



Woodstock TALMUD TORAH /CHEDER

by Manasa Merkel 2021

The “cheder” consisted of two classrooms in a building near the back of the shul. For the children, the shul was like a social meeting place—the cheder classes, and attending the Friday night and Saturday morning services were popular with the students. Games were played in the courtyard in front of the shul.

A particularly enjoyable game they created was where the boys would fight to get possession of a tennis ball and then try to score points by throwing the ball to hit the Magen David motif located high up on the front wall of the social hall.

The cheder was taught by Mr Gulis (for some time, Ms. Lipschitz also taught classes). Mr. Gulis required that bar mitzvah students learn to conduct the Friday night services (a first in Cape Town) and occasionally these students were invited to conduct services in other Cape Town synagogues.

The student body was a rambunctious lot, on occasion requiring committee members to intervene and separate the students. This especially would be a problem at Barmitzvah Friday night services. At such times, the students would sit and enthusiastically count the mistakes made by the bar mitzvah boy – “that’s one”; “that’s two” – the boys would call to one another, sometimes quite loudly. Then the boys were compelled to be separated and individually placed throughout the shul.

