

**1. JEWISH LIFE IN EAST RAND, MIDRAND, SOUTHERN GREAT ESCARPMENT & SOUTHERN HIGHVELD.** In the course of doing research into Jewish settlement in the rural areas of the East Rand, Midrand, Southern Great Escarpment & Southern Highveld, South African Friends of Beit Hatefutsoth has amassed a collection of many fascinating photos, only some of which could be incorporated into the book. So today, using a selection of photos in our database, we would like to give you a glimpse into Jewish life in these areas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The presentation will focus mostly on the earlier years because they depict a world far removed from the present.

**2. STREETS & TOWN VIEWS.** To start the slide presentation, we will look at how the villages and towns looked in the early days of Jewish settlement.

**3. BOKSURG** This is an 1890 postcard of the Angelo Gold Mine in Boksburg. Note the prominence of the bar in the centre of the photo.

**4. GERMISTON** A view of Germiston in the 1890's with Elandsfontein Hotel in the foreground. The wide dusty road is empty save for the 5 horse-drawn carts.

**5. BETHAL** This photo depicts a meeting being held in 1908 by General Botha on the verandah of Festenstein & Freed's general store in Bethal.

**6. NIGEL** A Gold Mine in Nigel in 1909

**7. GERMISTON** This 1910 photo of Germiston Lake shows the popularity of this man-made lake in the early days of the town.

**8. HEIDELBURG** Market Street in Heidelberg in 1910 is quiet and devoid of traffic

**9. BENONI** This is the old fire station in Benoni with a horse-drawn fire engine in the foreground

**10. CAROLINA** Carolina Station in festive mode for the arrival of the Prince of Wales in 1925.

**11. BRAKPAN** And, finally, a 1927 view over Brakpan looking towards the gold dumps. Modder Street (later Voortrekker Road) is in the foreground.

12. **SHULS** As more and more Jews moved into the towns, congregations were formed. As early as 1890 services were taking place in private homes, masonic halls or hotels. Once sufficient funds had been raised shuls were built.

13. **GERMISTON** The earliest shul built in the areas covered by this book is the 1<sup>st</sup> shul of the Germiston and Georgetown Hebrew Congregation, which was consecrated in 1903.

14. Due to the rapid growth of the Jewish population of Germiston and movement away from Georgetown, a larger, more elaborate, shul was opened in 1930 on the corner of President and George Streets.

15. **VOLKSRUST** The Volksrust Hebrew Congregation was formed as early as 1901 and the small, modest shul was built in 1904. It was the first building in Volksrust to receive electric lighting in 1912.

16. **BENONI** Benoni's first synagogue was built in 1908 in Woburn Ave. It was in use until 1950 and was later proclaimed a national monument

17. In 1929 it became apparent that a larger shul was required for the growing Jewish population. The Park Street shul was consecrated in 1933. Its impressive interior included fumed oak panels, coloured smoked glass windows imported from Europe and elaborate light fittings.

18. **SPRINGS** The small Gates of Hope Shul in Springs was opened in 1908. It also served the local farming communities and residents of Devon, Delmas, Bethal & Nigel.

19. In 1951 the original Springs shul was demolished and a new one constructed on the same site. At that time it was the second largest synagogue in the Transvaal. The choir room was screened off by a carved wooden screen made by famous South African sculptor, Herman Wald, which was placed above the Aron Kodesh.

20. The modest Ermelo shul was consecrated in 1909. By 1976 the community had dwindled and attended services in Bethal.

21. **BOKSBURG** The Boksburg Hebrew Congregation, formed in 1896, split in 1912, resulting in 2 congregations: Boksburg Hebrew Congregation and Boksburg North

Congregation. Boksburg North Synagogue, seen here, was the first to be built in 1915 and was in use until 1965 when it was sold. It is now an automotive paint store. Boksburg Hebrew Congregation Shul was built in about 1920. A new Boksburg synagogue was consecrated in 1983 by Chief Rabbi Casper.

22. **BETHAL** The foundation stone for the original Bethal shul was laid in 1915 by the Prime Minister, General Louis Botha. In 1951 a new communal hall and synagogue were built.

23. **HEIDELBERG** As early as 1893 Rosh Hashanah services were held at the Heidelberg Town Hall. However the foundation stone for the synagogue was only laid in 1929.

24. In the 1930's shuls were built in **BRAKPAN** (1931) and

25. **NIGEL** (1938).

26. The 1940's saw synagogues built in **VOORTREKKERHOOGTE** (1942) and

27. **DELMAS** in 1944

28. **LEANDRA** synagogue was built in 1963

29. And the most recent synagogue is **EDENVALE**. In 1976 the building of the old Dopfer Church was renovated and converted into a synagogue and Edenvale Jewish Centre. Here is an interior view of the shul

The vast majority of the synagogues in these areas no longer exist in their original form. This highlights the importance of documenting the past and is the motivation behind the series of books published by Beit Hatefutsoth.

30. **ECONOMIC** In the economic sphere, country Jews made their mark in their businesses, hotels and farming.

31. **ECONOMIC – BUSINESSES** Many of the businesses were family affairs.

32. The earliest businesses were general merchants selling a wide variety of items: groceries, hardware, outfitting, drapery as seen in this 1890 photo of Ginsberg Brothers store in **BENONI**.

33. **SPRINGS** At the turn of the century Epstein's General Merchant store in Springs was situated right next to the railway line
34. **ERMELO** Maurice Schwartz was a general dealer in the early days of Ermelo
35. **EDENVALE** Harry Sneece's general dealer store in Ninth Ave (now van Riebeeck Ave) in Edenvale, founded in 1909, was on the old route taken by the dynamite wagons from Modderfontein to the Reef gold mines.
36. **VOLKSRUST** Ethel and Harry Mayers stand proudly in the doorway of their grocery store in Volksrust in about 1910.
37. **GINGER BEER** Ginger beer was apparently a popular beverage in the early 1900's, being manufactured by Goldberg & Zefferts in Boksburg, M Finberg in Heidelberg and Isaac Bear in Benoni.
38. **BENONI** General dealer stores soon gave way to more specialized outlets. In 1911 Harry Smaller opened a butchery in Benoni.
39. **BETHAL** Here we see Robert Kark in front of his chemist shop in Bethal in 1920
40. **SPRINGS** Isidore Gordimer was a watchmaker & jeweler in Springs in 1920.
41. **GERMISTON** Most of the clothing factories in Germiston were started by Jewish businessmen. In the 1920's the Kalmeks owned Rand Trouser factory.
42. **ECONOMIC – HOTELS** In the smaller towns many of the hotels and bottle stores had Jewish owners.
43. **STANDERTON** This is the hotel and store owned by Victor Simon in Standerton in 1910
44. **BETHAL** In Bethal in 1913 the Commercial Hotel (above) was owned by the Blumberg family and the Selborne Hotel (below) was owned by Fanny Jacobs
45. **PIET RETIEF** The Werners owned the Imperial Hotel in Piet Retief. This photo shows Rachel and Ethel Werner in front of the Imperial Hotel c1918

46. **VOLKSRUST** Here is a 1922 advertisement for The Grand Hotel in Volksrust, owned by A. Friedlander, offering electric lighting and all mod cons!
47. **ECONOMIC – FARMING** Farming in the fertile Southern Highveld was a prime activity and the area became the “bread basket” of South Africa. Jewish farmers made a huge contribution to agriculture in South Africa. These farmers introduced innovative farming methods and equipment resulting in a modern, mechanized industry. In an area stretching east of Springs to Bethal, the so-called ‘Tel Aviv Strip’ was 80kms of uninterrupted Jewish farmland.
48. **BETHAL** These photos show the old steam mealie threshing machine on the Goldstein farm in Bethal the early 1900’s
49. **BALFOUR** Balfour Milling was established by Israel Kaplan c1919
50. **KINROSS** Seen here is a threshing machine on the Snipelisky farm in Kinross in c1930
51. **NIGEL** Henry Plen invented a maize harvester in Nigel in the 1940's
52. **JEWISH FARMERS – OGIES TO LESLIE 1950’s-1970’s.** This diagram shows the farms owned by Jewish farmers in the 30 mile strip between Ogies and Leslie in the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s
53. **DAILY LIFE** What does our collection of photos tell us about daily life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?
54. **DAILY LIFE - HOUSES.** Most of the earliest houses were simple corrugated iron structures
55. **SPRINGS** 'Old Nest' was built by Samuel Epstein in Springs in 1898. The room on the right was added in 1905
56. **BREYTEN** Here is Hymie Peipert in front of his house in Breyten
57. **BETHAL** This is Morris Friedland’s house in Bethal in the 1920’s

58. **BENONI** The use of bricks as building materials enabled more solid structures. Houses were often semi-detached. Here is a typical semi-detached house in Benoni in about 1914
59. This is the Salmenson family home which was a single family free standing house in **PIET RETIEF** around 1920.
60. And in the same period is the home of Robert & Sarah Kark in **BETHAL**
61. **AMERSFOORT** Henry Treisman's impressive house in Amersfoort had a verandah ('stoep') around the house, as was the fashion of the day.
62. **GERMISTON** And in many cases the family business was attached to the home, as in this photo of the Rabinowitz family home and studio in Germiston in 1920.
63. In the early days of the towns, horse-drawn carts were the means of transport
64. **AMERSFOORT** In this very clear photo from about 1912 Mathilda & Annie Sawitz are sitting on their horse and cart near the old bridge in Amersfoort.
65. **GERMISTON.** Here Philip Saffer of Germiston is seen riding his motorbike and sidecar with children Monty and Sylvia in 1926
66. With improved financial circumstances motor cars were acquired. These were a source of pride and joy as can be seen in the following photos. This is Ada Levy and friends posing with Louis Levy's car in Kinross in 1920.
67. **BENONI** In their 1930 photo album the Rutzkin family from Benoni proudly announce "We have a motor car"!
68. **PIET RETIEF** Rachel, Abel & Jacob Diamond from Piet Retief are seen here in 1933 on a family outing in their motor car.
69. **BREYTEN** In Breyten in 1934 Louis & Dora Abrams posed with their granddaughter Ethne in front of their car.
70. **SPRINGS** Looking dashing in his 8 cylinder sports car with a Springs number plate is Louis Nestadt in 1937

71. **WEDDINGS** And, finally, everyone loves (or hates!) a wedding. So here are a selection of wedding photos, spanning half a century, in which we can see changes in fashion, floral bouquets and formality.

72. **GERMISTON.** In this turn of the century wedding, men are wearing top hats and all the people in the photo, except the children, have serious expressions

73. **WAKKERSTROOM** Note the elaborate women's hats and children's bonnets in this Wakkerstroom wedding in 1910

74. **VOLKSRUST 1917.** While most of the adults in this photo have blank expressions, the children appear to be grimacing and one is looking up at the bride.

75. **AMERSFOORT** By 1930 grouping is less formal, hats are simpler and there are slight smiles on the faces.

76. **BALFOUR** And to end this presentation, I chose this slide because of the variety of expressions - happiness, uncertainty and stern Bobba in the middle keeping a beady eye on proceedings!

77. **THE END** We hope you have enjoyed this presentation of photos which is just a taste of what is in the book being launched today.