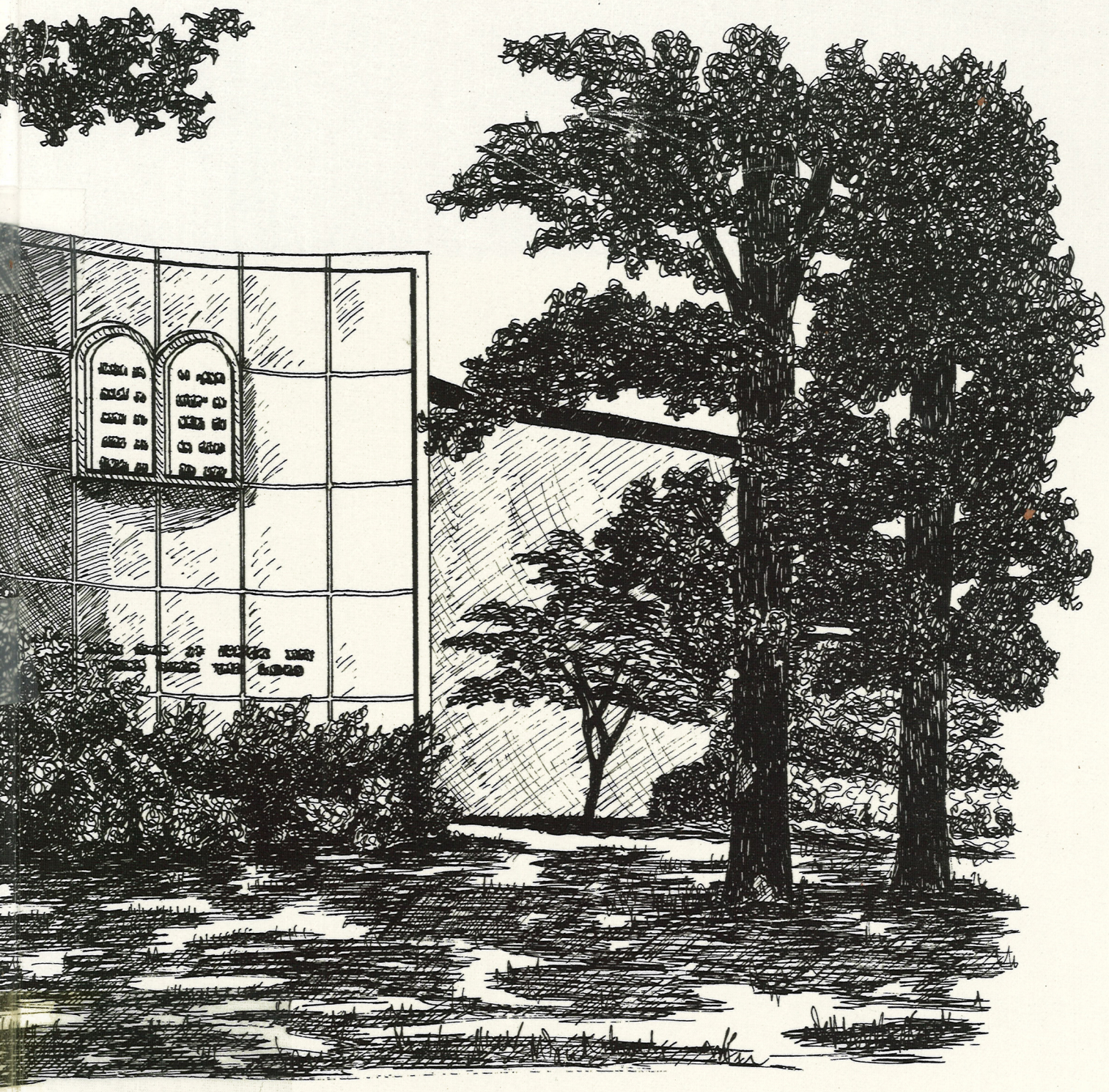
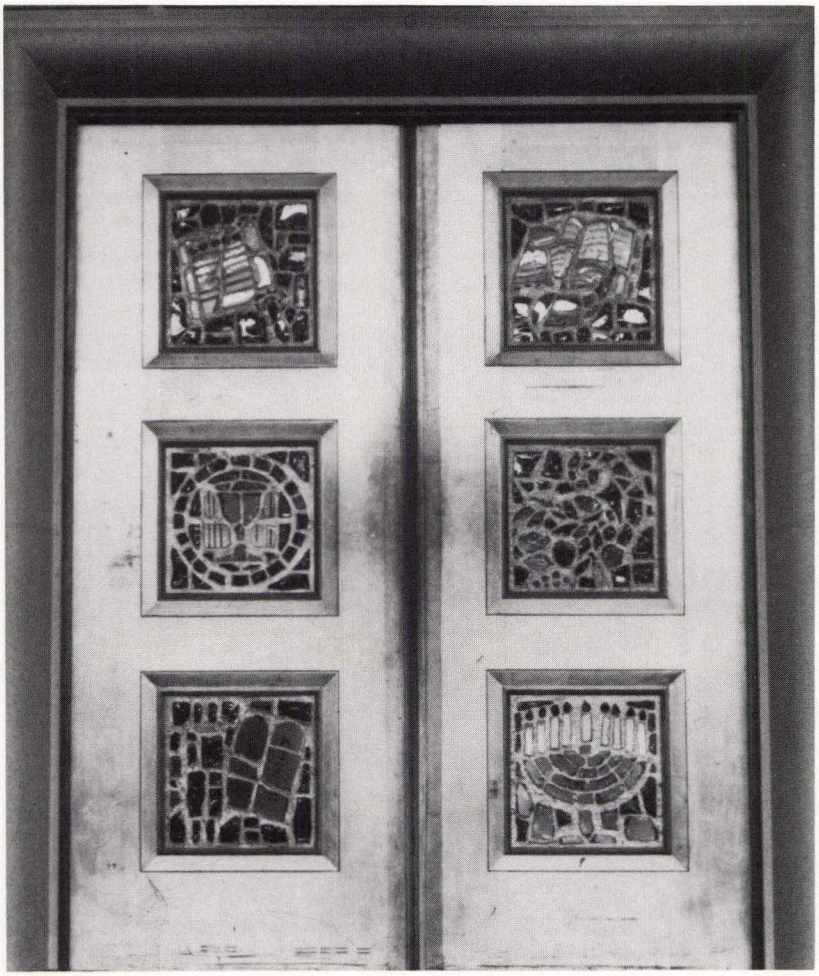


BETH EL HEBREW CONGREGATION

1859-1984

BETH EL
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1859-1984



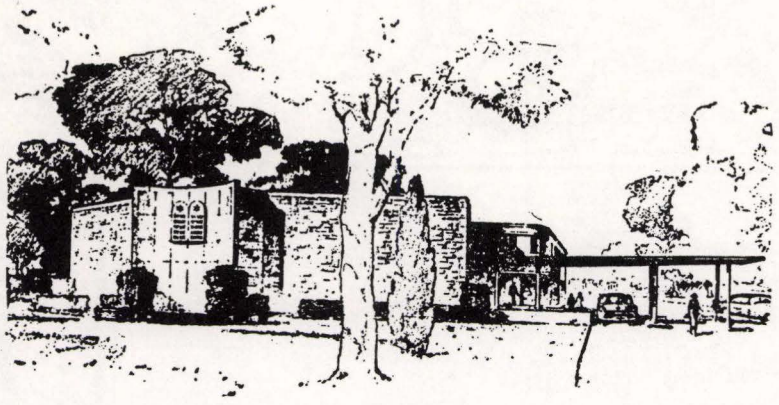
**Published in celebration of the
125th anniversary
of the congregation in Alexandria, Va.**

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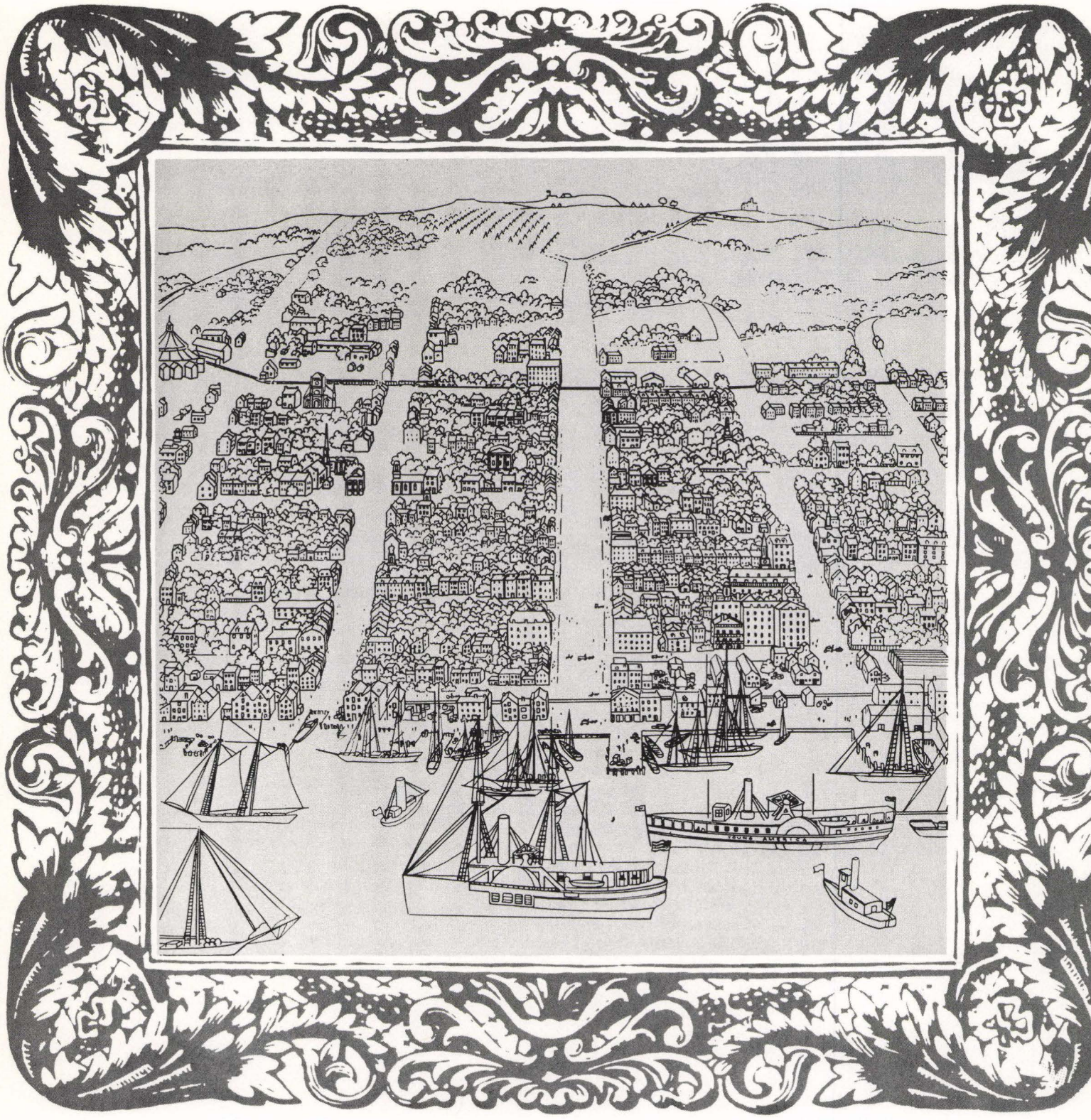
BETH EL
HEBREW CONGREGATION
1859-1984



"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples".
(Isaiah 56:7)

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THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

(CIRCA CIVIL WAR)



President's Message

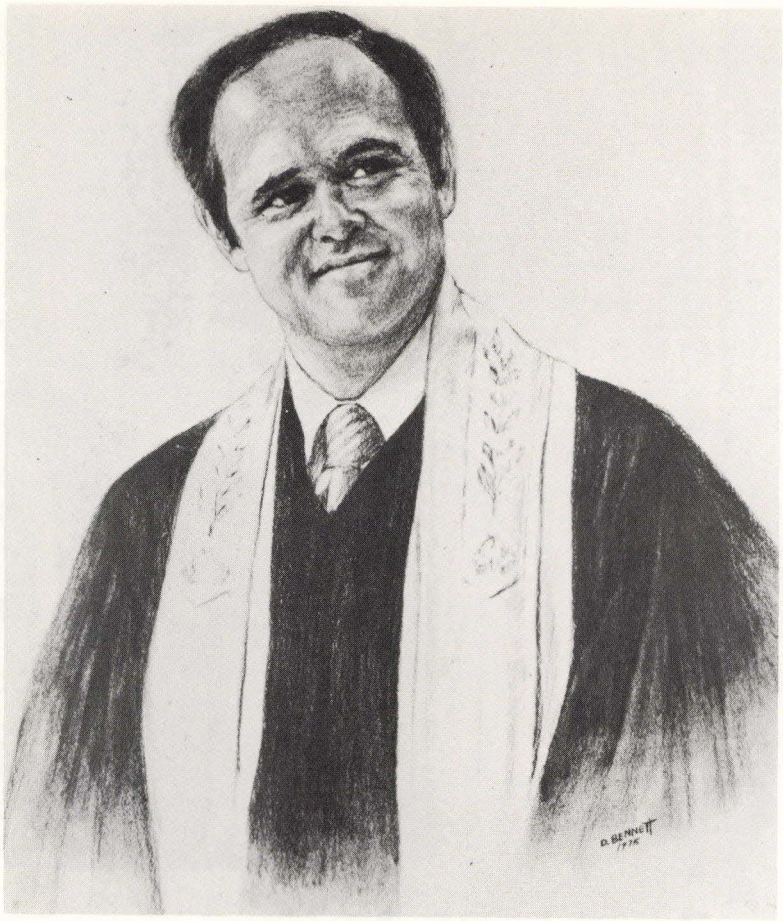
We look back with gratitude to those few families who began this congregation in 1859 with faith, courage and determination. In the years that have followed, the few have become many. With continuing dedication and growth over the past 125 years, we now find that Beth El Hebrew Congregation is the third oldest in Virginia, among the first in the Union of Hebrew Congregations, and the largest and most established in the Northern Virginia area.

As Beth El has provided inspiration, comfort and education to its members, so have its members given leadership and inspiration to the larger secular community of Northern Virginia. Many of our members have held public office as well as positions of responsibility and honor in the professional and business communities. Thus, directly and indirectly, Beth El has been a strong voice in consistently advancing the ideals and wisdom of our ancient tradition and spiritual legacy.

Our 125th-anniversary year—1984—finds us blessed with an outstanding professional staff, diverse and outstanding programs, active participation and a fine facility, along with a sense of warmth and purpose that pervades our membership.

It is with these thoughts that I am proud and honored to be President of this congregation in its 125th year, as we go forward to build for present and future generations on the foundations of faith and dedication that we inherit from those who have gone before.

Irving Imburg
President



RABBI'S FOREWORD

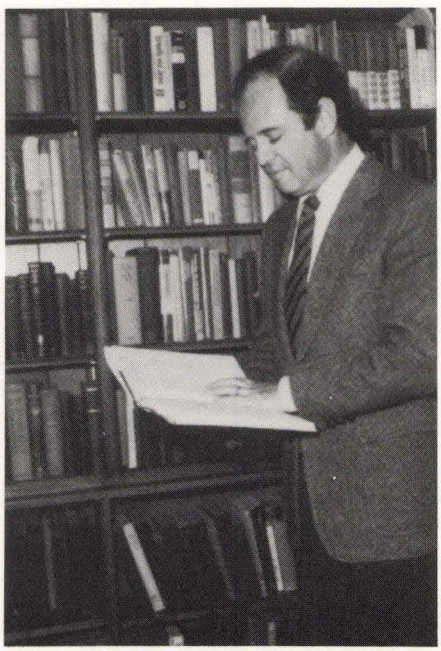
The Jewish people measures time by the centuries. In our historical journey, we have seen nations rise and fall, epochs come and go. Our sense of balance has been achieved by our overview of time itself.

By such reckoning, a century and a quarter is but an instant. Yet, if we assign it a value, the 125 years in which Beth El Hebrew Congregation has been in existence have been the singularly most important moments in our eventful history. Judaism has reached new heights of creativity in a free America, fallen to new depths of despair in the Holocaust and witnessed the rebirth of its homeland, the fulfillment of a dream awaited for 1900 years. Ours is a time unparalleled in Jewish history.

We in Beth El have witnessed these events from a vantage point close to positions of political power. Yet, Beth El's own beginnings were modest, following the fortunes of first, the city of Alexandria, and then the expanding community of Northern Virginia. Many worked diligently and gave immensely of their time and love to see our congregation grow and flourish, to help create a Judaism that was both historic and adaptive for the time to come. We salute them all.

A congregation is a people at prayer, at study, celebrating their faith in community. May we bring strength and hope to each other, and trust in the Jewish mission that will bring about the better tomorrow.

Arnold G. Fink
Rabbi





RABBI PERLIN'S GREETINGS

It is an honor to be part of Beth El's 125th anniversary year. Over the years, our congregation has had a number of student assistant Rabbis, and I have the privilege of being the first full-time ordained Assistant Rabbi at Beth El. You have made these past two years rewarding and fulfilling for me.

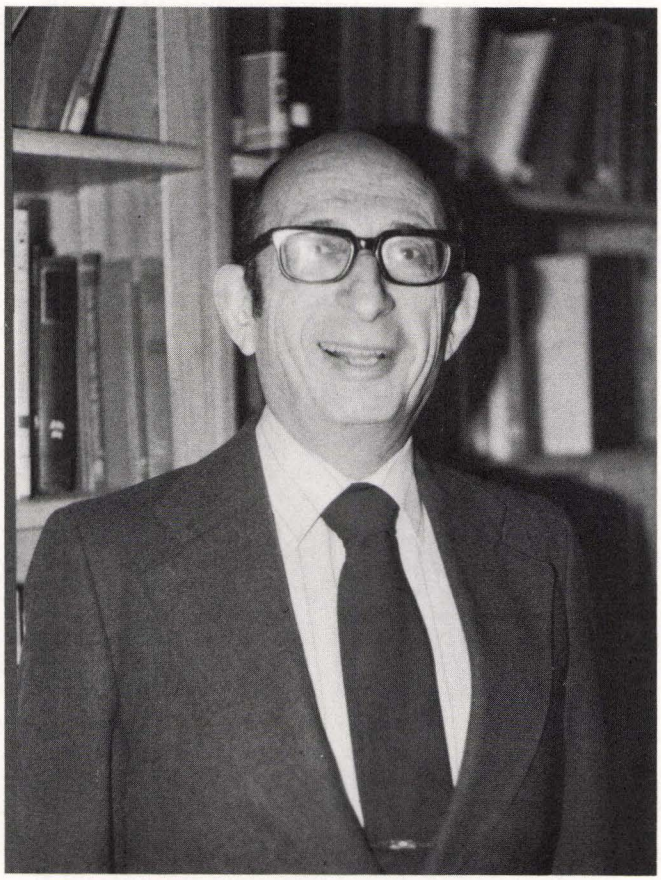
This congregation is characterized at this time in its rich history by one word—"family." As we continue to grow in size, we are made richer with each new member who joins us. We are forever rich because of all the members who remain a part of our congregational family and for the legacy of the generations who came before us.

Our common goal is to provide a caring community to all of our members. We share joys and sorrows. We are committed to reaching inward to the membership to offer support and fellowship to all who seek it. At the same time, we reach out into the community in the true spirit of Reform Judaism.

Beth El grows with its members. We see a renaissance in our Religious School, Confirmation and youth programs and a sincere effort to meet the needs of all age and interest groups in our community.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share this challenging and rewarding role of Rabbi for this dynamic congregation with Rabbi Fink. May we go from strength to strength in the years ahead. And in the tradition of our people and the founders of this great congregation, may we strengthen one another.

B'shalom
Rabbi Amy R. Perlin



EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This history of Beth El Hebrew Congregation is dedicated to that hardy group of German immigrants who gave birth to a Jewish congregation in Alexandria, Va., then a thriving port on the Potomac River.

The mood of American Jews of that era was described in 1950 by a Philadelphia Rabbi, Dr. Bertram W. Korn, who painted "a portrait of American Jewry as an organized articulate, self-community of Jews who expressed their sense of togetherness or distinctiveness in a concrete manner: Religious, cultural, philanthropic, social or political . . .

"At the time of the first census, in 1870, it is estimated, there were, at the most, 2,000 Jews in a population of 4 million. By 1850, when the nation had passed boldly through a period of tremendous territorial expansion and numbered over 23 million inhabitants, there were about 50,000 Jews . . . Practically all of the immigrant Jews came to the United States to taste the nectar of freedom which was denied them in their native lands."*

The story of how Alexandria's Jews faced the many problems of Beth El's first 100 years was told a quarter of a century ago in *A Centennial History of Beth El Hebrew Congregation*, a book edited by Max Rosenberg, who did the bulk of the research for that volume. We also are indebted to him for adapting much of that history to the space needs of this book; for those who are interested in more details about Beth El, we refer you to the 1859-1959 volume. The story of the last 25 years or so is the work of Morris Thompson and Ellen Feldstein.

Special thanks also goes to Robert Schweitz and Bruce Covill, who converted every word in this book to type on their computers; to Barbara Kaganowich, who designed our cover; to John Lippmann, chairman of Beth El's 125th-anniversary observance, and to my wife, Frances, for their valuable words of advice, and to Temple Administrator Al Ungerleider for keeping track of the names of the donors whose generous contributions made this book possible. The other volunteers whose sparetime efforts helped us produce this history are listed elsewhere in the book.

Louis Silver

**American Jewry and the Civil War* by Bertram W. Korn, copyright, 1951, by the Jewish Publication Society of America.

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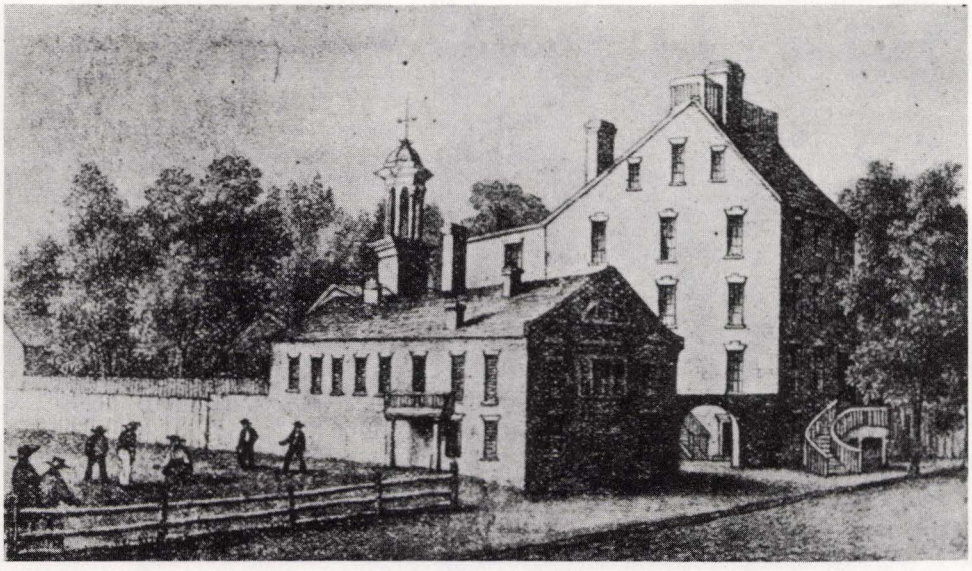
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This is a late 1820's view of Benjamin Hallowell's School for Boys, which included Gen. Robert E. Lee among its alumni. "The observatory shown in the rear, the school to the right and the playgrounds adjoining have since the [Civil] War given place to handsome residences and the [Beth El] Synagogue," Alexander Wedderburn wrote in *Historic Alexandria, Va.*, 1907. The site is the 200 block of Washington Street.

BETH EL HEBREW CONGREGATION

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Assistant Rabbi . . . . . Amy R. Perlin
Administrator . . . . . Al Ungerleider
Religious School Principal . . . . . Elaine Waschler

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1984-86—*Marilyn Blocker, Michael Blumenthal, Madelaine Fusfield, Alan Gropman, *Avron Hecht, *Marc Ross, *Lynne Sprung.

*Re-elected for two-year terms.

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The 1984 Beth El Hebrew Congregation Executive Committee: Seated, left to right, Ellen Feldstein, past president; Froma Lippmann, vice president; Jeanne Ross, secretary, and Michele Ross, sisterhood president. Standing: Lawrence Vogel and Peter Suchman, vice presidents; Dr. Irving J. Imburg, president; Richard Gordon, treasurer, and Mike Fischl, Brotherhood president.

BETH EL HEBREW CONGREGATION
1859-1984

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Temple Beth El's old Washington Street home, painted by R. Seligmann, 1957.

I. THE EARLY YEARS, 1859-1883

IN THE BEGINNING

In the middle of the 19th century, the port city of Alexandria, Va. just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital, was a colorful and historic center. The town George Washington helped lay out in 1749 now had about 8,000 inhabitants. Although there had been but slight change in the population between 1820 and 1850, Alexandria was a thriving community with bright prospects for the future. The town seemed destined to be a major regional center of trade and commerce, for its port facilities were ample and its railroad network was spreading into the fertile farmlands to the west and south.

This commercial opportunity was undoubtedly the most important reason why Jews were attracted to Alexandria. There is a distinct possibility that three or four Jewish adults or families had settled in the Virginia city before 1850. During the early 1850s, many more Jews came to the port city. By 1856, more than 30, most of them single male adults but many with families, had taken up residence in Alexandria, and the number increased in the remaining few years before the Civil War.

This vanguard of Jews had emigrated from Europe, primarily from Germany, in the wake of the unsuccessful revolutions and revolts that had rocked much of the Old World in 1848. Escaping from political oppression and limited economic opportunities, these Jews sought to attain their inherent rights of freedom and dignity, as well as their fortunes, in the more enlightened climate of the young American nation. Virtually all who settled in Alexandria engaged in some phase of the retail trade—clothing, dry goods, shoes, groceries and scrap. Many soon played active roles in the civic affairs of Alexandria.

Reporting on the status of Alexandria's Jews in the July, 1856, issue of *The Occident*, the first successful Jewish newspaper in the United States, famed Rabbi Isaac Leeser found the inhabitants all "in good circumstances." Reporting on their religious life, he observed that they had not yet formed a congregation but many belonged to the one across the Potomac in Washington. However, these Jews had recently organized the Alexandria Literary Society. Rabbi Leeser optimistically hoped that this step would provide a "successful impulse to real religious progress," that is, establishment of a congregation. Society officials included Henry Blondheim, President; Isaac Eichberg, Treasurer; G. Einstein, Recording Secretary; Henry Schwarz, Financial Secretary; and S. Straus, M. Hecht, Joseph Shoenthal, Leopold Genzberger and Samuel Rosenthal, Curators.

One year later, the Jewish residents of Alexandria took the traditional step of establishing a Hebrew Benevolent Society to provide an adequate burial ground. Jews had established this type of organization many times in the past. As the steadily increasing immigration would bring Jews to all parts of these United States, it would occur even more frequently. Normally, the first community effort of the Jewish immigrants was the establishment of a suitable cemetery. The formation of a congregation would come later.

In the case of Alexandria, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, established in 1857 and incorporated as a legal body by the Virginia General Assembly on Feb. 12, 1861, would work hand in hand with Beth El Hebrew Congregation through the years to the present. On many occasions, the society would furnish invaluable assistance to the congregation, particularly in times of financial crisis.

By 1859, the Jewish population of Alexandria had increased to some 50 single male adults and families. In addition to the above-mentioned officers of the Alexandria Literary Society, other Jewish residents of Alexandria included: Lewis Stein, Henry Strauss, Solomon and Wolf Meyenberg, Simon Waterman, Lewis Baar, Leopold Bendheim, Joseph Brager, Isaac Schwarz, J. Schwarz, Simon Blondheim, Simpson Dreifus, Joseph Rosenthal, Peter Seldner, Joseph Vogelheim and Joseph Feldenheimer.

The time had come to form a congregation in Alexandria; the Jewish community now found a situation that was developing in so many places throughout the United States. A portion of the community wanted to retain the traditional Orthodox rites; the remainder held to the Reform outlook. The result was the establishment of not one but two congregations just before the High Holy Days of 1859!

The Jews of Alexandria assembled on Sept. 4, 1859, for the purpose of forming a congregation. The divided views soon became apparent. One faction then established the Beth El Hebrew Congregation or Hebrew Congregation of Alexandria.* The remainder organized an Orthodox congregation.

The *Alexandria Gazette* of Oct. 10, 1859, reported their Yom Kippur observance in this fashion:

"Jewish Celebration:

"The day of Atonement was observed by the Israelites of this place last week commencing on Friday [Oct. 7] at sunset, and ending at sunset on Saturday during which time all their places of business were closed, and the different congregations were occupied with religious services. The day we understand was kept also as a rigid fast day. There is some little difference we believe in conducting the religious services between modern Jews; one part of them using the Hebrew and the other German, or whatever their native language may be. The last are, we believe, called reformers or progressives. To a reflecting Gentile, the sight of a religious assembly of these people is very interesting. Here we have the remnant of a once renowned nation firmly adhering to the custom of their fathers, which they have preserved amidst the greatest afflictions and calamities which ever befel [sic] a people."

Quite likely, each congregation met only for these High Holy Days at the home of one of its members.

*The author found "Beth Ehle" used for the first time in the *Alexandria Gazette* on Jan. 23, 1868. It is presumed, however, that the congregation used the name from the beginning. In subsequent years, Hebrew Congregation of Alexandria also received wide and popular usage.

The two congregations resolved their basic differences before the High Holy Days of 1860. For Rosh Hashonah, they rented the room of the Young Men's Christian Association. Yom Kippur services were held in the home of Lewis Baar, above his store at 138 King Street, near St. Asaph. ** "Heretofore," reported the *Gazette,* "upon Jewish festivals, there has been a division among the Jews of this city—one observing the Old Hebrew and the other reformed or German rites. On this occasion, however, all the Jews united in the ceremonial."

The congregation, perhaps 40 in number, was supplied with English-Hebrew prayer books, possibly Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's *Minhag America* or the *German Rite Festival Prayers,* published in New York by H. Frank during 1854. The services were nevertheless conducted in Hebrew and German languages, a practice continuing until 1882. The ritual still retained many traditional features, including the wearing of a prayer shawl by the reader (service leader). Too, the reader faced the ark rather than the congregation throughout the services. The ark contained at least one Torah, more likely two, and perhaps still others. It is important to note, however, that a portable organ (Melodeon) and a choir were very much in evidence. The *Gazette* described the Beth El services as sublime and beautiful.

Beth El had weathered its birth pangs and alone would serve the religious needs of Alexandria's Jews until World War I. At this, time an Orthodox congregation (Agudas Achim) would take its place in the community alongside Beth El.

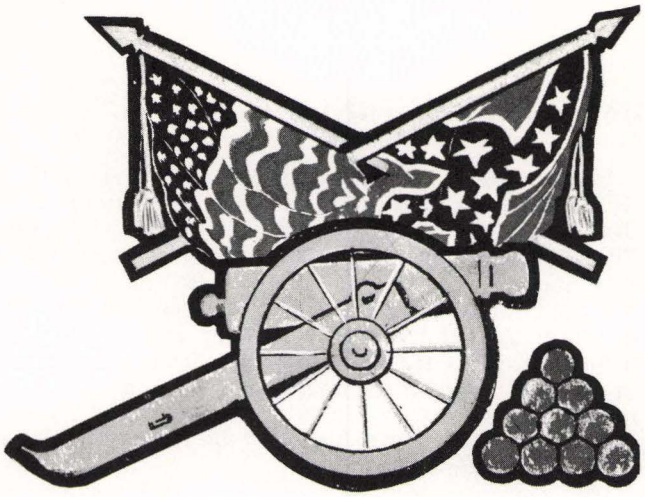
**The street-numbering system of Alexandria has since been changed.

GROWTH AND CIVIL STRIFE

The Civil War of 1861-65 wrought tremendous changes to Alexandria. Situated in the seceded state of Virginia, the city was occupied by Union forces almost from the beginning of the conflict. As a major segment of the defensive line circling the nation's capital, it was also a large personnel and medical center. Additionally, Alexandria became the capital city for the Union-maintained state government. Paradoxically, most of Virginia still under federal control was far removed from Alexandria, for it was primarily that section that eventually entered the Union as the state of West Virginia.

These political and military circumstances naturally affected all the inhabitants of Alexandria. By background, sentiment and inclination, most Alexandrians were sympathetic to the Confederate cause. Thus, the city was in a continuous state of turmoil, and martial law was the order of the day throughout the war and for a time thereafter.

This civil strife could not help but affect the members of Beth El. When the Union-sponsored Legislature called on businessmen to take an oath of allegiance to the new state government, many refused and ceased operations in Alexandria. Others continued to operate as before and were soon hauled into court, among them several Beth El members. It is presumed that the law was ultimately satisfied, for they continued in business. Others of the Jewish faith, worried at the turn of local events, left Alexandria and re-established themselves elsewhere.



More important from Beth El's viewpoint was the transition of Alexandria into a major military base. The large number of troops in and around Alexandria plus the establishment of several hospital facilities acted as a magnet in attracting many tradesmen. Jews flocked to the city in a steady stream, primarily from the North—Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and elsewhere. Others, unsympathetic to the Confederate cause, came from various points in the South.

The *Alexandria Gazette* news columns and advertisements for the war period reveal more than 75 names of Jews in addition to those previously identified as prewar residents. Obviously, these did not include all of the newcomers, so we may assume that the total number of Jewish adults and children in the city at this time was between 300 and 400. The new residents, like their predecessors, primarily entered some phase of the retail trade. They concentrated in downtown Alexandria, on King Street between Royal and Washington, then the heart of the business center, operated under Jewish proprietorship. Other Jews had their stores between Royal and the Potomac and in the new business section just developing on King westward from Washington Street.

This tremendous Jewish influx during the war years did not go unnoticed. In reporting the High Holy Days, the *Gazette* commented on Sept. 26, 1862, that "the closing of so many stores on King Street gave the town quite a dull appearance yesterday." A year later, the paper noted that "the extent of the business done in this place by citizens of Jewish denomination could be seen at a glance this morning by the appearance of King Street and the number of closed doors on that thoroughfare." The Oct. 1, 1864, report on the Day of Atonement read: "This day is observed by the Jewish as a Holy Day—and the numbers of stores and places of business closed showed the extent of the population of Israelites in this place." Again, on Sept. 21, 1865, the *Gazette* remarked that the "number of the Hebrew population in this place and the extent of their business were plainly perceptible today by the numerous stores, shops and places of business closed on King Street and in other parts of the city.

Because of this large growth in Alexandria's Jewish population, Beth El decided to obtain permanent quarters for worship and a religious school. The congregation initially rented a room on the upper floor of Stewart's Hall, a new building occupying the northeast corner of King and Pitt Streets (at that time 101 King Street). It was soon clear that the room could not meet the needs of the congregation. After Rabbi Leeser paid a short visit to Alexandria in July, 1863, he reported that Beth El officials were seeking more suitable facilities. They were also considering an alternate course of action—construction of a temple building.

The search for better quarters was fruitless. Construction of a building failed to advance beyond the discussion stage. Eight months later, in February, 1864, the *Gazette* carried the following advertisment in its "classified" section:

> Wanted—The Hebrew Congregation of this city desire to rent a HOUSE or ROOMS, suitable for worship and for School purposes.
> For particulars apply to
> I. Eichberg
> Corner King and Royal
> Lewis Rau, Secretary

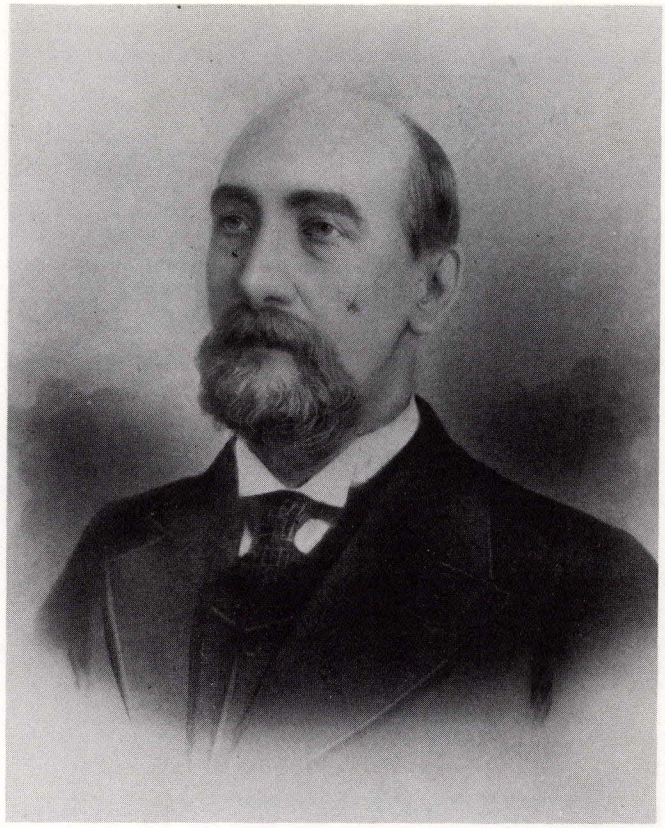
This attempt to find a new home for Beth El was equally unavailing. The congregation was still meeting at Stewart's Hall more than a year later, on April 19, 1865, when it held a special memorial service to mark the untimely death of President Abraham Lincoln.

By this time, the congregation had given up the hunt for better quarters and had renovated the Stewart's Hall room instead. A gallery or balcony was built at one end of the room to provide a separate area for the choir and thereby accommodate additional members on the main floor. Stewart's Hall was used until Beth El moved into its own temple in 1871.

Starting during the Civil War and continuing into the early 1880s, Beth El was able to obtain the services of a number of spiritual leaders. Most of these men were not rabbis in the modern sense of the word, since they lacked formal theological-seminary training and the usual accompanying divinity degree. But these men filled the role according to the literal definition of rabbi as "teacher," for they carried out the duties normally associated with a rabbi. Moreover, to supplement their income, Beth El's rabbis normally instructed foreign-language classes in community schools during the week.

It is not possible to identify Beth El's first spiritual leader. Quite possibly it was Dr. L. Schlessinger, in 1864, who was also President of the Alexandria Literary Society in the same year. He was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. H. Heilbroun. The *Gazette* identified Mr. Heilbroun in March, 1865, as "a Rabi [sic] of the Hebrew congregation." A month later, the newspaper reported that he would officiate at Beth El's memorial services for President Lincoln. Israel Sanger probably succeeded Mr. Heilbroun and stayed on until late in 1866 or early in 1867, when he left for Norfolk.

Beth El's lay leadership during the war period is uncertain. Rabbi Leeser reported the founding officers in September, 1859, as Henry Blondheim, President; Joseph Vogelheim, Vice President; Henry Schwarz, Secretary; Simon Waterman, treasurer, and Joseph Feldenhemer, Shamas. Midway through the war, Isaac Eichberg probably became President and served in that position except for one period of several years until his death in November, 1914. Lewis Rau was Secretary in 1864.



Isaac Eichberg, Beth El President, 1864-81, and wife Babette.







Isaac and Lena Schwarz were original members of Temple Beth El. Mr. Schwarz fought during the Civil War alongside many other Alexandrians in the Mt. Vernon Guards of the 17th Virginia Regiment, attaining the rank of sergeant.



AFTERMATH OF A WAR

The cessation of hostilities in April, 1865, did not bring peace and prosperity to Alexandria. Business suffered greatly from the withdrawal of the large military encampments. "Reconstruction" measures and military government for Virginia kept the political turmoil within Alexandria at a wartime pitch. Faced with these dismal conditions, many of Alexandria's inhabitants pulled up stakes and sought homes elsewhere. While the white population of Alexandria had grown by some 2,500 people between 1850 and 1860, the 1870 census revealed a net decline of more than 650 during the next decade.

Many of the Jews who had come during the war years left shortly after its end, and a gradual erosion, in numbers, of the Jewish community would continue for many years. Despite the decline in size, Beth El retained much of the vitality displayed in the earlier years. A new spiritual leader deserved a great deal of the credit. Early in 1867, Beth El obtained the services of the Rev. Dr. L. Lowensohn. Like his predecessors, Rabbi Lowensohn had to supplement his income. Within a short time, he was instructor of German at Belle Haven, St. Mary's and St. John's schools, conducted private classes in the subject and operated the "German School." That school was open to the public in general and to the large local German community in particular. Closely affiliated with Beth El, it was sponsored solely by its congregants, used Beth El facilities as a classroom and included instruction in the Hebrew language as well. Mrs. Weinberg was president of the school.

Dr. Lowensohn's dynamic leadership raised religious activity in the Beth El congregation to new heights. Minor as well as major holidays were scrupulously observed. Hanukkah, then deemed a half-feast day and not particularly worthy of celebration by Reform Jews, was duly noted with appropriate ceremonies at the synagogue. Shemini Azereth and Simchas Torah, and even the Fast of Ab commemorating the destruction of the Temple, did not go unnoticed. Obviously, Rabbi Lowensohn, strikingly attired in his sacerdotal robes—a black gown with white surplice—and topped with a black velvet cap, demanded and received the respect of everyone.

There were many outstanding events for Beth El and Alexandria's Jewish community during Dr. Lowensohn's tenure as Rabbi. On May 4, 1870, Beth El, along with the Christian churches, observed a day of public humiliation and prayer—a memorial to a disaster occurring a week earlier. On April 27, an upper floor of the capitol bulding in Richmond had given way, killing or seriously injuring more than 100 state officials and individuals, including several Alexandrians.

Another achievement was the organization in the fall of 1870 of the Hebrew Literary and Dramatic Association. The *Gazette* reported the group's first dramatic and poetry "soiree" as "one of the most agreeable affairs of this kind" ever held in Alexandria.

In the spring of 1871, a major step was taken in the Americanization of Beth El. Although he continued to conduct services in German and Hebrew, Dr. Lowensohn began to deliver his sermons in English. The seemingly omnipresent *Gazette* reporter even recorded this event, noting that "the sermon [at Passover services] was received with the greatest satisfaction by the congregation, it being the second one delivered in the English language by Dr. L."

ANDRIA GAZETTE AND VIRGINIA ADVERTI

JAN 1868

HYMENEAL.—An affair that has been the subject of much conversation for some time past, occurred last night, at the Jewish Synagogue, Beth Ehle, (House of God) in this city, in the marriage of Mr. Solomon Friedman, of New York, to the beautiful and accomplished Miss Bettie Waterman, daughter of Mr. Simon Waterman, one of Alexandria's most esteemed and well known citizens. As early as half-past six o'clock persons commenced gathering at the scene of the anticipated nuptuals, and by eight o'clock, the hour at which the ceremony began, the synagogue, the long flight of stairs leading to it, and the side walks of King street, in the neighborhood, were filled by the acquaintance and friends of the happy pair, anxious to obtain a glympse of them.

At the appointed hour the destined bride and groom, preceded by their attendants, Mr. Carl Auerbach and Miss Rosa Waterman, Mr. Fuld and Miss Carrie Meyer, Mr. Solomon Hable and Miss Lina Strauss, Mr. Solomon Weil and Miss Barbrra Brunn, Mr. Isadore Meyer and Miss Mollie Hoffheimer, and Mr. Isadore Lowensohn and Miss Dora Rosenbaum entered the synagogue, and took a position immediately in front of the altar. In a few moments, during which soft music was sounded from the choir in the gallery, the officiating Rabbi, Rev. Dr. Lowensohn, in his sacerdotal robes—a black gown and white surplice, and wearing a black velvet cap—appeared at the altar, and proceeded to perform the solemn and imposing matrimonial rites.

The *tout ensemble* of the bridal party, as they thus stood ranged before the altar, constituted a living picture which combined elegance, grace and beauty in their most agreeable proportions, and one which, in this city, has been rarely equalled and never excelled. The dress of the bride, composed of the richest and most costly white material, with bugle trimings, was produced into a long and graceful train, while from her forehead, which was encircled by a wreath of roses, and adorned with gems of brightest ray, there fell in lengthy folds the gauzy lace of the symbolic veil. The bridemaids, enveloped in the nicest fitting and most appropriate costumes, formed half of the beautifully decorated frame to the central figures which was completed by the six groomsmen, apparelled in suits similar to that worn by the groom, and which rivaled in blackness the raven's wing, and in whitness that of the driven snow.

The Rabbi, in the Hebrew and German languages, having stated the intent of the parties before him, and having enjoined upon them the sacred duties and obligations imposed by the marriage relation, the groom slipped the ring upon his blushing bride's finger, and they were pronounced, according to the law, man and wife, for better or for worse. The groom salluted the bride—she her mother and female friends; vocal and instrumental music resounded through the synagogue, and the interesting ceremony was concluded.

From the synagogue the bridal party and a large number of invited guests repaired immediately to the Assembly Rooms, corner of King and Royal streets, which had been engaged and prepared for the occasion, where, in unison with the soul inspiring strains of a splendid band brought from Washington, the dainty feet of lovely women kept time with those of graceful men in the intricate mazes of the waltz, the polka, and varsouvienne, until two o'clock this morning, when the guests separated, and retired to their respective homes.

During an interval in the dancing, a magnificent supper, spread in one of the rooms of the Assembly Building, was enjoyed with a zest that spoke volumes in favor of its excellence, and during which many a sparkling goblet was quaffed to the future health and prosperity of the newly married couple.

The dresses of the lady guests, as witnessed in the ball room, were magnificent beyond de-

AMUSEMENTS.

LADIES'—A FAIR, for the benefit of the FRIENDSHIP FIRE CO., for the purpose of aiding them to pay for the steamer, lately purchased by the Company, will be held at the ASSEMBLY ROOMS, commencing on MONDAY NIGHT, the 27th instant, and continuing for about ten days and nights.

All kinds of Fancy and Useful Articles for sale. Ice Cream, Oysters, &c., &c., always to be had. Supper served every night.

The ladies make an appeal to the citizens to help them in their good undertaking, and we are satisfied the appeal will not be in vain.

Season tickets, 50 cents; single tickets, 10 cts. jan 22—tf

A SERIES OF "TABLEAUX VIVANT," Will be exhibited at LIBERTY HALL, commencing on THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 23rd.

The preparations for the occasion will be complete, under the auspices and management of a number of ladies, who have engaged in this enterprise for the exalted purpose of procuring means to alleviate the condition of the suffering poor of all the churches in this city. The exhibition will consist of a variety of scenes and representations, selected in the best taste, and arranged with consummate skill, and being displayed by the united efforts of married ladies, as well as the young, the beautiful and the gay. The occasion promises not only to be interesting, but altogether attractive. Having for its grand consummation the noble purpose of gladdening the hearts of the poor and distressed.—The ladies appeal, therefore, to a generous public to patronize them liberally in this enterprise, which, if it should even fail to meet their expectations in the exhibition, cannot miss its reward in the world to come.

Doors open at 7 o'clock; Performance will commence at 8 p. m. Admittance 50 cents; Children under twelve years of age, 25 cents. jan 20—4t

"PUBLIC GOOD OUR ONLY AIM."

SECOND ANNUAL BALL OF THE HYDRAULION STEAM FIRE COMPANY, AT THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, On Friday evening, February 21, 1868.

It will be remembered that every available facility will be offered to make this one of the most agreeable and entertaining occasions of the season.

Master of Ceremonies—Wm. H. Smith.
Floor Manager—John A. Field.
Assistants—A. C. Kell, Thomas Hoy, J. H. Young.

Reception Committee—Hon Hugh Latham, Capt. George T. Whittington, Hiram Webster, Benj. Barton, Capt. James M. Stewart, Richard Purcell, Henry Strauss.

Committee of Arrangements—Jas. P. Shrakes, D. Z. Buckley, John W. Horsman, M. B. Harlow, George Bennett.

Prof. COOK'S STRING BAND has been engaged for the occasion.

Tickets, $1; Refreshments furnished.

The Committee reserve to themselves the right to eject any improper person from the hall. jan 10—eotd

FOR THE PENITENTIARY.—Sheriff Stuart, with a guard, left here this morning in the Aquia Creek steamer for Richmond, having in charge John Bryant, white, and Sinah Fansell, colored, convicts sentenced to three years imprisonment in the State Penitentiary, the former for robbing the store of Messrs. Backlock & Co., and the latter for robbing the residence of Mr. H. S. Wattles.

STOLEN CORN RECOVERED.—The corn stolen some time ago from a wagon in the wagon stand of Mr. Charles Cox, at the Railroad Hotel, has, through the exertions of the proprietor of that hotel, been recovered, together with the bags stolen at the same time, and mention of which has already appeared in the Gazette.

TABLEAUX.—Remember the beautiful Tableaux, for the benefit of the poor, at Liberty Hall to-night.

POLICE REPORT—MAYOR'S OFFICE.—John Baylis, for peddling without a license, was, in default of the imposed fine, committed to the Work House for ninety days.

MAGISTRATES' OFFICE.—John Baylis, for selling Matilda Jones, colored, two yards of cotton cloth for fifteen cents, and then snatching the cloth and running off with it, was discharged upon refunding the money, as he was supposed to be laboring under the effects of intoxication.

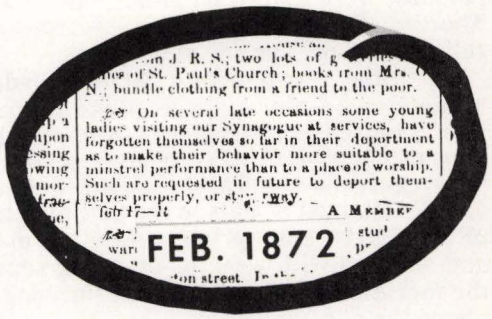
SERMONS IN STONES.—A feeling sermon, well

records signed, the Court adjourned till court in course.

CONFIRMATION.—On Saturday last, very interesting services occurred in the Jewish Synagogue. A son of Mr. Simon Waterman and one of Mr. M. Ruben, having arrived at the age of 13, were solemnly numbered among the people of Israel by confirmation. The exercises being in the Hebrew and German languages were not intelligible to us, but they were conducted with great solemnity, and were very impressive. Both the boys were permitted to hold the scroll of the law, and to read portions of it aloud, and they both made their profession of faith, and prayed aloud before the tabernacle or place where the law is kept, and young Waterman made an address in German which appeared to be very affecting, and brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience. The exercises were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Lowinsohn assisted by Mr. Isaac Eichberg, President of the Congregation. Excellent music was furnished by Mr. Heyman, the chanting being admirably performed by Messrs. Ruben and Henry Strauss. After the services, Mr. and Mrs. Waterman entertained a large number of their friends, Christian as well as Jewish, in a very handsome manner, at their residence on North Royal street.

PUMP OUT OF ORDER.—The condition of the

From *Alexandria Gazette* in 1870



1874

CLOSING EXERCISES.—The closing exercises of the German and Hebrew school, Rev. A. A. Bonnheim, principal, took place at the Synagogue, yesterday morning, in the presence of a large audience. The children have made considerable progress both in German and Hebrew during the last year and reflect great credit on their new teacher. The exercises were interspersed with music, and at the close the following prizes were awarded:

For Punctuality, Dilligence and Perfect Recitations—Gold Medal to Estella Kaufman.

For Good Recitations—Silver Medals to Albert A. Brager, Gabriel Dealham, Philip Lindheimer and Amalie Gentzberger.

For Merit—Honors to Hattie Lindheimer, Louis Eichberg and Simon Dealham.

BETH EL BUILDS A TEMPLE

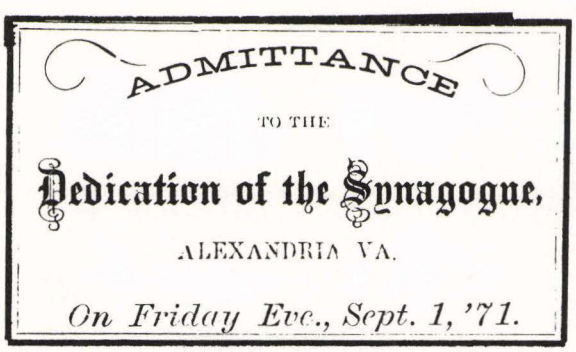
The range of congregation activity was diverse and widespread, but the pinnacle of Beth El's achievements during the Lowensohn era was certainly the building of a temple. The construction of a beautiful house of worship was a remarkable feat for a congregation whose membership had by then dwindled to less than 25 families.*

In February, 1871, Alexandrians received their first intimation that Beth El was about to construct a temple building. The "Hebrew ladies of this city," announced the *Gazette*, were sponsoring their first annual [Purim?] ball, with all proceeds going to help defray the cost of the building. The ball on March 8 proved to be "one of the most agreeable affairs of the season" both socially and financially. The party, attended by a large number of Jews and their Christian neighbors, came reluctantly to an end at 5 a.m.! The popular view that Victorians did not know how to enjoy themselves is undoubtedly inaccurate.

During the following month, Beth El leaders selected a small lot, 30 by 100 feet, fronting on Washington Street, just north of the famous Christ Church. Architects quickly drew up plans, but construction, slated to begin in May, did not start until the morning of June 26, 1871. Progress was rapid thereafter, and only 38 days later all brickwork was finished. Workmen used the month of August to complete the interior.

The new temple, described by the *Gazette* as a "very pretty building . . . fitted up in a neat and appropriate style," covered virtually all of the 30-foot frontage on Washington Street and extended back little more than half of the lot's 100-foot depth. An unusual feature was the use of the second floor as the sanctuary. At the far end of this 24-by-50-foot room was the Ark and the pulpit. Thirteen benches, each seating five persons, were placed on either side of a middle aisle. The first floor—also one large room—was devoted to religious school and social purposes.

On Friday, September 1, Beth El dedicated its new Temple in an almost pageantlike affair. Rabbi Solomon Deutsch of Baltimore's Temple Har Sinai, Dr. Lowensohn and two lay leaders proudly carried the congregation's four Torahs from Pitt Street down King and Washington Streets to the new building. A group of 20 little girls, appropriately outfitted in white dresses and adorned with wreaths and pink scarves, escorted the four men. The remainder of the congregation completed the parading group.


ADMITTANCE

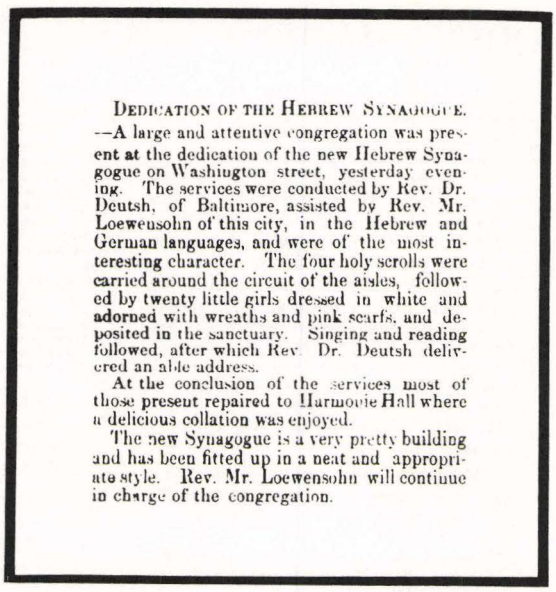
TO THE

Dedication of the Synagogue,

ALEXANDRIA VA.

On Friday Eve., Sept. 1, '71.

*Membership in Beth El was normally held by the head of a family unit. Sons and sons-in-law and their children, although part of the congregation, were not usually carried as members until the demise of their fathers.


DEDICATION OF THE HEBREW SYNAGOGUE.—A large and attentive congregation was present at the dedication of the new Hebrew Synagogue on Washington street, yesterday evening. The services were conducted by Rev. Dr. Deutsh, of Baltimore, assisted by Rev. Mr. Loewensohn of this city, in the Hebrew and German languages, and were of the most interesting character. The four holy scrolls were carried around the circuit of the aisles, followed by twenty little girls dressed in white and adorned with wreaths and pink scarfs, and deposited in the sanctuary. Singing and reading followed, after which Rev. Dr. Deutsh delivered an able address.

At the conclusion of the services most of those present repaired to Harmonie Hall where a delicious collation was enjoyed.

The new Synagogue is a very pretty building and has been fitted up in a neat and appropriate style. Rev. Mr. Loewensohn will continue in charge of the congregation.

The dedication at 5 p.m. was followed by the worship services an hour later. These were, as in the past, in German and Hebrew, accompanied by organ music and choral singing after which Rabbi Deutsch delivered an "able address." Upon the conclusion of the services, the congregation and its friends repaired to Harmonie Hall on Fairfax Street, where they enjoyed "a delicious collation." Beth El had good reason for celebration, for it was realizing a long-held vision: A permanent home for purposes of assembly, prayer and religious instruction. As events transpired, Beth El would use this Temple for the next 84 years.

Much credit for making this dream come true must be given the three-year-old German Cooperative Building Association.* Only recently, the association had gained the right to use a sizable area at Washington and Cameron Streets, although no formal recorded conveyance had yet taken place. It was from this land that Beth El's small lot was carved. Then without any conveyance of title to Beth El, the Temple was built. It was not until six months later, in January, 1872, that the first party officially conveyed the land to the German Cooperative Building Association. Another 2½ years elapsed before the association transferred title for the lot to Beth El for $810. The deed, dated Dec. 15, 1874, was admitted to record on Feb. 15, 1875.

Beth El obtained a portion of the money needed for the lot and the cost of the building from the sale of pews. Just before the dedication ceremonies, more than 20 members selected pews for their families, probably on the basis of their bids, which ranged between $50 and $80.

A lack of funds evidently was the major reason for the long delay in conveying Beth El's lot from the German Cooperative Building Association. As noted above, the deed was not recorded until Feb. 15, 1875. Just three days later, Beth El as an unincorporated organization obtained special legislation from the Virginia General Assembly to use its land and building as collateral in obtaining a loan. The building association probably lent the money, but curiously no trust or mortgage was ever recorded against the property. Undoubtedly, the close relationship between the two organizations influenced this unusual situation.

*Renamed Alexandria Savings and Loan Association in the 1950s.



In this 1957 photo, a street sign partially obscures Temple Beth El, next to house on corner.

CRISIS IN THE CONGREGATION

Dr. Lowensohn left Alexandria less than two years after the completion of the Temple. In the fall of 1873, Beth El engaged the Rev. A.A. Bonnheim to succeed Dr. Lowensohn as Rabbi and religious instructor. He, too, conducted private language classes in German and Hebrew to supplement his income.

Rabbi Bonnheim enjoyed a successful first year, both in his religious and educational endeavors. However, on Sept. 17, 1874, *The Alexandria Gazette* ominously headlined an article: "Trouble at the Hebrew Congregation." This trouble had grave consequences, for it resulted in a split among the members and the establishment of a rival congregation.

During the course of the first year, several members had accused Rabbi Bonnheim of unbecoming conduct and deportment in carrying out some of his official duties. Just before the start of the High Holy Days, the congregation met to discuss the re-engagement of the Rabbi for the coming year. After a thorough airing of the allegations, the majority of the members gave him a vote of confidence and renewed his contract.

The four or five dissatisfied members and their families immediately resigned from Beth El. They held Rosh Hashonah services in one of their homes. Then, in the 10-day period before Yom Kippur, they quickly formed a new congregation, rented a room in Phoenix Hall on King and Royal Streets and employed a reader from Washington, D.C., to lead their holiday services.

The defection made a considerable dent in the already small membership rolls at a time when Beth El faced major financial problems coincident with the conveyance of the deed for its land and with the payment for its building.

The breach endured for two years. When Rabbi Bonnheim departed in mid-1876, the rebellious congregation disbanded and the members rejoined Beth El.



Leopold Bendheim's family was one of several who resigned from Beth El in 1874 and formed a new congregation, protesting the policies of Rabbi A. A. Bonnheim. They returned to Beth El after the Rabbi left in mid-1876.

LAST EARLY-YEAR RABBIS

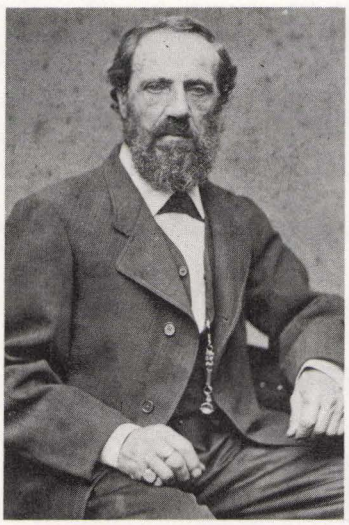
After Rabbi Bonnheim left, Beth El was unable to find a replacement for about two years. For the High Holy Days of 1877, the congregation engaged the Rev. Mr. Eiserman of Baltimore, but this was only a temporary measure for the 10-day period. It was not until August, 1878, when Rabbi B. Kahn of Troy, N.Y., accepted the position, that Beth El once again had a spiritual leader. He stayed only about six months, leaving early in 1879. This lack of spiritual leadership over an extended period began to affect Beth El's religious practices. Both Purim and Passover of 1879, for example, passed without any observance at the Temple.

Conditions improved with the coming of Rabbi Morris Sessler in the fall of 1879. The Rev. Leopold Rosenstraus succeeded Rabbi Sessler in 1881 and stayed until early in 1883. Activity at the Temple returned to normal, and the children again received their extensive religious and language training. As in the case of Beth El's earlier rabbis, both Rabbi Sessler and Rabbi Rosenstraus taught language classes to augment their salaries.

A highlight in the Sessler-Rosenstraus eras was the gratis offer in November, 1880, of the Temple facilities to the Union Presbyterian Church for its use as long as necessary. This act, highly praised within the community, would be repaid manifold some 75 years later, when Beth El needed and obtained the use of several Christian churches to conduct its own religious services. Another event receiving considerable notice in the community was the special services held on July 9, 1881, to pray for the recovery of President James Garfield, the victim of an assassin.

Then, in the fall of 1882, a major change in religious practice took place. Rabbi Rosenstraus eliminated completely the use of German in the weekly services. Henceforth, only Hebrew and English were to be employed. This shift was of great significance, for it marked the tremendous changes that had taken place in the character of Beth El and its congregants and preceded the start of Beth El's 50-year period as a "family congregation."

During the summer of 1883, Rabbi Rosenstraus departed Alexandria for Paris, France, where he worked on the preparation of a polyglot Psalter. With his departure, Beth El closed the book on its exciting first quarter century of history. Thereafter, for more than 50 years, until April, 1939, Beth El would continue without a spiritual leader. In a larger sense, this also constituted the final step in the transition of Beth El and its congregants—a transition which in the broadest sense of the word could be termed the Americanization period.





Among the organizers of clubs oriented toward Alexandria's German community, starting after the Civl War and lasting into the 1870s, were Joseph and Isabel Brager (above), and Mrs. Rosa Kaufmann and Simon Blondheim (below).





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SPECIAL PRAYER FOR THE PRESIDENT.—The Hebrews of this city assembled in their Synagogue, on Washington street, at 9 o'clock this morning for special services of prayer for the recovery of President Garfield. A large congregation was present, and the services were of an interesting character. Rev. L. Rosenstraus, who officiated, offered the following impressive prayer:

It has pleased Thee, Almighty, Lord, to cast upon this people the shadow of a great sorrow. The head and pride of the nation has been suddenly struck down by the red hand of a brutal assassin. Help us to recognize Thy hand in this mysterious dispensation, and to bow without murmuring to Thy holy will. O hear, we beseech Thee, hear the cry of Thy people, and restore Thy servant to health and strength. Rebuke the malice of those who would subvert the established order of things by shedding innocent blood. Protect us from those pestilent heresies that have destroyed so many nations on earth. Give skill to the physicians, O God, give efficacy to the remedies administered. Touch with Thine own hand those hidden springs of life with that touch, which always brings healing. Bless support and comfort the partner of his life, Mrs. Garfield, during this great sorrow. Out of weakness may she be made strong. Around his children cast the everlasting arms of Thy fatherly protection and as we stand and wait and watch with those around the bed of the sufferer to mark each fluttering pulse and each flickering breath, may every unhallowed feeling be hidden away from our hearts, in this hour, when the nation trembles before the weapon against which there is no defence and feels the very foundations of its security threatened by an enemy against whom there is no earthly protection. Therefore we cry to Thee; save us, good Lord, for Thy namesake. Unto Thee we shall give all the glory. Amen.

Cano El no refo no. Almighty Lord, I beseech Thee, heal now, O, God, our beloved President, Hashkivo Mimmaon, Kodanecho, Min hasho-majim uvorech, James, Abraham Garfield Im Mishpachto vechol Hoolom Kullo. Look down from Thy holy habitation from heaven and heal the President, bless his devoted wife, his boys—Harry and James—his daughter—Mollie—and all mankind. Amen.

PORT OF ALEXANDRIA.

MINIATURE ALMANAC, JULY 9, 1881.

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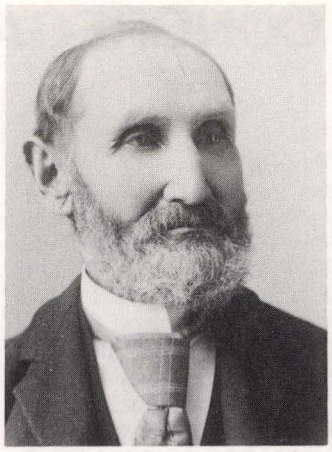
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END OF AN ERA

In the period to 1883, Alexandria had failed to recover from the depressed economic conditions after the Civil War. The effect on the Jewish community as a whole, and particularly on Beth El was unfortunate. The large-scale exodus that had marked the half decade from 1865 to 1870, although slowed, continued throughout the 1870s and into the early 1880s.

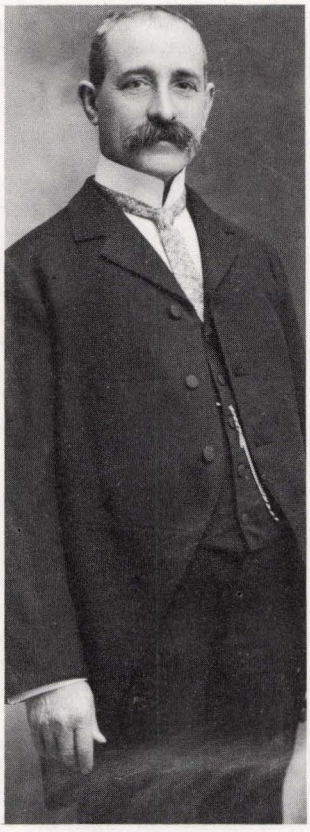
Many of the original congregants, long established in Alexandria's business, political and social circles, had to leave the community. More important, from the standpoint of Beth El's future well-being, was the continual flow of the "second generation" from Alexandria during the 1870s and continuing for the next 20 years. Finding conditions locally unattractive, young men sought to establish themselves in their business or their profession elsewhere.

All of these factors—the Americanization process in its various facets, the departure of so many founding fathers and of the second generation, the consequent decrease in the number of Jewish families—combined to force a complete reorientation in Beth El's role. No longer could Beth El afford the benefits of a full-time spiritual leader. The ability, the desire and perhaps even the necessity to operate a "professional" religious school had also disappeared.





Leopold and Bettie Genzberger, among Temple Beth El's founders, donated food to the public soup kitchen in the 1866-67 winter.





Among the new members joining tiny Beth El in 1890-91 were Emanuel and Ida Goldsmith.

II. A FAMILY CONGREGATION, 1883-1938

Beth El was essentially a "family" congregation for the half century between 1883 and 1938. Its membership fluctuated between a low of 12 and a high of 26, although remaining just under 20 during most of the period. As founding members joined their Maker, those few sons or sons-in-law remaining in Alexandria took their places in Beth El. Over these years, Beth El served mainly as a house of worship to the handful of members, as a religious school to a far lesser number of children, and, except for infrequent weddings, virtually not at all as a place of assembly. Nonetheless, Beth El still retained a very positive role in the teaching and transfer of Judaism's priceless heritage to Alexandria's small number of Jews through the years.

THE CONGREGATION

The size of the congregation gradually declined during the 1880s until by 1888 there were only 12 members. The recruitment in 1890-91 of several newcomers to Alexandria momentarily alleviated the problem of a minyan. However, several of the older members passed on, and membership fell to 12 between 1895 and 1899.

The crisis persisted until 1903 when eight members joined Beth El. Membership between 1903 and 1938 fluctuated only slightly on either side of 20. However, it should be noted that Beth El in 1927, for the first time since the opening of the Temple in 1871, had each of its 26 pew benches assigned to an individual family.

The leaders of Beth El during this half century were Joseph Kaufmann, Isaac Eichberg and Benedict Weil. Mr. Kaufmann served as President between 1881 and 1889, after which Mr. Eichberg once again became the top official until his death on Nov. 6, 1914. Benedict Weil, who had served as Vice President for more than a decade, succeeded Mr. Eichberg and retained the post until he resigned in February, 1943.



Benedict Weil, pictured here with his wife, served more than a decade as Vice President of Temple Beth El before holding the Presidency from 1914 to 1943. He also was a member of the Alexandria City Council.

Despite the tiny size of the congregation, Beth El was both formal and correct in the conduct of its affairs. The constitution and bylaws received periodic reviews and revisions. All congregational actions required a majority vote, and even the smallest expenditure needed the approval of the membership at the regular quarterly or frequent special meetings. The minutes of the April 30, 1905, special meeting, for example, recorded that "a motion by Mr. Goldsmith to buy 6 cospidores [sic] for the Vestry Room was carried."

In keeping with the businesslike operation of Beth El, failure to pay dues constituted grounds for immediate suspension or expulsion. This was rigidly adhered to, although the action was not taken until after a specially appointed committee had visited the delinquent member to ascertain the circumstances and persuade payment of the arrearage.

Money was always a major problem, even though general operating expenses were quite low. Dues initially were $1 per month. In February, 1905, they rose to $2, but a special High Holy Days assessment of $5 was discontinued. Dues went to $3 in November, 1919, and stayed at this level into the 1940s. Nonmembers attending holiday services paid $12 per family and $5 for a single adult. In 1920, the special fees were increased to $15 and $7, respectively.

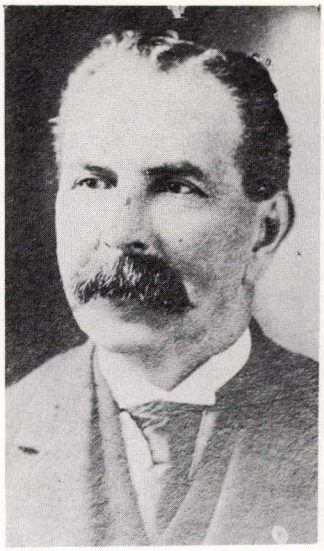
Income from dues generally sufficed to cover the ordinary expenses of Beth El—the annual $1-per-member payment of dues to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the salaries of the organist and choir, the salary and expenses of the "Holiday Rabbi," and the usual maintenance and utility bills. Year-long operation at little more than $1,000 was not unusual. Major alteration, renovation or modernization of Temple facilites were paid by special assessments or solicitations and gifts from the Sisterhood (after 1913) and the Hebrew Benevolent Society.

Payment of $1 per member annually to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was not particularly burdensome. However, in 1924 the UAHC instituted a new method of taxation, causing Beth El's payment to increase fivefold. Rather than raise its own dues, the congregation imposed a special $5 assessment. When UAHC dues increased again, in the depths of the Depression, several members refused to pay the assessment. On Aug. 12, 1932, Beth El eliminated the assessment and decided to allow the members to donate as they desired. However, in the next and subsequent years, Beth El was again making annual payments of $124 to the UAHC, somewhat below the earlier amounts. In passing, it should be noted that for many years Leopold and Sara Ruben sent a yearly gift of $100, with Beth El receiving credit for the donation.

The circumstances surrounding Beth El's affiliation with the UAHC were most interesting. The congregation joined on Oct. 12, 1883, some 10 years after the organization of the UAHC. The impetus came from Morris Sachs, the first of the visiting student "holiday rabbis" from the Hebrew Union College (HUC). He must have been a most persuasive and elequent young man, for within a day or two of his arrival, Mr. Sachs had convinced the congregation to join the UAHC. Moreover, during his 10-day stay in the city, he orga-

nized the Ladies Educational Aid Society of Alexandria for the purpose of assisting indigent HUC students. Virtually every Beth El wife, widow or adult daughter, 29 altogether, joined and pledged an annual contribution of $1 to the college. Mrs. Emil Rosenthal was the society's first President, with Mrs. Sara Ruben as Vice President and Mrs. Henry Schwarz as Secretary-Treasurer.

Beth El participated in UAHC affairs as conditions allowed. In 1885, Beth El authorized Mr. Sachs, still a HUC student, to represent it at the conference in St. Louis. In later years, when UAHC conferences convened in nearby cities—Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and even Pittsburgh—Beth El representatives were present.





During 1883-1931, "holiday rabbis" stayed in Beth El members' homes, including the residence of Nathan and Amelia Wollberg.



Alexandria Gazette

MONDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8

LOCAL MATTERS.

LADIES' EDUCATIONAL AID SOCIETY.—The Jewish ladies of this city are about to organize themselves into an association to be known as the Ladies' Educational Aid Society of Alexandria. The members of this organization agree to pay annually one dollar to the support of indigent students of the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati, Ohio. This institution, we understand, was called into existence in 1875 by Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise, of the above named city, and is open to all, irrespective of sex or creed. The aim of this institute is to educate young American rabbis who shall be able to preach to the people in the vernacular. The society which is under formation is certainly beneficial to the interest of the American Hebrews, as it extends a helping hand for the maintenance of the Rabbinical Seminary, from which all are expected to reap the harvest. The ladies are requested to meet to-morrow afternoon at the Synagogue, on Washington street.

A FREIGHT RATE WAR ON THE POTOMAC.—The Potomac river steamboat war is creating a stir in Southern Maryland. There are three independent lines running from Washington to the Potomac landings, and one line from Baltimore. The Washington companies have cut freight and passenger rates down to trifling amounts. The Southern Maryland merchants want the Baltimore line to do the same thing. They say that if the Baltimore company does not compete with the Washington lines the trade of Southern Maryland will come this way. In reply to this the managers of the Baltimore line say they have $75,000 in the Potomac Transportation Company, and that they are not realizing from the investment more than 4 two per cent., the smallest profit made by any steamboat company in Baltimore. Therefore they cannot, they say, make a reduction in rates. If it should happen that reduced rates are necessary to keep up their present business, they will be forced to take the steamers off the route. It is the opinion of the Baltimore company that the Washington lines will soon be compelled to put an end to the war, as they are cutting each other's throats and are losing money, notwithstanding their bluffing assertions to the contrary. In this connection the Baltimore *Sun* says:

"A number of prominent Baltimore merchants have talked the matter over with the managers of the Baltimore Company, and they give it as their opinion that it would be the ruin of the company to take part [illegible] and all the grain and come

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Alexandria Gazette

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 11.

LOCAL MATTERS.

MOTHERS IN ISRAEL.—The Jewish ladies of this city met in their synagogue on Washington street on Tuesday afternoon. The object of this meeting was to organize a permanent association to be known as the "Ladies' Educational aid Society of Alexandria." The purpose of this organization was mentioned in these columns of a revious issue. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Morris Sachs, the founder of this body, who explained in an elaborate speech the good results and benefits of the society. He complimented in high language the ladies as well as the gentlemen of this city stating that every lady without exception has willingly joined this assembly and contributed freely the required amount, while the young men did their duty in joining the Union of American Hebrew congregations. The election of officers for the ensuing year resulted in the following choice: President, Emil Rosenthal; vice-president, Miss Sara Ruben, and Mrs. Henry Schwarz as treasurer and secretary. The following ladies constitute the Ladies' Educational Aid Society: Mrs. Joseph Kaufman, Miss Stella Kaufman, Mrs. Joseph Brager, Miss Ida Brager, Mrs. M. J. Waterman, Miss Ida Eichberg, Mrs. Isaac Eichberg, Mrs. Henry Strauss, Miss Hennie Strauss, Mrs. L. Genzberger, Mrs. M. Heller, Miss Sophie Bendheimer, Mrs. Simon Rosenthal, Miss Bertha Rosenthal, Mrs. Simon Martha Rosenthal, Miss Sara Ruben, Mrs. Julia Dreifus, Mrs. Max Pretsfelder, Mrs. Sam Bernheimer, Mrs. M. Laupheimer, Miss Sara Bendheim, Miss Rose Bendheimer and Miss Lena Kaufman. After remarks by various members, the society adjourned subject to the call of the President. The meeting was quite an animated one lasting almost two hours.

THE LONG BRIDGE.—One of the new spans to the Long Bridge has been finished and work commenced on another. The work is being pushed with the utmost speed, to prevent delaying vehicles any more than possible, the men being kept busy even on Sunday. Yesterday vehicles which had been prevented from crossing the river were again able to resume traffic. The improvements are more extensive and substantial than any placed upon the bridge for a long time.

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W. Harris, 36th North Carolina Cavalry;
Maj. Robert J. Hicks, Surgeon North Caro-
lina Battalion; Col. James Y. Christmas,
Gen. Ransom's Staff. Gens. W. H. F. and
Fitzhugh Lee have been invited to accom-
pany the remains to Raleigh, as special
guests of the escort. Ladies wishing to
present flowers for the caskets will please
send them to Mr. Wheatley's by 2 p. m., on
Monday. It is hoped that there will be a
full turn out of veterans, and that the au-
thorities of the several churches will cause
their bells to be tolled, as those of the fire
department will be, from 3 to 4 p. m. on
Monday.

CORPORATION COURT.—*Judge N. B. Mea*
presiding.—The last will and testament
Edward Lawler, deceased, was admitted
probate, and administration upon the es
was granted to Margaret R. Lawler.
Fowle & Co. vs. Cyrus A. Cannon; assu
jury sworn; non suit; damages released. H
Mason vs. Henderson, Henderson vs. H
son, and Schwarz vs. Henderson; chancer
solidated; decree directing distribution
ceeds of sales.
Williams vs. Windsor et al.; motion
coming bond; motion by plaintiff to re
to Circuit Court; motion overruled
continued for defendant.

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OCTOBER, 1877

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Despite the absence of a rabbi, except for the fall holiday period,religious services continued to be held weekly. There may have been several occasions when services were suspended for lack of attendance, in addition to the regular suspension during the hot summer months. Generally, the congregation president—Mr. Kaufmann, Mr. Eichberg or Mr. Weil—acted as "reader" and led services. Throughout the years, the UAHC prayer book was used, and periodically Beth El replaced it with the latest revised edition.

The close association of music with religious services, begun in 1859, continued throughout the 50-year "family" period. Initially, as in earlier days, the members, their wives and their children made up the volunteer choir. Gradually, however, before the turn of the century, the voluntary feature passed and a paid group of non-Jews took over the choral function. During holiday periods, one or more of the congregation augmented the paid choir. Also, from time to time, a person from the congregation would serve for an extended period with the choir.

Prof. Robert E. Heyman, long-time music instructor at several Alexandria schools, served the congregation as organist and choir director, beginning in 1859 and continuing through the next 45 years. In September, 1904, Beth El reluctantly retired Professor Heyman because of age and replaced him with Mrs. Charles Lennon. She spent 20 years at Beth El, resigning in September, 1924. After a one-year term by Mrs. Drischler, Sherman B. Fowler took over as organist and choral director and held these posts until his death in January, 1937.

Beth El retired its first organ only months after Professor Heyman's retirement. A special solicitation and subscription drive in April, 1905, succeeded in raising $100 which, along with the $25 trade-in value of the old organ, was sufficient to pay for the new one. Beth El also used the new organ for almost a half a century. It was modified to operate with electricty in 1919.

HOLIDAY RABBIS

After Rabbi Rosenstraus' departure in 1883, Beth El no longer enjoyed the services of a resident Rabbi. On those occasions, weddings and funerals particularly, when a Rabbi was required, one of the Washington ministry obliged. For the Rosh Hashonah-Yom Kippur period, Beth El engaged a rabbinical student from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati to officiate. There was one exception, 1907, when all of the students had already been assigned before Beth El's request arrived and the congregation employed a Rabbi from New York. Normally, the student stayed in Alexandria for the 10-day period, received a stipend of $100 to $125 plus the cost of railroad transportation.

Over the years, Beth El obtained an above-average cross section of Reform Judaism's top spiritual leaders of the future. Jonah B. Wise officiated in 1901; Norman Gerstenfeld led the holiday services in 1930; Alexander D. Goode, one of the four chaplains who died heroically on the "Dorchester" during World War II was here in 1935. And there were many others who subsequently obtained national recognition in their spiritual endeavors.

The "holiday rabbis" until 1931 were the guests of Beth El members during their stay. Thereafter, the visitors took their lodgings at the George Mason Hotel in Alexandria. The practice of using "holiday rabbis" ceased in 1939, when Beth El again obtained a permanent spiritual leader.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL



From its earliest days, Beth El was most zealous in its efforts to give a well-rounded religious education to the children of its members. In the years after 1883, the zeal continued unabated, though the scope and character changed considerably. The children no longer received the extensive training formerly presented by Beth El's resident rabbis. Instead they were taught Judaism's history and the rudiments of Hebrew, attended services especially oriented toward them, and participated in Hanukkah and Purim plays and parties. In 1933, Hebrew instruction was discontinued because the one teacher could not do an adequate job during a short school day and with a wide variation of ages among the children.

Benedict Weil and Nathan Wollberg held the position of Religious School superintendent from the 1890s until about 1913 when Robert P. Whitestone assumed the job. Among the school teachers for this period were Misses Jennie Blondheim, Minnie Weil, Dora Schiffman, Antoinette Wollberg, Sarah Koenigsberg and Miriam Augenstein.

After 1913, the Sisterhood took over complete administration of the Religious School, including funding, faculty and curriculum. Between 10 and 25 children normally attended, Beth El children paying 50 cents a month and noncongregation children twice that monthly fee.

Samuel Bernheimer taught the 1926-29 seasons, and was followed successively by Misses Margaret Abramson, Tecla Dreifus and Ethel Berkow. I. Melvin Whitestone taught from January, 1933, through 1938. Salaries ranged from a low of $5 to a high of $10 per month, the amount depending on the number of students and the prevailing economic conditions.

Classes were held in the Temple's Vestry Room. However, during the winter months when the building was not sufficiently heated, the classes met at the homes of the children on a revolving basis or at the home of the instructor.

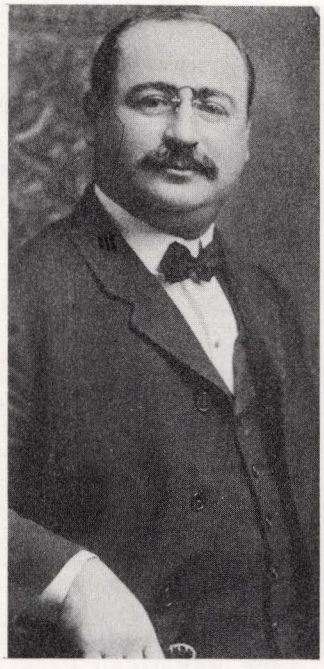
THE TEMPLE BUILDING

The Temple building was always a source of pride and joy to the small number of families that worshiped there. Beth El periodically carried out major refurbishing, decorating, renovating and modernizing jobs as conditions demanded and finances permitted. The *Gazette* on July 23, 1878, reported that the synagogue was then in the midst of being renovated, painted and put in beautiful order. Again, on Oct. 1, 1891, the newspaper commented on work just completed: painting inside and out, interior newly frescoed and the wooden fence replaced by one of iron. "Altogether," continued the *Gazette*, "the synagogue is now one of the prettiest and most comfortable little places of worship in the city."

Despite its small membership, the congregation managed to keep its house of worship in good condition during the passing years. The building was electrified in February, 1912. A year later, a new steam heating plant was installed in a newly constructed basement, and indoor toilet facilities replaced the old—at a cost of more than $800.

Other major renovations occurred in 1921. An oil heating system replaced the steam system in 1925. The original pew benches, after serving for more than 62 years, were replaced in January, 1934. Hardly a year went by without some painting being done—in the Sanctuary, the Vestry Room or the exterior. The Sisterhood continually dressed up the altar, choir room and Vestry Room with new curtains, rugs and other adornments.

Pride for its beloved house of worship was indeed strong among Beth El members.





Charles Bendheim, pictured here with his wife Edith, was reported in the 1890s to have served as state legislator, clerk of the court and on the Alexandria City Council, as well as having held important appointive federal positions.

III. REVITALIZATION AND GROWTH, 1938-1954

In 1933, two unrelated but highly important political events an ocean apart set the stage for the metamorphosis of Beth El from a family congregation to a revitalized and growing religious organization. As a result, under the direction and guidance of an able spiritual leader, Beth El once again underwent a large increase in membership and a vast expansion in religious activity reminiscent of the period during and immediately after the Civil War.

In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt became President in 1933. His New Deal and the vast expansion of activity by the federal government was accompanied by the start of a tremendous influx of people to Washington and its immediate environs. World War II speeded both the growth of government and the migration. Suburban areas expanded steadily with each passing year. Alexandria's population leaped dramatically upward, by 39 percent in the 10 years between 1930 and 1940 and by 85 percent in the following decade. The adjoining County of Arlington soon became one of the fastest growing residential areas in the nation, chalking up population gains of 115 and 138 percent respectively for the two decades between 1930 and 1950. Fairfax County, also contiguous to Alexandria, lost much of its rural characteristics as the population grew by 62 percent in the 1930-40 period and by 160 percent in the following 10 years. Among the numermous migrants to the suburbs were many potential Beth El members.

Meanwhile, Germany in 1933 fell under the diabolical tyranny of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi henchmen, and a reign of terror started that was unparalleled in history. In short order, Hitler fostered barbaric conditions that resulted in the tragic death of more than 6 million Jews and fomented a catastrophic holocaust that engulfed virtually the whole civilized world.

Thus, two events in 1933—unrelated to each other and at places separated by thousands of miles—set in motion the impetus and circumstances to spark the revitalization and growth of Beth El.

SPIRITUAL LEADER ENGAGED

During the evening of Nov. 16, 1938, only six days after the Kristallnacht, the calculated destruction of virtually all synagogues in Germany and Austria by the Nazis, Beth El's 23 members were called to a special meeting. At this time, President Benedict Weil proposed that the congregation engage Rabbi Hugo B. Schiff of Karlsruhe, Germany, as Beth El's spiritual leader—the first in over 50 years. Mr. Weil reported that an immigration visa for the Rabbi could be obtained without difficulty, since he was a clergyman and therefore admissible to the United States on a nonquota basis. The President emphasized, however, that it was necessary to guarantee Rabbi Schiff's position for at least two years. The small band of members, obviously motivated in part by the events and conditions in Germany, enthusiastically endorsed the proposal, agreeing to engage Rabbi Schiff with an annual stipend of $1,500.



Rabbi Hugo Schiff, Beth El spiritual leader, 1939-48.

The undertaking was indeed a courageous enterprise for the 23 members of Beth El. A special solicitation, over and above the annual dues of $36, was made and pledges of $670 were obtained. The donations ranged from a high of $120 to a low of $5, the majority falling between $25 and $50. As in the past, Beth El's longtime (and financially better situated) associate, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, generously contributed.

There was also a generous response from elsewhere in the community. Stating that "you [Beth El] have honored yourself, won the admiration of your city and made closer the fellowship of God's people herein," the Rev. John P. Tyler, minister of Alexandria's Washington Street Methodist Church, asked the privilege, personally and in behalf of his congregation, of sharing the support of the Rabbi.

How did Beth El come to select Rabbi Schiff? He had been proposed casually to Mr. Weil by Rabbi Ulrich Steur, leader of Fredericksburg's Reform congregation, some 40 miles to the south. In happier days before Hitler, Rabbi Steur had assisted Rabbi Schiff in his ministry in Karlsruhe. Rabbi Schiff served there for 14 years, from 1925 until his confinement durng 1938 in the infamous Dachau concentration camp.

Rabbi Schiff and his wife arrived in Alexandria on April 18, 1939. Two days later, he was invested as spiritual leader of Beth El. Shortly after, during Shuvouth, the Rabbi presented to his new congregation a Torah which had been, as he put it, "rescued from the fiendishly destructive hands of the Nazis." It was a farewell gift from the members of his Karlsruhe congregation.



Entire Religious School celebrates Succoth in 1945.

A DECADE OF GROWTH

Rabbi Schiff wasted little time starting a program that invigorated and broadened all phases of Beth El's religious, social and cultural life. A steady increase in membership marked the success of his leadership. The number of members increased from 23 in 1939 to more than 100 by mid-1948, when Rabbi Schiff left Beth El. His energetic activity soon extended beyond the confines of the congregation to include the community and greater Washington area as well.

Expanded Friday evening and Saturday morning services were instituted. Rabbi Schiff re-introduced the Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation ceremonies. Congregational Passover Seders became an annual affair, beginning in 1942.

Religious training quickly took form and expanded greatly. Soon some 50 to 60 children met weekly in the Vestry Room or in the Sanctuary, under the direction of Ira Funston and his voluntary staff of teachers. For a time, while the Temple was being renovated, the class sessions were held at the American Red Cross Building, the Episcopal Boys School and elsewhere.

Adult education was not neglected. The Rabbi organized an adult group to study the tenets and history of Judaism. Another group undertook to learn Hebrew under Rabbi Schiff's tutelage. Lectures on all aspects of Judaism, delivered by Rabbi Schiff and visiting rabbis, became a regular feature. A series of panel discussions on religious, political and other topics of the day was another innovation of worth.

Planning for a major repair and renovation of the Temple began shortly after Rabbi Schiff's arrival in 1939. Unfortunately, many months passed before sufficient funds could be obtained. The first phase finally got under way during the summer of 1941. It included the complete redecoration of the interior and was paid for by the ever generous Sisterhood. Completion of the work was marked by a special rededication service on Sept. 5, 1941. Activity on the exterior did not begin until late in 1942 and continued for several months into 1943. During the period of alteration, the congregation worshiped in several neighboring churches, primarily the First Baptist church on South Washington Street.

Expanded activity naturally imposed greater financial requirements, and the congregation was continually plagued with money problems. In 1940, Beth El borrowed from the Hebrew Benevolent Society. In the following year, the congregation dropped its annual donation to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and appointed a special committee to solicit pledges over and above the membership dues. Finally, in February, 1943, annual dues were increased from $36 to $48—a step that Beth El had put off for many months.

In 1943, Beth El's growth—both in membership and activity—dictated the reorganizaton of the congregation. A committee revised the constitution and bylaws

in January. The membership accepted the revisions as proposed at the February meeting. Coincident with the reorganization, Mr. Weil resigned the presidency after having served in the top position for some 28 years. The congregation reluctantly accepted his resignation but gratefully made him an honorary President for the rest of his life. Moses Jaffa, Beth El Vice President for more than a quarter century, was elected as Mr. Weil's replacement and served until January, 1949.

In 1941, Rabbi Schiff took on the additional role of part-time spiritual leader of the newly founded Conservative congregation—the Arlington-Fairfax Jewish Center. Beth El graciously granted its approval for this arrangement on a noninterference basis. Beth El also acceded to the request of its older sister congregation, the Washington Hebrew Congregation, when asked to have Rabbi Schiff assume Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld's duties during the summer months. This was continued in succeeding years and eventually, on July 1, 1948, Rabbi Schiff left Beth El to become Rabbi Gerstenfeld's full-time assistant.

Rabbi Schiff left after more than nine years of eventful leadership. His accomplishments were many and significant. He had found a closely knit group and widened its horizons. He had taken a "family" congregation of 23 members and left it a vibrant, growing congregation of more than 100—a congregation duly grateful for the changes he had wrought.



Rabbi C. Melvyn Helfgott, Beth El spiritual leader, 1949-53.

CONTINUED GROWTH, 1949-1954

Beth El was without a Rabbi for more than a year. However, during the Rosh Hashonah services of 1949, installation of the congregation's second "modern-day" rabbi occurred. He was youthful, softspoken C. Melvyn Helfgott, who came to Alexandria immediately after graduation from Hebrew Union College.

Rabbi Helfgott's four-year tenure as Beth El's spiritual head was another period of vigorous growth. To increase attendance at the weekly Sabbath services, he experimented with several innovations. In 1951, he began a series of Friday-evening adult discussions on Judaism in lieu of sermons. The next year, the Rabbi concentrated on having a larger Saturday-morning attendance, fashioning the services for the whole family regardless of age. And he also established a Sunday-morning adult-discussion group.

The Rabbi's interest in the young folks was evidenced almost from the start of his ministry. In 1949, a youth group was organized as part of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) and met monthly at members' homes. Rabbi Helfgott also formed a young married group in January, 1952, for the purpose of studyng Judaism.

Thus, with an ever increasing suburban population, an energetic Rabbi, and a vigorous and varied program, Beth El prospered in membership. From the 75 families which Rabbi Helfgott found upon his arrival in the fall of 1949, the congregation grew to 180 during the course of his four-year stay.

Perhaps the most noteworthy development during the Helfgott period—and the one that helped to build up the pressures for larger Temple facilities—was the phenomenal growth of the Religious School. In 1949, some 75 children were receiving training from five teachers. The 1950 school term revealed a 50-percent increase in enrollment—to about 110 pupils. This student body far exceeded the capacity of the Temple, and Beth El leaders looked elswhere for suitable school facilities.

The first away-from-home quarters were Alexandria's musty but serviceable Lee School, where Beth El's youngsters were educated for three years. In 1953, the evergrowing student body moved to the city's new and modern Barrett School in the Park-Fairfax area. Barrett continued to house the congregation's Religious School activities until 1957 when the new Temple building became a reality.

The growth of the Religious School student body followed a constant pattern. In 1951, almost 150 children registered; in 1952, enrollment rose to 170, and in 1953, almost 200 children were receiving instruction in their Jewish heritage.

Use of the Alexandria schools allowed the congregation to meet its obligation to its youth, but there were many problems. Since Beth El was a transient, once-a-week user of the school buildings, students and staff had to surmount a number of major and minor disabilities. There were no permanent quarters for supplies, and there were constant reminders that Beth El students were guests in the classrooms. Beth El had real need of a new structure to house its Religious School.

There had been talk of a new Temple building since the close of World War II. Finally in 1949, as a first step, a committee was formed to find a suitable site. The committee settled on the "Diener" lot, at the corner of Braddock Road and Glendale Avenue. Early in the next year, designs were drawn for a single-story, cinder-block building, with a sanctuary that would seat 140, and a connecting assembly room that would accommodate 236 persons, 6 classrooms and a kitchen. Cost of construction was estimated at between $55,000 and $60,000.

Fundraising got under way in February, 1950, with a congregational dinner, the immediate goal being $32,000. Pledges made at the dinner by 21 members totaled $9,600. In 1951, a building-fund allocaton was added to the annual budget. The first year's allocation amounted to $500. Even the Religious School was enlisted in the fund-raising drive. Each Sunday, the children contributed—10 cents per child.

By late 1952, it was obvious that neither the site nor the facility plans could meet the needs of the growing congregation. The Diener lot was too small, and the planned classrooms could not handle the ever increasing school enrollment. Accordingly, Beth El abandoned these plans and in December, 1952, purchased a larger lot on upper King Street. However, lack of funds kept any thought of construction in suspended status for the next several years.

As noted earlier, in 1950 the rising enrollment had forced Beth El to abandon its own building as a Religious School and use a city facility. In 1951, Beth El for the first time shifted to a dual-service basis for the High Holy Days so that all of its members could attend. The next year, faced with a similar situation for the High Holy Days and a membership now grown to 150 families, the congregation met in the Arlington Presbyterian Church. Annually thereafter until 1957, Beth El switched to a church during the Rosh Hashonah-Yom Kippur period. The pulpit area of these churches was transformed for Jewish services by the use of a beautiful eight-foot high, Honduras-mahogany portable ark designed by David Berliant and built by Dr. Philip Rudin.

The continuing growth of the Congregation obviously affected the cost of its day-to-day operations. During the Helfgott period, the annual operating budget increased steadily, from under $10,000 to more than $14,000. Annual dues, which had been raised from $48 to $60 before 1950, were again upped in January, 1952, to $70.

After almost four years of eventful activity and steady growth—membership increased to 180 families—Rabbi Helfgott resigned and in May, 1953, left Beth El. Pending selection of a replacement, Rabbi Paul Richman, longtime national membership director of B'nai B'rith, agreed to serve on a part-time basis. Rabbi Richman served in this stop-gap role from September, 1953, until the arrival of Rabbi Emmet A. Frank in April, 1954.

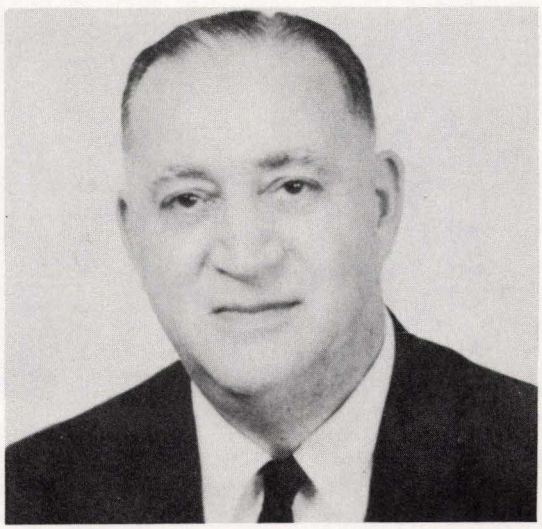
Ably guiding the continuing development of Beth El during the Helfgott and Richman periods was the lay leadership of Irving Diener, Maurice D. Rosenberg and Albert E. Baker. Mr. Diener, after more than 25 years of devoted service to Beth El as Secretary and Vice President, in 1949 succeeded Moses Jaffa as President. Mr. Jaffa became Beth El's second honorary President but continued to be active in the congregation's affairs until 1952 when he left Alexandria. During his 59-year stay in the city, Mr. Jaffa had attended every congregational meeting—an amazing record of service and devotion. Mr. Rosenberg succeeded Mr. Diener in mid-1950 but served only five months until his untimely death. Mr. Baker became President in January,1951, and furnished enlightened direction during the next three years.



Irving Diener became Beth El's 1949 President after 25 years as Secretary and Vice President.



Maurice Rosenberg, Beth El President, 1950-51.



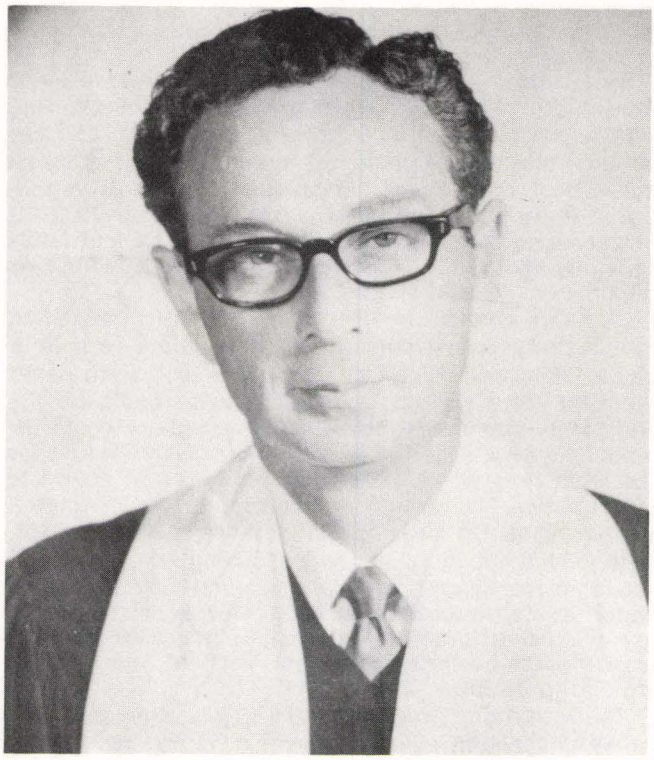
Albert E. Baker, Beth El President, 1951-54

IV. THE GREAT EXPANSION, 1954-1960

There were many reasons why Beth El continued to grow so rapidly during the late 1950s. There had been a great upsurge of interest in religion in the United States after World War II. Perhaps the underlying reason for this revival of faith was the search for guidance and understanding in an age of perplexity and uncertainty. World War II had ended, but the peace that followed was not a true peace, and the threat of a devastating atomic war cast a sinister shadow over a prosperous people.

During these years, Americans continued to move from the city to the suburbs. This exodus broke up established communities and led to the formation of new ones. Many of the uprooted families felt a need for belonging to a group and frequently joined a religious organization. These were also years of extraordinary population growth, and thousands of new parents wanted their children to receive a religious education.

The Jew in America could not help but be affected by these powerful social and cultural trends. Anxious to identify himself and his family with his ancient faith, he wanted at the same time to join a religious movement that looked to the present and future. His search for a modern Jewish faith ended in his discovery of Reform Judaism. By the mid-1950s, liberal Judaism had entered a period of great expansion. Many new congregations were established, and those already in existence were hard put to accommodate their new members. The membership also began to display a far more intensive interest in congregational activities. By 1960, 605 congregations in this country had embraced Reform Judaism. Their membership numbered more than 1 million. Their temples, in the words of Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, then President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, were "fairly bursting at the seams."



Rabbi Emmet A. Frank, Beth El spiritual leader, 1954-69.



Leroy S. Bendheim, who held the office of Beth El President from 1954 to 1962, is the grandson of two of the congregation's founders. He served two terms as Mayor of Alexandria and later was elected a Virginia State Senator.

Beth El certainly fitted into this category. The flight from Washington, D.C., to the suburbs had profoundly affected Northern Virginia. Since 1933, government officials and employees, businessmen and professional men of the Jewish faith had flocked to Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church and Fairfax County, and many of these new residents were eager to join a Reform congregation.

Between April, 1954, and April, 1960, Beth El's membership jumped from 140 to 400. Of particular significance was the expansion of enrollment in the Religious School from 200 to 500 during this period. Among the new members were many prominent government officials and high-ranking military figures. In this dynamic congregation, with its highly talented and capable membership, there were unique potentialities for outstanding religious, educational and cultural activity. The men at the helm of Beth El during the years of tremendous growth were Rabbi Emmet A. Frank, who arrived from Houston in April, 1954, and President Leroy S. Bendheim, who became the congregation's top lay officer about the same time. He was a member of a longtime Alexandria family, and his grandfathers were among Beth El's founders.



Sign on Beth El's Washington Street Temple.

NEED FOR A NEW TEMPLE

In the spring of 1954, Beth El's most pressing problem was the construction of a new house of worship. It had long been obvious that the old Temple could not meet the needs of the expanding congregation. The quaint old building on Washington Street had the charm of a bygone era. However, the membership was no longer made up of a handful of nearby Alexandrians; many came from residential areas 25 miles or more distant. Initially, the coziness and decor of the Temple had lent itself to the task of blending the long-time Alexanderia members with the suburban newcomers. But this advantage disappeared in the cramped conditions that accompanied the continued increase in membership. In any case, the members expected certain modern conveniences in their Temple, and the existing structure was plainly inadequate.

Perhaps the major shortcoming was that the Temple could not safely contain the large number of people who now attended services. As early as 1952, Christian churches generously opened their doors to Beth El for High Holy Day services. In the fall of 1954, these services were held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, and nearly 550 attended. By January, 1955, attendance had grown so large that it was necessary to hold Friday-evening services outside the Temple. On a typical Sabbath evening in 1954, the Temple was literally jammed to the doors. The sanctuary and other facilities, in the words of Rabbi Frank, "fit like Junior's last year's clothes." At this time, the First Baptist Church of Alexandria came to the help of Beth El, and Sabbath services were held in this church in safety and without congestion.

Beth El had realized for some time that a new Temple was essential and had initially purchased the Diener lot and, subsequently, a larger site on King Street, one block from Tuckahoe Lane. To pay for this property, Beth El mortgaged the lot on Washington Street. The King Street site was a 3-acre lot, but a small portion was not usable. It was intended to house a congregation of some 200 families. In June, 1954, Rabbi Frank dedicated this site; at this time, it was estimated that Beth El would have to raise $175,000 to construct a new building.

By late 1954, however, there was little doubt that the King Street lot would also be too small. During the first year of Rabbi Frank's service, membership rose from 140 to 215. Moreover, official state reports indicated that the population of Northern Virginia would probably double within the next 10 years.



Congregation gathers for Sabbath service in Washington Street Temple in 1954.



Rabbi Frank officiates at bar mitzvah service in Washington Street Temple in 1954.



Planning committee, 1954, for building new Temple: (standing) Frank Katz, Ernest Block, Gil Davis, Sidney Weil, Dr. Maxwell Sitzer and Morton Traub; (seated) Hal Silverstein, Albert E. Baker, Rabbi Emmet A. Frank, Shy S. Greenspan and Lehman Blondheim.

Accordingly, in October, 1954, Beth El established a new planning committee. The planners had no easy job. They had to determine space requirements, arrange this space so that it might serve several purposes, consider the amount of money that the congregation might reasonably raise, and select the most economical construction techniques consistent with the needs.

During the next year, Temple leaders tramped the Alexandria area looking for alternate building sites. Many locations seemed attractive but, for one reason or another, proved inappropriate. Finally, in May, 1955, Rabbi Frank discovered a beautifully wooded 5½-acre tract, conveniently located on Seminary Road in suburban Alexandria, which the congregation purchased for $42,500. Beth El, so long a neighbor of historic Christ Church in downtown Alexandria, would now be located directly across the street from yet another well-known religious institution, the Episcopal Theological Seminary.

Meanwhile, the congregation had to dispose of both the Washington Street property and the lot on King Street. The old Temple was sold for $25,000 in July, 1955, and the new owner took possession the following February. Furnishings and equipment were either stored or sold. Alexandria's Conservative congregation, Agudas Achim, was interested for a time in the King Street lot, but finally decided against its purchase; the lot was sold in April, 1957.



Leaders in the building of the temple at 3830 Seminary Road, 1956-57: Mayor Herman Fink of Falls Church, chairman of the Building Committee; Rabbi Emmet A. Frank, and Mayor Leroy Bendheim of Alexandria, President of Beth El.

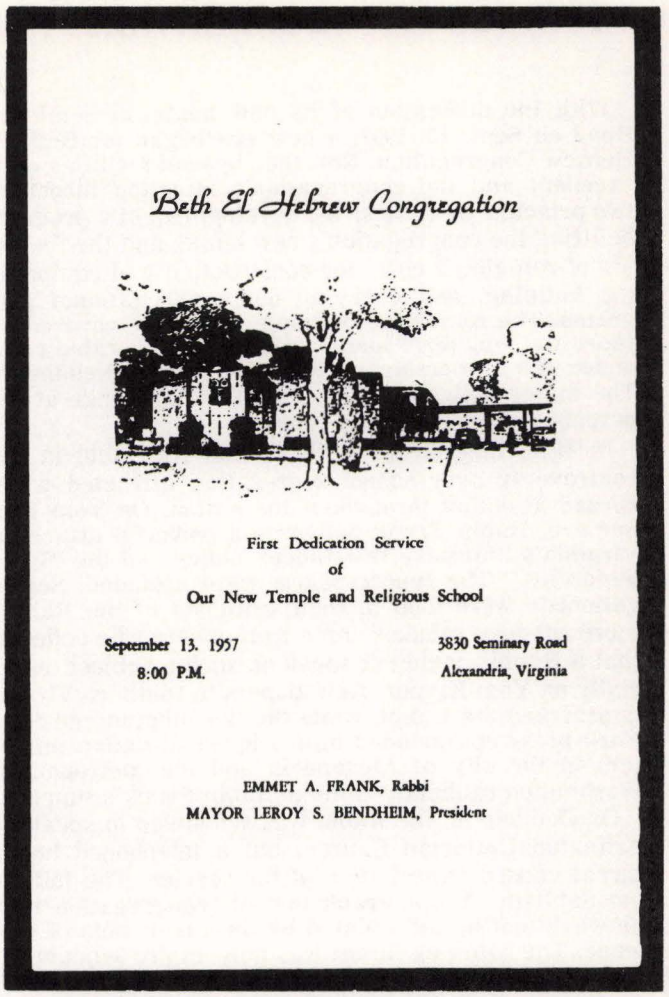
BUILDING THE NEW TEMPLE

Once the Seminary Road lot had been purchased, planning went into "high gear." By November, 1955, tentative sketches of the interior layout and exterior design were ready for the congregation's approval. The drawing of detailed plans and specifications and solicitations of contruction bids then followed. Financing negotiations also began during this time.

In January, 1956, building plans were nearly complete. The sanctuary would seat some 400 people. When expanded to include the social hall, it would accommodate approximately 1,000. The building would also contain a Religious School of 18 classrooms, a library and an office for the Rabbi. In April, the congregation authorized the committee to negotiate with builders, setting a maximum construction expenditure of $250,000. Groundbreaking followed on May 26, with the Cowles Construction Company as builder.

To raise the money for this endeavor, Beth El turned for assistance to a professional fund-raiser, the Wells Company, which supplied an expert know-how for a special drive. The solicitations were undertaken by a congregational committee, and it succeeded in obtaining about $85,000 in pledges.

On Feb. 10, 1957, the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone took place. Seven months later, on September 13, the day so long awaited came at last, when Beth El held its dedication services in the new Temple. The ceremony was highlighted by a procession of Torahs, the presentation of United States and Chaplain's flags, a worship service, and a dedication sermon by Rabbi Jay Kaufman, Vice President of the Union of Amercan Hebrew Congregations. The reception that followed marked the first use of the social hall.



Beth El Hebrew Congregation

First Dedication Service
of
Our New Temple and Religious School

September 13. 1957
8:00 P.M.

3830 Seminary Road
Alexandria, Virginia

EMMET A. FRANK, Rabbi
MAYOR LEROY S. BENDHEIM, President



View of the Beth El Hebrew Congregation sign in front of the Temple at 3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria.

FINANCES . . . SEGREGATION . . .

With the dedication of its new home on Seminary Road on Sept. 13, 1957, a new era began for Beth El Hebrew Congregation. Now the physical facilities were excellent and the congregation's attention turned to two principal activities: the development of a program befitting the congregation's new home, and the financing of remaining costs for constructing and equipping the building, and carrying out congregational programs. The remaining building costs were covered by short and long-term loans arranged at favorable rates under the leadership of President Leroy Bendheim. The major obligation was a $200,000 mortgage at 4½ percent repayable in 17½ years.

In 1958, the role of Beth El and its Rabbi in the controversy over school segregation attracted widespread attention throughout the nation. On Yom Kippur eve, Rabbi Frank delivered a powerful attack on Virginia's "massive resistance" policy and the "Byrd oligarchy." The repercussions were profound. Segregationists were loud in their criticism of the Rabbi; more subdued rebukes came from others who believed that a Rabbi should not speak on such a subject, especially on Yom Kippur. Newspapers in southern Virginia attacked the Rabbi, while the Washington and New York press commended him. Eleven Christian ministers in the city of Alexandria and the metropolitan Washington rabbinate came to Rabbi Frank's support.

On October 19, the Rabbi was scheduled to speak at Arlington Unitarian Church, but a telephoned bomb threat caused cancellation of the service. The following Sabbath, Rabbi Frank told his congregation that he would not be intimidated by threats or acts of violence. The bombing threat was universally denounced, and letters poured in from all over the country congratulating Beth El and its Rabbi for their courage.

Gradually, the furor over these sermons died away. New problems arose to divert attention from the segregation issue. But the controversy served many useful purposes. The Rabbi of Beth El was given complete freedom to voice opinions from the pulpit, however distasteful they might be to some segments of the community or even to some of his own congregants. Moreover, these expressions of opinion had resulted in a strengthening of interfaith relationships.

CENTENNIAL

Early in 1959, President Bendheim appointed a Centennial Committee to plan a program honoring a significant event—the 100th anniversary of Beth El Hebrew Congregation. Three Centennial Sabbaths were celebrated—the first on December 18, with Rabbi Ariel Goldberg of Richmond as guest speaker; the second on Jan. 29, 1960, with Rabbi Bernard Bamberger, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, reviewing the services rendered by Beth El to the community, and the third on March 4, 1960, with Rabbi Louis Binstock of Chicago delivering the message.

The major centennial weekend was celebrated on March 4, 5 and 6, 1960. The morning after Rabbi Binstock's Sabbath Eve sermon, a community-wide worship service was held at which governmental leaders from the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church and the counties of Arlington and Fairfax extended their congratulations on the completion of Beth El's first century of service. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Benjamin Lynt of the Second Presbyterian Church of Alexandria, a longtime friend of Beth El. The centennial celebration came to a close on Sunday evening, March 6, with a gala banquet attended by large numbers of members and friends, with the rabbinate of metropolitan Washington fully represented. The highlight of the evening was an address by Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which he concluded by commending Beth El's "spiritual and moral fortitude in trying times."

NORTHERN VIRGINIA SUN

Beth El Will Celebrate Centennial Next Week

ALEXANDRIA — Temple Beth El, 3830 Seminary Rd., will hold its major centennial celebration on March 4, 5, and 6, with prominent men of all faiths participating in one of the major services.

At the Sabbath Eve service at 8:15 p.m. March 4, the speaker will be Rabbi Louis Binstock of Temple Sholom, Chicago.

A community - wide worship service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 5. At that time greetings will be brought to the congregation by the governmental heads of the four communities in Northern Virginia represented by Herbert L. Brown Jr., member of the Arlington County Board; Charles M. Hailey mayor of Falls Church; Mrs. Anne Wilkins, chairman of the County Board of Fairfax County, and Leroy S. Bendheim, mayor of Alexandria.

Greetings also will be brought by the Rev. Beverly Watkins, president of the Alexandria Ministerial Association and minister of Fairlington Methodist Church; and Rev. William E. Bason, Beverley Hills Community Church. The Rev. Benjamin Lynt, minister of the Second Presbyterian Church, Alexandria, will preach the sermon.

* * *

THE CENTENNIAL banquet will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, March 6. Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, will be the speaker.

A letter from President Eisenhower was sent to the Rabbi Frank on Feb. 15 extending congratulations, which reads:

"Dear Rabbi Frank:

"It is a pleasure to join in the observance of the 100th anniversary of Beth El Hebrew Congregation.

"Over the years, faithful to the commandments of Judaism the members of this Congregation have grown and prospered. Strengthened by this tradition, I am sure they enter their second century with confidence and thanksgiving.

"Since I am leaving for South America on Monday I am taking this opportunity to send greetings to all gathered at your Centennial services March 4-6.

"With best wishes,

Dwight D. Eisenhower."

Temple Beth El was organized in September, 1859, and rented permanent rooms for worship and school on King street in 1864. The first Temple building, occupied until September, 1957, was on Washington street near Cameron in Alexandria. When built and dedicated in 1871 there were 25 families as members. Isaac Eichberg was president of the congregation from 1859 until his death in 1914.

* * *

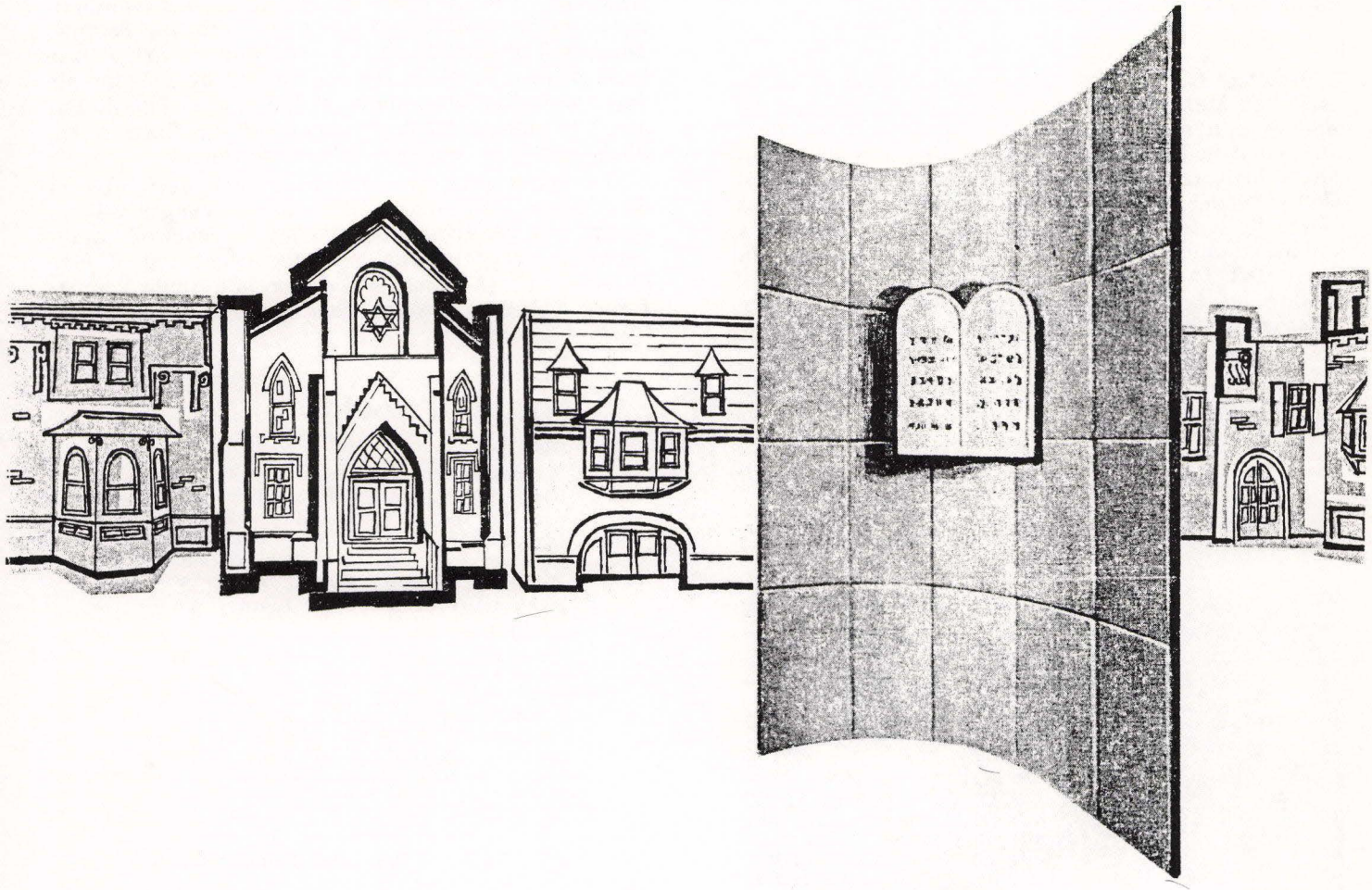
UNDER A series of rabbis the congregation continued to grow slowly. When Rabbi Emmet A. Frank arrived from Houston, Tex., on April 15, 1954, there were about 140 member families of the congregation. Leroy S. Bendheim, mayor of Alexandria and grandson of two of the founders of the congregation, was elected president of the congregation the same year. Since its removal to Seminary road, the congregation has increased to almost 400 families. This has been a growth of 250 families in about five years. The religious school has a weekly attendance of about 500 children.

Beth El Hebrew Congregation is a branch of Reform Judaism. The other two synagogues in Northern Virginia are of the conservative branch of Judaism.

Cover of the centennial book.

TEMPLE

BETH EL



1859 1959



Principals at a banquet in 1960 celebrating Beth El's centennial birthday were (left to right) Dr. David Kruger, second vice president; Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, congratulating Beth El President Leroy Bendheim; Rabbi Emmet A. Frank, and First Vice President Louis Spector.

Although the Centennial Year celebration officially ended on March 6, this date by no means marked the end of activities signaling the Centennial. In 1959, President Bendheim appointed a committee of professional historians to prepare a history of the congregation covering the first 100 years. After a tremendous effort by a few dedicated volunteers, the book was published and delivered to all Temple members in early 1963. That volume, bearing the title *A Centennial History of Beth El Hebrew Congregation*, 1859-1959, was written by Max Rosenberg and Arthur Marmor, assisted by Earl Abrams and Bernard Brenner. Mr. Rosenberg was the editor, and Shy Greenspan furnished technical guidance and artwork. Much of the content of this 125-year publication is based on the Centennial book.

Meanwhile, Temple programs were gathering new momentum, spurred by the opportunities offered by the new facilities. The Religious School began a period of improvement and expansion, with a faculty of professional teachers under the leadership of Educational Director Irwin Gottschall. The Sisterhood and Brotherhood undertook numerous projects, all redounding to the benefit of the Temple. For example, the Sisterhood contributed especially to the development of an efficient kitchen and to the maintenance of an attractive interior appearance of the Temple. In 1959, the Sisterhood put on the first of its famous Smorgasbords, a highly successful fund-raising operation which continued as an annual event for some 20 years. In 1960, the Brotherhood completed a multiyear project culminating in the presentation of a new Torah for the Temple. The scroll of this Torah is a true work of art. It was hand printed in block Hebrew letters by a Yemenite Jew, who spent six months at the task in Israel. The scroll is made of vellum parchment and fixed to two finely turned olive-wood interlocking rollers.

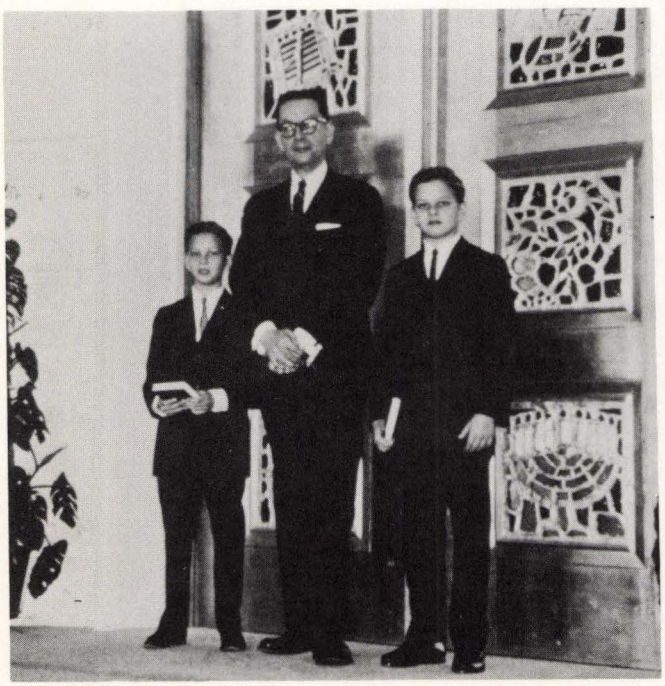
New adult programs included such activities as adult-education courses, dance classes, congregational seders and get-acquainted parties. A renewed youth-activities program was instituted consisting of four parts: NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth), Junior NFTY, a bowling program and a Boy Scout troop.

SOLOMON DIMOND MEMORIAL LIBRARY DEDICATED

Relatives and friends of Sol and Helen Dimond gathered on June 14, at 11:30 a.m. for the dedication of the Solomon Dimond Memorial Library. The dedication service was conducted by Rabbi Frank. A plaque mounted on the wall above the fireplace in the Library is inscribed:

SOLOMON DIMOND MEMORIAL LIBRARY
1908-1963
A GRATEFUL CONGREGATION
IN RECOGNITION OF THE
DEDICATION AND CONSECRATION
OF THIS BELOVED MEMBER
IN ALL FACETS OF
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE
HAS MEMORIALIZED
THIS LIBRARY
THIS 14TH DAY OF JUNE, 1964

From the *Beth El Bulletin*



The Harviths are one of several Temple Beth El families who can trace their ancestry to founders of the congregation. This picture was taken on Feb. 29, 1964, when Steve Harvith (right) became a bar mitzvah; beside him on the bema were his brother Charles and father Arthur. Henry Blondheim, first Beth El president, was a greatuncle of Arthur's wife Beulah and Lehman Blondheim. Henry's brother, Simon Blondheim, was the father of Solomon Blondheim who was the father of Beulah Harvith whose son, Charles, is father of Rachel Anne Harvith, born on Sept. 28, 1980.

V. TRAUMATIC CHANGES . . . A NEW ERA

SCHISM IN CONGREGATION

As so often happens in time of institutional growth, not everyone in the congregation was pleased with the directions of the Temple's development. In particular, a considerable element of the membership did not agree with positions and policies followed by the Rabbi and the lay leadership. For example, among the things that displeased many Beth El members was a letter that Rabbi Frank wrote to *The Washington Post* saying that he saw nothing wrong with Christmas or Chanukah observances in the public schools. When Leroy Bendheim declined renomination for the office of President of the congregation in March, 1962, after eight years of dedicated service, a group of congregants submitted a slate of officers in opposition to the slate proposed by the Temple's duly chosen Nominating Committee. The opposition slate, headed by Mr. Greenspan as the presidential candidate, offered a statement of objectives in which the most controversial provision was that the Rabbi's actions in representing the congregation should be influenced by "lay guidance, counsel and assistance." The Nominating Committee's slate, with Louis Spector as the presidential candidate, contended that the Rabbi should lead the congregation, that Rabbi Frank had displayed the leadership very well and that the most important obective was: "We must hold the congregation together!"

A hotly contested "campaign" ensued, in which honorable men and women who had rendered dedicated service to the congregation found themselves on opposite sides of an adversary relationship. The sincerity of both groups cannot be doubted. When the election was held at the congregation's annual meeting on May 28, 1962, a record number of members turned out. The Nominating Committee's slate won by a narrow majority. The opposition supporters were, of course, extremely disappointed, to the extent that 43 families left Beth El to help found a new congregation, Rodef Shalom, in Falls Church. At the time, this split appeared to be a serious blow to Beth El, for the departing members included some top leaders who labored unstintingly for the Temple. In the perspective of a generation later, however, it is apparent that in the long run the division has had fortunate results. With the great influx of Jewish families into the Northern Virginia area since 1962, a Reform congregation was needed in the Falls Church-McLean area. In any event, the wounds have long since healed, and the two congregations have had close and friendly relations, including many joint activities.

Under the presidency of Mr. Spector, the Temple undertook a vigorous membership drive to replace the members who had left in June, 1962. By September 23, 54 new families had joined, and the membership exceeded 400 for the first time. During the three years of President Spector's incumbency, the congregation experienced a remarkable period of growth in many directions: Religious services with inspirational sermons delivered by eminent pulpit guests; dynamic activities supporting the Temple by the Sisterhood and Brotherhood; an outstanding adult-education program; enhanced youth activities; a burgeoning Couples Club; stocking and improvment of the library; a well-organized Memorials program; a steadily growing Religious School with excellent Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation programs, and an attractive series of social activities. Attendance at High Holy Day services began to strain the capacity of the combined sanctuary-social hall. The Rabbi's presentations in the community as guest speaker at numerous commencements, interfaith services and civic events brought honor and respect to the congregation. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Rabbi Frank's approaches and policies continued to generate opposition among many members of his own congregation.



Louis Spector, Beth El President, 1962-65.

GROWING PAINS

The term of Max Kraft, who in July, 1965, succeeded Mr. Spector as President of the congregation, was marked by a continuation of growth in virtually all phases of Temple activities. The impact of this growth was particularly acute with respect to Religious School facilities, as classrooms became overcrowded. The 42 confirmands of the class of May, 1966, represented the largest confirmation class in the congregation's history. "The new Temple," stated Rabbi Frank, "built but 10 years ago to serve a generation or two without need for expansion, is bursting at the seams in but a quarter of this time."

Responding to the growing pains, President Kraft appointed a Committee on Building Expansion, with



Max S. Kraft, Beth El President, 1965-67.



Murray Weinberg, Beth El President, 1967-69.

First Vice President Murray Weinberg as Chairman. This was a felicitous choice since Mr. Weinberg was not only slated to become the next Temple president, but was also a builder with a thorough knowledge of construction and financing. His committee prepared a detailed proposal for presentation to the congregation at the annual meeting on May 24, 1967. Sketches of the proposed general layout were exhibited and explained. The plan for the expanded structure included a greatly enlarged social hall and kitchen, additional classrooms, a new lobby, new offices, a youth room and other improvements. Also explained was the plan to finance the cost of construction and related expenses, estimated at $300,000, by a quarterly assessment of $15 on each member. The congregation approved the plan and empowered the Temple Board to set the date for commencing the assessment. No building-fund drive for the expansion was undertaken.

During Mr. Weinberg's term as President of Beth El, July, 1967-June, 1969, the full program of ongoing congregational activities was continued, but the great achievement of that period was the construction of the new east wing of the Temple building. On assuming the presidency, he continued in his role as chairman of the Committee on Building Expansion. That panel immediately embarked on the procurement of suitable architectural plans. Finally, the most satisfactory plan consistent with the Temple's financial resources was selected. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on Sept. 6, 1968, and construction proceeded expeditiously under the watchful eye of Mr. Weinberg and his committee. By the following summer, the expansion was virtually complete, and occupancy of the new facilities began in August.

Meanwhile, other landmark events in the congregation's history occurred. On Sept. 17, 1968, the congregation was shocked by the news of the sudden death of Irwin Gottschall, who had served as the Temple's dedicated Educational Director for 15 years. Mr. Gottschall's untimely passing left a void that was not easy to fill. Mrs. Julie Lando was designated to serve as interim Director of the Religious School until permanent arrangements could be made. The quest for a new director resulted in the appointment of Cantor Julian Lohre to the new posts of Cantor and Temple Administrator, as well as Educational Director.

A few months after Mr. Gottschall's death, another key vacancy occurred. On March 10, 1969, Rabbi Frank announced his resignation, to be effective in July. He had accepted a call to Temple De Hirsch (now Temple De Hirsch Sinai) in Seattle. The Temple Board of Directors accepted the resignation with regret and expressed the congregation's good wishes to Rabbi Frank and his family. The congregation gave Rabbi Frank a cordial send-off with a number of farewell events, highlighted by a congregational dinner at which he was lauded by Temple leaders for his 15 years of devoted service, and presented him with tokens commemorating this service.



Beth El matriarchs of the 1960s: Florence Blondheim and Hattie Myer.

Beth El
Hebrew Congregation
Bulletin

SERVING NORTHERN VIRGINIA SINCE 1859
A Reform Congregation Affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations



VOL. XXI, NO. 1 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA JULY 1969

RABBI ARNOLD G. FINK,



Rabbi Arnold G. Fink, for the past 3 years Associate Rabbi of Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pa., has accepted a call to become spiritual leader of Beth El Hebrew Congregation. Rabbi Fink plans to assume his new duties in mid-August.

Selection of Rabbi Fink was made by a special pulpit committee and the Beth El Executive Board, and approved at a special Congregation meeting on June 26.

Rabbi Fink, 34, was born in Buffalo, New York, and represents the eleventh consecutive generation of rabbis in his family. He attended elementary and secondary schools in Buffalo, received his B.A. from Princeton University in 1957, his Bachelor of Hebrew Letters from the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, in 1959, and his Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and Ordination as Rabbi in 1962. He is currently a candidate for degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Temple University.

Since 1962, Rabbi Fink has been Assistant or Associate Rabbi at Congregation Keneseth Israel, one of the largest Reform congregations in the United States.

Rabbi Fink was a leader in communal, religious, and educational activities during his residence in the Greater Philadelphia area. He lectured at Manor, Beaver, and Gratz Colleges and Drexel Institute; was workshop leader for the National Conference of Christians and Jews; executive board member, Educational Week for the Blind; member of Rotary, B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Committee, Suburban Council on Human Relations; and was rabbinic adviser to the Eastern Pennsylvania Federation of Temple Youth.

He has lectured extensively on behalf of the Jewish Chautauqua Society and is the author of various published articles and reports.

Rabbi Fink and his wife, Karen, have two sons and a daughter.

NEW SPIRITUAL LEADER

NEW WING DEDICATION SEPT. 5-7

Work on the expansion of the Temple is virtually complete and the offices in the new wing have been occupied since mid-June. The library in the original building has been greatly increased in size by combining it with the former office of the Rabbi. The secretaries' office is being converted into a coat room and the former Religious School office will soon become the Judaica Shop. Members who have not yet toured the expanded Temple are invited to do so. Before or after Sabbath Eve services is a good time. Members will be delighted with the new facilities.

Dedication ceremonies and open house are planned for September 5-7.

Religious School Registration

Parents will again have the opportunity to register their children for Religious School by mail during the summer. Registration forms will be sent to parents in August with instructions explaining this advance registration procedure.

The procedure was used last year for the first time and was favorably received. It avoids the long lines and confusion of personal registration. Parents who do not register in advance under this procedure may register their children in person immediately before classes start in September.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

The first Executive Board meeting of the new Temple year will be held on Tuesday, July 22, 8:15 p.m., at the Temple.

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR TO ARRIVE IN MID-JULY

Cantor Julian Lohre, Beth El's new educational director, will arrive about the middle of July, and begin his duties at the Temple. He will work with the Religious School Committee, and later with Rabbi Fink, on the organization of school activities and curriculum for the coming year. With the addition of several fine classrooms in the new wing of the Temple a completely new plan of classroom assignments will be worked out.

In addition to his duties as educational director, Cantor Lohre will conduct Sabbath Eve services until Rabbi Fink commences his duties. Members who have not yet met Cantor Lohre and his charming wife can enjoy that privilege by coming to Temple on Friday evening.

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

The Congregation elected a new slate of officers at the Annual Meeting held at the Temple on May 28, 1969. The new officers, whose terms began on July 1, are:

President, Morris M. Thompson

First Vice President, Adolph Steinberg

Second Vice President, Leonard M. Marks

Financial Secretary, Mrs. Elaine Orlick

Recording Secretary, Mrs. Zelda Blumberg

Corres. Secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Sommers

Treasurer, Mrs. Wilma Marks

Trustee, 3-year term, Dr. Irving Imburg, (Holdover trustees, Charles Luria and Louis Spector)

Board Members at Large: Manfred Gale, Jerome Fine, Gerald Green, and Sherman L. Naidorf.

The Annual Meeting was chaired by outgoing President Murray Weinberg, who as immediate past president now becomes a member of the Executive Board. Other important business conducted included adoption of the 1969-70 budget, approval of amendments to the Temple Constitution and By-Laws, reports of committee chairmen, and an interim report from the Pulpit Committee.

BRIGHTER MOOD

Thus, by the summer of 1969 the mood at Beth El was one of eager anticipation for the many events that were about to unfold. Of greatest interest was the pending arrival of a new spiritual leader.

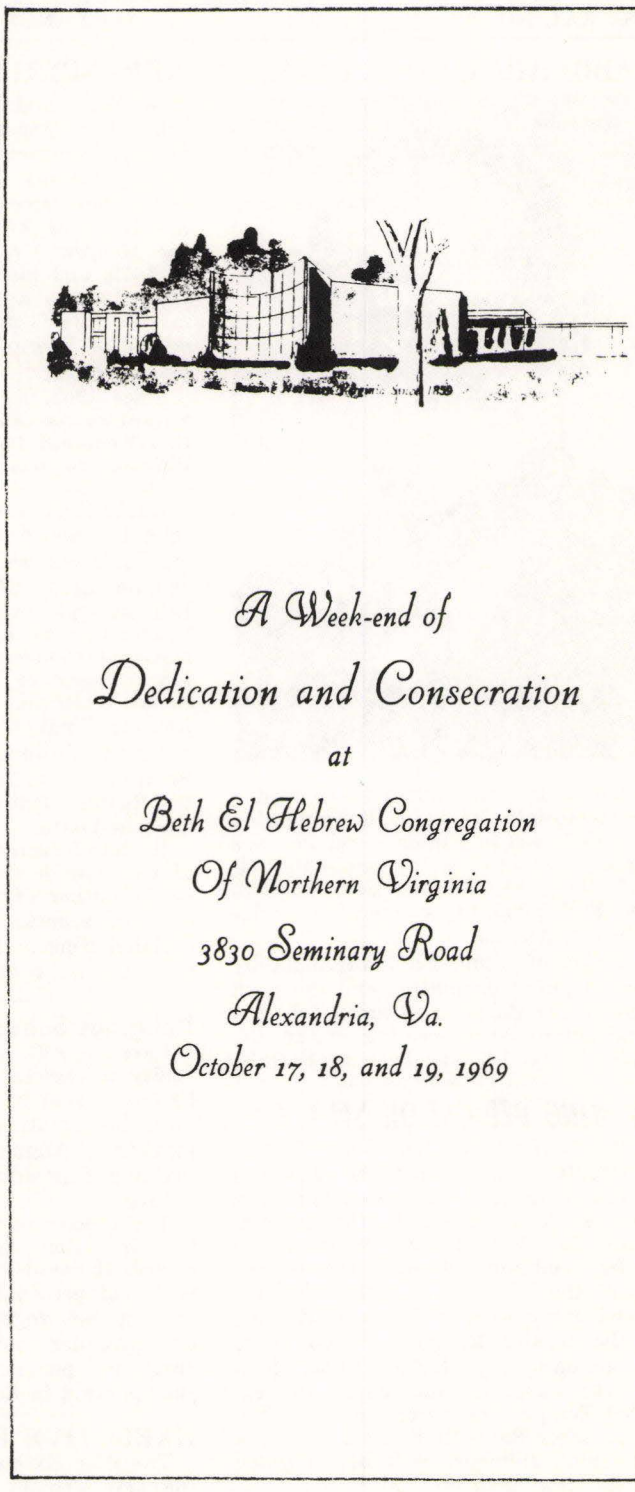
When Rabbi Frank announced his coming departure, President Weinberg appointed a Pulpit Committee to seek a successor. After considering several well-qualified candidates, the committee recommended the appointment of Rabbi Arnold G. Fink, 34, who was then serving as Associate Rabbi of Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, Pa., a Philadelphia suburb. The selection was approved at a special congregation meeting on June 26, 1969. A graduate of Princeton University and the Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Fink was ordained in 1962, thus representing the 11th consecutive generation of rabbis in his family. He began his new duties on Aug. 15, 1969, when he conducted Sabbath Eve worship services at the Temple. The arrival of Rabbi Fink and Cantor Lohre followed shortly upon the election of new Temple officers in June, 1969, with Morris M. Thompson succeeding Mr. Weinberg as President of the congregation. Rabbi Fink set the tone for the coming years at Beth El when he referred, in his very first message in *The Beth El Bulletin,* to the new "family" that he had inherited. Considering Beth El as the extended family for each of its members is now commonplace, but the phrase has special meaning to many congregants when they celebrate life-cycle events, or when they chat with friends at Sisterhood's Bagel Bar, at a Brotherhood brunch or at an Oneg Shabbat after services.

Philosophically, Rabbi Fink's arrival signaled a new beginning. The world was already well into a period of rapidly accelerating change, and the prevailing theory of Beth El was that in a world of change, the Temple should remain a constant. Beth El's philosophy at age 125 was based on the belief that in a world of change, the Temple must change as well, and while the changes in every phase of life at Beth El originated from different sources, they all found Rabbi Fink in the forefront, trying to make the Temple a home for all who wish to enter.



Morris M. Thompson, Beth El President, 1969-71.

The arrival of Mr. Lohre at the helm of the Religious School was welcomed as a recognition that Beth El was becoming a larger congregation and one that could support the services of a professional educator. In addition, Mr. Lohre, a trained cantor, would be on the pulpit each Shabbat to perform in that role and to lead the congregation in the musical portions of the service. During the two years that Cantor Lohre, his wife Rhoda and their three children were at Beth El, they made many friends and were personally very popular.



A Week-end of

Dedication and Consecration

at

Beth El Hebrew Congregation

Of Northern Virginia

3830 Seminary Road

Alexandria, Va.

October 17, 18, and 19, 1969

Installation-dedication ceremonies for Rabbi Fink, Cantor Lohre and the Temple's new east wing took place on the weekend of October 17-19. On Friday evening, during Shabbat services, Rabbi Bertram W. Korn, Senior Rabbi of Temple Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia, officiated at the installation of the Rabbi who had served with him for seven years. The following night, at a celebration dinner dance, Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman of Washington Hebrew Congregation spoke eloquently on what a Rabbi and a congregation should expect of each other. Members of the senior youth group and the volunteer choir also participated in the evening's program. On Sunday morning, President Thompson welcomed members of the Alexandria community, civic and religious leaders from the area, the entire Religious School and many congregants to an impressive ceremony of dedication of the east wing. Speakers during the morning included the Rev. James W. Unruh, the Rev. Archer R. Turner, Mayor Charles E. Beatley, Jr., and Senator Leroy Bendheim. Rabbi Fink conducted a ceremony of induction, installing Cantor Lohre as the Cantor/Educational Director, and then all were invited to tour the new building facilities and enjoy a sumptuous refreshment table.

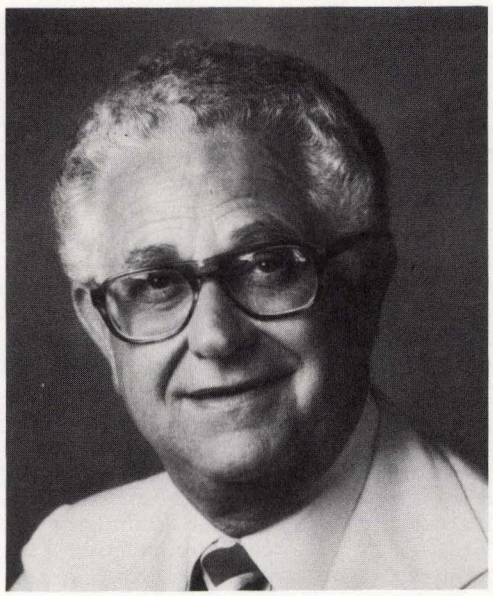
While 1969 was a year of great and positive change for Beth El, its members were experiencing world events that were causing them anguish, confusion, and doubts about their ability to distinguish right from wrong any longer. It was the year of My Lai, the year of students' holding sit-ins and sleep-ins on the floor of Bendheim Hall and of asking the pulpit to protest U.S. policy in Viet Nam. *Relevancy* was the word of the year, and Beth El, along with every other religious institution in the country, was challenged to respond to the times.

ASHKENAZIC TO SEPHARDIC

Beth El entered the '70s with a membership of about 380 families and a Religious School enrollment of about 400 children. A number of changes in practice and curriculum were initiated by Rabbi Fink, Cantor Lohre and, beginning in 1971, by Ilana Rappaport, the new Educational Director. The school's Hebrew program was greatly strengthened, and the change was made from Ashkenazic to Sephardic pronounciation. A year later, the Sephardic dialect was heard from the pulpit, and while all were free to use the dialect most familiar to them, it was only a matter of a few years until the pronounciation used in modern Israel and in most American Reform congregations, was the preferred one in Beth El's sanctuary.

In the fall of 1971, BEEP was born. Beth El Elective Program was the midweek Religious School course offering for grades 8-9 and was just one part of the giant step taken to upgrade religious education at Beth El. All children in grades 4-9 were encouraged to come to school on Wednesday nights as well as Sunday mornings, a move that doubled the amount of Hebrew instruction time for them. So successful was this program that within a few years all students in those grades were enrolled in the twice-a-week program. In addition to the Hebrew, younger pupils had the opportunity to choose a club or activity of interest, and older ones could choose from a variety of academic courses.

A committee of parents, students and teachers met regularly with Mrs. Rappaport and Rabbi Fink to monitor the changes occurring in the school and to help plan the many new enrichment activities that became a part of school life—class Shabbat dinners and Havdalah services, field trips to Jewish cultural events and a guest lecture series, to name a few. Mrs. Rappaport was able to call on large numbers of volunteers to assist her with all of these new programs, and those who gave their time to these projects experienced the joy of promoting the involvement of Beth El's young people in their religion. Following Mrs. Rappaport's move to Washington Hebrew Congregation in 1978, Gloria Eiseman became the school principal, and in 1982, Elaine Waschler succeeded her in that position.



Adolph Steinberg, Beth El President, 1971-73.

In June, 1971, the congregation elected Adolph Steinberg as its President. During his administration, Beth El joined Inter-Met, a program that provided the Temple with a series of student Rabbis. Beginning in 1972, Beth El enjoyed the services of four young men, all in the latter stages of their Rabbinic training, and all of whom gave much to every phase of congregational life. Assisting Rabbi Fink, each for one year, were Robert G. Klensin, Jonathan Kendall, Harold Caminker and Ronald W. Kaplan. While changes were taking place at Beth El, they were occurring in the reform movement as a whole. In January, 1972, David Mitchell, President of the National Association of Temple Administrators, led a retreat for all Temple officers, Board members and other lay leaders interested in developing and expanding the scope of Temple activities. During the two-day session, Mr. Mitchell dealt with a new constitution, programming, budgeting and most other aspects of congregational life. Many of the suggestions he submitted in a follow-up report were later implemented.

To correspond with the current trend in congregational management and after much serious thought and discussion at every level within the congregation, a new constitution was adopted at a specially called meeting in December, 1972. Most significant changes

from the old to the new included making the Board of Directors elective rather than appointive, making the duties of the Board largely policymaking, establishing an Executive Committee to run day-to-day operations and opening Temple membership to any person age 18 or older who wished to establish a separate membership.

ANNIVERSARY YEAR 115

In June, 1973, James N. Hayman assumed the presidency of the congregation, and most provisions of the new constitution were implemented. Shortly thereafter came the High Holidays and the wrenching Yom Kippur of the October War. Beth El members entered a period of introspection as they assessed their personal feelings toward Israel and toward the relationship of their congregation, the national Reform movement and their nation regarding the Jewish homeland. World events gave an added significance to the celebration planned for December, 1974—the 115th anniversary of the founding of Beth El. Chairman Ann Weinberg and her committee did an outstanding job, not only of planning a memorable service, dinner dance and brunch weekend, but also of locating many artifacts of the congregation and raising the money to have them restored to condition for permanent display in the building. A significant part of our history was made readily available to all congregants through the efforts of Mrs. Weinberg and her committee.

The mid-1970s also was noted for a substantial expansion of the adult-education program, including a scholar in residence. One of the most noted of these scholars was Rabbi Alexander Schindler, who visited Beth El in April, 1975. He later became President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Early in 1975, Beth El joined the growing number of Reform congregations adopting *Gates of Prayer* as its Shabbat service book, but most accepted the new liturgies enthusiastically. Six years later, *Gates of Repentance* was adopted as the prayer book for the High Holidays.



James Hayman, Beth El President, 1973-75.

Both of these books reflect the realities of the State of Israel and the Holocaust, but both retain much that was familiar to those raised in Reform Judaism.

When John Lippmann took over as President in 1975, membership in Beth El stood at 447 families. During the ensuing eight years, that number grew to 770, and numerous changes in the operation of the Temple were instituted. At the same time that the Temple was beginning to experience rapid growth, larger numbers of women were entering the work force, and men were taking over some of the house and child duties at home. As a result, both men and women had less time to give to volunteer work. These two circumstances led to the rise of professionalism, to having paid employees doing what heretofore had been done by volunteers. The staff grew, and the position of Temple Administrator was created to give direction to the much

MEANING OF THE 115TH: A REAWAKENING OF JUDAISM

By Louis Silver

A spirit of togetherness, a reawakening of Judaism back to our ancient roots, a feeling of what it really means to be a Jew. This is what evolved from Temple Beth El's 115th anniversary celebration.

It was certainly more than collecting relics from the old Washington Street Building. It was more than the bare statistics—360 worshipers, a large crowd, at the Nov. 15 services; 250 enjoying the fun of the Nov. 16 Presidents' Ball, and 100 persons at the Brotherhood Brunch on Nov. 17.

Sidney Weil and Senator Leroy Bendheim set the mood for the celebration at the Friday-night service with talks on "The Old Days in the Old Building."

Those early days—the Washington Street Building was dedicated on Sept. 1, 1871—featured services conducted by members of the Congregation. Hiring a rabbi came later, Mr. Weil said.

Indoor plumbing also came later. As Mr. Weil put it: "It was cold outside."

The problems of raising money for our present, 15-year-old building were detailed by Senator Bendheim, himself a past president of Beth El. He recalled the building-fund drives, supplemented by loans from friendly bankers.

The Saturday-night dance had two bits of formality—a brief *Havdalah* service symbolizing the end of Shabbat and the presentation of pictures of the Washington Street Building to current and past presidents of the Temple, Brotherhood, Sisterhood and the Couples Club.

Brotherhood President Addie Steinberg put on a highly entertaining act, remi-

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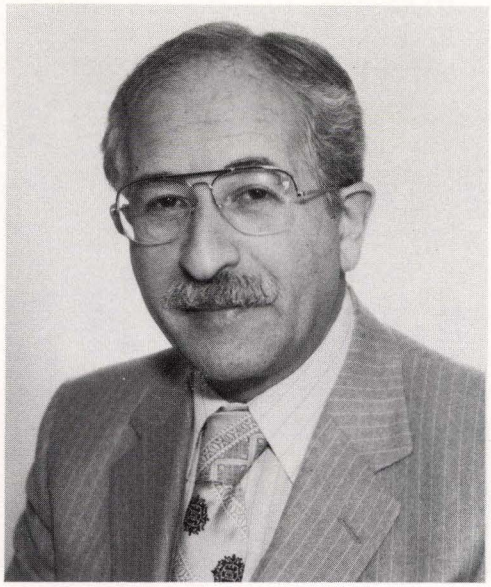
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niscent of his days as a stand-up comedian. The crowd loved it.

But the *piece de resistance* came at the Sunday Brotherhood Brunch—after we all were pleasantly sated from the scrambled eggs, lox and bagels. The mood was set by the guest speaker, Rabbi Herbert Bronstein of North Shore Congregation in Glencoe, Ill., and chairman of the Joint Commission on Worship for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

"Jewish worship," he told a questioner, "is not an unsuccessful spectator sport. Rather, it's more of congregational participation in worship."

From the *Beth El Hebrew Congregation Bulletin*, Dec. 6, 1974



John F. Lippmann, Beth El President, 1975-77.

greater volume of business flowing through the Temple office. Diane Brooks, Marshall Levin and Al Ungerleider all made major contributions to the increased efficiency of the organization, and each, as Administrator, convinced those involved with Temple procedures that every one was benefiting greatly by having someone in the office every day overseeing expenditures, supervising operations and following up on the myriad details of Beth El's greatly expanding programming.

STRESSING MEMBERS' NEEDS

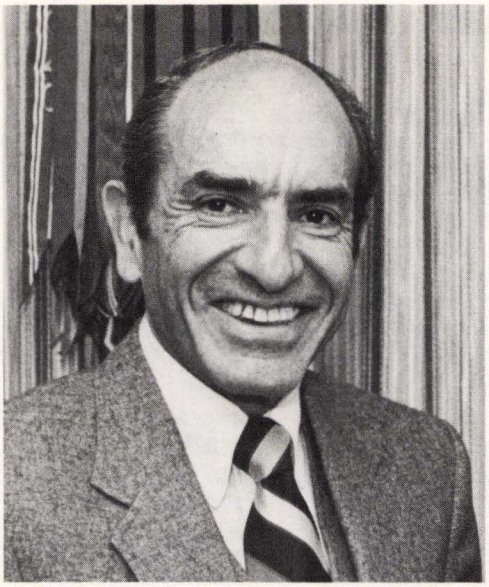
With increased membership and increased staff came increased programming. "Project Outreach" was an attempt to serve the many Jews both in and out of the congregation who were moving in large numbers into the Burke-West Springfield area. So successful were Shabbat Services and holiday events out there that by early 1984 Beth El's satellite Religious School, held each Monday in Burke, served more than 50 children, and informal Shabbat family services held once a month during the school year were very well attended.

Early in Manfred Gale's presidency, the Board spent considerable time discussing and formulating plans for Chavurot. More than one Chavurah formed in 1977 were active seven years later, and many new groups were created since the program's inception. One Chavurah came about because of a need perceived by Rabbi Fink and expressed by several members to him. It was composed of single parents and their children. Each Chavurah was different, each fulfilling the need of its members for belonging to a small group as within the larger Temple family.

With changes in the nuclear family, separation from the extended family, widespread mobility and a constantly accelerating rate of change in the world, the Temple, even while itself undergoing change, greatly helped sustain Judaism and offered a focal point for many of its rootless members. Responding to, or anticipating the needs of its congregants, Beth El fostered a Young Couples Club, a Singles Group, youth groups, senior citizens groups, a nursery school, adult study groups, a bowling league, Sisterhood, Brotherhood, Couples Club, Funeral Assistance Committee, Home of Peace Cemetery, and an Outreach program for new converts and those contemplating conversion to Judaism.



Rabbi Alexander Schindler's scholarly lecture begins with humorous remarks that bring smiles to the faces of Rabbis Arnold Fink and Richard Sternberger in 1975.



Manfred Gale, Beth El President, 1977-79.



Martin Mintz, Beth El President, 1979-81.

In the late 1970s and early '80s, Beth El reached outside of its walls, too. In 1979, the Temple sponsored two Indo-Chinese sisters who were among the "boat people" brought into this country by President Jimmy Carter. Two Soviet prisoners of conscience were adopted, and those who worked very hard on this project had the great satisfaction of helping the Mogilever family leave the Soviet Union and safely settle in Israel. Temple participation was increased in local, regional and national Jewish organizations. Most significantly, Arlene Rephan became President of District 8 of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and John Lippmann became a Vice President of the Mid-Atlantic Region and then a National Board member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Beginning in 1975, a determined effort was made by successive Boards of Directors to put the Temple on a more sound financial footing, and by the time of the election of Martin Mintz as President in 1979, deficits were hoped to be a thing of the past. In 1980, Beth El was able to look beyond current fiscal matters and begin to plan for the future when a relatively new member conceived and, after Board approval, carried out the establishment of an Endowment Fund. Due largely to the efforts of Bert Fisher, $100,000 was raised and a beautiful dedicatory plaque installed in 1983. Sixty-five members of the congregation had responded to the Endowment Fund motto: "We Are Our Children's Future."





The Home of Peace Cemetery in Alexandria was taken over by Temple Beth El in 1983 from the Hebrew Benevolent Society. That society established the burial ground in 1857—two years before the founding of the congregation.

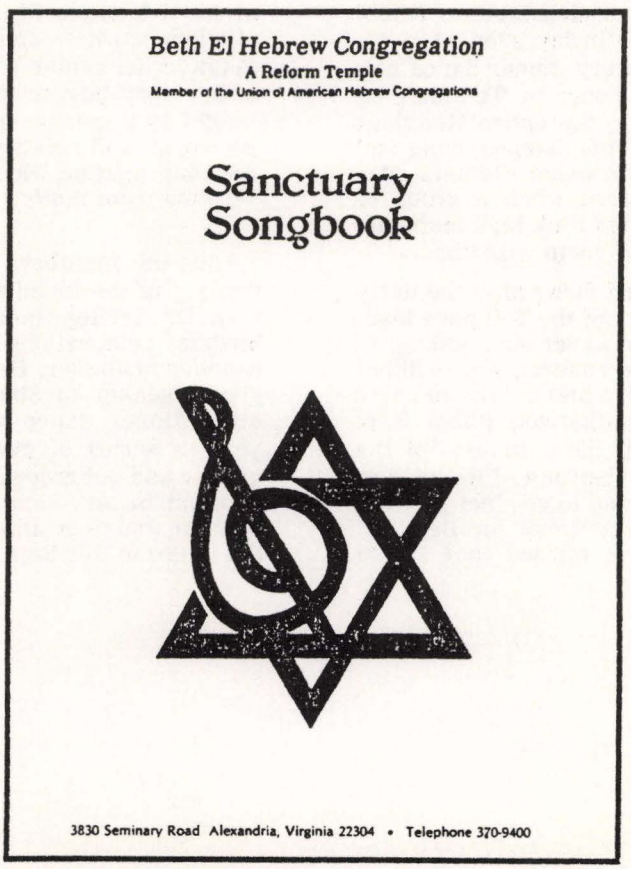


Alvin D. (Ted) Gustin, organist and choir director in 125th-anniversary year.



Michael Peerless, cantorial soloist, in 1984.

Perhaps because he was always out of sight in the choir loft, proper recognition was rarely given to Alvin "Ted" Gustin, the organist who arrived in 1969, but Mr. Gustin's musicianship and his devotion to the Temple were appreciated by those involved with the service music. Cantorial Soloist Michael Peerless's warm rich baritone greatly enhanced Shabbat and holiday services. A continuing challenge to music committees over the years was the selection of "appropriate" music for services. Members come from a variety of Jewish backgrounds, and each person wants to hear service music that is "traditional"—that is, what each knew in the congregation in which he or she was raised. The Temple's new music book, compiled largely through the efforts of Sandra Fisher and Judy Ginsburgh, was published to help all who wished to participate in chanting and singing the responses and songs.





Ellen Feldstein, Beth El President, 1981-83.



Rabbi Arnold G. Fink and Assistant Rabbi Amy Perlin greet Temple Beth El's 125th-anniversary with optimism.

In the spring of 1981, the congregation elected its first woman President, Ellen Feldstein. By the High Holidays of that year, membership in the congregation had passed 700 families, and it was the start of Rabbi Fink's Bar Mitzvah year as spiritual leader of Beth El. In the spring of 1982, a weekend honoring Rabbi Fink took place. On Friday evening, April 30, the sanctuary was filled to overflowing for Shabbat services and to hear Rabbi Ronald Sobel of Temple Emmanuel in New York City, a longtime friend and classmate of Rabbi Fink, deliver the sermon. On Saturday evening, a capacity crowd enjoyed a celebratory dinner dance and a presentation in Rabbi Fink's honor by Temple past Presidents. On Sunday morning, the entire Religious School and many adult congregants listened, sang and danced to the music of the Farbrangen Fiddlers. The highlight of the morning occurred when a group of faculty and students hoisted Rabbi Fink high in the air on a chair and danced around the room with him.

As Beth El membership leaped forward in the early 1980s, it became evident to much of the Temple's leadership that asking one Rabbi, however outstanding, to serve the needs of such a large congregation without Rabbinical assistance was unwise and unfair. In early 1982, the Board of Directors authorized Rabbi Fink and President Feldstein to visit the campuses of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and New York City, and to conduct preliminary interviews for an Assistant Rabbi for Beth El. Rabbi Fink and Mrs. Feldstein agreed that Rabbi Amy Perlin was their first choice, and in March invited her to meet the Board of Directors and other congregational leadership at a specially called meeting. At the conclusion of that meeting, the Board gave unanimous approval to a resolution to offer Rabbi Perlin the position of Assistant Rabbi, beginning in the summer of 1982. From the time of her arrival, Rabbi Perlin made her presence known and felt, and in less than two years had made major contributions in all areas of Temple life. A keen scholar, dedicated and efficient worker, and warmly caring individual, she followed her senior Rabbi in giving so very generously of her very best to the congregation. She was widely sought as a speaker in the larger Jewish and non-Jewish world, and repeatedly brought honor to herself and the congregation when she went out into the Northern Virginia community.

Thus the members arrived in 1984—the 125th anniversary of the founding of Beth El Hebrew Congregation. Dr. Irving Imburg was President, and several birthday celebrations were planned for May. Rabbi Alexander Schindler, UAHC President, was invited to be guest speaker at Shabbat services, and a Saturday-night dinner dance was scheduled. Throughout the year, a series of events was planned, involving all groups and subgroups within the Temple. Beth El's is a proud history—one worthy of observing the traditions of Judaism and of carrying them forward into the future in this Beth El, this House of God.

SISTERHOOD: MORE THAN 7 DECADES OF SERVICE

Beth El Sisterhood was one of 16 Sisterhoods which joined together in 1913 to establish the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. "In the quarter century to 1938, if the congregation members were the body of Beth El, the Sisterhood was surely its heart," wrote Max Rosenberg in *A Centennial History of Beth El Hebrew Congregation.* This small group of women dedicated themselves to the support of the congregation--they raised funds to finance major renovations of the Temple building at 206 North Washington Street in Alexandria, donated permanent pews to seat 100 persons, and decorated the pulpit, choir balcony and vestry room. The congegation in its minutes of that period, paid tribute to Sisterhood and its work.

Sisterhood also took over operation of the Religious School including funding, faculty and curriculum, and carried this responsibility until Rabbi Hugo Schiff became spiritual leader of the congregation in 1939.

In 1949, Rabbi Melvyn Helfgott came to Beth El. In an effort to help members of the growing congregation become acquainted, Sisterhood instituted the Friday evening Oneg Shabbat, for which its members brought homemade cakes and cookies, served with tea and coffee, in the vestry room. In 1952, Sisterhood presented a Baldwin organ to the congregation to replace an organ that had been in use for 47 years.

Sisterhood's efforts in this period were not restricted to fund raising for its project — it was instrumental in establishing and supervising the congregation's youth groups and improving the Religious School.

On April 16, 1954, when Rabbi Emmet A. Frank arrived to conduct his first Sabbath service, Sisterhood "dressed up" the old Temple building for the occasion. But even as this was under way, Sisterhood was planning ahead for its part in a new building. When the last payment was made on the organ it had purchased two years earlier, it bagan to accumulate a kitchen fund.

When the new building on Seminary Road was dedicated, the *Centennial History* states: "The Sisterhood furnished a modern kitchen, a beautiful china and silver table service, and a host of other essential furnishings." Increased Temple membership, the move to the new building and the growing number of young people looking to Sisterhood for help and leadership presented a challenge far greater than in previous years.

Sisterhood met the challenge and expanded its activities in the late 1950s with the beginning of its famous annual Smorgasbord luncheons, which were to continue for 20 years, becoming increasingly elaborate and financially successful. Many Sisterhood members became better acquainted while working together on these tremendous undertakings — cooking in the kitchen, setting up the dining rooms and serving as many as 1,000 diners in a three-hour period on Smorgasbord day. In 1978, with considerable sadness, Sisterhood decided that because of the constantly increasing cost of food and related supplies, it would be compelled to end this activity, which was not only a great cooperaative project within Sisterhood, but also was a community event, widely supported by outsiders who enjoyed the delicious food.



Beth El's 125th year found these top Sisterhood officers (left to right): Lynne Someroff, 1983-85 vice president; Suzanne Cooper, 1983-84 vice president; Sue Fischl, 1983-85 1st vice president; Michele Ross, 1983-85 president; Frances A. Silver, 1984-85 vice president, and Edith Beirstein, 1983-85 vice president.

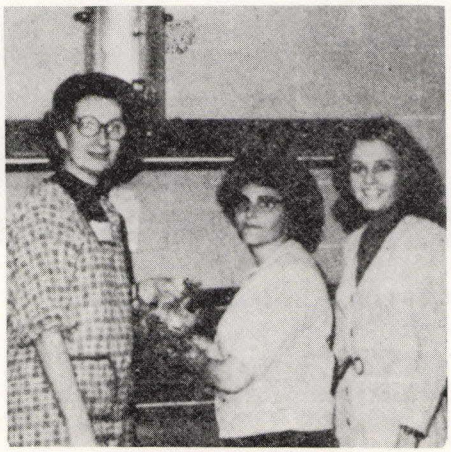
SISTERHOOD CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY







(Top) Mrs. Phillip Sobelman sang "Alice Blue Gown" at a Feb. 12, 1964, luncheon celebrating Beth El Sisterhood's 50th birthday. (Right) Discussing the anniversary affair were Mrs. Sarah Billowitz, Sisterhood President; Rabbi Emmet A. Frank and Mrs. Daye Glassman, chairman. (Left) Preparing the luncheon (left to right) were Mrs. Lenore Augenstern, Mrs. Babette Newman, Mrs. Betty Berman and Mrs. Louise Blondheim.



Getting ready for Sisterhood's April 11, 1973, Smorgasbord were (left to right) Mrs. Enie Berger, Mrs. Irene Rehbock and Mrs. Arlene Rephan, Sisterhood President.

As a service to parents of bar and bat mitzvah children, Sisterhood, on request, prepared and served kiddush luncheons after Sabbath morning worship. The work of the women involved in this activity helped enormously to provide funds for Sisterhood projects, including redecoration of Bendheim Social Hall in 1962-63, furnishings for the Library, curtains for the stages, furnishings for the entrance lobby, and complete renovation and redecoration of Bendheim and Billowitz Social Halls in 1973-74, at a cost of nearly $19,000.

In 1969, when Rabbi Arnold G. Fink came to Beth El, he found a well-organized, active Sisterhood whose members were ready and willing to work with him when he needed them.

Concurrent with its projects, Sisterhood has always been responsive to the needs of the Religious School, providing gifts for the young children at consecration, kiddush cups for bar and bat mitzvah boys and girls, and bibles for confirmands. To enhance holiday celebrations, Sisterhood decorates the succah, provides treats for Hanukah, hamantaschen for Purim and Passover food for the children's seders.

For many years, Sisterhood actively sponsored the National Federation of Temple Youth groups, providing leadership and financial support. Scholarships to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' camps were provided.

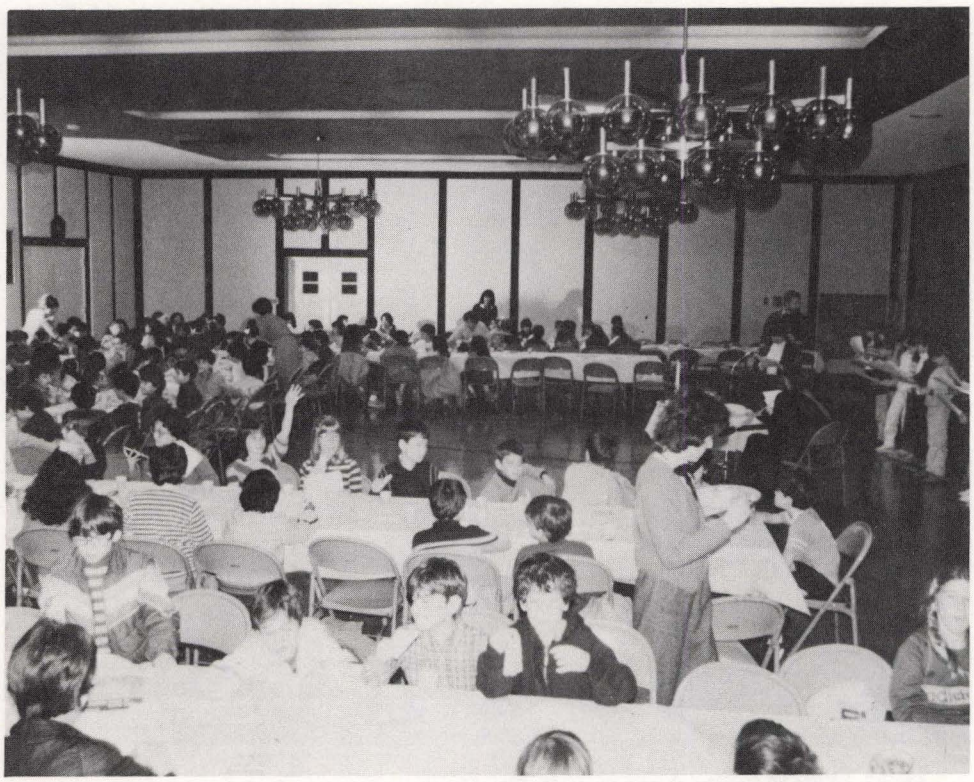
As regular activities, Sisterhood arranged for contributions for pulpit flowers, scheduled candlelighting for Friday evening services and provided hostesses for the weekly Oneg Shabbat. Sisterhood members frequently represented the congregation in the community, working closely with people of all faiths.

Sisterhood's successful Judaica Shop, the project of a small group of dedicated members, made available to the congregation a broad selection of holiday items, bar and bat mitzvah gifts, and books.

Sisterhood projects were undertaken to raise funds to redecorate the multi-purpose rooms so they would be used as a chapel. One of these projects, a bagel bar, operated on Sunday mornings, was a financial success and the idea was widely copied.

Sisterhood members rallied to lobby members of Congress on critical issues. Some members assist in the Temple office on a regular schedule. A large-type typewriter was purchased and a group of members transcribed books for visually impaired people for the library of the Jewish Braille Institute. A member of Beth El Sisterhood was a devoted leader on behalf of assistance to Jewish men and women who wished to leave the Soviet Union.

Beth El Sisterhood was represented on the board of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and two past presidents of Beth El Sisterhood served with distinction as presidents of District Eight (made up of the Sisterhoods in Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and one Sisterhood in northeastern Tennessee). Other members held District offices, and several served as District board members. Many able and dedicated women (listed elsewhere) led Beth El Sisterhood in its 71 years of service and accomplishment. As we look back, we see an impressive record. We look forward to the future and trust that we can meet its challenges.



Religious School children participate in model Passover seder in 1984. The seder was prepared by the Sisterhood.

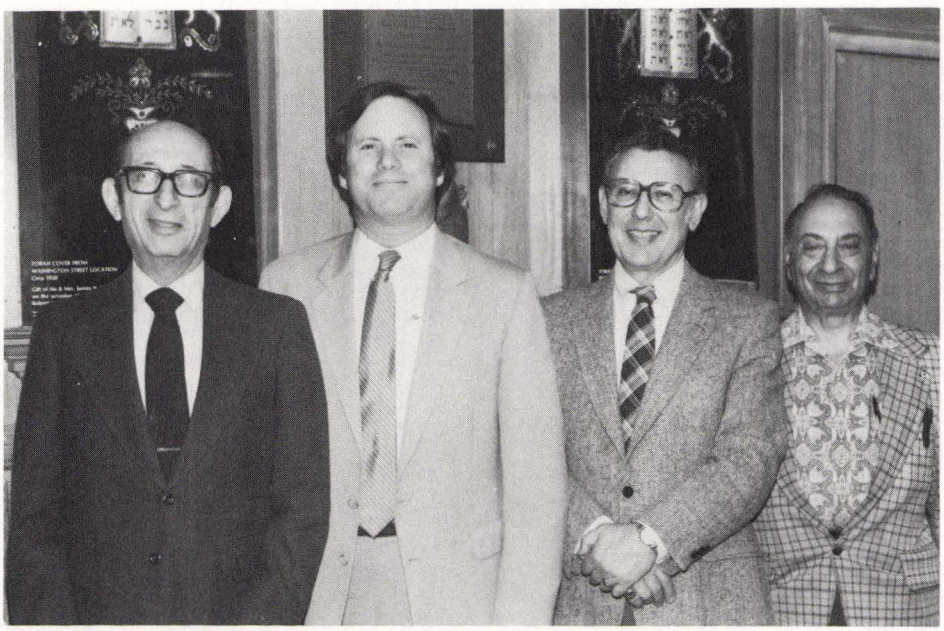
BROTHERHOOD— MORE THAN THREE DECADES AT BETH EL

The Beth El Brotherhood was founded as the Men's Club in 1948 when the congregation with about 80 members was approximately one tenth its size in 1984. About one quarter of the heads of families in the membership joined the organization in its first year. Abbey Mintz was the guiding impetus for creating a Brotherhood, formed to unite the men of the congregation to serve Beth El while practicing fellowship. The first President was Jack Jenkins. From its origin, the Brotherhood sponsored meetings that provided a forum for educating, informing and entertaining Temple members. More central to its purposes, however, was service to the Temple.

The Brotherhood's earliest significant benefit was publication of the Temple *Bulletin*, that essential communication medium that keeps all congregants informed of Temple religious, social and human activities. During its first year as an organization, furthermore, the Brotherhood donated books to the Beth El library. Whenever the Rabbi was absent, moreover, the Brotherhood provided Sabbath-service leadership, preventing the canceling of services, a too frequent custom before the Brotherhood was founded. Its most notable donation in its first dozen years was a much needed new Torah scroll that was prepared especially for the Temple by scribes in Israel and made of vellum parchment on two olive-wood interlocking rollers. This Torah was purchased to celebrate Beth El's centennial in 1959. In that year, the membership of the Brotherhood stood at less than 80 and by 1984 was more than 220.

The Brotherhood in the early 1980s continued to provide abundant services to Beth El, without which life at Beth El would be less rich. For example, the Brotherhood supplied parking-lot guards on Sundays when about 350 children poured into and out of the Temple with no regard for traffic. The men's club coordinated the furnishing of ushers for Sabbath services, seeing that members, guests and strangers were properly and warmly greeted. The organization served the children of the Religious School by donating money and equipment needed for the effective funtioning of the school, and by sponsoring a Purim Carnival that enthralled hundreds and a picnic that entertained a like number. Most important, the Brotherhood furnished critical funds for felt needs.

In the last decade before the Temple's 125th birthday, the Brotherhood established for Temple members a unique service that brought it the funds with which to make generous donations that benefited everyone. The men's club catered up to two, sometimes more, functions each month. Beyond providing congregants with a relatively inexpensive program for entertaining guests, the catering service raised more money than all other Brotherhood fund-raising activities combined. All of the purchasing, cooking and food arranging was done by the Brotherhood (with the Sisterhood acting as servers). The organization netted between $6,000 and $9,000 per year from catering (providing the Sisterhood between $1,500 and $2,000 for its help). An outline of several of the more significant contributions to the Temple demonstrates the Brotherhood's value to Beth El.



At the helm of Brotherhood in Beth El's 125th year were (left to right): Louis Silver, first vice president; Robert Stein, second vice president; Mike Fischl, president, and Emil Lowenthal, treasurer. Not pictured is Irving Scharf, secretary.

By the late 1970s, the Temple roof was found to be in serious disrepair, with leaks threatening the integrity of the building. The Brotherhood paid more than $11,500 toward roof repair (almost 50 percent of the total bill). Most of the money for the roof repair came from catering profits, but more than $1,600 of the sum donated by the men's club came from a "Raise the Roof" cabaret-dance conducted by a separate committee. The men's club donated so much money, in fact, that a large part (about $10,000) of the special roof-repair assessment was turned over to the Temple capital fund for other purposes.

The Brotherhood solicited needs from various Temple functions (Administrator, Custodian, Religious School Principal, etc.) in order to prioritize and meet the highest needs. For example, in just the 1981-84 period, the Brotherhood donated the full amount, more than $1,000, to construct a ramp from the parking lot into the Temple building to facilitate its use by handicapped people, and provided more than $100 to install hardware in the restrooms to make them usable by the handicapped. The men's club donated nearly $2,250 to install emergency-lighting, smoke-detector and exit systems to make the Temple safer—plus the more than $3,250 for a floor buffer, an ice maker and coffee urns. The Brotherhood made sure that each seventh-grade boy and girl in the Religious School had a new Torah to begin Bar and Bat Mitzvah training, and (with the Sisterhood) provided each young person with a silver Kiddush cup at their ceremony. The Brotherood takes proper pride in more than three decades of service to Beth El.



Davey Marlin-Jones, flamboyant movie critic for Eyewitness News on Washington's TV Channel 9, makes a point in addressing Brotherhood's Sunday brunch on Dec. 11, 1983.



The attention of this crowd in the Temple social hall in the fall of 1983 was on the speaker (rear, under screen). The occasion was one of Brotherhood's monthly brunches, complete with a minyan at the start and a menu of lox, bagels, scrambled eggs and trimmings.

The Brotherhood
of
Temple Beth El
Alexandria, Va.

presents

THE BROTHERHOOD FOLLIES OF 1982

In Honor of Mother's Day
May 9, 1982



ALL THIS AND HERRING, TOO.

Minyan 9:15 a.m./Brunch 9:30 a.m./Follies 10:30 a.m.
Brunch & Follies: Men $4 Women $2

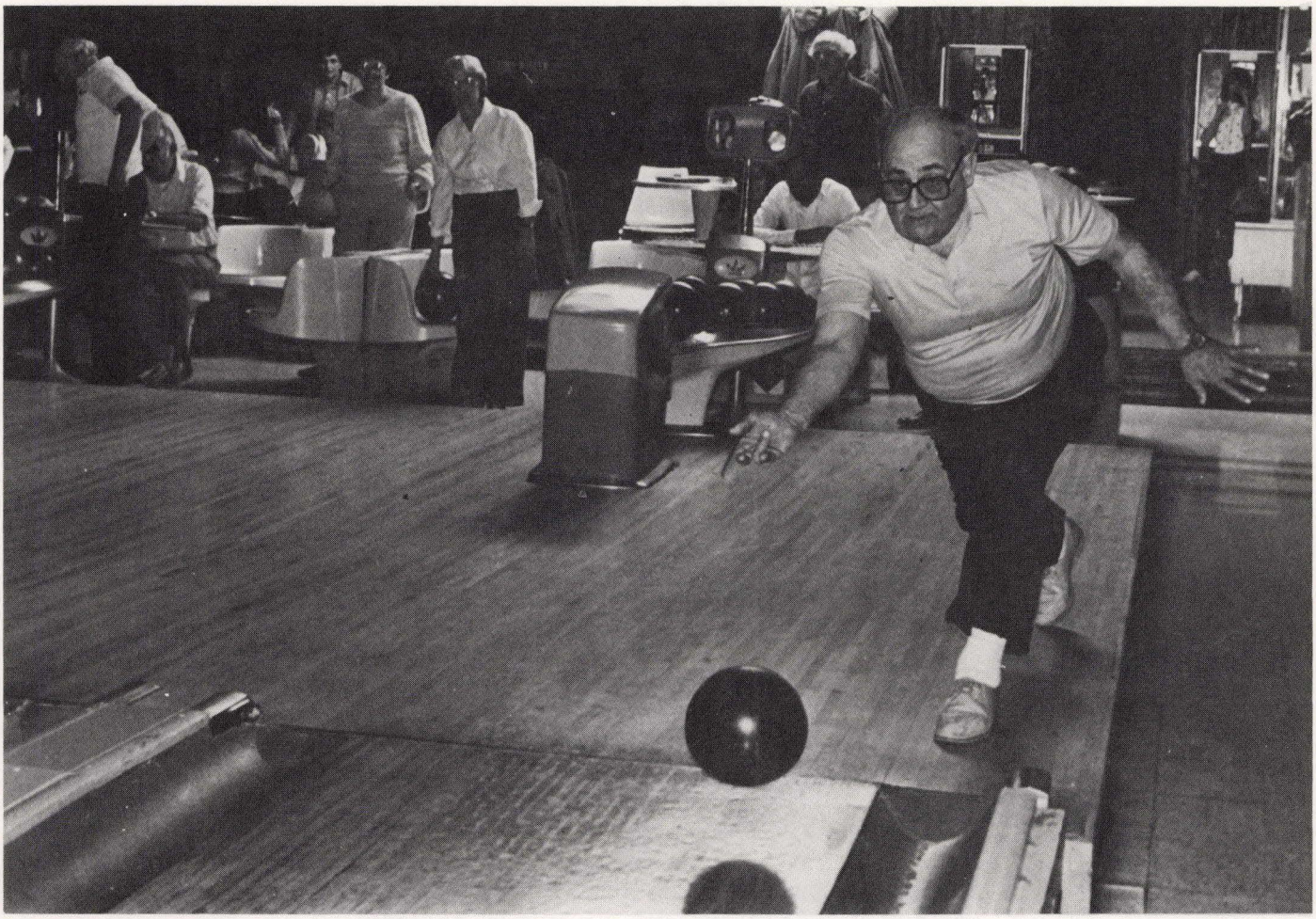
Reservations Suggested



Waiting time is not unusual for members of Beth El Brotherhood's softball team in 1984, their second season. They are (left to right) Jerry Schwarzman, Fred Reiner, Ron Schwarzman and Phil Esposito.



Batter Marc Ross was waiting for a good pitch.



Ira Schwartz rolls for a big strike during the Beth El Bowling League's 1983-84 season at Shirley Bowl.



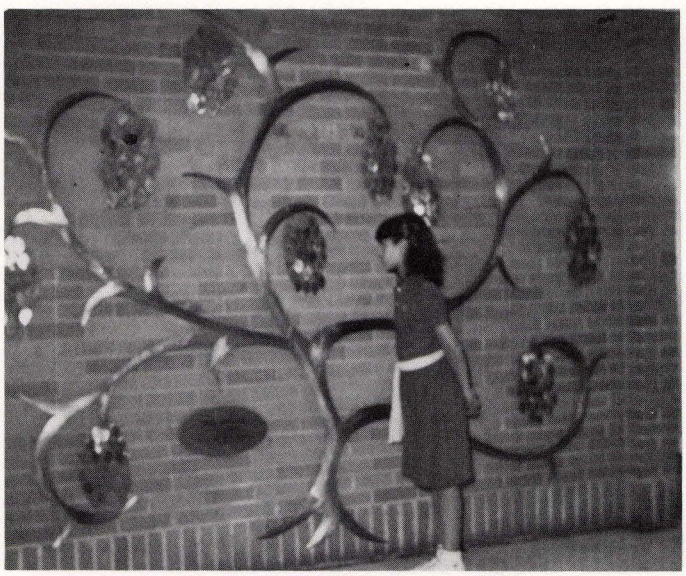
Couples club officers in Beth El's 125th year were (left to right): Rita Foreman, 1984-85 president and 1983-84 corresponding secretary; Bea Fred, 1983-85 recording secretary; Irving Scharf, 1983-84 president; Jeanne Kortlang, 1983-84 vice president; Betty Goldstein, 1984-85 treasurer, and Trudy Kimmel, 1984-85 corresponding secretary. Not pictured is Richard Fakoury, 1984-85 vice president and 1983-84 treasurer.



Gathered in spring, 1984, for a BEFTY group meeting in the Beth El Youth Lounge were (left to right) Bev Leifer, Rachel Segel, Jennifer Alexander, Jeff Fieldman, Arlene Sprung and Jeff Hecht.



Jan. 28, 1984, was a Saturday of celebration for this class of adult bar/bat mitzvah students at Temple Beth El. In this photo (from left) are: Back row, Rabbi Arnold Fink, Jean Gurman and Rabbi Amy Perlin. Front row, Michele Ross, Faye Mogin (behind Mrs. Ross), Rita Foreman, Morton Foreman and Arthur Harvith, the class instructor. Beth El's first adult bat mitzvah class conducted the service on Saturday, Feb. 26, 1977. Ilana Rappaport, then Religious School Director, taught the history part of the course and Mr. Harvith, the Torah portions and other parts of the service. Participants were Hazel Charles, Lois Cohen, Frances Fromm, Ellen Gale, Lois Goldberg, Maria Greenspoon, Froma Lippmann and Frances Schuster. Beverly Jeanne Davis became a bat mitzvah on Wednesday, April 14, 1982, during services on the final day of Passover.



The "Tree of Life" in the Temple Beth El east lobby attracted the attention of 12-year-old Lauren Hecht in the spring of 1984. Temple members are invited to "buy" leaves on the tree as part of the congregation's fund-raising program.

Presidents of Beth El

1859-64	Henry Blondheim
1864-81	Isaac Eichberg
1881-90	Joseph Kaufmann
1890-1914	Isaac Eichberg
1914-43	Benedict Weil
1943-49	Moses Jaffa
1949-50	Irving Diener
1950-51	Maurice Rosenberg
1951-54	Albert E. Baker
1954-62	Leroy S. Bendheim
1962-65	Louis Spector
1965-67	Max S. Kraft
1967-69	Murray Weinberg
1969-71	Morris M. Thompson
1971-73	Adolph Steinberg
1973-75	James N. Hayman
1975-77	John F. Lippmann
1977-79	Manfred Gale
1979-81	Martin Mintz
1981-83	Ellen Feldstein
1983-85	Dr. Irving Imburg

Sisterhood Presidents

1913-14	Mrs. Robert Whitestone
1914-15	Mrs. Bernard Ehrman
1915-16	Mrs. Minnie Weil
1916-19	Mrs. Albert Dreifus
1919-22	Mrs. Harry Nelowitz
1922-25	Mrs. Julius Dreifus
1925-28	Mrs. Jacob Myer
1928-31	Mrs. Irving Diener
1931-34	Mrs. Sylvern Laupheimer
1934-37	Mrs. Louis Rosoff
1937-39	Mrs. Max Ostrow
1939-41	Mrs. Sylvern Laupheimer
1941-43	Mrs. Richard Flesch
1943-44	Mrs. Albert Baker
1944-45	Mrs. Mae Goldwyn
1945-47	Mrs. William Goldberg
1947-49	Mrs. Jeanne Wasserman
1949-50	Mrs. Philip Rudin
1950-51	Mrs. Shirley Sonoskv
1951-52	Mrs. E. Edward Tannenbaum
1952-55	Mrs. Fred Garfield
1955-	Mrs. David Kruger
1955-58	Mrs. Maxwell Sitzer
1958-60	Mrs. Helen Dimond Reiner
1960-62	Mrs. Gilbert Davis
1962-64	Mrs. Herbert Billowitz
1964-66, 1970-71	Mrs. Elliot Citron
1966-68	Mrs. Jane Kraft
1968-70	Mrs. Alice Davis Schneyer
1971-73	Mrs. Arlene Rephan
1973-76	Mrs. Fern Koch Bekenstein
1976-78	Mrs. Froma Lippmann
1978-80	Mrs. Rosalind Engels
	Mrs. Barbara Kaganowich
1980-81	Mrs. Lois Cohen
1981-83	Mrs. Joyce Gordon
1983-85	Mrs. Michele Ross

Brotherhood Presidents

1948-49	Jack Jenkins
1949-51	Howard Weiss
1951-53	Dr. Maxwell Sitzer
1953-55	Ralph I. Cole
1955-57	Capt. Herschel Goldberg
1957-58	Louis Spector
1958-59	Paul Pfeiffer
1959-61	Sidney Schneider
1961-63	Morton Roney
1963-65	Sidney Levine
1965-66	Harry Chanzes
1966-67	Joel Gerstle
1967-68	Adolph Steinberg
1968-70	Jack Orlick
1970-72	Maurice Katz
1972-74	Emil Lowenthal
1974-75	Adolph Steinberg
1975-77	Ernest Heilberg
1977-78	Jerome Joseph Schwarzman
1978-81	Dr. Arthur Goldsmith
1981-83	Jerry Liess
1983-85	Mike Fischl

Couples Club Presidents

1964-66	Dave Blumberg
	Joel Gerstle
1966-67	Stuart Feldstein
1967	Marvin Feinstein
1967-68	Mark Rubenstein
1968-69	Marvin Sachs
1969-70	Arlene Sachs
1970-71	Michel Margosis
1971-72	Bud Tucker
1972-73	Jerome Liess
1973-74	Frances Fromm
1974-75	Ronald Kortlang
1975-76	Barbara Margosis
1976-77	Morton Foreman
1977-78	Lois Goldberg
1978-80	Louis Silver
1980-82	Norman Kimmel
1982-84	Irving Scharf
1984-85	Rita Foreman

Beth El Spiritual Leaders

1859	
1860	
1861	
1862	
1863	
1864	L. Schlessinger
1865	H. Heilbroun
1866	Isaac Sanger
1867-73	L. Lowensohn
1874-76	A. A. Bonnheim
1877	Eiserman (holidays only)
1878	B. Kahn
1879-80	Morris Sessler
1881-82	Leopold Rosenstraus
1883	Morris Sachs*
1884	Isaac L. Rypins
1885	Morris Sachs
1886	Charles S. Levi
1887	
1888	Charles S. Levi
1889	Samuel Hirschberg
1890	
1891	Julius Fryer
1892	Seymour G. Bottigheimer
1893	Isaac E. Marcuson
1894	Gustav H. Lowenstein
1895	
1896	Martin Zielonka
1897	Simon R. Cohen
1898	G. C. Mayer
1899	Solomon Foster
1900	David Alexander
1901	Jonah B. Wise
1902	Harry G. Friedman
1903	Joseph Rauch
1904	Max Reichler
1905	Louis D. Gross
1906	Louis J. Kopald
1907	Abraham Blum
1908	Samuel Schwartz
1909	Irving M. Bloom
1910-12	Jacob B. Krohngold
1913	Simon Cohen
1914	Harry R. Richmond
1915	J. Max Weis
1916	Solomon Landman
1917	Henry J. Berkowitz
1918-19	Morris H. Youngerman
1920	Steinberg
1921	Julius H. Halprin
1922	Freid
1923	George A. Taxey
1924-25	David Goodis
1926	Max Lasker
1927	Carl I. Miller
1928	Felix Nash
1929	Jerome D. Folkman
1930	Norman Gerstenfeld
1931	Sidney M. Lefkowitz
1932	Moses C. Weiler
1933	Allan S. Green
1934	Burton E. Levinson
1935	Alexander D. Goode
1936-37	Sylvan D. Schwartzman
1938	Malcolm H. Stern*
1939-48	Hugo B. Schiff
1949-53	C. Melvyn Helfgott
1953-54	Paul Richman
1954-69	Emmet A. Frank
1969-	Arnold G. Fink
1982-	Amy Perlin, Assistant Rabbi

*Between 1883 and 1939, students from the Hebrew Union College conducted services for the 10-day period between Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. During these years, Beth El had no full-time spiritual leaders.

B.E.F.T.Y. PRESIDENTS

1965-66	Jon Bernheimer
1966-67	Eileen Steinberg
1967-68	Mark Callman
1968-69	Lynne Weinberg
1969-70	James Bennett
1970-71	Wendy Weinberg
1971-72	Mark Berger
1972-73	Fran Kobel
1973-74	Ann Schwarzman
1974-75	Ronald Schwarzman
1975-76	Debbie Kobel
1976-77	Janet Tyroler
1977-78	Steven Schwarzman
1978-79	Daniel Fink
1979-80	Lee Mintz
1980-82	Phillip Reiser
1982-83	Albert Schick
1983-84	Beverly Leifer

JR. N.F.T.Y. PRESIDENTS

1967-77	Phillip Reiser
1977-78	Sheila Lerner
1978-79	Becky Rosenfeld
1979-80	Julie Lerner
1980-81	Christi Goldman
1981-82	Mike Rosenfeld
1982-83	Hank Miller
1983-84	Marci Alperstein
	Debbi Lubar



SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 1984

SERVICE OF CONFIRMATION

THE TAPESTRY OF OUR CONGREGATION

TORAH PROCESSIONAL

Torah Bearers

Hugh Apple
David Beckerman
David Permut
Barbara Fox
Bonnie Gordon

Opening Prayers

Stacey Shlakman Harold Stusnick

Presentation for Confirmation

Rabbi Fink Parents Confirmands

THE BEGINNINGS OF OUR TEMPLE

David Permut Dawn Bennett
Helen Brooks Barbara Fox
David Kaplowitz Stacey Harris

Shema & Vahavta
Harold Stusnick

The Fabric Torn

Lisa Brook Michael Rosenfeld

Song: *Go Down Moses*

The New Wave

Matthew Glaser
Aaron Spielberg
Bonnie Gordon
David Beckerman
Cynthia Suchman

Songs: *Dona, Dona*
The New Colossus

A Distant Light, A Jazz Age and Despair

Robin Springberg Julie Segel
Deborah Kaganowich Karen Lamm

Song: *Sahaki: Laugh at all My Dreams*

Into The Abyss

Gretchen Adeson
Helen Brooks
David Kauffman
James Rosenfeld
Nicholas Goldfarb
Benjamin Selig

Songs: *The Butterfly*
Song of the Partisans
Am Yisrael Chai

A Land Reborn

Emil Engels

Song: *Hatikvah*

Toward The Present

David Permut
Jill Gampel
Eric Reiser
Michael Wise
Aaron Spielberg

Songs: *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*
Oseh Shalom

TORAH SERVICE

Torah Talk

Lewis Blocker Harold Stusnick Dawn Bennett

Torah Blessings

Robin Springberg

Torah Readers and Interpreters

David Kaplowitz Stacey Harris Michael Wise Bonnie Gordon

Haftarah Blessings

Cynthia Suchman Matthew Glaser

Haftarah Readers

Julie Segel Hugh Apple

The Shaping of Our Future

James Rosenfeld David Beckerman
Stacey Shlakman
Deborah Kaganowich
Lewis Blocker
Gretchen Adeson
Jill Gampel

Kaddish: Rabbi Perlin

THIS IS OUR FAITH

Members of the Class

FLORAL OFFERINGS

Karen Lamm Lisa Brook

Closing Prayer: Rabbi Fink

Closing Song: *America*



Temple Beth El's 1984 Confirmation Class.



Elaine Waschler, Religious School Principal, in 1984.

Saturday, February 18, 1984

The Washington Post RELIGION

Synagogue, Bishop Hold Unique Meeting

By Marjorie Hyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

An Alexandria synagogue and the Roman Catholic bishop of Arlington joined forces last week in an unprecedented assault on 1,900 years of religious hostility when Beth El Hebrew Congregation invited Bishop John R. Keating to address its Sabbath service.

It is believed to be the first such interreligious encounter between a Catholic prelate and a Jewish congregation in the Washington area.

Introducing Keating to the Reform Jewish congregation, Rabbi Arnold G. Fink summarized the bloody history of Christian-Jewish relations. "To the Jew, the Christian has been the oppressor . . . the one who confined him to the ghetto," he said, and whose anti-Semitism produced "an ideology that led to pogroms, to oppression and unwittingly, perhaps, to the Holocaust."

On the other hand, he continued, "To the Christian, the Jew has been the one who refused divine grace" by rejecting belief in Jesus as the savior.

Fink credited Pope John XXIII and the Vatican Council he set in motion two decades ago with fostering a giant leap in understanding. "He and his successors have given Jews and Roman Catholics the opportunity to face one another in candor and share all our concerns, those that unite and those that divide us," the rabbi said.

John XXIII and his Second Vatican Council, said Keating, "produced one of the most profound shifts in understanding of our time in the relationship with the Jewish people," overturning "centuries of misunderstandings that had built up layer upon layer upon layer."

The key element of that shift were two theological concepts, he continued: "In no way could the Jewish people be held accountable for the death of Christ," and the "official acknowledgement" by the Catholic Church "of the eternal validity of God's eternal covenant with the Jewish people."

The charge that the Jews killed Christ fueled centuries of anti-Semitism and persecution, condoned and sometimes led by the church.

Dressed in his black robes and red skull cap, Keating said the Vatican Council "gave impetus to dialogue between Christians and Jews. Admittedly it has not eliminated all the tensions. But given the grimness of the history of the past 2,000 years and the tragic grimness of anti-Semitism, we are progressing swiftly."

Fink said the invitation to Keating, bishop of Arlington since August, reflected the Jewish congregation's ecumenical outlook and interests. "Our congregation has been involved in a variety of dialogues with the Protestant community," he said.

Beth El has conducted a 25-year dialogue with neighboring Fairlington United Methodist Church, and shared its facilities for a time while the synagogue was under construction.

Beth El's ecumenical outlook is reflected in the unprecedented dialogue between a Roman Catholic priest and a Jewish congregation, as reported in the above newspaper article.





Al Ungerleider (left), Administrator, and Bill Cobert, Building Superintendent, in 1984.



Temple Beth El Office staff, 1984 (from left): Jane Springer, bookkeeper; Judy Ginsburgh, executive secretary, and Gloria Sitrin, administrative secretary.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 8, 1984

To the Beth El Hebrew Congregation:

Congratulations on the occasion of your 125th anniversary.

Religious faith has always been the essence of strength for free peoples. As guardians of this faith, our churches and synagogues seek to continually renew the spirit of brotherhood, family, and concern for one's fellowman embodied in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is the spirit that built and preserved our freedom and made us a humane and God-fearing people. From early times the fire of faith has burned brightly all across this land, and as long as it lives, so will the America we cherish.

As we commemorate this anniversary, let us all resolve to revitalize the spirit of community which sustains us. Let our wisdom be vindicated by our deeds. And when our work is done and the busy world is hushed, then may God in His mercy give us a safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last.

Again, congratulations and God bless you.

Ronald Reagan

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Richmond 23219

Charles S. Robb
Governor

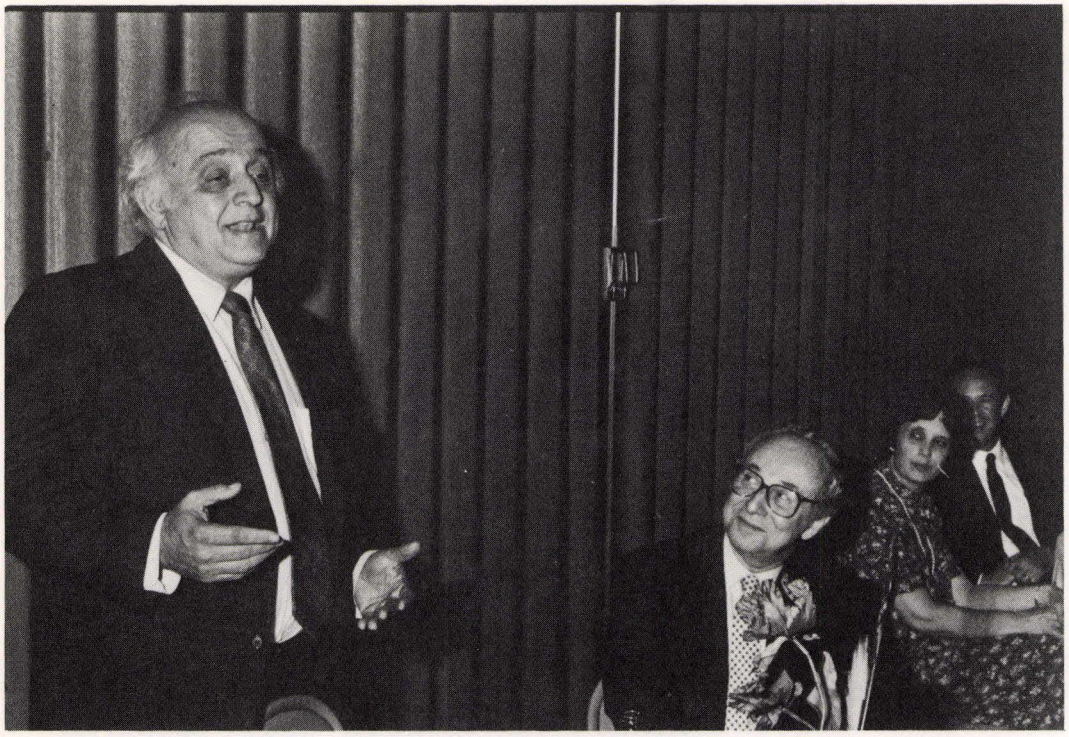
May 19, 1984

A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Please accept my warmest congratulations and best wishes on the occasion celebrating the 125th anniversary year of Beth El Hebrew Congregation. With a membership consisting of more than 800 families, Beth El Congregation is the largest and oldest Reform Jewish Congregation in Northern Virginia.

I am delighted to add this message to the many expressions of congratulation I know you have received and hope all of you in the spiritual family of Beth El Hebrew Congregation look forward to continuing in the second century of even greater success in spiritual progress.

Charles S. Robb
Governor



Rabbi Alexander Schindler (left), President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, addressed a Shabbat dinner on May 11, 1984, as part of Temple Beth El's 125th-anniversary celebration. Listening to his sometimes humorous, sometimes serious remarks were Dr. Irving J. Imburg, Temple President (center, foreground), and Mrs. Karen Fink and her husband Rabbi Arnold G. Fink (right rear).

Joining Rabbi Schindler before the Shabbat service were Dr. Imburg and Assistant Rabbi Amy R. Perlin (left), and Rabbi Fink and John Lippmann, member of the UAHC Board of Trustees and a Beth El past President (right).



Beth El Hebrew Congregation 125th Anniversary

1859-1984

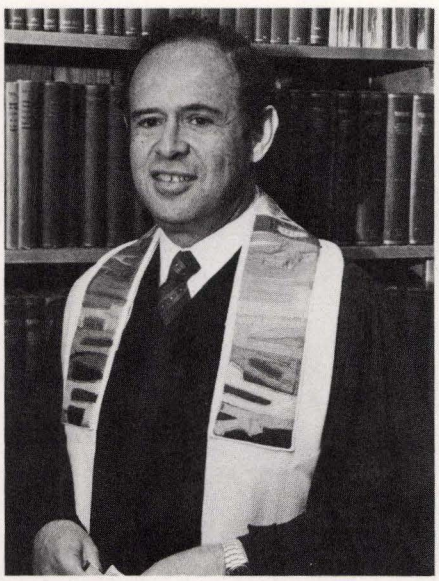
COMMEMORATIVE DINNER DANCE SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1984

Tonight we celebrate and give thanks that 125 years ago a small group of Jewish pioneers had the foresight and determination to establish the Beth El Hebrew Congregation. Ever since that time, Northern Virginia Jews have had a spiritual home and a place to assemble, to meet friends and to establish roots. Here we have community, hope and a future. In that spirit we all share the common toast and prayer -- L'Chayim - to Life!

Rabbi Arnold G. Fink

This is a time to look back at the past.
This is a time to look to our future.
This is a time to celebrate our present.
May we enjoy this celebration of all the times we share at Beth El and look forward to many future occasions to share and celebrate together.

Rabbi Amy R. Perlin





At the 125th-Anniversary Dinner Dance . . .



Beth El past presidents at the May 19, 1984, dinner dance were (left) to right John Lippmann, Morris Thompson, Ellen Feldstein, Manny Gale and Murray Weinberg.



Brotherhood past presidents participating in the 125th-anniversary party were (left to right) Jerry Liess, Paul Pfeiffer, Dr. Maxwell Sitzer and Ernie Heilberg.



Sisterhood past presidents enjoying the dinner-dance fun were (left to right) Joyce Gordon, Barbara Kaganowich, Jane Kraft, Froma Lippmann, Helen Reiner, Arlene Rephan and Alice Davis.



A bright Sunday morning in May, 1984, found an excited group of Beth El Religious School children celebrating the 125th anniversary by releasing brightly colored balloons skyward. Each balloon contained a message listing the name and address of a Beth El boy or girl and requesting the finder to inform the sender where the particular balloon had landed. Some of the balloons drifted as far away from Alexandria as Delaware.

BEFTY'S ROLE IN CELEBRATION

BEFTY (Beth El Senior Youth Group) is proud to be an important part of Temple life in this 125th-anniversasry year. We are dedicated to fostering our identity as young Jewish adults. Our programs include social, educational and social actions—activities including service to Temple and community. Through these activities, we make and strengthen friendships and grow as human beings and as Jews. We are affiliated with NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) and with MAFTY (Mid-Atlantic Federation of Temple Youth).

This year we are particularly proud of many of our programs and events. The highlight of our year was in October, 1983, when our youth group sponsored a MAFTY Fall Conclave. The program's theme was "Jewish Oppression: Let My People Go." It was the largest MAFTY conclave in recent memory. Over 200 young people from all over our region shared a very meaningful weekend at Beth El.

We take pride in our many services to the Temple family, including ushering, serving at congregational dinners, writing and conducting creative services, and our annual "haunted happening" at the Purim Carnival.

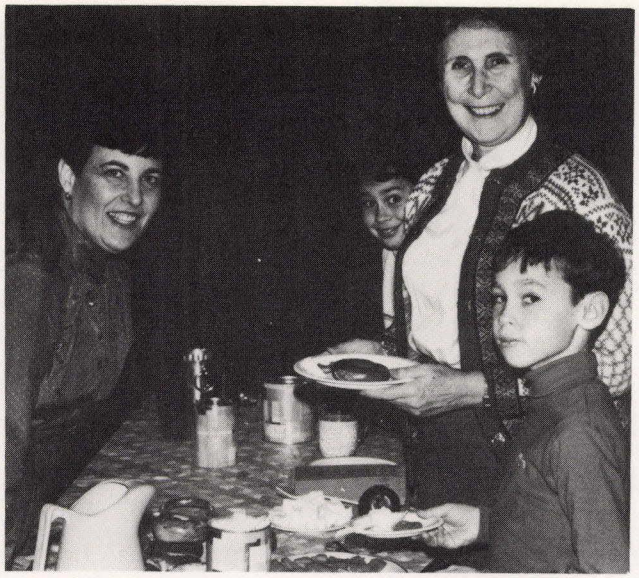
We look forward to continued growth and involvement with our Temple youth group. We share in the excitement, pride and celebration of our congregation's 125th year with the entire Temple family.

Lynne Sprung
BEFTY Advisor



Janet Tyroler and her guitar were a familiar sight around Temple Beth El in the 1970s. A photographer found her singing at a 1975 worship service in an Alexandria park.

Fellow members of the MAFTY (Middle Atlantic Federation of Temple Youth) in the park were (from left) Ben Lowenson, Marilyn Bonett and Debbie Gale.



Beth El Sisterhood operated a Sunday-morning bagel bar in the small social hall. Mrs. Sue Fischl (left), Sisterhood first vice president, waited on Mrs. Claire Imburg on a Sunday morning in 1984.

Snow on the ground didn't stop this Brotherhood member from his traffic-attendant duties during a Religious School session in 1983-84.





Mrs. Dorothy Koch (left) and Mrs. Ethel Herz were credited with much of the year-in, year-out success of Sisterhood's Judaica Shop, which featured a variety of merchandise for Beth El members. This photo was made in 1984. Mrs. Koch's late husband Jerry Koch helped her set up and operate the shop.

PASSIONS AND PREJUDICES
or
Some of My Best Friends Are People
by
Leo Rosten

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Page from Sisterhood's large-type project for the visually impaired.

Tribute to Fred Johnson

On a Friday night in July, 1983, the congregation paid tribute to Fred Johnson on the occasion of his retirement. Mr. Johnson—known as Fred to Temple Beth El members—began his tenure as Beth El custodian shortly after the Seminary Road building opened in 1959. Within a short time, his wide smile and friendly manner were a warm and familiar part of Beth El, and his knowledge of where even the smallest things could be found in the building remained unequaled to the day of his departure.

Mr. Johnson tried to retire once, in 1975, but he just couldn't stay away entirely, and so he returned to work part time. On more than one occasion, Mr. Johnson was invited to speak from the pulpit, and each time he spoke, the congregation was treated to an articulate message on the values of family or brotherhood or kindness or one of the other deeply held and practiced beliefs that were as much a part of Mr. Johnson as breathing. Beth El was fortunate to have the services of Fred Johnson for nearly 25 years. Young people growing up at the Temple during those years remember him for his unfailng kindness and caring; those who led congregational activities remember his always friendly helpfulness, and all remember Mr. Johnson's big, hearty, contagious laugh.



Fred Johnson

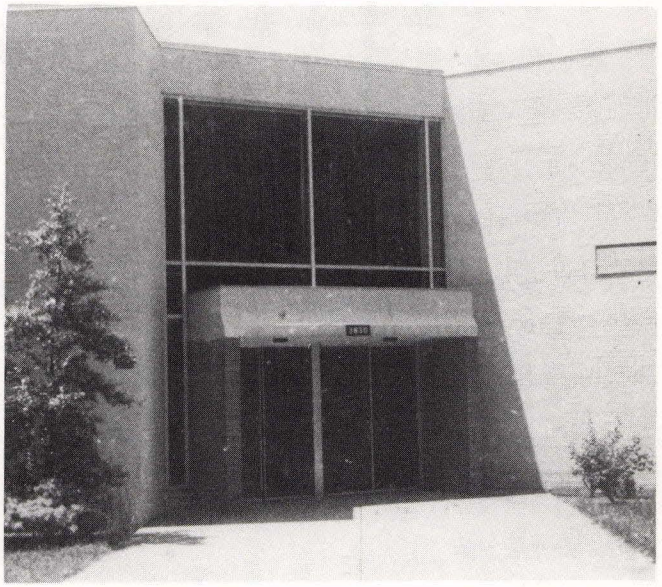
AFTER 125 YEARS — AN ARCHIVES

It was a quiet event—but an important one—that took place in 1984, Temple Beth El's 125th year: An archives was created.

Although it wasn't the sort of happening to make the evening television news, setting up an archives had great significance for the staff members of this commemorative book. They had rummaged through libraries, old newspapers and other places to obtain photographs and documents that are part of this congregation's history. Fortunately, *A Centennial History of Beth El Hebrew Congregation,* which recorded events of 1859-1959, was an invaluble source of information and pictures. So were several Temple members whose ancestors were founders of the Alexandria congregation.

Mrs. Sharon Galperin, an archival librarian, helped, too, in between going about organizing the archives, of which she was the first director. Plans called for assembling the historical documents of the Temple, the Hebrew Benevolent Society and individuals and families who made significant contributions to the life of the Jewish community in Northern Virginia. All that memorabilia was to be stored in a secure room and cared for, using the standards endorsed by the archival profession.

The Beth El archives was the second to be established in a Virginia temple or synagogue. The first was set up at Beth Ahahab in Richmond.



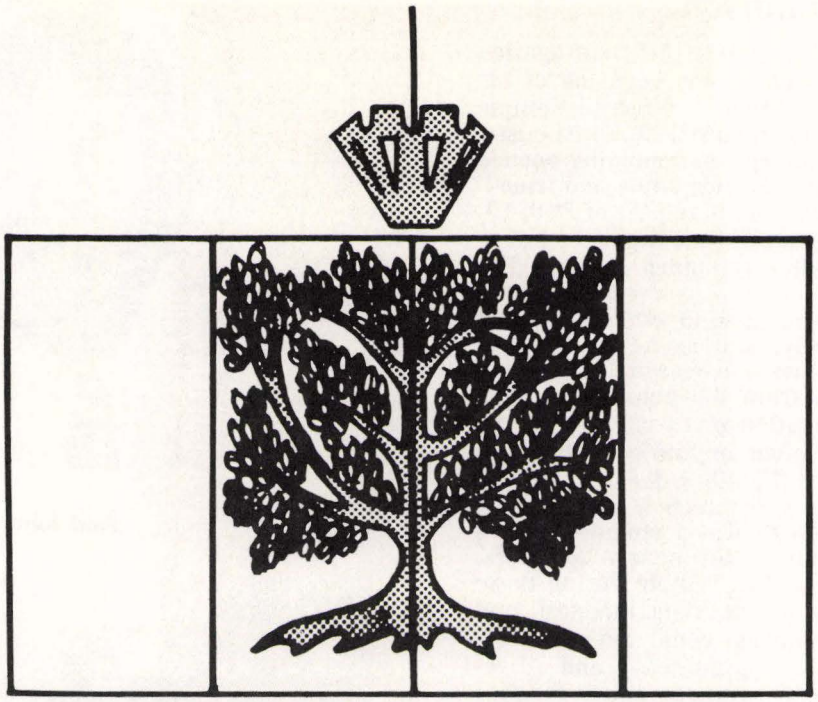
Meanwhile, Down in Louisiana

As plans developed for Temple Beth El's 125th-anniversary celebration in Alexandria, Va., festivity leaders discovered that another Reform congregation—Gemiluth Chassodim of Alexandria, La.—also was observing its 125th birthday in 1984.

Both congregations invited Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to participate. His schedule called for him to address Gemiluth Chassodim's annual congregational dinner meeting on February 25 and a May 11 Sabbath service at Beth El.

Coincidentally, the 1983-85 Gemiluth Chassodim President was Jascque Caplan, mother of Judy Ginsburgh, Beth El's executive secretary.

Rabbis Arnold G. Fink of Beth El and Martin I. Hinchin of Gemiluth Chassodim exchanged congratulatory messages. Rabbi Hinchin pointed out that Henry Hayms in 1828 became the first Jewish settler of Alexandria, La.; he was a first cousin of Judah P. Benjamin, who served successively in 1861-62 as Attorney General, Secretary of War and Secretary of State of the Confederacy.



Beth El Hebrew Congregation

CHAPEL

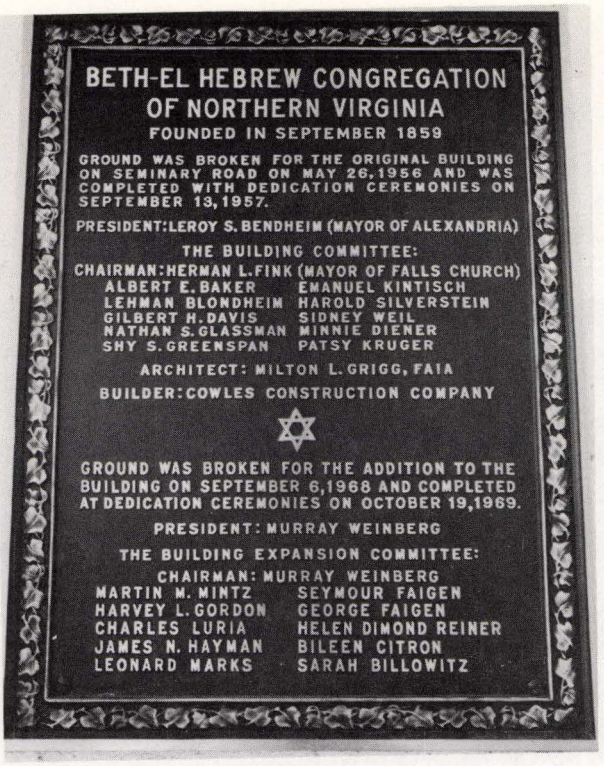
A fund drive was begun in 1984 to finance construction of a new chapel in the Temple Beth El multipurpose room.

Rabbi Arnold G. Fink described the purpose of the chapel in these words:

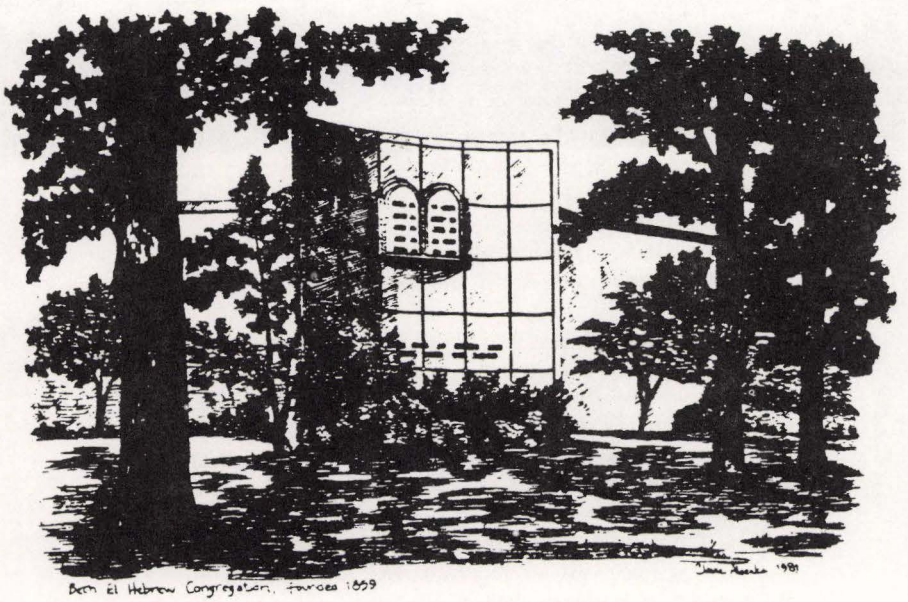
"A Temple is a special place. Here we gather to pray, celebrate, study and share the Jewish moments of our lives.

"In creating a chapel in our building, we shall bring to fruition a special dream—the fashioning of sacred space, a sanctuary for small weddings, funerals, minyans and alternate services. Here we shall teach our young, worship with our friends, meditate among the symbols that are unique to our faith. Our chapel will be lovely, intimate and inspiring.

"The Beth El Chapel gives you the opportunity to memorialize a dear one or to remember a blessed event in the beauty of holiness. What memorialization can be as meaningful as the dedication of a part of a sanctuary of the Lord? A limited number of opportunities exist. I hope you will consider the rare opportunity to participate in bringing our beautiful chapel to reality."



This plaque lists the Building Committee that directed construction of the new Beth El building in 1957, plus the Building Expansion Committee of 1968-69.





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Beth El Hebrew
Congregation,
1859-1984

Presented to the Library
of the Jewish Genealogy
Society of Greater Washington
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