

Chapter 9

Return to Zion: The Early Years

As I sifted through the early incunabula of Maishele's life, I found that the *Who's Who In American Jewry* of 1928 lists his name, and gives his bibliography. I remember when the request came from the Jewish Biographical Bureau for the information. Father was very interested, flattered, and began at once to jot down items to be included.

It is therefore with some feeling of confidence that I can quote the statistics given—at least they were the things which Morris himself deemed important to his record. The list begins with Health Commissioner, New Britain, Conn., and goes on to list Director of City National Bank; Vice President, Jewish Community Chest and Jewish Relief Commission; Connecticut State Chairman, Jewish National Fund; Member of the National Zionist Executive Committee, 1925; Delegate, First American Jewish Congress. Also, Member: Local and Connecticut State Dental Societies, New Britain Chamber of Commerce, Masonic Order, B'nai B'rith, Sons of Israel, and Tephareth Israel Congregations. His birthdate is given as January 26, 1886, and marriage date as August 1, 1909, when he was 23 years old.

Other papers list his naturalization as taking place in the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut at Hartford on December 31, 1915. His Mason's certificate is dated March 18, 1917.

In 1916, Morris evidently applied to the U.S. Navy for an appointment as an Acting Assistant Dental Surgeon, for we have the Navy's reply, stating that there were no vacancies in the Dental Corps of the Navy.

In the box where the family record of Dr. Dunn's life is

Form N-570

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DUPLICATE ORIGINAL No. 639622

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Application No. 390-P-3382
0205-2117

Personal description of holder at date of issuance of this certificate: Age 61 years, sex Male, color White, complexion Dark, color of eyes Brown, color of hair Brown, height 5 feet 11 inches, weight 155 pounds, visible distinctive marks None, marital status Married, former nationality Russian

Morris Sidney Dunn

 (Complete and true signature of holder)

The United States of America
 District of Columbia
 Be it known that
 residing at 292 Linwood Street, New Britain, Connecticut
 having applied to the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization for a certificate of naturalization and having heretofore satisfied all the requirements thereof, he was naturalized by the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut at Hartford on December 31, 1915.

It is therefore in pursuance of the authority contained in Section 2341 (b) of the Nationality Act of 1940, that a certificate of naturalization is issued this 5th day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-eight, and of our Independence the one hundred and seventy-third, and the seal of the Department of Justice affixed pursuant to statute.

By direction of the Commissioner

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

104441

Although naturalized in 1915, Maishe apparently lost his copy; this later copy of his naturalization certificate is dated 1948.

stored, there is an envelope dated June 2, 1908, which is addressed to Rosa. The printed return address says “Connecticut Council of Zionists,” of which Morris was one of the founders. The printed name is that of A. Aisenberg, a dear friend of his, who was evidently president or secretary of the Council at that time. There are two one-cent stamps on the envelope—the going rate for mail at the time.

• • •

On Monday, January 15, 1934, the *New Britain Daily Herald* devoted half a page to reporting a Testimonial Dinner which had been tendered in honor of Dr. Dunn on the previous evening. Hanging in a place of honor in our home today is the plaque which was presented to him on that evening—it is now a “museum piece,” for it was crafted at the Bezalel School in Jerusalem, and we have seen a duplicate hanging

NEW BR

Encomiums Showered On Dr. Dunn For Work In Zionist Movement

Nearly 500 Attend Banquet in Masonic Temple Hall in Honor of New Britain Leader.

In appreciation of his 30 years of active service in the interest of the Zionist movement, Dr. Morris S. Dunn of 292 L'ewood street was tendered a testimonial banquet last evening at the Masonic temple hall with nearly 500 friends and admirers in attendance.

The occasion attracted one of the most representative gatherings in the history of the Jewish community in New Britain, prominent guests including city, state and federal officials, representatives of religious organizations and professional and business men. Included in the gathering were residents of New York and many cities in Connecticut. Telegrams and felicitous messages were received from all parts of the country and from Canada.

Dr. Dunn received as gifts a scroll on which were resolutions in appreciation of his works and a religious scroll in brass made in Palestine.

George L. Gans, one of the leaders in the Zionist movement in this

Extolled at Banquet



DR. MORRIS S. DUNN

tribute to the chief magistrate of the city. "I like to be the leader of a forelorn hope," he said. "I guess I will be the surviving republican

far as the Jewish people concerned, Hartford and New Britain are a single community. Dr. Dunn for his interest and called him an outstanding example of a Jewish leader.

The toastmaster extolled Mrs. Charles Mill York, who, with her husband, former New Britain bus was present at the banquet thanked Martin H. Horwiling it possible to hold this in the Masonic temple and this was the first Sunday event held in the hall.

Messages of felicitous were received from Congressman Herman P. Koppleman, Stephen S. Wise of New York, Senator Ernest W. Child, Brew Old People's Home of Hartford, Morris Rot New York in behalf of the Administration of America, Julian W. Mack of New York, Congregation B'Nai B'rith, Mrs. Harry Alex, Samuel of the Talmud Torah, Dr. Myron Eisenberg of Philadelphia, Rabbi Jesse former pastor of the Congregation B'Nai Israel and at present of the Zionist movement, Louis Lipski, Samuel Ber A. Sussman of Baltimore, Zucker of Boston and others.

Testimonial to Dr. Dunn: The following resolutions by 438 persons at the occasion were presented:

in an exhibit at the Israeli National Museum.

The scroll of resolutions signed by the 438 persons present at this event reads in part:

Acclaim and honor for service rendered is the debt owed by a community to one who has sincerely and earnestly labored for the material, spiritual and moral advancement of his fellow citizens and his people. Especially is this recognition due when such service has been given humbly and modestly and without thought of credit or reward. . . . Appreciation of such devotion can only be felt—not expressed. . . . May the example of Dr. Morris S. Dunn be an inspiration to those about him today and to those who will follow him in his noble endeavors.

The names of the people who spoke at this outpouring of good will is a roster of people prominent in the community at that time. Mayor George Quigley paid tribute to Dr. Dunn, says the *Daily Herald*, “as a man who has been unselfish and who has labored to uphold the finest traditions of his race. I know him personally and I am well aware of his benevolence and his charity, both of which reflect his fine citizenship.”

Other speakers included Judge Morris D. Saxe, Rabbi Joseph Aronson of Congregation Tephareth Israel, Rabbi Murray Alstet of Congregation B’nai Israel, U.S. District Attorney George M. Cohen, Referee in Bankruptcy Saul Berman, Jonas Goldsmith, Morris Cohen, Corporation Counsel David L. Nair, Chairman of the Connecticut Zionist Region Louis Linderman, Rabbi Louis Spitz of Bridgeport, Abraham Goldstein of Hartford, and Saul Hanin. Presenting scrolls were Miss Jeannette Light representing the Junior Hadassah, and Mrs. George L. Gans representing Senior Hadassah.

George L. Gans, lifelong friend and ardent Zionist leader, was Toastmaster for the occasion. At one point, he suggested that the audience give Rosa a standing ovation for her support and enthusiasm for her Maishele’s devotion to his ideals.



This testimonial dinner was a milestone in the years of endeavor, but we must not neglect the years preceding it, for they were active, anxious times. In retrospect, the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1918 did in fact leave much to be desired, but in its time it was a landmark event in the history of Zionism. The recognition by the League of Nations of the ancient rights of the Jews to the Land of Palestine was a fantasy come true for the early Zionists. They had indeed hoped and prayed and worked for such a result, but their life-long efforts were justified and upheld by this recognition. Their dreams and hopes and work had not been in vain. Jewish dreams in the Diaspora were to become a real-

One of the oldest known photos of a Young Judaea event, a croquet game outside my parents' home in New Britain, Conn., taken in 1923. I am in the center-right of the photo, kneeling; my sister Naomi is seated in the bottom left corner.



ity. The first return had been from Babylonia, and now they were to witness the second return, after 2,000 years of exile.

The Balfour Declaration was the recognition of the work which had already been started. It was during the early years, under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, that the foundations had been laid. There were already pioneers in the Land, health services provided by Hadassah, cultural and educational efforts, including the formation of Young Judaea. The Blue Boxes of the Jewish National Fund were already a familiar feature of Jewish homes all over the world, and the World Zionist Organization was expanding into a force in Jewish life. From 1918 and the Balfour Declaration, until 1929 with the economic collapse of the world, there were fortunately years of growth and prosperity in the United States during which the American Jews could be prevailed upon to share their sustenance with their fellow Jews in need throughout the world. Unfortunately, it was also becoming apparent that the British presence in Palestine was a mixed blessing for the Zionist pioneers.

Father's Zionist activities took a large proportion of his

time. By my own observation, he would pack cotton into a patient's mouth, "to let the amalgam dry," and then spend time on the telephone speaking to Mr. Linderman in New Haven, Mr. Mallove in New London, Mr. Umansky in Meriden, or to others of his Zionist friends, each of whom was dedicated with all his heart to the ideal of Zion reborn.



When a group of members of the one synagogue in town decided to organize a Conservative congregation, Dr. Dunn worked on the committees, helped collect the money needed, and the membership bought an old church located on Elm Street and converted it into a synagogue. However, he never forgot the other synagogue, where he still worshipped, and helped them with their financial and organizational affairs. On Rosh Hashanah, he always spent the second day at Tephareth Israel, and on Yom Kippur he went there for all or part of the long day's worship.

As soon as B'nai Israel Synagogue hired Rabbi Gershon Hadas as its spiritual leader, Dr. Dunn saw to it that a Hebrew School was organized, teachers were procured, and the children began to get a Jewish education in "modern" style. Quarters were very cramped, as the congregation used the basement as well as the pews for classrooms, but the school had a few excellent teachers, and learning did take place. My husband's sister Ethel Zucker Mellion worked as Temple secretary, and I remember one teacher, Martha Rosoff Witkin, with great fondness.



In 1938, my sister Naomi and her husband, Irving Eichenbaum, were married in this synagogue, and I can't resist telling the following story.

In those days there was a half-joking relationship amongst Jews who came from different regions, and Jews from Galicia were often mocked as unlearned or slow-learning. Sidney and I had been married a short time before Naomi and Irv

graduated from University of Maryland Dental School.

Just as the procession was about to start, my father-in-law, Max Zucker, walked over to Father. I was standing in the line which was forming to walk down the aisle. Mr. Zucker said, in Yiddish, “Dr. Dunn, at one time you must have sinned!”

Alarmed, Dr. Dunn looked at him and said, “Mr. Zucker, what did I do, what did I do?” The reply came quickly—Mr. Zucker said, “You already have one *aidem* [son in law] who is a Galitzianer, but now you will have *two!*”

Although I heard this story as it unfolded, I also heard my father repeat it many times, as the joke it was intended to be.



In the 1920s, as his practice grew, Morris and his three brothers became involved in buying Main Street property, and in the stock market. Uncle Max, the youngest brother, had graduated from the University of Maryland Dental School and was sharing offices with Morris, and the other two brothers, Meyer and Eddie, were working with their father as cattle dealers. They all lived frugally, and a large proportion of their earnings went into their investments.

Father was a great reader, and the business newspapers and magazines began to flood into our home. After a full day’s work at the dental chair, with a Zionist meeting following in the evening, his light would burn well into the night, as he read the reports, the commentators, and the columns of advice to the investor. By the time of the stock market crash in 1929, Morris had built his own two family home, which was located at 784 Arch Street at the corner of 292 Linwood Street, as well as the Hadassah cottage at Sound View Beach, located on Sound View Avenue. Meyer owned a home in New Britain and two cottages, one next to ours and one across the street, and Max owned one across the street from the Sound View movie house.

Despite the fact that the Dunn brothers lost their Main

Street properties during the 1929 crash, they were all in reasonably sound positions, for they were able to hold on to their homes and the cottages at the beach.

However, they had been investing in real estate, and when the Depression began its inevitable erosion of their resources, the bank, which was their largest lender, was closed, and the value of Father's stocks had shrunk. The banker made a gesture of gratitude to Father, by giving him a drop-leaf table which is still in use in the home of my daughter, Rebecca. The table was said to have come over with donor's forebears, in the 1880s, so it is now an authentic antique. Rosa used to call it their "real estate profits."

Not at all daunted, Morris continued to dabble in the stock market, watching the newspapers and stock market commentators carefully, reading about how to build a good portfolio, and investing his earnings according to the advice he saw as most sensible. Upon his death it became apparent that he had done a shrewd job of building his estate, so that his Rosa was financially secure.