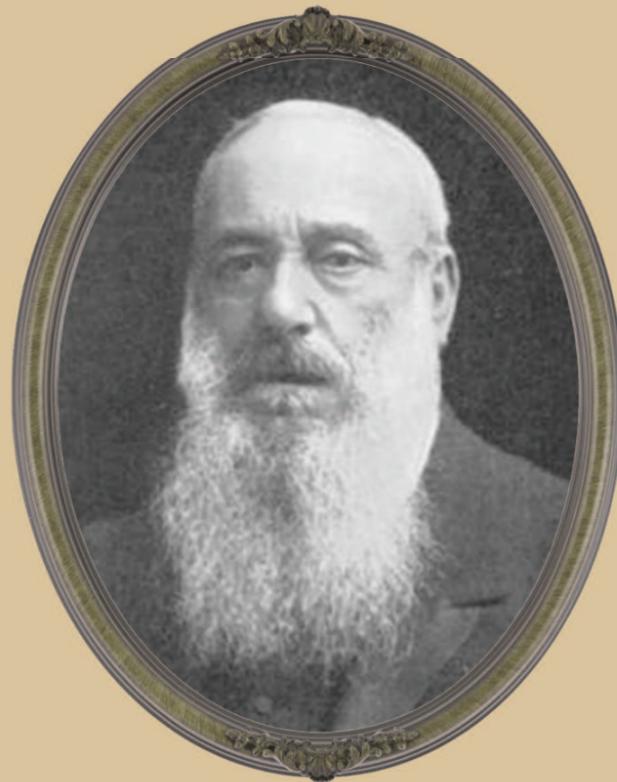


Montagu Road 125th

Lord Samuel Montagu

Lord Samuel Montagu, MP for Whitechapel and Tower Hamlets in the late 19th century and a shomer Shabbos, was also the founder of the Federation of Synagogues and devoted to the welfare of the Jewish community.

In 1889, Montagu presented a strip of his family land in Edmonton to the Federation of Synagogues for use as a burial site - this year marks the 125th anniversary of the consecration of the cemetery, which is still in active use today. Many illustrious figures from the Jewish community of yesteryear are buried there. To mark this significant anniversary, over the next few weeks the *Jewish Tribune* will look back at the lives of some of them. This week we revisit Lord Montagu himself, whose *kevura* took place there in 1911 (5671).



SAMUEL Montagu was in fact born Moses Samuel, the second son of Louis Samuel and his wife Henrietta Israel of Liverpool. Mr Samuel Senior was a watchmaker and jeweller, but his son, known by the Anglicised form of his name, Montagu, did not want to continue in the family trade. Instead, aged 21, Montagu established a banking firm, Samuel Montagu and Company of London (he had his name reversed by Royal decree while still at school), and went on to make his fortune. In 1862 he married Ellen Cohen and raised a family of ten children – six daughters and four sons.

At the time when Samuel Montagu was establishing himself in British society, the Anglo-Jewish community was undergoing something of a metamorphosis. Following a series of pogroms in Russia, Yiddish-speaking immigrants were streaming into London, living in overcrowded conditions in the East End of the city, in stark contrast to the well-established, English-speaking and highly educated Jewish elite. A committed Orthodox Jew who spoke fluent Yiddish, Montagu decided to get involved, endeavouring to help the immigrants out of the newly-formed de-facto ghettos. He became treasurer of the Jews' Temporary Shelter, a member of the Religious Education Board, and founded the Jewish workingmen's club in 1870. He was also president of the Board of Shechita. Eventually, in 1885,

he was elected to Parliament as a Liberal MP, continuing to extend his influence to help the Jewish community.

In 1887, Samuel Montagu decided to bring together the smaller East End shuls or 'chevras', typically patronised by the frum, Yiddish-speaking Eastern European immigrants, under one umbrella - his 'Federation of Synagogues'. With an initial membership of 16 shuls and 1300 members, by the turn of the century the organisation had grown to represent some 39 shuls - and 24,000 people. Under its auspices, the frum kehilla could truly feel its needs were being met - for unlike other prominent Anglo-Jewish figures of the day, Montagu did not believe in encouraging the immigrant Jews to abandon their old customs. He did, however, insist that the official language at all synagogue meetings was English - in this way, he believed the community members would integrate without losing sight of their minhagim.

Unlike the 'Establishment' synagogues, the Federation was affordable to the poor Jew; it had lower burial society fees and did not turn away members for lack of funds.

Over the years, Montagu was responsible for the appointment of several Federation Rabbonim who helped to further coalesce and unify its membership. The first of these, Rav Dr Meyer Lerner of Wurzburg in Alsace, worked closely with Montagu to prevent the sacking of 100 Jewish East End tailors who

refused to work on Succos in 1892. Montagu was also instrumental in hiring Rav Chaim Zundel Maccoby, known as the Maggid of Kaminetz, as the Federation 'maggid' on a salary of £150 a year.

In 1907, four years before his death, Samuel Montagu was raised to the peerage, becoming the first Baron Swaythling, of Swaythling in Southampton. He passed away in 1911 at the age of 78, stipulating in his will that his children only inherit his estate if they married Jewish and continued to remain committed to the Jewish faith.

Lord Montagu was buried in Edmonton cemetery, on the land that he himself had donated to the Federation of Synagogues some 20 years earlier with the goal of encouraging migration of the community from the overcrowded Whitechapel slums to the leafy suburbs. Indeed, the road from which the cemetery is entered is now known as Montagu Road.

In addition to leaving his indelible stamp on the Jewish community, Lord Montagu is memorialised in the Samuel Montagu Youth Centre in South London and in numerous other Montagu Roads, Streets, Gardens and Crescents, and even a Swaythling Close. *Yehi zichro boruch!*

Next: The Sassover Rebbes ztl
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