

Autobiography of Magen Abraham Synagogue, Ahmedabad

A Poem

I, Magen Abraham Synagogue, am today 81 years old;
Residing in Gentile surroundings, I've always been gentle but bold.
The Fire Temple in front, a Mosque nearby, the CNI Church behind,
Have by no means influenced or transformed my mind.

I've weathered all seasons: heavy rains, bitter cold and intense heat,
And even seen my members come to me in amazing feat;
Violent storms, torrential rains, the devastating 2001 earthquake,
All these I have survived and stood erect for people's sake.

In my early years, I saw the young and the old,
The rich and the poor, the meek and the bold,
Steeped in solemn service in praise of the Living God,
With fear in their hearts, yearning for the blessings of the Lord.

My house would be packed on Sabbaths and every Festival day;
Elders with long beards and prayer books in their hands;
From the Bimah, the Hazan would melodiously chant away,
While tiny tots frolicked fearlessly in lovely little bands.

Time passed by and the numbers steadily reduced,
as the call of the Holy Land magically beckoned and induced
the many brethren who finally decided to emigrate,
For some it was too early, for some others too late.

Now, the attendance in my house has turned so thin,
It looks deserted, without many of the kith and kin.
At times, getting a minyan becomes difficult;
Reading the kaddish is therefore omitted as a result.

But lo, I have endured all and everything,
and grown in strength by spreading my protective wings,
With a spacious room for visitors, a pavilion alongside,
and a treasure of books to provide an unerring guide.

My house is now the centre for studying the Torah and Hebrew,
where the young and the old assemble, not just a few.
In a remarkable development few had heard of before,
May Hashem bless their efforts and lead them to the fore.

Very few, in fact, a 'remnant' are my members you see,
but the spirit, the intensity, the passion is their key.
May they continue to receive the blessings of Hashem,
The Holy One, blessed be forever His Glorious Name.

Today, I mourn the dead and weep for those who have left;
Today I am anxious and worried of the uncertain future.
Tomorrow, when the Messiah comes and takes away one and all;
I'll surely be despaired, yet glorify the Mighty One's call.

Then all will be gone from here, yet I'm sure I'll stand.
In the years ahead rapt in silence and their sweet memories,
With the strength of my love, but without a helping hand.
Even if I weep and shed tears in boundless quantities.

Sure, I'll tarry and hope to see my members again,
In the Messianic kingdom devoid of fear and pain,
When the Lord Himself will be amid one and all,
Rejoicing triumphantly over every enemy's fall.

This poem originally appeared in *Kol India*. It has been reprinted with permission from the poet and the editor.