzi (National Seminar for Madrichim), held at Samford Valley, Brisbane. The Machoz in Brisbane was able to successfully carry out the entire organisational and technical details for the Course

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Artzi, the largest of its kind ever held in Australia. Close to 100 senior madrichim, Seminar, and Study Group members from all Mechozot assembled to partake in this course. From beginning to end it ran like clockwork. Paradoxically, this account will terminate with the circumstances surrounding the establishment of this important Betar centre (a few months prior to my return to Israel after a two-year shlichut). Matters are much easier today. Betar has an array of Machon students from which to draw educational manpower, and Melbourne and Sydney can run their Seminar courses independently. This is indeed a contrast to those “bumbling” days of 1949. Betar’s name is known and respected everywhere throughout Australia. The Betar shaliach is treated as an equal by the Zionist and communal bodies and the movement’s representatives on these bodies are of the highest calibre. In that far-off city of Brisbane, removed from those large centres of Zionist activity, Betar succeeded in implanting itself within the hearts and consciousness of the community. It was not always thus.

It was not long after I assumed the position of Natziv that a most far-reaching episode occurred. For a number of years previously, Habonim had been the sole Zionist youth movement in Brisbane. It is a small compact community numbering approximately 500 Jewish families and sustaining all the various communal institutions. Between 1953–55, Habonim had been unable to maintain regular youth activities. From time to time, their shaliach from Sydney or Melbourne would travel up for a brief period, inject a little life while he was there, but immediately afterwards activity would collapse. The State Zionist Council President in Brisbane, Mr. Newhouse, and the Secretary, N. Ochert, viewed this situation with alarm, sending urgent pleas to the Zionist Federation to prevail on Habonim to send people up to remedy the situation. The Habonim shaliach in Melbourne at the time, Asher Mansbach, informed the Federation that everything had been tried and there was nothing more that the movement could do. However, the State Zionist Council in Brisbane demanded an immediate solution. The Zionist Federation called upon the B’nei Akiva shaliach, Menachem Levin, to try to start up a branch of his movement in Brisbane. He, too, declined the invitation. The situation was becoming desperate. We sat on the sidelines quietly waiting for developments. We did not have long to wait. With much reluctance, the Zionist Federation approached Betar, asking whether they would be prepared to undertake the task.

I recall that at the Netzivut meeting we had together with Gad Pedhazur, after a lengthy discussion we unanimously decided upon an unusual line of action. No one was particularly overjoyed over a Betar incursion into Brisbane; and apart from that, some of the leaders of the Brisbane Jewish community at that time were opposed to Betar, including its Rabbi Dr. A. Fabian, who wielded great influence. We informed the Zionist Federation that Betar would comply with the request and send its shaliach for a visit to Brisbane. Furthermore, we made it explicitly clear, that Betar had no intention of forcing itself upon the community. Therefore, during his stay there, the Betar shaliach would conduct a “general” Zionist educational program, after which the youth themselves would decide which movement appealed to them.

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Those in Brisbane who had a misconceived idea of Betar, expected a “gun toting” terrorist to come spouting inflammatory political propaganda and prepared themselves for it. I have heard it said that the Rabbi himself, from the pulpit, told the congregation to be careful of the “terrorist” and not get into any argument with him. It might prove dangerous. They got the surprise of their lives. Instead of a terrorist, a mild-spoken intellectual arrived with a captivating smile - a man steeped in philosophy, culture, and Jewish learning from the renowned Talmudic city of Safad.

There was hardly a topic in which he was not well versed. For an Israeli, even his English was excellent. He was courteous and, above all, modest. They were looking for cracks in his armour, but there were none. Grudgingly, they allowed him to undertake his task, which of course he fulfilled admirably. Before he left Brisbane, he told the youth to make their decision after he returned to Melbourne and not in his presence, so that they should feel absolutely free. It was not long after that we received the reply that the youth of Brisbane had unanimously decided in favour of Betar. Victor Young was appointed Mefaked Machoz and Betar activities began in earnest. Sydney undertook to look after the fledgling Machoz and Danny Rosing traveled up to consolidate Gad’s excellent start. After that, other madrichim from Sydney and Melbourne went to Brisbane to help the new Machoz and to make it an inseparable part of Australian Betar, and from then on Rabbi Fabian became one of Betar’s most ardent supporters.

During this prolific period of activity within Australian Betar, we almost established a Machoz in Perth. Not long after the Brisbane episode, Danny Rosing of the Sydney Machoz, undertook a mission on behalf of Betar to explore the possibility of establishing another Machoz along the lines of the Brisbane model. However, there were other problems involved. Habonim did exist, barely, but it was alive. Unlike Brisbane, there was no sense of urgency, therefore the Betar shaliach had no right to intervene. However, it was not long before Danny had a small but active Maoz running in Perth. Things went along well as long as Danny was there. However, the Maoz was not strong enough to continue on its own after his departure. It struggled along for a short space of time but soon ceased activity, mainly because those who expressed the desire to be in Betar were ostracised by the other youth. And, in a city with a small Jewish community as far away as Perth, such a situation was unbearable. Unlike Brisbane, which received infusions from time to time, there was no way the Netzivut could send people to give practical help and encouragement to the small Maoz.

### **Epilogue**

This account is in no way meant to be a definitive history of the movement in Australia; it is but the reflections of one who had the privilege of being centrally involved during those early years. Many will no doubt recall other important events that I have perhaps forgotten or omitted without giving them due attention. As far as possible, I have attempted to be fair in my assessments, though I lay no claim to objectivity. How can one so intimately involved in the developments be objective? However, this is how I saw things. Maybe in years to come, someone else with

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better perspective will find it worthwhile or interesting enough to go deeper into the motives that led to Betar's development in Australia and its role, giving the subject greater scrutiny and analysis.

I must also apologise for not mentioning the names of many people within and outside the movement whose contribution to Betar was outstanding. It always presents a problem when writing of events where so many people are involved, for, after all, what is in effect the movement, ideas and above all, people. The names mentioned in the narrative have been used to "clothe" the events and in no way are meant to imply that they and they alone were the star actors in the drama. The list of personalities is too long.

However, on 29 June 1989, at Kfar Raziel, the Betar Youth Town in Herzliyah, I felt proud to have been part of that drama. On looking around me, I saw faces of Betarim who were born long after I left the shores of Australian Betarim who had been educated, attained top leadership positions and later came on aliyah. Who in their wildest fantasies in the year 1949 would have imagined that we would reach such a day? Each and every one, in his own way has a story to tell of their time in Betar of their hopes and achievements, which are perhaps greater than those mentioned here that encompass a mere eight years. And, if today, Betar in Australia is a pulsating and active movement, it is simply because each and every one of you made it so. It gave me the feeling of belonging to a wonderful family where the difference in age is unimportant; and if this account makes others feel proud of belonging to Betar, I am satisfied.

Ramat Hasharon, Israel  
August 1989



# Ra'ayon Betar

## The Ideology Of Betar

By Ze'ev Jabotinsky  
(Written in 1929)

# Topics

1. THE MISSION OF BETAR
2. THE JEWISH STATE
3. THE JEWISH MAJORITY IN ISRAEL
4. THE HEBREW LANGUAGE
5. HAD-NES
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13. ISRAELI PRODUCTS FOR THE DIASPORA
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## 1. THE MISSION OF BETAR

The duty and aim of Betar is very simple though difficult: to create that type of Jew which the nation needs in order to better and quicker build a Jewish state. In other words, to create a "normal", "healthy" citizen for the Jewish nation. The greatest difficulty is encountered because, as a nation, the Jews today are neither "normal" nor "healthy" and life in diaspora affects the intelligent upbringing of normal and healthy citizens.

During two thousand years of exile, the Jewish nation lost the habit of concentrating its will-power on an all-important task, lost the habit of acting in unison as a people, lost the ability to defend itself, armed in case of emergency, instead, the Jews became accustomed to shouts rather than deeds, to disorder and disorganization, to negligence, both in social and personal life. Every step of the Betar education signifies, therefore, a desire to reach the top and achieve this "normalcy" even though it will take a long time for every Betari to grow up in the proper ways of life and behavior. The goal is not easily attainable but at the very beginning, it is reassuring indeed to know that the Betari remembers them and aspires even if slowly, to arrive at the heights.

## 2. THE JEWISH STATE

The basis of the Betarian viewpoint consists of one idea: the Jewish State. In this simple idea however, lies a deep meaning indeed. What do the nations of the world symbolize? They symbolize that every nation must contribute its own share to the common culture of mankind, a share which is distinguished by its own specific spirit. This contribution should not and cannot consist merely of the ideas and good advice to other nations; it must serve as a living example of ideas and ideals, tangibly realized, expressed not only in books but in the collective life of the people as well. For this purpose, every nation must possess its own "laboratory", a country wherein the nation alone is master and can freely suit the common life in accordance with its own conception of good and evil. A people's own state is such a laboratory. There was prevalent for a long time the opinion among Jews that although the Jewish nation has a "mission" of its own, a complexity of ideals which it must contribute to civilization, we can, nevertheless, best serve this mission by remaining scattered among the nations of the world. Thus we will be able by closer contact, they maintain, to offer our ideas to every nation so that it should follow our advice in its collective life. This is a grave mistake. As already stated, one cannot be taught by precept alone. The world is prone to learn even new ideas from tangible examples only. England has, for instance, given to the world an important social idea - self government of a free citizenry. How then did the English nation teach other peoples to understand and regulate such a parliamentary system? Certainly not by being scattered among the nations and so convince them; just the opposite is true. Thus it became an example from which the world learned. In a like manner, the French nation carried out its mission of instructing the world the teachings of liberty and equality which it accepted during the great French Revolution. The only right way to offer mankind some good is to show practically, and not verbally, how to achieve it. It is not true that the Zionists have ignored the idea of mission, the mission of the Jewish nation in the world; rather we believe that the world will yet learn from us many truths, truths still unknown to it. However, the single way leading to this is the creation of the Jewish State.

### 3. THE JEWISH MAJORITY IN ERETZ YISRAEL (Israel)

What then is, practically speaking, a Jewish "State"? When can it truly be said that our country has ceased to be "Palestine" and become Eretz Yisrael? Only then, when there will be more Jews than non-Jews; for the first condition of a national state is national majority. For a long time, many Jews, including Zionists, were unwilling to understand the simple truth. They maintained that the creation of important positions in Palestine (settlements, cities, schools, etc.) is enough. According to them a national life could be freely developed even though the majority of the population were to be Arab. This is a great mistake. History proves that any national position, however strong and important cannot be safeguarded as long as the nation which built it does not constitute a majority. A minority can safeguard its cultural position only as long as it can control the local majority. Sooner or later, every country in the world is to become the national state of the predominant nation there. Thus if we desire that Eretz Yisrael should become and remain a Jewish State, we must first of all create a Jewish majority.

The first step in Zionism consists of this, but it does not follow that it is the last step. After attaining a majority in Palestine and being enabled to govern upon broad democratic principles, we will have before us even a more important task: Shivat-Tzion (the return to Zion). By this we mean the creation of such conditions which would enable every Jew who is unwilling or unable to live in the diaspora to settle in the Jewish State and earn his livelihood there. These would probably reach into the millions, while a sufficient majority can be obtained by one million or a million and a half settlers. Afterward will come probably the most important task of all: to make Eretz Yisrael the leading state of the civilized world, a country the customs and laws of which are to be followed by the whole universe. "From Zion shall go forth Torah", signifies a "Torah" not merely in the religious sense. Zionism is a tremendous, overwhelming important task, the boundaries of which our generation cannot as yet envisage. The first step, that deed without which there can be no Zionism, or a Jewish state, or a real Jewish nation, is the creation of a Jewish majority in Eretz Yisrael on both sides of the Jordan.

#### 4. THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

Betar recognizes Hebrew as the only and eternal language of the Jewish people. In Palestine it must become the only language in-all phases of life; in the diaspora it must, at least, be the language of the Jewish educational system, starting with the kindergarten and ending with high school (later on perhaps college too, if we shall ever have Jewish universities in the diaspora). In the education of every Jewish child it must be the beginning and base of everything. A Jewish child who is ignorant of Hebrew is not entirely Jewish, even though he or she is a Betari. We have the utmost respect for the other languages which are being utilized by our people. Especially do we appreciate the tremendous role of Yiddish in preserving our national integrity, the wealth of its literature and press. We also esteem the Ladino of the Sephardim which also served as an excellent remedy against assimilation. A national language, however, is something different and by far greater. It cannot be a language which the nation has, in the course of its history, derived from a strange people and then suited it for its own purposes. Very significant indeed is the fact that the greatest immortal works of our national genius (the Bible, the Books of HaLevi and Ibn Gavirol, of Bialik and Shneour), were not created in Aramaic during antiquity nor in Yiddish in our own times despite the really great role of both languages in our development. A national language is one which is born simultaneously with a nation and then accompanies the latter in one form or another throughout its entire life. Such is Hebrew to us.

I hope - being a hopeful man and having unbounded faith in Betar - that there will eventually arrive a day when Betar will also play an important part in the renaissance movement of our language: one role which was forgotten by all the groups participating in this revival movement. I refer to that role which is to safeguard the beautiful tone and pronunciation of Hebrew. Our language is being revived, but without that marvelously harmonious enunciation which it apparently possessed was as musical a language as Latin or French. Today, on the other hand, Hebrew is spoken vulgarly, and the accents are ill-sounding and foreign, even in Eretz Yisrael. This too is a problem which can be termed "lack of Hadar" - to talk the language in any manner whatsoever and be careless of its beauty. It is sufficient to look over attentively a page of the Bible with its various notes of pronunciation, in order to understand the love for each letter and the wealth of nuances that could be found in its spoken Hebrew. I sincerely hope that it will be fated to the Betar again to renew this forgotten tradition of our national language. And our national language must again be what it once upon a time was: a poem, a musical masterpiece.

## 5. HAD-NES

This is the basis upon which is founded the entire Betarian viewpoint of building a Jewish state. It means the creation of a state comprising a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan. The special pride of Betar, which differentiates it from all other youth movements, in Jewry, is Monism, Had-Nes. Betar signifies a generation that dedicates its life to the sole idea of a Jewish State, without recognizing any other ideals. Of course it does not follow that a Betari must be blind in regard to the importance or even greatness inherent in other ideals for betterment and reform which now inspire masses of humanity on the contrary - the Betari must be open-eyed, clear minded and generous of heart. A Betari must be able to deal fairly and respectfully with all honest aspirations of his fellow men - especially because the best of these are derived from Jewish sources. Pacifism, for instance, and above all the war for social justice have their mainspring in the Bible. We also hope for a time to come when the Jewish state will show the world the right way of both eternal peace and social justice. First of all, however, the Jewish nation must build its state, this undertaking is so complicated and difficult that it demands the full strength of an entire generation, perhaps even more than one generation. Jewish youth must, therefore, devote itself completely to this sole task; all other ideas, though they be beautiful and humane, should influence us only in so far as they do not hinder the rebuilding of a Jewish state. When one of these ideas becomes, even if indirectly, an obstacle on the road to a Jewish state, it must be mercilessly sacrificed in favor of the one ideal. One should remember that one may have many ideas and respect them highly, but one can only have one ideal. To this ideal all other ideas must bow, and near it there should not and cannot exist a second ideal, for two ideals are as absurd as two gods; one can worship only one G-d and only one ideal. Everything else one may like is, and must, remain secondary importance.

As already stated, this is the one fundamental which distinguishes the Betar from all other Zionist Youth movements. The latter have the characteristic tendency to "co-ordinate" two ideals like Zionism and Socialism serving both simultaneously. As a result, there is a confusion which renders impossible a clear-cut relationship toward Zionism and the Jewish state. Being Zionists, they are gladdened at the fact that private capital aids the foundation of new enterprises and increases Jewish immigration; being also Socialists, however, they consider such businesses a plain result of exploitation. The outcome of such an adulteration of conceptions is that neither here nor there are they correct. In reference to Zionism, they are prohibited to use such expressions as "Jewish State" or "Jewish Majority", for this would mean encouragement for the Capitalist settlers too, without whom there can be no large "aliyah" (inflow) of workers. As far as Socialism is concerned, these young people are being jeered at by the "pure", non-Zionist Socialists, who keep on reminding the Zionists that their actions are contradictory to the Proletarian principles. Consequently, we are witnessing the fact that many tire of such confusion and throw the Zionist ideal overboard; for two ideals cannot dwell together and one or another must eventually give way and disappear.

This admixture of various ideals which Betar absolutely rejects we may call biblically, "schatnez", the euphonistic stand of Betar may be termed in Hebrew "Had-Ness" (One Banner). Betar has not bent asunder souls, a breach caused by two equally valued aspirations. Everything which disturbs the upbuilding of the Jewish state, whether in connection with private interests or with a group or class must, without pre-conditions, bow to the one banner, to the command of the highest, the supreme ideal: to the Jewish State.

## 6. CLASS STRUGGLE

Especially distinct is the difference between Betar and other youth organizations regarding the idea of class-struggle in Palestine. This idea maintains that every Jewish worker should consider himself an enemy of the Jewish capitalist even though the latter utilizes his capital to build another factory or to purchase a plantation and employ in his concern Jewish labor exclusively. This conception Betar holds to be the most conspicuous example of "shaatnez" of a blind absurdity. Classes can exist only in an already formulated and established society; since we are concerned as yet with the colonizing stage, there are no "classes" or "proletarians" or "wealthy" - there are only pioneers. These "chalutzim" each of whom participates as well as he or she is able, in a mutual and very difficult enterprise are merely figures on the chessboard of Zionism - whoever they are, they play a fighting game while being manipulated by one excellent player. They, the chalutzim, are merely various instruments in an orchestra; each instrument has its own musical score, but the combined instruments play at the same concert and are led by the same conductor. In our case, the chess player and the conductor is named the Jewish State.

Nobody denies that even in Palestine the individual interests of the worker are unlike those of his employer: the former want to earn more, the latter to pay less, - as in any other country. However, whereas in France or Italy it is not the concern of the worker whether his employer, a manufacturer, can "stand" a high wage or not, the case is entirely different in Palestine. There the worker, if he is a Zionist, cannot afford the luxury of running a factory because thus the scope of colonization is narrowed. The manufacturer too, if he is a Zionist, should not tolerate impossible working conditions in his enterprise which then would lose its colonizatory significance. In other words: in Palestine, higher and mightier than class-interests, the common interest of rebuilding the Jewish State rules supreme. Consequently there should be no talk of class war, a system, the harmful tendency of which, is manifested when one side threatens the other by means of strikes or lockouts. In Palestine, such conflicts must always be settled in one manner only: through obligatory national arbitration.

Of course, as long as there is no Institute for National Arbitration, a strike might be, at times, the only recourse to gain just concessions from a miserly employer. The Betari must never forget that there is a solidarity among all wage-earners, if it only doesn't disrupt the solidarity of all the builders of the State. The Betari must beware of such courses which threaten to turn the Jewish worker in Palestine into a poor, needy man who cannot live decently and educate his children properly. Upon noticing that arbitration bodies are as yet non-existent and the only manner in which to defend just working conditions is, to our regret a strike, he, the Betari, is not allowed to disrupt it. We are sorry that there are frequent and quite necessary strike in Palestine when encouraged without economic need, these slow up the work of rebuilding. This is true especially when referring to the strikes with the help of which Histadrut seeks to control the economic life of the Yishuv. The Histadrut declares a strike if a manufacturer or colonist hires laborers, (on just the very conditions) that refuse to join the Histadrut or be subject to its employment

bureau. Most of these are Betarim - and the real purpose of a strike such as this seems to be the ejection of Betar workers. Naturally, such a strike is not merely "unholy" - it is a crime, an injustice which is intolerable for the state which needs every one of its pioneers. Such a strike must not merely be disrupted - it must be made impossible; whether one is cursed with the name "scab" or not. An unjust and state disintegrating strike must be mercilessly broken as well as any other attempt to damage the reconstruction of the Jewish State. Finally, it is the right and duty of Betar itself to decide as to the justice or injustice of a conflict; help of the former and break the latter.

In another sense too, the class struggle in Eretz Yisrael is but a fiction, in the sense of uniting the "proletarians of all countries" in a common battle against the bourgeoisie of all nations. Every Jewish worker in Eretz Yisrael knows very well indeed that if Arabian proletarians were to attack the hateful bourgeois of Petach Tikvah, he being a Zionist, would defend middle-class property against his "class brethren". Why? Because it is, first of all Jewish property, a factor in Jewish colonization, a position to be eventually utilized in the process of attaining a Jewish majority. A colonizatory period has its own social laws, which are fundamentally different from those that, perhaps, govern the already established countries. Here are several social laws pertaining to our colonization as comprehended and proclaimed by Betar.

a) 100% Jewish Labor in all Jewish enterprises. Otherwise these are, from the colonizatory viewpoint, worthless. The worst of all national crimes in Palestine is the boycott of Jewish Labor.

b) Decent labor conditions for the Jewish Worker. Otherwise, he will be unable to emigrate and Palestine will then never be a Jewish State.

c) Normal investment of private capital otherwise capital will cease pouring into-Palestine and thus the rebuilding of a Jewish State will cease.

d) Obligatory national arbitration in all the social conflicts of Jewish economic life and a "Cheram", a taboo, against the two national crimes; Strikes and "lockouts".

Since the strongest of the labor organizations in Palestine the "Histadrut HaOvdim", does not recognize these principles but insists upon the class-struggle viewpoint, the Betarim-workers in Palestine do not join the Histadrut and cannot, therefore, find employment through its labor bureaus.

The fifth demand is:

e) The formation of neutral employment bureaus, with an equal representation of all Jewish labor organizations as well as of employers under the chairmanship of neutral elements; preferably under the guidance and inspection of such an institute whose function is to be national arbitration.

## 7. THE LEGION

The Betar is steadfast concerning Legionism: it demands of its members as well of the Jewish youth generally that they fully train in the technique of utilizing firearms, and that they be in readiness always to answer personally the call of self-defense or, time being opportune, of a new Jewish army. The Betar holds that a pioneer who did not prepare himself for this task is useless and unsuitable for Palestine and "Hachshara -a-garin" (military training) is the first and most important of all other requisites. Our rivals call this "militarism". We should not be afraid, however, of a Latin word. There was a time when the first Zionists too were threatened with Latinism: nationalism..... But those first Zionists too were undaunted and answered: There are two sorts of nationalism: If a nation dwells in its country but also desires to annex the land of its neighbors - that is bad nationalism. On the other hand, when a nation is entirely homeless and demands for itself a portion of G-d's earth, it is a good nationalism about which there is nothing to be ashamed of. The same applies to "Militarism". If a power, unharmed by anybody, begins to arm in order to attack its peaceful neighbors, it is a bad militarism. In, however, the case of Jews, who are being beaten everywhere, and even in Palestine are being threatened with destruction - it is certainly proof of good nationalism to arm for the defense of our lives, property and future. We may then well be proud of it. Every great colonization in history, has always entailed a revolt of the natives. Palestine is no exception to the rule. One who thinks that the Arabs are right to oppose Zionism, may as well reject entirely the idea of colonizing Palestine. But he who holds that the Jewish people has a sacred right in its historic homeland, and that the opposition of the Arabs (a people of only about 40 millions which possesses a territory as large as a half of Europe) is unjustified - he should draw the logical conclusion, and in accordance with his conviction aid in the creation of that iron wall, which will make destruction impossible.

## 8. BETARIAN DISCIPLINE

The building of Betar is founded upon the principles of discipline. Our aim is to make Betar such a world organism which, at a sign from the center, will be able simultaneously to move tens of thousands of hands in the cities of all countries. Our adversaries say that it is "unworthy of free men", that it means being made into a machine. I propose that we should not be ashamed to reply, and proudly to boot: "Yes - a machine". For it is the highest achievement of a mass of free men, if they are capable to act in unison, with the absolute precision of a machine. Only free, cultured people can do so. When ten thousand Czech soldiers are stationed somewhere and at a sign from their commander they all make the same gesture at the very same moment, every onlooker feels that in this there manifests itself the highest self-respect of a free and civilized nation. When we listen to a choir or an orchestra hundred participants of which follow implicitly one conductor and so create an impression of absolute unity, it is a certain proof that each individual gave his best efforts to achieve such a result. Of course, it was not the conductor who forced things: it was the artist himself who desired a complete unity of tone. Into such an "orchestra" we want to transform the Jewish nation, and the first step is Betar. Likewise, no young man is being forced to enter the Betar ranks and there remain, it is his own free will which makes him recognize as the first characteristic of mankind the ability to unite one's individuality with that of others for the sake of a common goal. Indeed the entire conception of "mankind", in its deepest and most delicate sense, is centered in unity. The salvation of Israel will dawn at the moment when the Jewish Nation will learn how to act together and in unison, preferably as a "machine"; when humanity as a whole will learn art, salvation will come to the world, and warring particles will be transformed into one world family.

Discipline is the subordination of a mass to one leader; that leader must subordinate himself to his superior, the superior to somebody higher than himself, etc. It does not signify, however, that one subordinates to a stranger's will - for the leader is but the executor of your own will, your representative whom you freely empowered to conduct your "orchestra". Otherwise, you would not have joined the Betar or remained there indefinitely. The meaning of Betarian discipline too lies in the very important fundamental law of Monism, We all have one will, we build together the same structure, we, therefore, listen to the call of that architect, is accurate in his planning, we pave stones and hammer in nails as instructed. The leader, the conductor, the architect may either be an individual or a body - a committee, for instance. Both "systems" are equally democratic as long as leadership is couched by a mass agreement. In France, there reigns a collective body, the cabinet, in the United States, solely the President - yet both are strictly democratic republics. For Betar the American system is better suited because it, Betar is a combination of both "school and army" and a class of pupils or a regiment of soldiers is best led by one teacher or one commander, not by a group with divergent opinions. Nevertheless, the first and last source of this complete hierarchy of Betar is expressed in the will of the Betarian mass because it freely elects the highest functionary of the movement - Rosh Betar.

The growth of Betar and its-conception of discipline form a happy and healthy union between freedom on one hand, and monistic harmony on the other.

## 9. HADAR BETARI

"Hadar" is a Hebrew word which hardly is at all translatable into another language: It combines various conceptions such as outward beauty, respect, self-esteem, politeness, faithfulness. The only suitable "translation" into the language of real life must be the Betari - in his dealings, actions, speech and thought. Naturally, we are all as yet removed from such a state of things, and in one generation cannot be achieved. Nevertheless, "Hadar Betar" must be the daily goal of each one of us: our every step, gesture, word, action and thought must always be strictly executed from the Hadar viewpoint.

If "Hadar" is important to every man generally, it is doubly so to us Jews. We have already stated that life in the Diaspora has greatly weakened many of our soundest normal instincts: The outward form of our life has however been still more neglected. We all know, we often deplore the fact that to the average Jews manners of appearance are of no consequence whatsoever, this is not a "trifle" it is an important problem of self-respect. A man must care of his bodily cleanliness not because he fears his fellow men, but simply by reason of self-respect. He should also accustom himself to speech and gestures in which there must be discerned an equal esteem of his own "Majesty" for every man has majesty of a kind; a Jew especially, if the expression "aristocrat" has any meaning, it is this: an aristocrat is he whose fathers, grandfathers and so on, for many generations were men of "culture"; men who were not merely existing but were capable to engross themselves in noble ideas and suit their way of life in accordance with higher ideals. If such is the case, we Jews are the most "aristocratic" people in the world. Even the most ancient of ruling dynasties have to their credit not more than 20 - 30 generations of culture. Further, some where at the beginning we find at best a medieval, half-savage peasant, or a robber. Jews, however, have seventy generations of man in the past; men who could read and write; men who studied and discussed G-d, history, ideas of justice, human problems and the future. In this sense, every Jew is a "prince" and the bitterest of all jokes that the Diaspora played upon us is, that the Jews are generally considered as hailing from G-d knows where....

Only the ignorant can persuade themselves that the question of "Hadar" is a private matter or a "family-affair" Each of us recognize the fact that we behave differently towards a man whose manners show "uncivilized" abandon or coarseness than towards a person whose every word denotes him a "princely", though he is poorly dressed and is a woodcutter in a forest. Were all Jews to act properly the anti-Semites probably would hate us anyhow but it would be a hate mixed with respect, and our situation in the world would have been quite different than it is. In attaining the Zionist aims too, a tasteful mode of life would help us greatly; a dolt who yells, jostles and has no sense of order, is incapable to create an impression of "state-leadership". On the other hand, a group, every individual of which shows in his behavior and mannerism a long-standing tradition of culture, forces even an enemy to admit that, "Yes, this is a nation, these people can build a State".

One of the good methods of "Hadar" education is, in fact, the Betarian discipline but is not sufficient. Every individual must examine and weigh and measure his personal habit.

The Jubilee idea is totally dissimilar: for it aims that society should periodically institute a great fundamental social revolution; that it should equalize all classes that it take from the wealthy and give to the destitute. The difference, however, is that the Jubilee idea infers that after such a revolution, every man is free to start anew his social battle, free again to aspire, to utilize his energies and talents according to his desire. Here we do not find any "once and for all" here the reverse is true: make a fresh start! Mankind must not conglomerate into a stony mass among which it is senseless for a man to work better than his neighbor - for both, at any rate are equal. No! Humanity must always be stormy and seething. Every man must see before himself an open road upwards; one will rise to the heights another will slide down a precipice. All will be lively. There will be competition and progress - until the new year of Jubilee, when everything will once more be equalized to be followed again with a new beginning.

This does not mean, however, that between one Jubilee and another people must perish from cold and hunger as is the case in the present capitalistic system. The Bible has two additional principles; "Shabbat". That you must not force a poor man to work for you at all times and under all circumstances: your right to demand services of his is limited to a higher law. The entire present day system of labor protection, the eight-hour day, the prohibition of child labor, etc., is derived from the one source: our "Shabbat" principle. And the second principle "Pejah", (the obligation to leave part of your crop in the field or in the vineyard for the orphan, the widow, the homeless wanderer) is the source from which spring the taxes for social betterment, all institutions of insurance and security for the people. These are not as yet properly developed, mainly because the world as a whole, expands too much for battleships and cannons. So that no appreciable sums remain for social needs. When armies will be abolished (also a Jewish idea from the Bible) the world will be in a position to make such manifestations as hunger, homelessness and nakedness impossible. The term "destitution" will be no more; every man, whether he earns sufficiently or not will be then certain to have the minimum requirements for a decent livelihood. Such a state will result from the two ancient Jewish principles of "Shabbat" and "Pejah". Consequently, even in the interim between two "Jubilees" a person who is not successful in economic competition will not suffer hunger-pangs; even if he or she will fail he or she will fail not upon hard stones but on soft warm carpet. Men and women will then be sure of their families and their own existences; they will be enabled to "rise" again immediately and seek their fortunes anew.

In the Bible, this system was quite superficially indicated (specifically the Jubilee idea). However, in a few instances we envisage a seed of such a social outlook which is probably better, more beautiful and "humane" than Socialism. Its beauty consists of the fact that instead of one special revolution, which is to put everything in order, "once and for all" (after which mankind may go to sleep interminably), we find in the Jubilee-idea a much more refined representation of a humanity which advances steadily by the means of endless "social" revolutions. Each of these revolutions follow one another and each constitutes a new stage of progress; each of these does not arrive like a bloody outbreak but constitutionally, as a perfectly lawful event - and in the interim as already stated, rule the two main fundamentals of Shabbat and Pejah, the principles of which must be developed to the utmost extent. For these aims to stamp out mercilessly every vestige of

"Hadar" consists of a thousand trifles which collectively form every day life: Eat noiselessly and slowly, do not protrude your elbows at meals, do not sip your soup loudly: walking upstairs at night, do not talk - you awaken the neighbors; in the street give right of way to a lady, to an elderly person, to a child; to every man - let him be rude, be not so yourself. All these as well as an endless row of other trifles make up the "Hadar Betari". More important is moral "Hadar". You must be generous, if no question of principle is involved. Do not bargain about trivialities, you, rather should give something instead of exacting it from somebody else. Every word of your must be a "word of honor", and the latter is mightier than steel. A time must eventually arrive, when a Jew desiring to express his highest appreciation of human honesty, courtesy and esteem will not say, as now: "He is a real gentleman!" but "He is a real Betari!"

## 10. THE GIRL IN BETAR

Woman is a born "organizer". Since ancient times, she has always played the organizing part in every family. The man was the "conqueror", the "attainer"; he was a hunter; it was his job to find edible "stuff" for the table, garments to cover the body. The task of the woman, then as ever, was to transform all the material the man brought home into real food, suitable clothes and general comfort. She has a natural inclination for order, she foresees things necessary not only today but tomorrow as well. This may perhaps, be the reason that history shows us a much larger percentage of high-caliber queens than kings (our own Shulamith Alexandra of the Hasmoneans; Elizabeth of England, Catherine the Great of Russia, Maria-Theresa of Austria) all distinguished themselves in the field of organization of state-management as well as in social and economic betterment. Of course, not every woman is a Shulamith. There is also the type of empty headed, flapperish girl; but nonetheless, every one of the latter too has this inclination to orderliness, to quiet systematization. Betarian education will have to seek the way in which to train a refined citizeness for the Jewish State.

In every branch of our "Hachshara" there are the twin aims of organization and order; without the latter the former is worthless, and the latter is something which a woman can better create than a man. I would for instance have taught woman not merely military training (Hachshara Tzvait) like shooting, marching and signaling but also - and especially so - everything pertaining to supplies and sanitation.

An important branch of colonization is house management. The progressive woman of my generation hated it and it was quite natural for them to feel so, because they reacted in this manner against the old viewpoint that "Housewifeliness" is the only affair women are capable to undertake.

Today, women-suffrage is generally acknowledged and consequently, there is no reason for hating a field of endeavor upon which is founded the life of both family and society. Betar will probably develop the highest appreciation and enthusiasm for the conception of "Hachshara Baithith" (house management).

## 11. TRADE TRAINING

In this field too, Betar will have its own say. That the present day system of Aliyah preparation, (especially agriculture) became merely a useless farce is admitted by all. Nevertheless, one does not hear of any positive proposals as how to change the situation. I do hope that the right proposal, and, better still, the example itself will come from Betar.

About twenty years ago it was generally conceded that the best a person can do for himself, was to completely master some "trade" or profession. Shoemakers or tailors, farmers or lawyers were certain to find their respective social and economic positions. Today, too, it is probably the best way, but not the surest any longer, for we may well ask: how many good tailors and excellent lawyers do not earn enough money to buy bread with? In regard to colonization, this certainly almost vanishes altogether - for you cannot exactly estimate how many shoemakers, farmers and doctors the country will need (to be capable to absorb) in the very nearest future. Consequently, we may as well ask the question: would it not rather be a good method to train such pioneers who, though not specialists in any trade, are quick to become acquainted with and concentrate themselves in every new field of labor?

There is a French expression "debrouillard" that cannot be adequately translated. It refers to such a man who is able to extricate himself easily from any difficulties that might befall him. For instance, if the electricity is to be repaired, such a man can do it, although he is not an electrician, when the foot of a table is to be put in its place, a pair of trousers mended, or a dinner must be cooked he is capable to handle dexterously all these jobs. It may not be a first class accomplishment not even one of secondary importance but it is very useful, indeed. I often ask myself "whether" a debrouillard" is not the most suitable pioneer-type in a colonizatory period? For one of the characteristics to be found in such a pioneer is naturally this: That when, sooner or later, he will get an occupation, he will master his trade quicker and better than others. (especially is this true of very young people). How and when can one learn to become a "debrouillard"? Of course there is no school for that. One learns this at home, on the streets, through applying oneself to everything and anything. Wherever one goes, one can find something to do, if the oven does not burn properly, the door screeches, a wagon wheel is loose, or mother's sewing machine does not serve - it simply demands the application of some sense, energy and diligence. I am certain that if we could create a generation of "debrouillard-men" they would have been the best pioneers Palestine could ask for.

## 12. THE PRINCIPLE OF MOBILIZATION

The word "giyus (mobilization is definable thus: first and most important is the mobilization of a Jewish army at the opportune time. The second mobilization signifies permanence, and it refers to every Betari who settles in Eretz Yisrael. According to our statutes, the Betari must consider himself "mobilized" for a period of two years and is obligated to do any assigned work in any given place in conditions deemed fit by the Betar Executive.

This principle is extraordinarily important. Nowadays, the Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael has become a very usual thing indeed and even non-Zionists are very desirous to "escape" to Eretz Yisrael, though they might not be interested in the national idea. At times, the difference between the conception of "pioneer" and "refugee" is hardly discernable. We must not allow it in Betar. To us "Aliyah" must remain Aliyah indeed: an action which should possess an element of effort, or accomplishment, of sacrifice for the national welfare, not merely a matter for personal betterment. We, therefore, demand of every Betari that during the first two years in Eretz Yisrael he should entirely disregard his own interest. During that time, a Betari is only an instrument of rebuilding; he must not prefer to work in Tel Aviv rather than in Metula or be pleased to become a baker rather than a carpenter. he must go to such places and do such labor as the Jewish State might demand and as commanded by the Betar in Eretz Yisrael. Thus act those of our young laborers who, at present, are working in various Jewish settlements, and who are organized into "Plugot-agiyus" (work corps).

Our "olim" (immigrants) must know that this is an obligatory duty. Those who do not desire to be subject to the two year giyus should not receive the certificate of a Betarian Olen. Of course, those Betarians born or bred in Eretz Yisrael should also voluntarily enter the "Plugot Avodah". In the case of a Betari desiring to continue his period of mobilization, we will certainly be glad of it; but one thing must be remembered: the first two years are not yours, they belong to the Nation.

### 13. ISRAELI PRODUCTS FOR THE DIASPORA

The first convention of Betar (Vienna 1928) resolved that the Betar uniforms especially the brown shirts (which, by the way, were worn before one had heard of the German Nazi movement) should be made by Jewish weavers in Eretz Yisrael. To our regret, this has not been realized in actuality; but this will be a duty of Betar in all the countries, to develop great and systematized work on behalf of the products of the Yishuv. As regard Betar, the principle of "Israel Products for the Diaspora" is not merely one of a hundred proper ways to aid our colonization: it is the most important, almost a synonym, for the settlement of the land. A man is not "held" in Israel by the fact that he settles in Eretz Yisrael and establishes a factory or plants an orchard, this is not enough, he is still just a "tourist" for tomorrow he may lose his livelihood and be forced to leave. Only at that moment that he sells his products it is possible to consider him a settler more or less permanent - a settler and not a tourist. The success of colonization is not measured by the amount of land bought and not in the number of buildings set up, not even in the total of money invested; the success is dependent on whether it is possible to find a market for the products - either in Israel or in the Diaspora. In this sense we may say that the colonization is assured, not where settlers settle, but where possibilities open to see their products. To spread "totzeret ha-aretz" (Israeli products), that is to say, to participate in the colonization of Eretz Yisrael actively and directly to help those who work in Israel and need buyers abroad for the fruit of their toil. When Betar will be able to approach this task, we might call the people engaged in this work - "Pioneers of Israeli Produce", for he who aids in the selling of an article made by a chaltz in Israel is not inferior but as important as the producer.

And this is a job especially for Betar, for the youth. Commerce in our days is dependent on advertisement. For in the big and prosperous cities live the Jews. Not in every corner can a store selling Israeli merchandise establish itself and not every housewife, with all her good will, can always travel a great distance for the sake of such a bargain. Also notices published in strange newspapers, read by rich classes is much too expensive especially in the beginning. Therefore, it is important to spread "totzeret ha-aretz", that the public relations and the bringing of the merchandise to the buyer's house, with price lists and samples in hand, and to collect signatures for this and that, once a week, once a month, and afterwards, to bring the buyers the product on the appointed day. No work is harder or more proper and worthwhile. No other undertaking for the financial good of a Zionist institution can be compared with the tremendous colonizatory importance of the creation of absorptive markets for the Yishuv products, work that a Betar group can aid in to base in Israel plantations, factories and workers, and especially not in the aspect of contributions, but in the form of healthy and commercial profit.

## 14. A BETARIAN SOCIALISM

I wish to touch upon a subject which probably will enter into our ideology because many of us doubt the need of Betar to create its own theory of social reform. Did we not decide once and for all that, in building a State, we must utilize the means at hand, be they old or new, good or bad, if only we will thus attain a Jewish majority? We also said that naturally another generation will arise, and make use of the national laboratory which we prepared for it. Such a generation may variously test and analyze sociological problems, experiment with the prevalent social orders and seek solutions for its betterment. This is sound principle, for it includes the sacred fundamental law of Monism, "Had-Nes", and such it must invariably remain as far as practical activity is concerned. We may enquire however, whether we must unconditionally surrender the course of our theoretical idea. The mind of a thinking young man is hardly asleep, if alert, a young man delves into various worldly problems, among which of course he meets with social questions. One may theoretically agree with Socialism, or be negative towards it - this cannot be forbidden and it is unnecessary to bewail the fact, everything is well, if only the projects for a distant future do not disrupt the harmony essential to the one task of the present - the building of a Jewish State.

And if so - is it not conceivable that a time may arrive when a purely Betarian approach to the social problems shall evolve? This approach would be based upon Jewish sources. Socialism, although formulated at its best by two Jews, Marx and Engels is not build upon exclusively Jewish ideas. Of course, their longing for social justice, which is inherent in every Socialist theory is inspired by Laws of Moses and the Prophets. These sources do not, however, promulgate that concrete plan of a new social order which we term "Socialism". Our Bible does offer a concrete plan of a social revolution, but it is the direct opposite of Socialism. I refer to the idea of a "Jubilee".

A "Socialist" order means such a social system which once and for all should regulate all class relationship; once and for all abolish the difference between rich and poor so that there will be no further necessity for additional social reforms. All this is good and well, but there is one great flaw in such a system: man thereby would cease to strive, to fight to seek for something better. Everybody's position would be automatically regulated; nothing could be changeable; dreams could be disposed with, the mind would not be exerted and there would vanish every individual's constructive impulse. In this manner, every person must become a kind of an "official" in an almighty State, and as we know, it lies in the nature of officialdom to be satisfied with existing conditions and with a "routine". The mainspring of progress is the mighty fact that millions of people seek battle and aspire. This, in a Socialist State, must disappear.

And do not see that in Soviet Russia, where during the past fifteen years the Socialist system was experimented with, not only was the individual downed by the above described but also that his political and civil liberty was circumscribed and curtailed?

The Jubilee idea is totally dissimilar: for it aims that society should periodically institute a great fundamental social revolution; that it should equalize all classes that it take from the wealthy and give to the destitute. The difference, however, is that the Jubilee idea infers that after such a revolution, every man is free to start anew his social battle, free again to aspire, to utilize his energies and talents according to his desire. Here we do not find any "once and for all" here the reverse is true: make a fresh start! Mankind must not conglomerate into a stony mass among which it is senseless for a man to work better than his neighbor - for both, at any rate are equal. No! Humanity must always be stormy and seething. Every man must see before himself an open road upwards; one will rise to the heights another will slide down a precipice. All will be lively. There will be competition and progress - until the new year of Jubilee, when everything will once more be equalized to be followed again with a new beginning.

This does not mean, however, that between one Jubilee and another people must perish from cold and hunger as is the case in the present capitalistic system. The Bible has two additional principles; "Shabbat". That you must not force a poor man to work for you at all times and under all circumstances: your right to demand services of his is limited to a higher law. The entire present day system of labor protection, the eight-hour day, the prohibition of child labor, etc., is derived from the one source: our "Shabbat" principle. And the second principle "Pejah", (the obligation to leave part of your crop in the field or in the vineyard for the orphan, the widow, the homeless wanderer) is the source from which spring the taxes for social betterment, all institutions of insurance and security for the people. These are not as yet properly developed, mainly because the world as a whole, expands too much for battleships and cannons. So that no appreciable sums remain for social needs. When armies will be abolished (also a Jewish idea from the Bible) the world will be in a position to make such manifestations as hunger, homelessness and nakedness impossible. The term "destitution" will be no more; every man, whether he earns sufficiently or not will be then certain to have the minimum requirements for a decent livelihood. Such a state will result from the two ancient Jewish principles of "Shabbat" and "Pejah". Consequently, even in the interim between two "Jubilees" a person who is not successful in economic competition will not suffer hunger-pangs; even if he or she will fail he or she will fail not upon hard stones but on soft warm carpet. Men and women will then be sure of their families and their own existences; they will be enabled to "rise" again immediately and seek their fortunes anew.

In the Bible, this system was quite superficially indicated (specifically the Jubilee idea). However, in a few instances we envisage a seed of such a social outlook which is probably better, more beautiful and "humane" than Socialism. Its beauty consists of the fact that instead of one special revolution, which is to put everything in order, "once and for all" (after which mankind may go to sleep interminably), we find in the Jubilee-idea a much more refined representation of a humanity which advances steadily by the means of endless "social" revolutions. Each of these revolutions follow one another and each constitutes a new stage of progress; each of these does not arrive like a bloody outbreak but constitutionally, as a perfectly lawful event - and in the interim as already stated, rule the two main fundamentals of Shabbat and Pejah, the principles of which must be developed to the utmost extent. For these aims to stamp out mercilessly every vestige of

hunger, cold and homelessness as well as the possibilities of failure. On the other hand, the opportunities of attainment must be open to every individual. These "Shabbat" and "Pejah" principles, at their best, will serve as the strongest impulse for all men to battle energetically in Life's arena.

Perhaps therein lies the groundwork for a new, purely-physical social conception which the future Jewish State will be privileged to realize in life, which, meantime, can serve as a base for purely Betarian Social Philosophy.



Camp badge.

This was sewn on a T-shirt and worn at many camps.  
T-shirts were to be washed between camps.



Pennant Narrabeen Camp, 1961.  
Pennants were sold at many camps. This is one of only two believed to be still in existence. (Proof required to contradict this statement).



Merit award left over from 1965 Ballarat camp and then claimed by Harry Stuart.



Betar Australia sleeve badge.

This was worn on the uniform about 2" below the shoulder. After a fierce competition, the design chosen was by Aaron Ninedek. He also judged the other entries.



Netzivut hat badge.  
Members of the Netzivut wore silver hat  
badges. Other Betarim wore bronze badges.

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 FIRST NAME *Teuda*  
 DATE OF BIRTH .....  
 ADDRESS .....  
 DATE OF ISSUE *29-7-62*  
 NATZIV BETAR *1911/1324*

Teuda (membership) card.  
First issued in 1962, it identified members of Betar.

**BRITH TRUMPELDOR**  
**of Australia**  
NETZIVUT



**BETAR**

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Betar Letterhead.

For those of us that worked out of Beth Weizman, this was a very familiar piece of paper.

# FORTY YEARS BETAR



volume 4

number 1

HALAPID



## Message from the Mefaked



This evening has been organised to give you an idea of the activities and ideals of Betar. We have tried to show you, in the form of entertainment, what these young Betarim do at their group meetings: singing, dancing, lectures, discussions, outings and games are included in the program. The basic feeling we instill in our chanichim is a feeling of Jewishness, to make them proud to be Jews. At meetings we show the children that they have much in common -a Jewish heritage and

way of life, a cultural homogeneity, in short, that they form a part of the Jewish people.

Betar fulfils a need in the community which is not satisfied elsewhere. Social groups cater for only one facet of the youth's life, but they offer nothing more than momentary pleasure, and give youngsters nothing to live for. We do not neglect social activities, but feel that they are only a part of a youngster's life. Our aim is to help produce the new Jew that Jabotinsky hoped for, "proud, generous and fierce", one who will carry out the ideals of Betar. But this is not a dogmatic movement. We encourage our chanichim to think for themselves, to question, to discuss, to disagree even, instead of trying to impose rigid conformity.

Louis De Vries.

Editor

Bill Fayman

Co-editors

, John Goldlust ,  
Loy Lichtman

also . . . Maureen

Hammershlag

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## Background to the formation of Betar



Brit Hanoar Ha'ivri was established under the name of Yosef Trumpeldor in 1923. It was a time of crisis for the

General Zionist Organization, which had to determine and define its aims. The establishment of Betar occurred simultaneously with that of Hatzoar, and this was not a mere coincidence. The two organizations consisted of young people willing to grasp the flame of Zion. Both organizations, Betar and Hatzohar, were the first of the ideological branches of the General Zionist Organization to understand the national ideas of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, but these ideals were not heard by the senior Zionists, which were influenced by the narrow Zionism of the Chibbat Zion. The ideas of Jabotinsky were necessary for the new generation, free of all the old fashioned opinions of the senior Zionists, and there were already signs of deviation from the old ways of thinking.

In the opening speech of the first World Kinus in Danzig, Rosh Betar described the background to the establishment of Betar as follows:

"Betar was born in a bad and bitter time. The vision of Herzl did not exist. Our hopes after the Balfour Declaration had

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# WHOLESALEERS

been shattered. The trend was to fight the Zionism of the various differing groups, and naturally if one wished to fight amongst oneself, then one's idea lost its content. In the beginning the "Official" Zionist Organization omitted the conception of a "Jewish State", and when the settlement scheme began, there came the cry that we needed quality and not quantity. That in Israel we needed good-looking people, people of a high moral standard only. Therefore all one needed was nice clothing, a nice tone of voice. . . if one wished to go to Israel. Was this possible to tell the suffering Jews that demanded to be allowed to go to Israel? Was it possible to tell them that they were not of sufficiently good looks, and that the Jewish nation was being divided into classes? Firstly, the "Owner of a Soul" would be redeemed, those that suffered were not worth while redeeming. The young could not be drawn by such an "ideal" and so it was natural that the youth disappeared from the ranks of the Zionist organizations. However, one section of the Jewish youth explained the Zionist conception with a socialist content.

'The foreign road is richer and our youth look through the window, they watch the colourful flags, they listen to the foreign music, and they are amused. They

watch openly. . . . till they lean outside and shout "We are with you! ". . . . Then they fall through their open window, they are assimilated.' We had reached the stage of National Assimilation.

As a reaction to this we saw the establishment of Betar. Betar was not only born through the efforts of Jabotinsky to find supporters and faithful assistants in the fulfillment of his great Zionism. The establishment of Betar came especially from the youth alone. The answer to this can be found in Rosh Betar's own explanation. . . . .

"in the years after the first world war the people were happy that the shedding of blood was over and that there was peace. The Jew, always looking for a "saviour", saw the way to a better world where there would be no difference between Jew and Gentile, and where Jews could enjoy full rights among other nations. But in actual fact they knew that living amongst the Gentiles would be like living in another Ghetto. With the finish of the First World War we saw the creation of many new states, among them the Arab states which succeeded in causing many Anti-Zionist factors. These then persuaded the allies to disband the Jewish battalions which had been the undertaking of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. These had

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been the battallions which had been created to help in the redeeming of Israel. The result of this "finishing off" was the declaration of the Mufti of a holy war against the Jews, which the administration hastened to assist. Jabotinsky realised what was imminent, and established a defense organization against the pogroms, succeeding in frustrating all attempts before they had a chance to develop. This action was against the malicious purpose of the Mandatory Government, and Jabotinsky and his followers were sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Instead of fighting for their rights the Zionist organization became frightened of the pressure of the British and the Arabs. Their aim was no longer a Jewish State, but they returned to the old idea of the Chibbat Zion movement. This could be seen by the selective immigration, which showed their hesitation in overcoming any obstacles that stood before them, and their seeking of ideological reasons to cover up their failures. The reaction of the Jewish youth did not show as yet. The majority of Jewish youth were busy with other problems of a general nature, and were far from being nationally bound in the problem of our existence. The aims of Zionism were strange to them, and they did not find in it, or in its leaders, any great ideals to follow. The pioneer who attempted to influence wide circles of youth in Zionism, came after the death of Trumpeldor. It came under the influence of many foreign factors which stated that the conception of Zionism would come as a second ideal among other ideals.

The only reaction to the Arab attacks was in the Galil and Jerusalem. England, who had promised so much for Zionism, saw the weakness in its leaders and their failings, which frustrated them in any attempts that were made. It was clear

that a strong fighting power to defend our rights was required. Only the youth possessed this strong will which could change us from an exiled nation to a new generation of pioneers conquering their homeland. To a generation of builders from an assimilated youth, which would be as strangers to its nation. They would be ready to sacrifice themselves, firstly for their nation and the ideal expressed in the words a "National Home". To attract the youth it was necessary to have a new idea and a clearly defined aim. A Jewish State that would be worth while fighting for. From the immigration of a few important people, to the immigration of the multitudes. From a small quota of settlements on land that had to be bought slowly, to a large conquest and creation of a majority of Jews in a short space of time, because time was lacking, and the nation still faced the danger of the Diaspora.

In a world of darkness suddenly light appeared. It became common knowledge that the nation faced a great danger, and hearts hammered listening to the ideas of Jabotinsky that were brought before the Zionist Organization. . . .

And he was a prophet seeing his nation in danger. . . . and he came to the youth bringing before them the image of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, "the reviver of the Hebrew language", the image of Yosef Trumpeldor, the creator of "chalutzit" (pioneering) , who gave his life for his homeland at Tel Hai. . . . and he called the youth to arise from the pit of decay of the Diaspora . . . .

And his call was not in vain . . . the youth listened . . . The Jews of Russia were lost, but the youth of the 'free' Diaspora were thirsty for action, and they followed him step by step . . . until 25 years later saw the establishment of the Jewish State, although . . . The fight for its eternal and everlasting foundation is ours to complete . . .

## Yosef Trumpeldor

Yosef Trumpeldor was born in Piato-gorsk, Russia in 1880 (the Jewish year 5641). His father was in the Russian army and so consequently he was brought up by his mother. As a child Yosef was continually reading books about Jewish bravery, and of the days when Israel belonged to the Jews.

As a young man Trumpeldor was deeply disturbed about the persecution of his fellow people. At this time Zionism was beginning to expand, but for Trumpeldor dreaming was not enough, he wanted action so he formed his own Zionist circle.

At the age of twenty-two he was called up to the army. At the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in 1903, Trumpeldor served at the front line and by doing this hoped to disprove the accepted idea that Jews were cowards and disloyal to their country. Throughout his army career Yosef always displayed unusual bravery and coolness even when after being hit by a shell he awoke to find his left arm amputated. Although he was a prisoner in Japan, Zionism was foremost in his mind. He founded a Zionist society with 125 members in the prison camp.



In 1912 Yosef and 10 comrades reached Palestine and worked in the fields there. At the outbreak of the First World War Trumpeldor left for Alexandria where he met Jabotinsky. Both were keen to form a Jewish army to play a part in the conquest of Palestine. They both agreed that if blood had to be shed for the liberation of the country, let Jewish blood play its part. The Zion Mule Corps was formed, of which Trumpeldor was captain. He devoted himself to his new duties and was greatly respected and loved by all his men.

In 1917 he returned to Russia where he recommenced his efforts to create an organization of Chalutzim - "Hechalutz". He defined a chalutz as "Everything. A

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worker and a fighter, a builder and a soldier. One who sacrifices everything for his country and expects no reward for his efforts. A son of his people. The vanguard of suffering millions. He belongs to no class: he represents no class. He is prepared to perform every kind of work and becomes the right man on the right job wherever he is sent. "

In August 1919 Trumpeldor set out on his last journey to Palestine. But in the land of Israel there was trouble as the Arabs were attacking the Jewish settlements. He heard rumours that the Arabs were preparing to attack the Jewish settlement in the Northern Israel so he set off to organize the defence of this settlement.

On the morning of the first of March 1920 a band of several hundred Arabs made an attack on the colony of Tel Hai. It was here that Yosef Trumpeldor was fatally wounded. As the doctor fixed his bandages Trumpeldor said, "These are my last moments, tell everybody to stay at their posts and stand up for the honour of our people until the last moment". Then when the doctor asked how he felt, his last words were, "Ein davar, tov lamut b'ad artzenu" (It does not matter, it is good to die for our homeland).

Now we realize why Betar honours Yosef Trumpeldor and why a member of Betar keeps his memory dearly, and proudly bears his name.

## Machoz News



### THE 12TH KENES ARTZI

The twelfth National conference of Betar Australia was held in Sydney over the Queen's Birthday weekend. Nine delegates of Machoz Melbourne attended the conference along with delegates from

Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. The Kenes re-elected Avraham Appel as Federal leader for another year.

### U.I. A. APPEAL

Along with all the other Zionist youth movements, Betarim have been working hard to earn money for U.I. A. All Betar groups have gone out with their madrichim over the past few Sunday mornings and so far - the final totals are not yet available - well over £100 has been collected.

### SEPTEMBER CAMP

It is anticipated to hold a camp for Senior members during the September school holidays. The camp will be held at Olinda and the dates are from the 30th August to

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the 4th September. For further information contact your madrichim.

Israeli film on the absorption of new immigrants.

HERZL-BIALIK -JABOTINSKY  
YAHHRZEIT

A commemorative function for the three great Zionist leaders was held in the Bamboo Room at the Chevron Hotel on Sunday July 5th. The function was well attended by members of the Jewish community and a large number of Zionist Youth. The programme included speeches on the achievements of Herzl, Bialik and Jabotinsky and evaluations of their probable impressions of Israel and the world if they had been alive today. The evening ended with the showing of an

SERVICE HELD TO COMMEMORATE  
JABOTINSKY YAHHRZEIT

A service conducted by Rabbi Rappaport was held at Toorak Synagogue on July 9th to commemorate the occasion of the transfer of Jabotinsky's remains from NewYork to Jerusalem on the 24th anniversary of his death. An inspiring address was given by Rabbi Rappaport in which he emphasized the genius and courage of Jabotinsky and the tremendous difficulties and opposition which he faced in his determined stand for a Jewish State as a political entity.

**Yigal and the Inquisition**

by Ephraim Kishon

Two men sat next to me on the Rothschild Boulevard bench and mutely immersed themselves in their papers. One of them was an old gentleman, his glasses had slid down to the tip of his nose, and he read some Yiddish periodical, mumbling. The other was hardly ten, one of those sabra youngsters. In his hands he held a bloodcurdling thriller.

The boy suddenly turned to the old gentleman.

"Grandpa," he said, "what is 'inquisition'?"

Grandpa ponderously folded his paper and pushed his glasses back into the saddle.

"Hundreds of years ago, " he began with unconcealed relish, "in the dark Middle Ages, our forefathers' fate was bitter indeed, Yigal. They were herded into high-walled ghettos, and every Gentile, even the lowliest, could kick them, spit on them, or humiliate them to his heart's

content. Yes, yes, The tax collectors of the Church robbed them of their hard-won pennies, provided they had anything left after paying the emperor's taxes. They burned our sages alive, sold our sons into slavery, our women. . . "

"All right," - Yigal interrupted him-"that will do. I asked you," Grandpa, what 'inquisition' was. "

"Don't be cheeky, Yigal.-I'll tell you presently.

. . . The inquisition was nothing but a diabolic way to intimidate those doubting the dogma. The victims naturally were almost exclusively Jews."

"Why 'naturally'? Why?"

"Quiet! Will you listen quietly?" the old gentleman raged. "In the torture chambers of the inquisition, the red-hooded monks quartered their victims, pulled out our martyrs' nails with red-hot pincers, hanged them head down over slow fires, and broke them on the rack... "

"All right. " Yigal again interrupted. "Skip the rest until the revolt. "

"What revolt?"

"What a question! The Jews' revolt against the monks."

"Don't interrupt me, Yigal. Our forefathers were G-d-fearing, meek Jews, who did not revolt against the Lord's will!"

"What? The Lord wanted. . . that. . . the inquisition. . . ?"

"Shame on you, Yigal! How dare you speak like that! If you must know it, our forefathers were great heroes who were not broken even by the most horrible tortures! Their faith never wavered, they gave proof of an unprecedented inner strength. . ."

"Good! So they clobbered those monks after all, didn't they?" -

"Yigal! The old man flared up. "What did I tell you? Our forefathers, blessed be their memory, suffered the most horrible tortures at the hands of their executioners, but even with their last breath they praised the Lord for protecting them against their foes. 'And though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death', the old gentleman psalmodized, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. ""

"This I don't understand, " Yigal said, referring to the psalm. How could they sing about no harm coming to them with the monks burning them? Now, if the singing had been done by the monks. . ."

"Your only excuse, you brat, is that you don't realize what you are saying. Our forefathers' faith in the Lord deeply

moved even the executioners, who were seized by such terror that they had to kill more and more innocent victims. "

"Grandpa, " Yigal implored. "Please tell me about the revolt. "

"Will you keep quiet, yes or no. . . ?"

"Just a small revolt! "

"Quiet, 'shegetz'! Don't desecrate our forefathers' memory. Had they, instead of resisting, succumbed to the horrors of the inquisition, you wouldn't be a Jew today. "

"That's not true. " Yigal flatly rejected this theory. I would be a Jewish boy even then, because I was born here in Israel. "

"You are a heathen, that's what you are. You don't appreciate our forefathers' heroism! "

"Humbug! " Yigal shouted deeply hurt. "You want me to believe that it is the Lord's wish to have those monks slaughter me? Excuse me, Grandpa, but those forefathers of yours must have been awful milksops. "

And with that, Yigal left us.

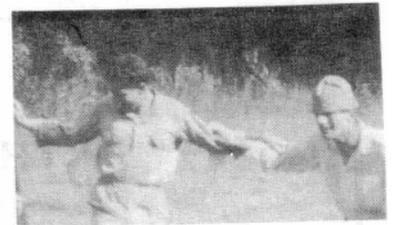
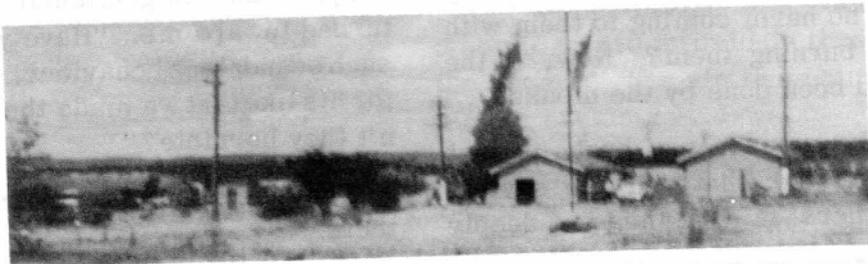
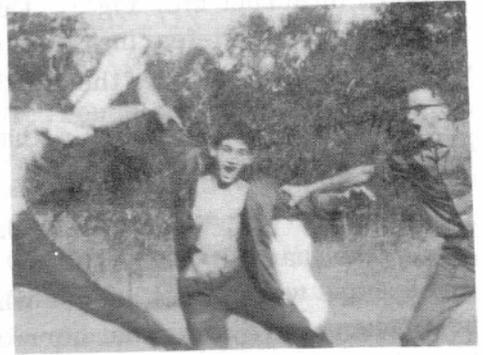
"Milksops! The words they use nowadays! " the old gentleman fumed, then turned toward me. "Have you ever seen such scandalous behaviour, sir. And it's for his like that we made the State. Aren't they horrible?"

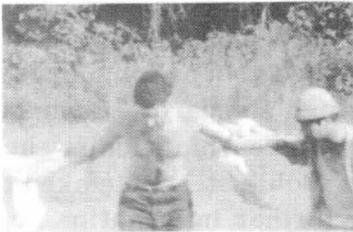
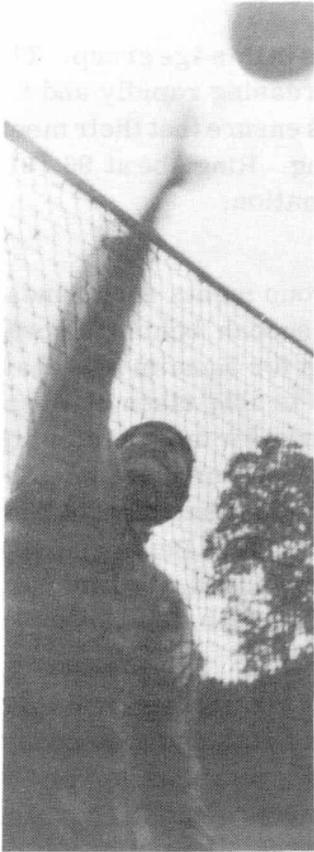
"They certainly are horrible, bless them."

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## Betar Groups in Melbourne

The following are Betar groups in Melbourne. And each one of them will be prepared to welcome YOU.

**BRIGHTON:** This group comprises Betarim of the Chashmonaim age group (9-12) and is capably taken by two of Betar's younger Betarim. The group meets every Sunday afternoon at the Brighton Synagogue, Marriage Road, Brighton. The group's activities are numerous and many activities have been planned for later in the year. If you wish to hear more about the group and its activities, ring Jesse at 92 1878.

**CAULFIELD:** This group caters for chaverim of Kanaim age (13-16) and meets each Sunday at the 4th Caulfield Scout Hall in Birch Street, Caulfield. This Kanaim group shows great potential because its members are younger Kanaim which form the basis of the group. It could be the largest group in Melbourne before the year is out. For further information ring Joe at 53 6311.

Also meeting in Caulfield is a new Chashmonaim group which has become one of the best and most enthusiastic chashmonaim groups. This group shows the rapid development of this age group in the Machoz. For further information ring Henry at 53 5113.

**ST. KILDA:** This is a Chashmonaim group which meets at Beth Weizmann, 584 St. Kilda Road, every Sunday afternoon at 2.30. This is one of the older

established groups in this age group. The numbers are increasing rapidly and the madrichim always ensure that their meetings are interesting. Ring Abe at 96 1019 for further information.

**TOORAK:** The group meets each Sunday afternoon in the succah behind Toorak Synagogue, and is for Kanaim age chaverim. The group is ably taken by Susan Aufgang, one of our older madrichim, and Sam Scherer, one of our most talented younger madrichim. It has always been one of the best groups in Betar and still maintains its high standard. For information ring Sam at 94 1910.

**ELWOOD:** This is yet another new Chashmonaim group in Betar and also boasts a good attendance every Sunday afternoon. The group meets at the Bialystoker Centre in Robe Street. For information ring Judy at LF 2949.

**BNEI ETZEL:** This is the 16-18 age group of the Machoz. The group -meets at different people's places every week, and consists of two groups for discussions to ensure a high standard. Discussions are lead by different madrichim each week with John Goldlust as Mefaked of the group. For further information ring Loy at 211 6895.

There is also a Coburg group for chashmonaim in formation.

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## PROGRAMME

### 40 Years Betar

# 40 YEARS Betar PROGRAM

## PART I - THE FIRST 40 YEARS

The history of Betar in Word and song.

narrated by..... Evie Skall  
John Goldlust

Songs arranged and conducted by.....Sol Goldstein

Sung by The Betar Choir

THE CHOIR WILL SING THE FOLLOWING SONGS:-

Shir Betar — The Song of Betar

This song was written by Ze'ev Jabotinsky in 1927. It calls on the Jewish Youth to arise from the "pit of decay and dust" and create a new Jewish State.

Shir Habiryonim - The song of Biryonim

This is the song of Brit Habiryonim, the organisation formed in the late 20's in Palestine and consisted mainly of Betarim. Their motto was "In blood and fire Judah fell, and in blood and fire will it rise once again."

Ma'apilim - In the Darkness

A song of the illegal immigration to Palestine in the 1930's. It tells the story of a group of illegal immigrants who are quietly and stealthily floating towards the shore.

Kesa'ar Pitom - Like a Sudden Storm

A song of revolt of the Irgun Zvai Leumi - the underground fighting movement in Palestine.

Shir Hapartisanim — The song of the Partisans

The stirring song of the Jewish Resistance during World War II. "Like a symbol will this song be from generation to generation".

Chayalim Almonim - The Unknown Soldiers

The song which opened and closed every broadcast of the Irgun Zvai Leumi during the period of the revolt in Palestine 1944-8.

Shir Hamered — The song of the Revolt

The haunting and beautiful song of the heroes of the revolt. "The mother sits and weeps at the loss For her dear son, her fine son,"

Kita Almonit — The Unknown Platoon

A song of the War of Independence 1948.

Haderech L'Eilat - The Road to Eilat

One of the tasks of Betar today is to send immigrants to the frontier towns such as Eilat which need to be built up.

# PROGRAMME —

## INTERVAL

### PART // - BETAR TODAY

1. A shabbat Evening on a Meshek  
The Betar Dancing Group  
Choreography..... Sam Scherer
  
2. Scenes from Israeli Life.  
Three humorous sketches of Israel written by Israel's brilliant satirist — Ephraim Klshan.
  - a) Jewish Poker..... Henry Burstyner  
John Goldlust
  - b) The Relativeness of Justice.....The Company
  - c) Incognito..... Sol Goldstein  
John Goldlust  
Sam Scherer
  
3. Hazamrim  
Four Betarim sing modern Israeli folk songs..... Bill Fayman  
Sol Goldstein  
Sam Scherer  
John Goldlust
  
4. Recital on Piano..... Betty Melnik  
  
Fantasie Impromptu — Chopin  
Waltz in C minor — Chopin  
Czardas - Monti
  
5. Tomorrow We Celebrate  
A modern Israeli play in one act by.....Gad Pedhazur  
Characters:  
Yoram .....Henry Burstyner  
Yossi..... John Goldlust  
Dina.....Susan Nassau  
Ron.....Louis Devries  
Rivka.....,-Raymonde Strzyg
  
6. Hatikva.

# Betar Reunion: Mifkada Meeting

Monday, 9 May 1988

Present: Henry Burstyner, Mefaked; Louis de Vries, Mefaked; John Goldlust, Mefaked; Evie Katz, Mefakedet; Judy Weinstein, Mazkira.

The aim of this Betar reunion festival is, like Moomba, to get together and have lots of fun. The theme is Camp Betar. Date: Saturday, 30 July 1988 at 7.30 p.m. Venue: 27 Olinda Street, Caulfield.

## Activities

- When people arrive there will be Israeli/Betar background music. Attention: EK, JW, LdV.
- Video—A celebration of times past. Attention: JG. (Contact Judy Rudzki about old photos.)
- Films on video. Old Camp Betar movies, if available. Attention: HB will contact Harry Stuart about his videotape; JW will pursue Brian Diskin; LdV will ask Avraham Appel if he knows of the availability of films; LdV's Betar films.
- Dramatics. The staging of *Rinse the Cordial off My Kafia* will be organised by HB and JG. EK and HB will discuss the presentation of anecdotes/memories/this is your life . . . HB will ask Aaron Ninedek if he is prepared to tell a ghost story around the campfire (fire to be arranged by A. Appel).
- Music. Background music is noted above. HB will produce a small song book based on the South African opus of renown. Shoshana Yanoshevitz Jordan Kol will be asked to lead the group singing (maybe with A. Appel). LdV to locate and copy 1964 tape of Shimshon Feder's accordion version of Betar songs. JG will present a short bracket of Betar songs with collaborators of his choice.
- Dancing. JW will organise and lead the dance troupe. HB was asked not to dance.

## Other issues

- LdV to coordinate the evening to obviate the need for further meetings.
- EK will coordinate the supper and drink arrangements, on the basis that each couple will be asked to bring a specified dish and BYO grog. Although Betarim can be advised of this at the time of the invitation, the details can be left till closer to the party.
- Decorations to be arranged. HB to get another dummy from his father (the last one his father gave us has pretty much had it, and it talks too much). JW to locate an old Betar uniform. Possibility of a tent, sleeping bags, hurricane lanterns, stretchers etc. for decorations. Volunteers needed for shmimah.
- HB to put together a newsletter for the night.
- Betarim should be invited early in June. The present invitations list can be added to but please run your suggestions past the Mifkada. The list is headed by the Mifkada member who will be personally doing the inviting. (No printed /written invitations as that would make it look like a fund-raising event.) Where no spouse is listed it either shows my ignorance or their lack thereof.
- Please keep LdV informed of changes etc.

### JW

Marl Rosens  
Bill Borovski  
Nonny Reich  
Hannah Kurfurst  
Iliana & Phil Lipton  
Sam & Ruth Parasol

### HB

Avraham & Raymonde Appel  
Peter Revelman  
Louis & Miriam Chester  
Aaron Ninedek  
Harry Chojna  
Brian Rudzki  
Helen Webberley Pepper

### JG

Bill Fayman  
Nadine & Lloyd Perry  
Eric & Rachel Aufgang (if approved)

### LdV

Shoshana & Zvicka Kol  
Raphy & Ann Star  
Emmy & Peter Guttmann  
Jacques & Gabrielle de Zoete  
Linda & Norman Yaffe  
Henry & Chava Yanoshevitz  
Betty Levie

# **Olinda** (Street) **Camp—1988** **Special Souvenir Edition**

Welcome and Tel Hai!

Betar was founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky in 1923. Most of those present this evening were either members of Betar, Machoz Melbourne, or are married to ex-Betarim. For those of you who married an ex-Betari and are fed up with feeling excluded from the anecdotes, reminiscences, and connections of your Betarian spouses, get ready for a night of it!

Betar was started in Melbourne in 1948 and led in the early years by Shimshon Feder, Yosef and Dora Steiner, Jack Mirjam, Theo Balberyszski, and others lost in the mists of time. Most of us were members in the fifties and sixties. Indeed, among those present tonight are a number of former natsivim, mefakdim, and madrichim.

Our program this evening incorporates some of the activities that we enjoyed at Camp Betar. Indeed, camp is the theme of the evening. Regrettably we can't give you tass, an overnight hike, or ghost stories around the camp fire, but supper is being provided by those brought up on camp food.

This evening has been organised by a small, hardworking committee and Henry Burstyner. Thanks are due to Evie Katz, Judy Weinstein, and John Goldlust.

—Louis de Vries  
Convenor

# *Iton hamachane*

Whatever else Betar was about, the highlight of each year was the summer camp. For many, it was the main reason for being a Betari. We all have the fondest recollections of the friendships formed and good times had, frequently in paddocks by riversides in places such as Woori Yallock, Kinglake West, Wonga Park, Point Lonsdale, Launching Place, and Ballarat.

Who among us will ever forget the sight of Avraham Appel in full military mode organising the erection of tents and flagpole, digging (let alone using) latrines, shmirah, overnight hikes, ghost stories around the campfire (especially when Aaron "Nudnik" Ninedek was doing the telling), misdarim, tent inspections, concerts, and more. And what about the camp food! Only at camp would we enjoy such delights as tomato soup with a kerosene flavor, salmon patties, camp cocoa, cordial, and canned everything. Most years the cooking (if that's what it was) was cobbled together by a madricha or a shaliach's wife, but in the latter years of this group's connection with Betar, we actually hired cooks, such as Mrs Gordon and Mr Maas. I still remember Mr Maas cooking for us for the second year in succession at Ballarat (1964-65), when a chanich confronted him with the news, "The cook's not as good as the one we had last year."

Some of the memories Betarim have dredged up for tonight:

- Threepenny bangers under Harry Stuart's sleeping bag.
- Puncturing the water tank in the bushfires at Point Lonsdale, 1961.
- At one junior camp Raphy Star was in the males' showers while Betty Brisson was in the females' showers. Raphy called out, "Come and soap me", and Betty did! Raphy suffered a near collapse.
- Aaron Ninedek spent three days straight playing mah-jong with Alfie van der Poorten at Point Lonsdale senior camp.
- Jack Katz took out a group at midnight and "lost" them. Max Strubel went to look for him. Judy Skall suggested dancing to keep warm. Jack then returned and gave them a lecture on what they "should have done".
- Garry Rudzki was the madrich in charge of the kitchen at Wonga Park when we first tasted kerosene-infused tomato soup. Thereafter it became a regular camp treat.
- Avraham Appel decided to wake the whole camp in the very early hours of the morning. The tents were lifted and removed with the chanichim still on their stretchers.
  - The big night when Loy Lichtman decided between Nadine and Jesse.
  - The train ride to Brisbane when Ruth decided between Raphy and Sam.
  - The Ballarat Kidnap Debacle.

One of the features of summer camps was the daily Camp News, variously called *Iton Hamachane*, *Ha Shemesh* or whatever. Here, from the bowels of our archives, are a few items from a 1963–64 *Iton Hamachane*.

### Prep party

The Prep party came to Ballarat a few days before the other campers. Its leader was Morry, who was flat out all day—on his stretcher. The members of the Prep party: Jack, Bill, Joe, Abe, Allen, Louis, and Max (double)—worked incessantly to prepare the camp site for the chaverim. The tents were put up in blistering heat (unfortunately we did not know they would come down in a howling gale); huts were swept out; stretchers were set up; toilets and showers were cleaned; etc. After a gruelling four sleepless days (we slept at night), the weary Prep party staggered into bed (separate) and awaited the campers.

PS: I would like to thank Max for his hard work?

### General comments on hut inspections

On the whole huts are reasonably clean inside, but greater care could be taken to keep the outside clean, especially around the areas where dishes are washed. The place for rubbish is in the bin, not the ground.

### Overheard in tents

"I can't go on shmira tonight because my mouth hurts."

### The runaround

On Tuesday night all the campers were given a real runaround in the form of a new, exciting night game (with the let's have another cup taste). After a spectacular race against time which led them to all corners of the camp site, the game ended in a dead heat between a group led by that lovable Mefaked Raphael Shtair, and that dancing Sabra, Shoshana Yanoshewitz.

### Independence day

Independence day started on Wednesday evening when Rudy de Zoete was elected Mefaked Ha Machane, and Eva (Goldbaum) was elected K'tzin Toran. The madrichim were Jack, Gabriel, Alan, Ziggy, Rochelle, and Rosalie.

In the morning all the ed-madrichim were woken up and given a tough PT run. (So tough in fact that the new madrichim collapsed from trying to keep up with those whom they were trying to torture.) Then all of the ex-madrichim took up KD and latrine duty except for Loy and Abe who wisely chickened out. . .

—*Ha Shemesh*  
1 January 1965

# Lighting up Betar

On this page you will find some extracts from *HaLapid*, "The Torch, Official organ of Betar Melbourne". The cover carried these immortal lines:

The torch you threw at us  
We caught and held it high  
Its glorious light  
Will never die.

*HaLapid* was edited by various Betarim over the years, including **John Goldlust**, **Bill Fayman**, **Loy Lichtman** and **Susan Aufgang**.

One of the interesting questions to ask yourselves as you reread these contributions from more than a quarter of a century ago is this: Have our friends really changed very much? Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, *HaLapid*, and will be published in the next issue. See John Goldlust for details.

Incidentally, *HaLapid* was only one of numerous publications issued at various times by Betar in the fifties and sixties. Others included *Haderech*, a monthly journal; *Altalena*, a political news bulletin; *Betar*, a monthly newsletter; as well as educational booklets on the history and ideology of Betar, the geography of Israel, and so on.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I would like to complain about the attitude of Betarim at group parties. Recently there was a party held by Amatzia and quite a few chaverim came, but because it was dull at the beginning most of the kids left and went to another dance. This doesn't show any Hadar at all from my point of view. When you come to a party you shouldn't just think of yourself but think of your host who went to all the trouble and expense to prepare a party for your enjoyment.

Also, how about a few more people attending our Neshefim (especially females). Dancing the part of a girl is not one of my routine occupations

—Henry Yanoshewitz  
*HaLapid*, April 1962

Dear Herschl,

I am ravishingly beautiful, wear gorgeous clothes, am highly intelligent, am very rich, 18 years old, and have never been out with a boy yet my mother will not let me go to camp because she says I'll catch cold. How can I convince her that everything will be all right?

—Harry Stuart, Windsor

• Never mind. We'll send Avraham down to clear things up, but we want him back unharmed please.

Dear Herschl,

I'm sick of immature teenage boys. I'd like to go out with an older fellow. I was thinking of calling Peter Revelman next Saturday and also asking him if he has a friend for my friend. What do you think?

—Lady Muck, Sela

• I think you are quite immature, and have a lot to learn about dating. Your idea is childish and completely ridiculous. Why drag a friend along?

—HaLapid, October 1961

## Editorial

Over the past year the membership of the Movement has been on the increase and Melbourne especially has been expanding rapidly. The successful camp at Pt Lonsdale is an example of what can be achieved with a combination of numbers, spirit and enthusiasm of both chaverim and madrichim.

However, as often happens when we rest on our laurels and relax, apparent disinterest of many madrichim has been noticeable since camp. More interest and drive is needed if we are to continue our membership drive and expansion. It is hoped that this will be shown in the near future.

—John Goldlust

HaLapid, April 1962

## Poetry

"In ten years there will be for the Jews a state,  
And if not ten, then in fifty years, but we will fight and wait . . ."  
These were Herzl's words; they all came true:  
Now we have a state, with soil, where the sky is blue.  
The land of our ancestors, the State of Israel.  
It is still young but it will grow,  
And as it grows, young seed we will sow.  
It will again be called the land of milk and honey  
And will supply those who have no money.  
In Israel, a generation will arise  
Pushing aside the irons, with light in its eyes,  
Defending its land from every war.  
The Maccabees will arise once more.  
The Lord's name will be glorified and never die.  
Israel will rejoice on soil where crops grow high,  
For we have turned ours into fertile land  
Despite having suffered all that is on hand.  
Pogroms, massacres, executions, genocide,

And we cannot replace our dear ones who have died.  
But through all this, the Jews live on,  
Fighting, struggling, always singing a song,  
And in the centre of this is in every Jewish heart:  
It's the one belief from which we will never part.  
This is the faith in God, our Helper and Creator,  
For without him there would be nothing, not even an equator.  
Therefore, a race of wonderful Jews will emerge on that soil,  
And one which no other country will be able to spoil.  
And always that thought which sets us ready to sail—  
We have our Holy Land, the State of Israel.

—Judy Skall  
*HaLapid*, April 1962

### **Foreign Land**

It was the same world  
Yet . . .  
It seemed so different.  
Here I was, alone  
In the midst of a happy reeling world  
Of noise and commotion.  
Why was fate so cruel to me?  
When did I sin?  
I could not answer these questions.  
The tears felt like heavy stones in my throat,  
My heart was ready to burst.  
I was deserted.  
I was deserted by my homeland,  
I was taken to this foreign land  
Where skies are just as blue  
Where the trees are just as green  
Yet . . .  
I pause . . .  
And look . . .  
No.  
I can not find my happiness here!  
The laughter of these children weaves a strange music in my ears.  
While the droplets on my cheeks keep rolling  
With each memory of the life I had just lost.

—Shoshana Yanoshewitz  
*HaLapid*, April 1962

## Report on the other machozot

Did you know that while you are enjoying yourself at your group meeting on Sunday afternoon there are some 500 boys and girls who are doing the same thing? Yes, there are 500 Betarim going to Sunday afternoon meetings in Australia today.

I found this fact when I went visiting all the machozot of Australian Betar.

Betar is the only Zionist Youth Organisation to have groups in all the Eastern States. There is a machoz in Melbourne (as we all know), Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane. These four groups have a total membership of over 600 Betarim . . .

—Jack Katz  
*HaLapid*, April 1962

## Views and opinions

One of the features of Betar life that we may have forgotten was the vigorous and robust intellectual debate on controversial matters. In 1964 work started on raising money for a moadon, which provoked some dissent. But the most controversy was aroused by an article entitled "Betar ideology: Universally valid or a mass of contradictions". That article is reprinted in full, and is followed by excerpts of the numerous responses.

It is now 16 years since the establishment of the state of Israel and for a long time now Betar has found itself in an ideological dilemma from which it has not as yet succeeded in emerging one way or another.

The main differences of opinion concern themselves with interpretations of what we have come to call Betar ideology—the manifesto written by Jabotinsky in the late 1920s. The fact that the ideology was not written until some five years after Betar as a movement was established is of some importance. We must look at the ideology within its historical context. In my opinion Jabotinsky's aims in this carefully worded piece of work were threefold:

- **Political.** This can be seen in the section concerning the "class struggle" and his opposition to socialist Zionism. Betar was to be an organ to be used in his fight against socialism and for the Revisionist Zionism which Jabotinsky was propogating.

- **Nationalistic.** This is apparent in the glorification of Jewish history and concentration on Jewish heroes and strong-men. This was also Jabotinsky's main method of attracting the Jewish youth to the movement. He supplied an answer from the past for their inferiority complexes and by clever uniting of religion and nationalism, he attempted to make militant Zionism respectable and desirable to the Jews of the ghettos.

- **Idealism.** Undoubtedly Jabotinsky thought that through Betar and Zionism could be set up a Jewish Utopia upon liberal rather than socialistic lines. He envisaged some kind of capitalist-social welfare state, but he kept practical considerations to the background.

When we look closely at the details, the few that there are, of this ideology, we are immediately struck by the internal inconsistencies which have caused the dilemma we face today. Firstly, the basis of the *Shtei G'dot* war cry is the bible. (Some people would argue that there are economic, geographic, and defence motives. This may be so, but we are only dealing here with Jabotinsky's reasons.) However on matters of religion Jabotinsky decrees "freedom of conscience". One must respect the Jewish religion but belief and worship are left to the individual alone. Now we are faced with some screaming *Shtei G'dot* and waving a bible, yet with full Betarian rights, not believing on one word written in the bible.

Secondly and perhaps much more seriously to be considered is the question of the opposing concepts of "freedom of the individual" and "Betarian discipline". One can overcome the contradiction perhaps by arguing that Jabotinsky's accent on discipline and militarism was necessary to organise the Jewish youth into a powerful enough force to recapture a state for the Jewish people, while freedom of the individual was to be the doctrine within this new state. But look at us today. We continue to maintain the old ranks and hierarchy as if we were still fighting a war. Instead of treating the period of the Irgun as one of a regrettable necessity we look upon it as a justification of the use of military force and an example for the future of the "good" and "noble" reasons for military activity.

The "freedom of the individual" idea comes into conflict again with the neo-nationalistic concept of the *chalutz*. This was probably thrown in to oppose the limited socialist concept of an agricultural worker as the only type of *chalutz*. We are told therefore that we must be anything that the state needs, so subordinating the individual completely to the will of the all-powerful state.

These are only a few of the glaring contradictions which can be seen in the framework of what we call the Betar ideology. It should be quite apparent that this kind of hotch-potch of politics, nationalism, and idealism may have been valid for the 1920s and 30s but that it is quite meaningless and contradictory to accept it as a universal truth which is relevant to the 1960s and will be so in the future.

The main blockage to any reform has been and still is the refusal to accept the fact that Jabotinsky meant the ideology to be relevant to the times. There are too many—among the older Betarim especially—whose blind idol worshipping of Jabotinsky have prevented any changes in the ideology which would make it more consistent and meaningful.

We must decide in which direction to go, and we must decide now. The longer we wait, the deeper we sink in the morass of antiquated and inconsistent half-truths and the further we slip from any obvious goal.

—John Goldlust  
*HaLapid*, August 1964

### Betar today and tomorrow

I was disgusted by [John Goldlust's] article, it contains a well thought out attack on Betar based on the doubtful (but imaginative) interpretation of Betar's ideology. Although I do not question the author's rights to air his views, I do question his motives . . . in causing

the disillusionment of our younger members, and a possible split among older members. This could only harm the movement. . .

**Contradiction.** This is the key word of the article, and yet, right from the start the author has committed the greatest contradiction of all, the contradiction that Rosh Betar was trying to counter the fact that Zionism alone and socialism hampers it, i.e. Zionism plus socialism equals contradiction. Monism, one aim, that is the fundamental idea in our ideology and the fact that the author has omitted it may tell us something of his political inclinations. . . The author has given me sichten on Jabotinsky's reasons for turning to the youth, sichten on the revival of Jewish dignity, and Jabotinsky's fight in the face of tremendous odds—it is a pity he did not listen to them as he may have learnt something.

..

—Sam Scherer

HaLapid, September 1964

### A closer study of the Betar ideology

. . . If a Betari does not agree with *shtei g'dot* and Betarian chalutzit he is at liberty to join a less extreme Zionist movement. . .

Let us look at the reasons for the emphasis in Betar on nationalistic thinking. In the earlier years of Betar it was essential to get rid of the ghetto-Jew mentality. What Jabotinsky wanted and what was needed is clearly stated in *Shir Betar* . . .

It appears that at least one Betari . . . is puzzled by what at first glance appears to be a contradiction in the ideology of Betar. This is "freedom of the conscience" concerning religion and *shtei g'dot* which uses the bible as a basis. If one looks at the bible for its historical value alone there is sufficient reason for the Jews as a nation, not only as a religion, to have a claim to Eretz Israel. Also it is necessary to respect the Jewish religion, and this involves the respect of our religion's right to Israel.

Another supposed contradiction is that of "freedom of the individual" and Betarian discipline. The write has linked the hierarchial system with that of an army. Surely it is obvious that in all everyday activities a form of hierarchy is used. At school, work, university; in the government it is used. The alternative would be everybody trying to be boss as occurs at ill-fated Betar senior camps . . .

—Susan Aufgang

HaLapid, September 1964

### The ideology of Betar—today and yesterday

. . . I must say I am a little disappointed, that an ideology which is as complex and flexible as Betar's is summed up in one and a half pages as "a mass of contradictions". . .

I must agree with the author that Betar is facing an ideological dilemma, but it must be seen in its true perspective, for Betar is only part of the whole Israel and Zionist complex which is facing a similar problem, and to simply decry the Betarian ideology without looking at the complete framework of the Jewish work today, and the role of the Betar and the Zionist in it would be wrong. And to apply mechanical logical terms such as universal contradiction or truth to an ideology would be slightly unrealistic, for if these terms would

have applied, the state of Israel would probably not be in existence today. . .

There are difficulties, the main one is being able to face reality, and look at the problems in their true perspective, and the answers cannot and need not always be found in Jabotinsky's writings. I doubt if Jabotinsky wanted them to. He laid a foundation upon which one can build a varying edifice, but this will not be done by wrecking the foundation. The ideology is a flexible one, and there is not always a right and a wrong, and we mustn't be afraid to build on this foundation. The foundations were laid by a man who was not afraid to stand up for a concept which was new to the Jewish people, and today if we look at the State of Israel, many parts of the foundation Jabotinsky laid are being used by those who tried to wreck them.

—Raphy Star

*HaLapid*, September 1964

### To be or not to be

. . . we should make the mistake of supposing that "Betar" is a magic word, and by uttering it, or by evoking memories from the past, we can solve our problems. In fact, Betar is no more than its members. If its members are enthusiastic and strive to follow the ideals set by the movement, then Betar is "good"; but if its members are indifferent and uninspired then we have no right to exist.

Discussion is good only if it achieves something. In Betar discussion is going in a vicious circle. We recognise that we are failing somehow in carrying out our aims, that our movement is not the size and calibre it ought to be, but instead of acting we talk: the native hue of resolution is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought.

Is there then a practical solution? So far there has been no answer to satisfy anyone as regards the ideology of Betar, nor a solution for attracting members to Betar. But while we talk we do not act. . .

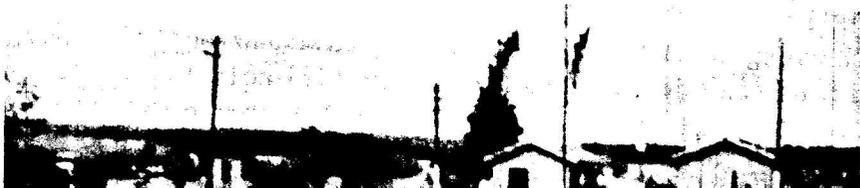
"To be or not to be: that is the question", and it is up to our generation to decide.

—Louis de Vries

*HaLapid*, December 1964



*Your ideal Holiday*  
at  
**CAMP BETAR**



# Program

- Background music—Shimshon Feder on accordion; recorded 1963
- Video—*The Nudnik Film*; made 1955, starring Aaron Ninedek, Henry Kranz. This film used to be shown at camp reunions and the like.
- Drama: *Rinse the Cordial off My Kafia* (A travesty of a mockery of a sham in three-quarters of an act). Written more than a quarter of a century ago by actors who wish to remain nameless.
- Video: *Memories of Camp Betar*, produced by John Goldlust.
- Song: "I'm Not Telling", by John Goldlust.
- *Ha yo, ha ya pa'am* Eight Betarim reminisce (briefly!)
- Trivial Betari Pursuit, coordinated by Elliott Katz, in honor of those who through no fault of their own failed to be members of Betar.
- Dancing troupe—organised by Judy Weinstein.
- Singing—organised by Shoshana Kol
- Supper
- Shmirah—see Avraham Appel to be allocated your street to patrol.



בבא

# Betar

Melbourne

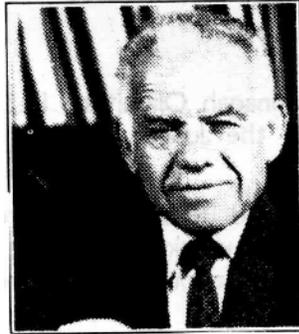
1941 - 1991

Celebration  
of its  
Jubilee Year



17th November 1991

Message from Mr. Shamir  
The Prime Minister of the State of Israel



Dear Friends,

I have learnt with interest and pleasure that the Melbourne Betar is now celebrating its Fiftieth Anniversary.

I am sure the Movement played an important role in the development and education of its members throughout this momentous half century. It was established at the beginning of the terrible World War, which resulted in the destruction of one third of our people. The Golden Jubilee is being celebrated at a time of great joy in the sovereign Jewish State as tens of thousands of our brethren from the Soviet Union and other countries come home. This is a real Shivat Zion, such as the Rosh Betar, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, advocated and urged.

The Culmination of all Betar activity and its educational process should be the personal fulfilment of Aliyah. Betarim from the free world can play an important role in the continuing building and development of the country and now, in the absorption and integration of this wonderful mass Aliyah.

I wish you a meaningful celebration and continued success in all your work.

Sincerely  
Yitzhak Shamir

## Message from Mr. Hertzl Macov The Rosh Hannagah Oiamit

Shalom--

On behalf of the Hannagah Oiamit of Betar and myself, I would like to congratulate you on the occasion of the Jubilee year of Betar Melbourne.

All the sniffim of World Betar can be proud of the great achievements of Betar Melbourne. These days when world events put even more pressure on Jews and on the State of Israel, Betar's mission becomes even more important.

Keep up the good work.

Tel - Hai,  
Hertzl Macov  
Rosh Hannagah Oiamit

## Message from Mr. Dan Meridor The Minister of Justice for Israel

Dear Friends.

Allow me to convey my most sincere blessings on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of Betar Melbourne. Since its founding, the Betar movement has played a crucial part in the history of the Zionist movement in Israel as well as abroad. Looking back at the impressive history of the movement, we can proudly say that many of its goals have been realized in the modern State of Israel. Today more than ever the educational message of Betar must continue to be a driving force for the Jewish People.

Sincerely,  
Dan Meridor

Message from Mr. Johnny Baker  
President State Zionist Council of Victoria



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the State Zionist Council of Victoria, it gives me great pleasure to extend greetings to Betar on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary.

The dramatic events of the past year have once again underscored the urgency and importance of Zionist youth activities in helping shape the course of Jewish history. Indeed, the past year has been a momentous one for the entire Jewish people. Israel has continued to embody the meaning of the Zionist ideal -that it will serve as a home for Jews from all corners of the earth. We have seen the continuing influx of Soviet" Jewry together with the miraculous ingathering of Jews from Ethiopia and the less heralded migration of Albanian Jewry.

The State Zionist Council of Victoria views its role as promoting and supporting the cause of Zionism in all its facets. To this end, our commitment to the Zionist Youth Movements has ensured that the ultimate goal of Zionist endeavour - Aliyah - receives maximum support from the community. During its first 50 years in this community, we have seen Betar set an exemplary standard in achieving this goal and, in the process, instilling in our youth an understanding of their heritage and a love of Zion.

Wishing you successful celebrations and may you grow from strength to strength in the future.

Sincerely  
Johnny Baker

Message from Mr. Lamm  
The President of United Zionist Revisionist Organisation

Dear Friends,

The 50th anniversary of Betar in Australia is a truly historic event to commemorate, not only because it provides us with the deserved opportunity to assess the vital contribution Betar has made to the Jewish Community in Australia, to reflect on the success of the Olim from Australian Betar, in Israel, but because it shows us that Betar, as a movement and as an ideology remains healthy and alive more than 40 years since the passing of the founder of revisionist Zionist Ze'ev Vladamir Jabotinsky.

Jabotinsky had many profound thoughts of foresight, but sometimes I wonder whether he would have imagined this; a movement guided by his principles, implementing his principles, a commitment to Aliyah, despite our criticism, a loosely prospering and tolerant society. And these Betarim undertake their aliyah and all their objectives as Jews and Zionists with the dignity of Hadar.

On behalf of The Revisionist Organisation of Australia, I would like to congratulate, enjoy your celebrations, they are much deserved which like your success will undoubtedly continue.

Sincerely Erwin  
Lamm

## Message from the Betar Schlichim

We are extremely happy to be in Australia at this time to share with the "Betar family" this memorable event. Since our arrival in Melbourne at the beginning of this year, we have been fortunate to have become a part of this wonderful movement. We have seen that Betar plays a central role in Zionist education throughout the Australian Jewish community. It is with great pride that we have witnessed hundreds of Betar graduates make Aliya over the last 50 years. Tonight we are all here together to celebrate the magnificent achievements of Betar Melbourne.

We would like to thank all the Betarim that have contributed to tonight's reunion, especially the hard working organising committee. In addition, the parents deserve special thanks for their on going support of Betar's activities.

Special mention must go to Mr Isaac Schwartz, who recently passed away. His contribution to Betar throughout the last 50 years outstanding and without his support Betar would not be as strong as it is today.

Finally, we look forward to seeing all of you helping Betar in the future and being a part of our goals for the next 50 years.

Tel Hai

Drora, Gershon and Roi Mishon  
Schlichim



## Message from Mr. Jonathan Gordon Mefaked Betar Melbourne 1991

Tonight we honour Betar Melbourne and the contributions it has made both to our community, and to us as individuals. Over the last fifty years, Betar has had an immense impact on the Jewish community of Melbourne. Betarim, inherently, have always been outspoken and not afraid to voice their opinions. Over the years Betar has been responsible for Jewish and Zionist education of many of Melbourne's Jewish Youth. We can also boast a large number of successful olim, now living in Israel.

Over the years, Betar Melbourne has seen many people come and go through the years, it is fter all, a Youth Movement. For some people it was just another period in their lives, while for others it means a little more.

It was only in turning this 50th celebration from thought into action, that I realised how many different people have been through the ranks of Betar Melbourne. All these people, from all walks of life had a hand in shaping Betar. I am sure that their years in Betar hold special memories and a special place in their hearts.

The stories, (for the most part) are the same, only the names and faces change. Betar is a place where you believe, that you and your friends can change the world. Youth tells us we can make a difference. The youth of today ' carry the flame of that dream.

It is an honour for me to be able to participate in this celebration. I am proud to be able to call myself a member of Betar Melbourne.

To all the old Betarim, and to all the future Betarim.

Shalom, Ve'Tel Chai  
Jonathon Gordon

# IN MEMORIAM

## Isaac Schwartz

The sudden death on 30/8/1991 of Isaac (Jack) Schwartz is a great loss to his family, friends and the Melbourne Jewish Community.

I have known Jack through two sources. One stems from my link with "The Twenty Boys", who arrived in Melbourne in May 1939, only months before the outbreak of World War Two. Half of the boys came from my home town: Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) and the neighbouring district of East Poland, which is now White Russia.

Those "Twenty Boys", all aged about 15 years were literally rescued from the inevitable fate, which awaited all during the Holocaust. They were brought to Australia by the combined efforts of the Polish Jewish Relief Fund and the Jewish Welfare Society under the auspices of a pilot resettlement schemes for Jewish children, sadly interrupted by the outbreak of war.

They arrived in Melbourne, like most refugees, without knowledge of English and without money. They found work almost immediately inspite of the lasting efforts of Australia's great depression and they were billeted with Jewish Melbourne families, these teenagers appreciated what was done for them. They worked hard, whilst some studied part-time. Throughout their formative years they were deprived of direct parental guidance and support, they nevertheless built successful personal and professional lives, making themselves a credit to the Jewish Community.

My association with Jack has grown over the last 14 years. As honorary secretary of the Revisionist Zionist Organisation I met with Jack frequently. I thus had opportunities to learn more about Jacks origins, his views and his personality.

Jack was born in 1925 in Berezno, a typical small shtetl in Eastern Poland where he was raised in a traditional Jewish, Zionist home. Early in his youth Jack became imbued with the teaching of Ze'ev Jabotinsky who urged the Jews to take pride in their heritage, to work towards the establishment of a Jewish State and not to wait for a socialist solution to their problems.

Jack joined the local Betar in Berezno and remained a loyal admirer and advocate of Jabotinsky's ideology.

continued.....

# IN MEMORIAM

Soon after his arrival in Melbourne and still a young teenager, in 1940, Jack became a founding member of the Betar and the Revisionist movement here.

In 1941 he became Mefaked (leader) of the local Betar. He remained a very active member of the U.Z.R.O. all his life. He never stopped caring about his loved Betar, supporting it morally and financially. He was the main liaison between Betar and its adult counterpoint: the U.Z.R.O.

On the executive committee U.Z.R.O. , whether as treasurer, or in other capacities he remained very active, giving a lot of his time and a lot of himself. He was always in charge of the House Committee, which maintained Beth Jabotinsky in Dickens Street, Elwood, the headquarters for Betar. Whenever the young Betarim had problems either financial or with repairs and maintenance of Beth-Jabotinsky, Jack was always available and gave generously of himself.

I could not help admiring Jack's vigour enthusiasm, his love for Betar and his love for Zion. He immersed himself in all Zionist causes and issues. He was always frank and outspoken. He travelled frequently to Israel to attend Zionist congress and to help projects initiated by the Melbourne U.Z.R.O His energy and ardour were boundless.

I had the opportunity to discuss Jack with his Rabbi: J. Schreiber, who kindly disclosed that Jack retained the old Jewish custom from Poland of consulting his Rabbi in all matters. The Rabbi confirmed, what I already suspected, that Jack was a charitable man, who contributed to charities and causes, but always insisted on anonymity. He avoided any publicity and "Kaved", the mask and character of true Jewish charity.

Jack was a devoted husband of Fay and loving father of his son and daughter and five grandchildren. He was family centred and their welfare was paramount to him. I personally lost a good friend, the boy from the shtetl, who gave so much of himself to his family, friends, charities and to Zion, always with enthusiasm and dedication.

He will be missed by all and always remembered.

**Dr. Sam Chami.**

## THE FIRST DECADE OF BETAR MELBOURNE



In 1939 a pilot orphan scheme was established in Melbourne. By May that year 20 boys arrived under that scheme. They came from East Poland and Germany.

This group established the first Zionist Youth Group in the Herzl House, Drummond Street, Carlton. Within a few months half the group, Betarim from Europe, left Herzl House and created Betar Melbourne at the headquarters of the Revisionist Organization at the Jabotinsky Hall in nearby Faraday Street, Carlton under the leadership of Kalman Parasol and subsequently the late Menachem Shifman.

By the end of 1940 the group had attracted some 60 members, conducted classes and meetings and participated in the first public function mourning the death of Ze'ev Jabotinsky.

In 1941 under the leadership of Eric Stock, Betar grew rapidly and created the first holiday camp Betar at Woori Yallock with 100 participants and subsequently a second group of Betar St. Kilda was established in Elsternwick.

Betar organised the first march under the blue and white flag through the streets of Melbourne. During the world war years many public meetings were organised to protest against Nazi persecution and the continued British Government policy restricting Jewish emigration to Palestine and the return of escapees from the shores of Palestine back to the Holocaust. Jabotinsky's fight within the Zionist World Movement to define the aim of Zionism as the creation of the Jewish State and the creation of the Jewish army to attain that end, was carried out by Betar and

Revisionists in a hostile local atmosphere where fellow Zionists labelled Betar as fascist and Australian Jewish dignitaries of the time accused them of actions detrimental to the local Jewish community.

After the war when the plight of the Holocaust became known and the British army resisted the emigration of the surviving remnants, confiscating arriving ships and interning the occupants at Cyprus and when the British forces assisted the Palestinian Arabs and arming them and at the same time confiscating weapons of the Jewish defence fighters, Betar protested at public meetings and directly to the Press. Betar condemned the British Government for their actions and the subsequent hanging of the freedom fighters of the Irgun Zvai Leumi and called for the British Government to relinquish the Mandate and leave Palestine so that a Jewish State could be created. Despite being blacklisted by the Australian Federal Authorities, a group was formed to train freedom fighters and weapons were smuggled to Palestine. Throughout the difficult decade right up to the creation of the Jewish State in 1948, the Betarim proved their courage, determination, conviction and commitment to the ideals and aims of Jabotinsky in the face of hostility of the Zionist Movement and the representative dignitaries of Australian Jewry.

Under the leadership of Yosef Steiner, Betar expanded dramatically in Melbourne and to New South Wales and Queensland.

Fifty years later we are proud of our conduct, our ideals and aims which have proven right and were eventually embraced by all Zionists and the majority of World Jewry.

**Dr. Eric Stock.**

## MISCELLANEOUS MEMORIES OF BETAR CIRCA 1955 - 1963



The fragrance of the Australian bush on a hot summer's day and a warm summer's night is what I first associate with memories of Betar for it was the summer camps which encapsulated the way of life that became mine from the age of 13 to 19. Behind the recollections of canvas tents, hessian stretchers, caterpillar plagues, and using river water for just about everything, were the people. At Wonga Park 1955/6, my first camp, I shared a tent with Elfi Rosner, Enna Margulies, Yvonne Loewy, Jeanette Ignace and the "twins" - Mimi and Sophie, Aka Sonia, Offman. Key older figures were Aaron Ninedek and Jack Mirjam, both of whom we were somewhat in awe as they had been on "Machon", in Israel. Two older girls who I think were (with hindsight) my role models were Anne Entenberg and Betty Brisson. Anne introduced some of us to the wonderfully strange ideas of a man named Sigmund Freud. She had the added distinction of being Aaron's girlfriend. I remember Betty mainly because she liked to laugh. She, like Anne, was one of the first females I knew who went to university. This sounds serious, but Betty was rarely serious. I liked that combination! She and her sister Fay were what you'd call gigglers. Others remembered John(ny) Goldlust, Brian Rudzki, Gideon Dorevitch, Harry Stuart, Peter Revelman, Shimshon and Leah Feder, the Lew family, Dennis Samolin, Jack Katz, Eric Aufgang, Tom Rado, Lloyd Samuel, Sam Offman, the Eisakovitch family.

Visitors day - we were usually involved in putting on a show for the parents and relatives. We looked forward to it, it meant eating decent food for a start. At my first camp we spent hours rehearsing and preparing the Visitors Day program. Choir, dancing groups, plays, solo recitals of poems and songs, skits,

sets and makeshift stages. The day arrived. Around mid-morning the cars came, Vanguards, Perfects, Austins, Morrises, Holdens and Studebakers, Greetings, smiles and laughs, anxious looks - has my child survived this long spell away from home? The food was unpacked, the card tables unfolded. And what did many of the parents do, after feeding their offspring, packing up the remnants so that only the thermos flasks of coffee remained? They played cards, Gin rummy, canasta, red aces - they were absorbed. A few had even set up their card tables on the stage and in the middle of one of our skits were heard to tell us to be quiet as our play was disturbing their play. Other parents however, dutifully played the part of the audience and of course loved seeing their children so involved. "Did you like it Dad?" I asked my father. "Yes, yes, but how come you weren't limping?" (a family joke).

Betar was a magnet for many reasons, not least being the romantic trysts at camp, euphemistically known as "shmira" - guard duty. Of course there was always the possibility of a raid by Habo or Hashomer Hatzair. The main weapon in these raids seemed to be toothpaste. Internal raids, mainly the boys raiding the girls' tents or huts, were a camp feature too.

One part of the Betar philosophy that I found particularly compelling was the idea of taking pride in being Jewish and refusing to make excuses for it. And - semitism was to be faced up to bodily, to the extent of fighting back. Though nobody of my age had heard Jabotinsky's famous oratory we were taught some of his sayings. Betar meant debate - was an excellent training ground for learning grass - roots politics. As active members of this Zionist youth movement we were not only learning Jewish history there was some sense of participating in it. Of course we were against socialism, and for the blowing up of the King David Hotel by the Etzel. Avraham Appel taught us Tass, Israeli games like Machanayim, and night manoeuvres were always between the Arabs and the Israelis. Another important concept was Hadar - which I interpreted as a kind of inner integrity.

One event that comes to mind is when a couple of us were on kitchen duty. Garry Rudzki was in charge. Cooking for the camp was done over an open fire. This evening the fire had not been burning well, and we were trying to heat tomato soup, the first course of the evening meal. It was getting closer and closer to the designated time and the soup remained cold, the fire low or dying out. We hit upon the brilliant idea of throwing kerosene on to the fire. It worked. We had a huge blaze and the soup warmed up to at least tepid. By this time seventy or eighty chanichim were sitting at trestles in the marquee chanting the B'te'avon song. With great relief we distributed the tomato soup and returned to the blaze to heat the next part of the meal. Suddenly, shouts came from the marquee. "This soup smells funny!" "There's kerosene in my soup!" Next camp we hired Mrs. Cohen to cook for us, and open fireplaces were swapped for stoves of various kinds.

Another tent, another camp - was it Woori Yallock or launching Place? Baby doll pyjamas were de riguer for females. I have a photo of our tent in our night attire. There's Enna again, and Elfi, together with Eve Tauber, Annie Lew, Diane Rubinstein, Amelia ? Through these camps and Betar life came a love



of Israeli folk music, singing and dancing were enjoyable activities, much preferred (by me) to sichot which droned on, or learning how to tie knots in ropes.

Another memory is of Avraham (again) trying to teach us how to use rifles. I would not be surprised if there was an ASIO file on us somewhere. After all, were we not the militants?! I don't know how successful the rifle - training was because I left. This was one advantage of being female. One was supposed to find such activity repugnant. One was also assumed to prefer singing, dancing and flirtation. Any Betaria deemed to be more serious, leadership material, usually got the Chinuch and Hadracha portfolio, the department of education and training. (In the Late 1950s and early 1960s employment was not a problem).

Betar to me still means people above all else. Some of my best friends were in Betar. Shoshanna Janusewicz, John Goldlust, Henry Burstyner, Tami Star, Louis De Vries. Tami maintains that once, when I was in charge of a group of 13 - 14 year old girls at Kinglake West camp, I gave them a sex education lecture. I can't recall that and I find it hard to believe. What I knew about that topic at the age of 15 would have been as much as Arafat knows about the peace process. "Are you sure Tami, that it was me talking, not them telling me? Tami is sure. "But what on earth did I say?" She can't remember. It must have worked though, because she had twins.

In summary, Betar meant the opportunity to take up responsibilities, the pains and pleasures of adolescence within the warmth of shared community, plus the significant knowledge that there was a world beyond that of Melbourne, Australia.

Thanks go to three people who read this piece, made helpful comments and suggestions, and helped me recall the past. They are Elliott Katz, Judy (Skall) Weinstein and John Goldlust.

**Evie (Skall) Katz.**

## Betar 70's

After surviving the radical 60's, Betar Melbourne had a very young but dedicated chevra of madrachim that were very idealistic. With Avi's return from Machon in December 1970, all the madrachim changed their names to their hebrew names for that summer camp, to help create a love of Israel amongst the chanachim. Well, the names have stuck for many and so have they, "here in Australia "

An extension of how idealistic the madrachim were at that time was their political involvement, the Madrachim/mefkadah meetings, the wearing of their uniform and their absolute devotion to the principle of "Hadar Betari".

Their political stand was made obvious to Melbourne over the PLO visit of 1975 when the Madrachim featured rather prominently in the newspapers and on television. This steadfastness was reinforced when they tried to organise a defence unit to protect Jewish establishment buildings. There were numerous protests over a number of issues and once a bus was even organised to take them to Canberra itself to convey their message to parliament.

The Madrachim/Mefkadah meetings epitomised how idealistic they all were. The Madrachim were so adamant in their beliefs the mefaked had to climb on to the table for order over non - issues on a number of occasions. The wearing of the uniforms was an honour to do so. On a few occasions the madrachim were asked to forego the wearing of the uniform for political reasons but the madrachim chose to ignore that request. Their love of the uniform took precedence over their willingness to conform.

Therefore, being Hadar Betari was not just an aim, it was an obsession. Triviality was not a word in the vocabulary as everything was of intense importance. All behaviour had to be Hadar Betari and so all had an obligation to ensure good manner, proper respect and an absolute adherence to the principles of Betar. When Habo camp was raided, it wasn't for self gratification, it was because of a duty to make Betar's presence known. Constantly the madrachim were being told by their peers what was and what wasn't Hadar Betari.. The only exception to that rule was when Betar played Habo or Hashy in the football. However, Hadar Betari principles had to be maintained when Bnei was being played.

In summary, when looking back at that time, one sees a very idealistic and dedicated vintage of Betarim. Their devotion to individuality has manifested itself through the lives they are living today. An extensive of that intensity was the good times that was had by "that chevra". That chevra has withstood the test of time as exemplified by the numerous friendships that there is today that originated some 20 years ago from Betar. Almost ceremoniously, there are always those reminiscing sessions of the "Old Days" as it was that good for all, to have been part of "that chevra".

**Avi Feldman.**

## BETAR IN THE 80'S

Like every other decade in Betar, the 1980's had its up's and down's. Numbers at certain times were so small that Madrichim outnumbered Chanichim and yet, so large were the numbers that campsites in Victoria were difficult to find for the Betar Army.



Schlichim were always a driving force over the decade, Amos and Leora Doron were so dedicated that they lived across the road from the Maon. Menachem and Deganit Ganon started the long family of Van's. Helping the likes of Mitsubishi and Toyota. Uzi and Merav Barzely began their Schlichot as Israelis and ended leaving as Yobo Australians.



Many Mefakdim started and ended their terms throughout the eighties, making decisions that made some people happy and others glum. However, each one leaving their own impression on the movement. Overall the eighties in Betar will always have many special memories for those who just came to one camp or who dedicated many years of their life to a just and worthwhile cause.

## BETAR IN THE NINETIES

Betar moved into the nineties after an extremely busy and successful eighties which culminated in the biggest summer camp in Betar's history. With the resulting strong base of chaniachim we have attempted to consolidate and make strides into being the biggest youth movement in Melbourne. Gone are the days of rifle training and eradicating the reds from under the beds, and in their place is a concerted effort at imparting a genuine love and appreciation of Judaism and Israel.

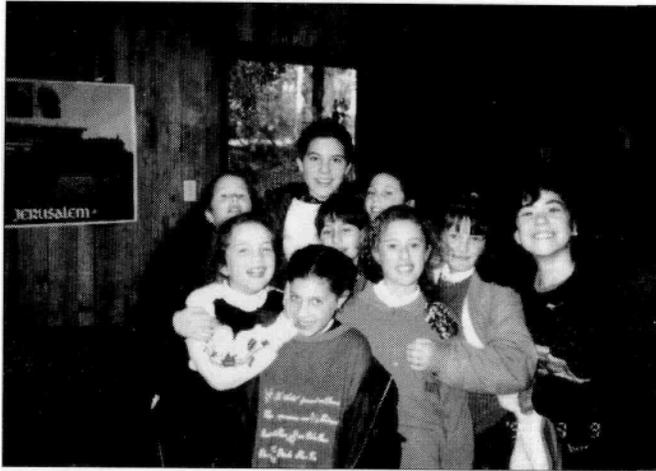


Highlights in the nineties are still camps and functions, full of "ruach", fun and "chinuch". Of course the principle of "Hadar" still plays an important role in the nineties, however the role of a "Hadar" Betari in the nineties naturally stands in contrast to one during the earlier years of Betar. Some things however do not change, Mifkada meetings are still full of fruitless arguments which go well into the night with the conclusion always being an agreement to further discuss the issue the following week. The first night of camp is still a "Betariada" (in some shape or form), and the last is still skit night with the same boring skits year after year.



A new feature of the nineties is an annual Pesach "Hadracha" seminar at which future madrichim and current junior madrichim are forced to sit through the same ideological tochniot that were the new innovation at Course Artzi 1923.

We feel however that this new addition will only further the level of education amongst the senior movement of the future. (Speaking of Course Artzi that still is a feature of the Betar year. The last night is still Kenes Artzi which still goes well into the night filled with fierce debate over the "annual" resolutions ie: Uniforms, Kashruth and whether or not madrichim without a firm commitment to aliyah are able to hold senior positions.)



The future of the movement looks bright. We are well into the summer camp mode and are predicting the most successful camp yet. Numbers are looking good, our team of dedicated madrichim are hard at work organising a first class tochnit, which together with traditional Betar know how can only result in a sensational camp.

On behalf of the current Betarim we would like to thank you all for coming and sharing our 50th anniversary with you tonight.

Shalom Ve Tel-Chai

**Barry Feldman, Sharon Abbatovi & Derek Miller.**

# **BETAR 50TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME**

Introduction

Shir Betar

Mefaked

The President of U.Z.R.O. - Mr Lamm.

40's The Beginning of Betar - Dr. Eric Stock.

50's The Nudnik Film.

60's The Mavis Bramston Show.

Late 60's Early 70's - Slide Show.

Mid to Late 70's - Different Perspectives on Betar.

80's Typical Morning at Camp.

90's- Finale.

Shaliach.

Hatikva.

Supper & Israeli Dancing.



*Betar 60th  
Anniversary*

*14 October 2001*

*Welcome*

# 60th Anniversary



## Re-union

### BETAR MELBOURNE

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

#### Attention all Betarim!

\* Looking for memorabilia from your time in Betar.

\* Please contact us with your details.

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14TH OCTOBER 2001

7.30PM

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בית"ר אוסטרליה  
**BETAR AUSTRALIA**

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

*Betar Melbourne Proudly Presents.....*

# 60 Years of Betar in Australia

*Order of Events...*

- 7:40pm *Australian Anthem*  
*Shir Betar*
- 7:45pm *Opening*  
*Mr. Phillip Chester*  
*President of the State Zionist Council*
- 7:50pm *H.E. the Ambassador of Israel*  
*Mr. Gabby Levy*
- 7:55pm *A song by Betar Melbourne Chanichim*
- 8:00pm *Deputy Minister of National Infrastructure*  
*Chairperson of World Likud*  
*Naomi Blumenthal MK*
- 8:05pm *Betar Melbourne throughout the years – Slide Show*
- 8:10pm *A song by Betar Melbourne chanichim*
- 8:15pm *From the Jabotinsky institute in Israel*  
*Professor Theodore Balberyszki*
- 8:20pm *A dance by Betar Melbourne chanichim*
- 8:23pm *Chairman of World Betar*  
*Mr. Danny Danon*
- 8:28pm *Hatikvah*
- 8:30pm *Reunion*

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**World Zionist Organization**

**The Jewish Agency  
for Israel**

הסוכנות



**Sallai Meridor**, Chairman of the Executive

Jerusalem, Elul  
29 August, 2001

**Betar  
Melbourne**

It is with great pleasure that I write to bring greetings to Betar Australia on its' 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Betar in Australia has a long and honored history of standing with and for Israel. Your Solidarity is even more important today.

I hope to see every one of you here in Israel. Our mission of bringing Jews home to Israel is far from over, and we must all work together for this common goal.

On behalf of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Israel, I wish you and all Betarim in Australia another 60 years of fruitful Zionist activity.

Tel Hai,

Sallai Meridor



מדינת ישראל  
دولة اسرائيل  
STATE OF ISRAEL

رئيس الدولة  
THE PRESIDENT

הנשיא

Jerusalem, 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2001  
17<sup>th</sup> Elul, 5761

Dear Members of the Betar Movement in Australia,

I am pleased to send you greetings and congratulations on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Betar Movement in Australia.

I am pleased that Australian Jewry is proud of the extensive Jewish education being given to its youth, has deep ties with Israel and encourages Aliyah.

I praise the Betar Movement, which for many years has actively, with dedication and devotion, imbued its members with Zionist education, the deepening of Jewish identity and attachment to Israel.

In the difficult period being experienced by us now, the solidarity demonstrated by world Jewry, through visiting Israel and solidarity rallies, encourages and unifies us.

I wish the Betar Movement continued success in its undertakings and you and your families a happy and blessed New Year, a year of security and of peace for the citizens of Israel and the Jewish people.

Yours sincerely,

Moshe Katsav



# בית"ר אוסטרליה

# BETAR AUSTRALIA

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

שיר בית"ר – זאב ז'בוטינסקי

בית"ר -

מגוב ריקבון ועפר,

בדם וביזע

יוקם לנו גזע

גאון ונדיב ואכזר,

בית"ר הנלכדה,

יודפת, מסדה,

תרומנה בעוז והדר.

הדר -

עברי גם בעוני -

בן שר

אם עבד אם הלך

נוצרת בן מלך

בכתר דוד נעטר

באור ובסתר

זכור את הכתר

עטרת גאון ותגר

תגר -

על כל מעצור ומיצר

אם תעל או תרד

בלהב המרד

שא אש להצית- אין דבר!

כי שקט הוא רפש

הפקר דם ונפש

למען ההוד הנסתר.

למות או לכבוש את ההר -

יודפת, מסדה, בית"ר

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בית"ר אוסטרליה  
**BETAR AUSTRALIA**

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

## התקווה

כל עוד בלבב פנימה  
נפש יהודי הומיה,  
ולפאתי מזרח קדימה  
עין לציון צופיה-

עוד לא אבדה תקוותנו,  
התקווה בת שנות אלפיים,  
להיות עם חופשי בארצנו  
ארץ ציון וירושלים.

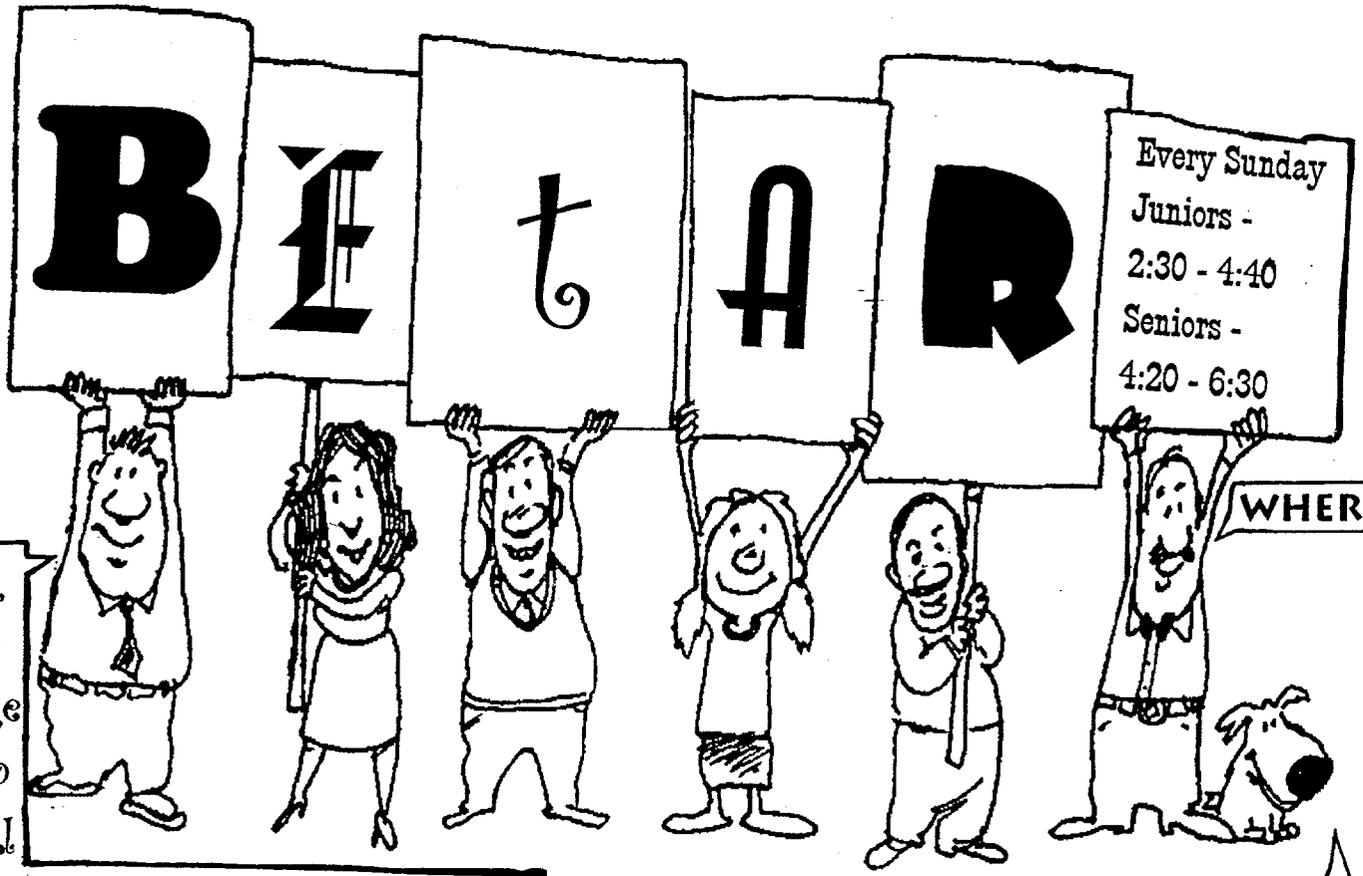
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Junior Summer Camp  
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Leigh - 0412 661 714

Federal Summer Camp  
Years 9 - 12  
7th - 16th January, 2002  
Sydney!  
For more info call...  
Marissa - 0412 585 703



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בית"ר אוסטרליה

# BETAR AUSTRALIA

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

Betars 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was proudly  
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And:

## **Parents & Friends of Betar**

### **Betar Sydney**

112/529 Old South Head Road  
Rose Bay, N.S.W. 2029  
Telephone: (02) 9130 8230  
Facsimile: (02) 9380 5124

### **Betar Melbourne**

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betarqueensland@hotmail.com



בית"ר אוסטרליה  
**BETAR AUSTRALIA**

ברית הנוער העברי ע"ש יוסף תרומפלדור

Please find the time to update your details on the Betar database.  
This way we can send you a personal invitation to the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Years in Betar: \_\_\_\_\_  Male  Female

Would you like to receive regular information about Betar?

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If you would like to make a donation to Betar Melbourne please fill in the  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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