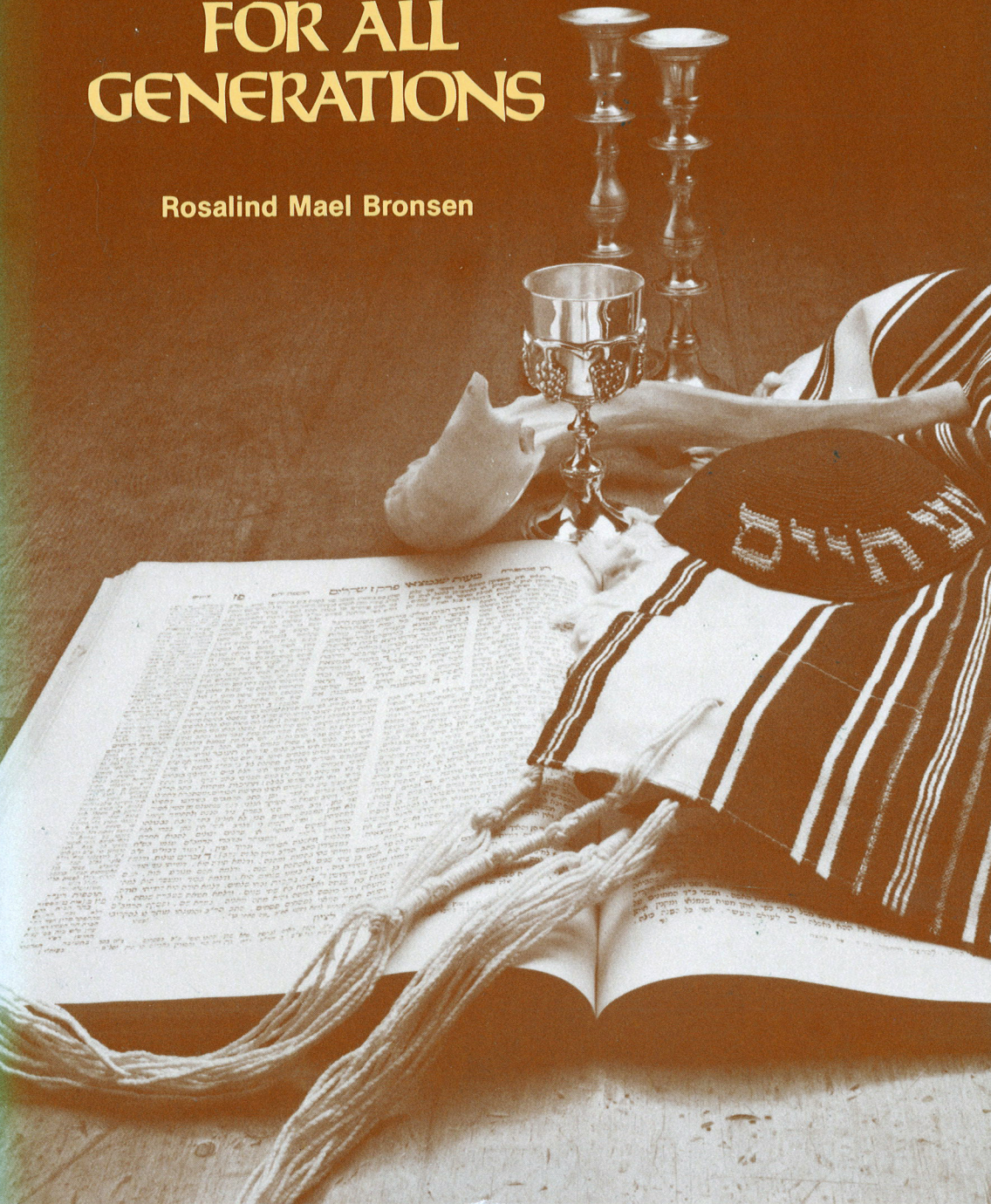
B'NAI AMOONA
FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Rosalind Mael Bronsen



In the long sweep of Jewish history, one generation in particular stands out as very special. That is the generation of Jews that lived at the end of the 19th century and made the difficult passages from Europe to America and to what was then Palestine. Possessed of enormous courage and resourcefulness, these people, in the space of a few short years, laid the foundations of both the State of Israel and the Jewish community of the United States.

Whereas some of that generation, in their eagerness to adjust to the new world, jettisoned their religious heritage, others showed a fierce determination to retain that heritage and to make it speak to them and to the world in the accents of their new tongue.

One expression of such determination was a small group of Jews who in the early 1880s met above a millinery shop in St. Louis, Missouri in order to establish what was to become Congregation B'nai Amoona. Over the next one hundred years, the congregation went on to become one of the leading Conservative congregations in the United States.

The present volume, written in honor of the congregation's centennial, describes the struggles of those years. With candor and love the book documents the congregation's confrontation with the American environment, the quiet heroism of some of its dedicated people, its efforts to make ends meet, the inevitable squabbles and foibles of its leadership, and above all its constant search for ways of making the Jewish tradition relevant to the life and needs of its members. It is the fascinating story of living, pulsating people who succeeded in their task far beyond what might have been expected when their journey began.

B'NAI AMOONA

FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Rosalind Mael Bronsen

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Congregation B'nai Amoona

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GENERATION TO GENERATION
B'NAI AMOONA
1881-CENTENNIAL-1981

Dedicated to the loving memory
of
Charles and Minnie Lopata
by
Stanley and Lucy Lopata

Charles Lopata was born in Russia in 1882. At the age of 21 he immigrated to the United States and settled in St. Louis. Minnie Kligman, who later became his wife, was the daughter of Russian immigrants. Her family settled first in New York, where Minnie was born in 1889, and then in St. Louis. The young couple met in St. Louis at a dance sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and were married in 1909. They had three sons, Edwin, Stanley and Monte. In 1921, when it became time for their eldest son, Edwin, to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah, the Lopatas affiliated with B'nai Amoona. Each of the sons celebrated the occasion of his becoming Bar Mitzvah in the congregation. In honor of the long and close relationship between the Lopata family and B'nai Amoona, Stanley and Lucy Lopata have underwritten the cost of this history of the congregation which is dedicated with respect and gratitude to the memory of their parents.

Acknowledgements

In a project of this dimension there are always numerous people who contribute to its success. In singling out the names of a few, one runs the risk of overlooking others who also deserve mention. Despite the risk, I must offer my thanks to the following individuals who made significant contributions.

At the top of the list is Rabbi Bernard Lipnick. It is no exaggeration to say that due primarily to his persistent and determined backing the history of Congregation B'nai Amoona has been written. He had the foresight to see that documents were collected and preserved. He requested Mrs. Miriam Freedman to record the invaluable reminiscences of Shamas Isidor Katz. He found both the people and resources to bring the project to fruition. Last but not least, his own recollections, spanning thirty years, cover one-third of the congregation's history. To Rabbi Lipnick I say thank you on behalf of myself and of every reader who derives pleasure and benefit from this book.

Stanley and Lucy Lopata deserve special recognition for making it possible to undertake the history of B'nai Amoona. Their vision and generosity are in the finest tradition of both the congregation and Judaism.

I wish to express my appreciation to:

Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen who was always ready to explain the intricacies of Jewish law, ritual and custom.

Phil Polsky, Executive Director, and his staff who facilitated my task in every way possible.

The B'nai Amoona History Committees, headed successively by Mrs. Rena Schechter and Mrs. Laura Snitzer, and Donald Makovsky who worked on the project for a summer. They gathered important materials which form the basis of part of this work.

Rabbi Lipnick, Rabbi Cohen, Prof. David Bronsen and Prof. Gerald Izenberg whose critical comments improved the manuscript.

Margaret Callan and Mary Ann Steiner whose copy editing provided a polish to the style.

Rose and Charles Klotzer and their staff who did everything in their power to produce a book that is both accurate and attractive.

Herb Halpern who designed the book jacket and the lay-out for the pictures.

Dr. Aaron Hendin and Alfred Fleishman who shot a number of photographs.

Steve Weitz who reproduced many of the photographs.

To all these people and the many more who are still unnamed, I say thank you.

Rosalind Mael Bronsen

Interviews

I wish to express my gratitude to the following people who were interviewed in person, by letter or by telephone. Their recollections constitute the living history of Congregation B'nai Amoona and in many instances are the only documentation available. My debt to these people is reflected throughout the text.

Thelma Abrams
Pearl Barohn
Jules Biegelsen
Arthur Bierman
Norman Bierman
Gertrude Brickman
Jack Brickman
Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen
Jules Dubinsky
Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky
Fannie Ellman
Evelyn Binder Feldman
Mildred Fischer
Ted Fischer
Alfred Fleishman
Esther Flom
Harry Freedman
Miriam Freedman
Jacob Friedman
Maurie Friedman
Mercedes Friedman
Eva Gallup
Abe Garland
Edna Garland
I. Eli Goldstein
Jeanette Gould
Tillie Gowseiow
Gertrude Haffner
Henry Haffner
Bess Halpern
Harry Hammerman
Libby Hankin
Sherry Hecht
Fannie Hertzman
Henrietta Hoschild
Rose Kaplan
Shamas Isidor Katz
William Katz
Carolyn Kleiman
Esther Klevens
Morris Klevens
Rabbi Simcha Kling
Maurice Kranzberg
Vivian Kranzberg
Sam Krupnick
Rabbi Bernard Lipnick
Babette Kahn Lipsitz
Hazzan Leon Lissek
Ruth Lourie
Robert Mass
Rose Mass
Hyman Matlof
Gertrude Olschwanger
Barbara Poger
Albert Price
Armin Price
Edith Price
Melan Price
Laeh Halpern Raskas
Seva Roberts
William Rosenbaum
Mamie Rosenblatt
Meyer Rosentreter
Dorothy Fleishman Schucart
Victor Sessler
Barbara Shechter
Laura Snitzer
Debra Spigel
Esther Spitzer
Gloria Spitzer
Tiby Gowseiow Stone
Rabbi Sheldon Switkin
Irwin Tober
Lester Tober

Foreword

Much of society today thinks and acts as though humanity sprang into existence full-blown, without anticedents, free to pursue its own personal and frequently selfish goals. This is a tragedy, especially to the extent that it characterizes the attitude of Jews. For, it was we Jews who provided the world with a conception of history, that is, the idea that humanity is involved in a great cosmic drama, conceived and set into motion by God. The drama began at a particular point in time with the creation of the world and has been advancing ever since toward its ultimate goal, variously referred to as the End of Time, or the Messianic Era.

It follows from this that the universe and everything in it is a purposeful, organic unity which does not simply "exist" but which is "going somewhere," presumably forward and upward in the direction of a glorious denouement which will realize human potential and, at the same time, vindicate God's trust in His creation. It follows, too, according to this view, that human beings, as the chief personae with God in the drama, are united both in origin and in destiny. The unity applies both horizontally and vertically; that is, present humanity the world over is one, as are all generations of humanity that have led up to the present and will stretch beyond it.

From this perspective, one hundred years of history in the life of a congregation of Jews takes on significance far beyond the obvious. Whereas one century in the long sweep of human history —even in the somewhat shorter sweep of Jewish history—may seem almost trivial, the fact that Congregation B'nai Amoona was part and always considered itself part of the divine drama, confers upon its existence a dimension of meaning which transcends the immediate. In keeping close to the well-springs of the Jewish tradition, the congregation has never wandered very far from the awareness that its work was indeed part of a larger whole, and that in some fashion this work was a contribution to the forward movement of Jewish and human history.

Yet it was the incentive provided by the centennial of the con-

gregation, celebrated during 5742, corresponding to the year 1981–82, which inspired the congregation to commission a systematic analysis of the historical record and to have that analysis set forth in the book before you. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley (Lucy) Lopata, well-known and highly respected members and benefactors of the general and Jewish communities of St. Louis, volunteered to fund the project. The work is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Lopata's parents, Minnie Kligman Lopata, who died December 4, 1955, and Charles Lopata, who died February 3, 1968. The elder Lopatas were long-time members of the congregation and among its most active supporters.

The task of researching and writing the history was assigned to Dr. Rosalind Mael Bronsen, formerly of the Department of History at Washington University, and herself a committed Jew. It has been my pleasure during the course of the past year and a half to observe Dr. Bronsen at work and to note her unswerving dedication to the highest standards of scholarship. The results of her dedicated effort will be apparent immediately to all who read this book.

It has long been a point of controversy among those who accept the Jewish conception of history as to whether progress toward the Messianic Era is inexorable and inevitable or whether progress depends upon how well or how poorly we human beings conduct ourselves. While support can be elicited for both points of view, it is, I like to feel, B'nai Amoona's point of view that progress both in our sphere of activity as well as in the larger domain depends directly upon us; that the Jewish understanding of history confers upon all human beings and especially upon congregationally affiliated Jews the sacred obligation to conduct themselves so that the universe will indeed be advanced towards our and its ultimate perfection. I express the hope and the prayer that the performance of this congregation during its second hundred years will bring our people and all of society closer to that blessed age of which our people have always dreamed; that by word and by deed, throughout all our generations, we shall, in the words of the Kedusha, "declare Thy greatness, O Lord and . . . proclaim Thy holiness" and that we shall yet see the day when "the Lord shall be One and His Name One."

Bernard Lipnick
Rabbi, Congregation B'nai Amoona

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Chapter One

Beginnings

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SHADOW AND HISTORY lie the beginnings of Congregation B'nai Amoona. The first contemporary references to the small assemblage of orthodox Jews are found in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*

> August 15, 1884, A concert for the benefit of the Rev. Aaron Levy, the Jewish rabbi whose congregation seceded recently from Sheerith Israel Church, will be given at Druid's Hall, August 17. The congregation now worships regularly at Pohlman's Hall, Broadway and Franklin Avenue, under the name B'nei Emounoh, which means "Sons of Faith." Exercises are held Fridays and Sundays at 6 and 8 p.m. respectively. They use the Mount Sinai Cemetery. His time with his old pastorate not expiring till that date, Dr. Levy will not take charge of the new church until October.[1]

> October 31, 1884, Rev. Aaron Levy's Hebrew congregation will worship after November 1 in the hall at Ninth Street and Washington Avenue. The congregation which formed in July with 32 members now numbers 97 and $500 is the snug balance in the treasury.[2]

> January 16, 1885, Rev. Aaron Levy who resigned as pastor of Bene Amoona Jewish Congregation, has been succeeded by Rev. A. Rosentreter, who has recently arrived from Berlin.[3]

These excerpts suggest that B'nai Amoona was founded in July 1884 by a group that broke away from an older orthodox congregation called Sheerith Israel.

An article written by Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter in 1925 essentially substantiates this conclusion. That article says that on August 2, 1884, 17 men met in a room over a millinery shop at 721

Franklin Avenue to form Congregation B'nai Amoona.[4] The minor discrepancies in these two accounts regarding dates, locale and the initial number of members do not seriously alter the picture.

Rabbi Rosentreter also maintained that the little congregation held a *minyan* (a service conducted with a minimum of ten men) on Sixth Street and then at Ninth Street and Franklin Avenue, before arriving at its quarters at Ninth and Washington Avenue, where the Statler Hotel (now the Gateway) was later built.[5] Although this seems a surprising number of locations for the congregation to have occupied during its short span of existence, this information provides additional confirmation for our conclusion regarding B'nai Amoona's origins. J. Thomas Scharf's *History of St. Louis City and County* says that Sheerith Israel rented a room at 926 North Sixth. From there the congregation apparently moved to Ninth and Franklin, where the congregation held services and conducted a Sabbath school in 1882.[6] As a breakaway group from Sheerith Israel, B'nai Amoona would have met first at these two prior locations before settling at Ninth and Washington.

What clouds the issue of B'nai Amoona's founding is a historical account written by Rabbi Abraham Halpern, who became rabbi of the congregation in 1917. In his version, which appeared in the 50th Jubilee book (1932), Rabbi Halpern states that in the latter part of 1881 a few men gathered together for the purpose of organizing a modern orthodox congregation. The leading spirit behind the undertaking was Moritz Schuchat and the first president was Joseph Sessel, who was followed in this office by L. M. Plaut. Since Rabbi Halpern was not even born at the time of B'nai Amoona's founding, he undoubtedly based his account on information received from those founders still living in 1932, namely Mrs. Helene (Moritz) Schuchat, Mrs. Elizabeth (Isaac) Emmer and Israel Meyerson.[7] Yet memories do fail and contemporary newspaper accounts, although not always the most reliable of sources, are more likely to be accurate than an account written a half century later. Moreover, in this particular case, 1884, as the date of origin, is further corroborated by other sources. In 1902, B'nai Amoona listed its annual meeting as the 18th to be held by the congregation, and in 1909, the president's

message identified that year as the synagogue's 25th anniversary.[8]

Although Rabbi Rosentreter was looking back over 40 years when he wrote his article, his testimony may be considered reliable. Arriving in St. Louis in 1884, Adolph Rosentreter was possibly a first-hand observer of the formation of B'nai Amoona. At the very least, he was closely associated with those who were. He became rabbi of B'nai Amoona in 1885 and in 1886 he married the young widow of L. M. Plaut, the man whom Rosentreter cites as the first president of the congregation. A newspaper notice regarding Plaut's death identified him as "the founder" of B'nai Amoona congregation.[9]

In pointing to Moritz Schuchat as the leading spirit behind the creation of B'nai Amoona, Rabbi Halpern is indirectly supporting the thesis that the congregation was an offshoot of Sheerith Israel. In the *Jewish Tribune* we find a notice that M. Schuchat was elected one of the trustees of Sheerith Israel for 1882–83.[10] It is difficult, however, to know what to make of Joseph Sessel's role. At first glance, it seems unlikely that Sessel would have had anything to do with an orthodox congregation, since from 1884–92 he served as president of United Hebrew,[11] one of the four large reform temples founded in St. Louis during the 19th century. But even if he did take a hand in the establishment of B'nai Amoona, it is hard to believe that he served as the first president unless a case can be made for a date of origin earlier than July 1884.

Perhaps the most important role Sessel could have played—with or without the title of president—was in helping to establish a viable financial base for the new religious assembly. For at the time the congregation was founded, orthodox Jews had neither the wealth nor the numbers to support their own institutions. Consequently, when a new *shul* was formed, the leaders turned to their more affluent brethren among the reform Jews for the means of survival. Despite the great social gulf that separated the two communities, well-to-do reform Jews often responded favorably to such solicitations. With regard to B'nai Amoona, moreover, the gulf was not nearly so unbridgeable.

In a historical piece about B'nai Amoona Cemetery—which originally belonged to Sheerith Israel—Joseph Sessel is listed as one of a committee of three appointed by Sheerith Israel to purchase land for a burial ground.[12] If this information is correct,

then it is not at all surprising to find Sessel, even if he had already moved into one of "the rich men's congregations,"[13] helping out his old friends who had undertaken to establish a new congregation.

Although most Jews in St. Louis in the 1880s belonged to reform congregations, a few orthodox congregations did exist before B'nai Amoona's emergence. It is very difficult to identify such groups because most of them were no more than *minyanim* that met on a more or less regular basis to observe the holidays and the Sabbath. Since Jewish orthodoxy requires that the place of worship be within walking distance, a new *shul* would come into being in nearly every neighborhood where a few Jewish families settled. And if ethnic divisions as well as personal animosities and ambitions are taken into account, it is easy to grasp why orthodox congregations proliferated rapidly. Not surprisingly, however, few of these little assemblages ever established a firm foundation. Among those that did are Chevra Kadisha, organized in 1862; Sheerith Israel, in existence since 1868 or 1869 and Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, which began as a *minyan* in 1879.[14]

The Rev. Isidor Katz, who became *shamas* of B'nai Amoona in 1913, left a description of the founding of Sheerith Israel. As Katz tells it, two friends who settled in St. Louis decided to form a *minyan*. After securing a room for their meetings, they solicited chairs, tables and other furnishings from store owners. They acquired a Torah from one of the rabbis in St. Louis and ordered prayer books from Chicago and New York. Then they were ready to begin *davenen* on Saturdays. Soon others joined them and the congregation started to grow.[15]

Although Shamas Katz embellished his account with numerous details that may or may not be accurate, the general picture he draws serves as a close approximation of what must have transpired in the founding of most early orthodox *shuls*. Frequently, they came into being in time for the High Holidays, the time of year when men, who had previously been too busy or too tired from their labors, longed to renew contact with the faith of their fathers. A handful of participants would gather in a room, usually offered to them free of charge, to observe the sacred days. Once the holidays were over, someone would suggest that the group continue to meet for services on the Sabbath and possibly

weekdays as well, since mourners required a daily *minyan* in order to recite *kaddish*, or the mourner's prayer. Soon others would join them, making it necessary to find larger, more adequate quarters. If the tiny new congregation had sufficient wealth and luck, it would procure the services of a rabbi, *hazzan* or "reverend gentleman" to serve as its leader. In time, the casual association would be formalized by a charter of incorporation.

But these broad outlines do not reveal much about the particular experience of B'nai Amoona. The challenge is to illuminate the congregation's little-known early history with as many specifics as possible. For instance, one of the very first orders of business apparently was to secure burial space for the congregation's members who were either no longer entitled or no longer willing to use Sheerith Israel Cemetery. President Plaut sent a letter, dated July 27, 1884, to the governing body of Mount Sinai Cemetery, requesting that B'nai Amoona be permitted to purchase an acre or two at this reform-owned burial ground.[16] The request was granted and Plaut, who was killed in an accident in April 1885, probably was one of the first B'nai Amoona congregants to be buried at this site.[17]

The founders of B'nai Amoona have been identified as immigrants from Cracow, which at the time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this connection, we learn from the 50th Jubilee book how B'nai Amoona acquired its name. When the congregation was first organized, so the story goes, its founders called it the "Moses Montefiore Congregation" after the famed British-Jewish philanthropist. They prepared a beautifully inscribed scroll and sent it to Montefiore in the hope that it would elicit an appropriate response. When six months of hopeful waiting failed to bring even a reply, let alone a contribution, from "His Lordship," the name of the congregation was changed to B'nai Amoona—"Children of Faith," in honor of the *shul* Moritz Schuchat attended in his native Cracow.[18]

Sheerith Israel was probably the original "Krakower Shul" in St. Louis. Mrs. Rosalie (Herbert) Berger in a historical account of B'nai Amoona Cemetery (previously owned by Sheerith Israel) relates that Abraham Tuchler arrived in America from Cracow early enough to fight in the Civil War. After being mustered out of the Union Army, he returned to St. Louis and joined with

other Cracow immigrants to form Sheerith Israel. As an offshoot of this congregation, B'nai Amoona was founded by men and women from the same locale.[19]

Since we have virtually no knowledge as to what brought about the split in the congregation, we can only speculate on the causes. It is possible that some sort of personality factor was involved, although a doctrinal difference is not out of the question. Given the insignificant distance of two blocks that in 1884 separated B'nai Amoona at Ninth and Washington from Sheerith Israel at Ninth and Franklin,[20] it hardly seems likely that there was any need for a new neighborhood *shul.*

If Moritz Schuchat was the leader, several others have been identified as joining him when he broke with Sheerith Israel to found B'nai Amoona. In an article written 50 years after the fact, Schuchat's supporters are named as David Frey, Mailach Saffier, Pincus Agatstein, David Priwer, Israel Meyerson and Jacob Goldwasser.[21] A curious role was played by Abraham Tuchler. He is listed by Rabbi Rosentreter as B'nai Amoona's first secretary under the presidency of L. M. Plaut and he served again as secretary under the succeeding president, Marcus Rosenblum. Yet in 1889, Tuchler is listed as the secretary of Sheerith Israel and two years later is found collecting for the building fund of yet another orthodox synagogue, Anshei S'fard. All this may suggest no more than that Tuchler was associated with various synagogues perhaps in a paid capacity. Nonetheless, it is interesting that despite B'nai Amoona's split from Sheerith Israel, Tuchler found it possible to shift from one congregation to the other and back again.[22]

Those identified as following Schuchat's lead in forming B'nai Amoona constituted the Cracow contingent of the congregation. Many other early founders originated in Germany. Prominent among them were the Rosentreter family from Gollantsch; the Maizner brothers, Herman and Moritz, from Breslau; Mrs. Rebecca (Abraham) Kahn; Adolph and Marie Knoch; Solomon and Bertha Marks; Meyer and Mary Gad; Isidor and Philippine Friedman; Abraham and Dora Marglous; and others about whom we lack specific information. Leopold Lichtenstein came from Austria-Hungary, although his birthplace within the empire cannot be pinpointed.[23]

What all these people had in common was their adherence to Orthodox Judaism and the German language. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the language spoken among B'nai Amoona congregants during the early period was German. When Dr. Moritz Spitz, rabbi of B'nai El, delivered an address at B'nai Amoona he spoke in German, which according to the newspaper report, was the language "best fitting to his audience." Although Bar Mitzvah boys sometimes spoke in English, Willie Emmer, son of founders Isaac and Elizabeth Emmer, addressed the congregation in German at his Bar Mitzvah. The eulogy that Rabbi Rosentreter delivered at memorial services for B'nai Amoona President Plaut bore the title, "Das ewige Licht."[24] Finally, Victor Sessler, whose memory goes back to the beginning of this century, recalls that Rabbi Rosentreter usually gave his sermons in German, although he occasionally spoke in English. This information is confirmed by newspaper accounts that explicitly state that Rabbi Rosentreter addressed his audiences in German at various services and on other occasions.[25]

What else can be said about the first generation of B'nai Amoona members? Although there is little information available about their occupations, we do know that the Maizner brothers owned a dry goods store. The name Rosentreter was variously associated with clothing, jewelry and banking. At one point there was a Rosentreter Emmer Jewelry Co., indicating that one of the Rosentreter brothers was in partnership with Isaac Emmer. Later David Rosentreter is listed as president of the Washington National Bank. Since there were both a Louis and a Leopold Lippmann, all we can say is that one was a mail carrier and the other a jeweler. At one point Leopold Lichtenstein advertised himself as an agent for matzos, as did Adolph Knoch. Abraham Marglous first owned a dry goods store in Grand Tower, Ill., and later an overall factory in St. Louis.[26]

Apparently, most of the early members were of limited means. This is attested to by a letter to the editor from "an Orthodox Jehudi," which was printed in the *Jewish Free Press* on November 6, 1885. The writer says that orthodox Jews in the city need a suitable place of worship instead of the "dingy halls" they have been forced to use until now. He states that B'nai Amoona, whose congregation "consists of decent, well-behaved men and

women," wishes to acquire such a synagogue but lacks the means to do so. The 65 members have already subscribed $1,000, but, if they are to realize the total sum necessary, their more "well-situated brethren"—which means reform Jews—must assist them with generous contributions, the letter writer concludes.[27]

Even if they lacked substantial wealth, the common German heritage that B'nai Amoona congregants shared with their more well-placed compatriots did gain them entry into organizations founded by the reform community. Those early B'nai Amoona members who can be identified as having been active in that quintessential German-Jewish brotherhood, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, include David and Adolph Rosentreter, Herman Maizner, Leopold Lichtenstein, L. L. Lippmann and Pincus Agatstein.[28] In addition, B'nai Amoona names can be found on the membership lists of such reform-supported societies as the Independent Order of the Free Sons of Israel, Sisters of Rebecca, Modern Woodmen of America and the Austro-Hungarian Society.[29]

Perhaps the most revealing point which can be made about the founding fathers and mothers of B'nai Amoona is that they used the columns of the local Jewish newspapers to report the important events in their lives. These included births, Bar Mitzvahs, weddings and deaths; illnesses and recoveries; trips to Europe and summer holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and parties; awards, graduations; and changes of address. These announcements appeared in a succession of English-language, reform Jewish weeklies, commencing with the *Jewish Tribune* (1879–84), followed by the *Jewish Free Press* (1885–87) and the *Jewish Voice* (1884–early 1920s), and concluding with the last of this line, the *Modern View*, which began publishing in 1901 and continued until the early years of World War II.

People who put notices in papers such as these undoubtedly were literate in English and had friends who were too. Such literacy suggests that the early congregants had a fairly high level of education and probably had lived in the United States for a time. The notices also suggest that, if not rich, they at least had sufficient means and leisure to be socially conscious. Recently arrived immigrants from Eastern Europe, who were poor, uneducated and Yiddish speaking, would not have such concerns nor would

they have turned to these newspapers for an outlet. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that B'nai Amoona's first generation congregants although not yet among the *crème de la crème*, were certainly upwardly mobile and were already being accepted within the social circles of the more prosperous German-Jewish reform community.

As the only orthodox congregation that held this unique social position, Congregation B'nai Amoona bridged the worlds of reform and Orthodox Judaism. While reform rabbis and lay leaders often supported an orthodox congregation's efforts to acquire a new synagogue or raise funds, it was exceptional for orthodox representatives to be included in major events sponsored by the reform community. Yet B'nai Amoona's rabbi was asked to take part in memorial services for the Baron and Baroness de Hirsch, the 25th anniversary celebration of Rabbi Henry J. Messing's tenure at United Hebrew and the dedication of B'nai El's new temple in 1906.[30] From 1891 onward Rabbi Rosentreter was a participant in the joint Thanksgiving Day Services sponsored by the Jewish community.[31] He was invited to a meeting called at Shaare Emeth to discuss greater congregational cooperation.[32] Rabbi Rosentreter occupied the pulpit on at least one occasion at United Hebrew and B'nai El's Rabbi Spitz did the same at B'nai Amoona.[33] Rabbi Rosentreter was a signatory along with the four reform rabbis of a petition directed to the "better-situated" Jews of St. Louis, urging them to be generous in their aid to the victims of the Kishinev pogrom.[34] Finally, in listing the hours of holiday services, the reform Jewish newspaper *Jewish Voice*, beginning in 1893, invariably printed "B'nai Amoona and all other orthodox congregations . . .",[35] suggesting that only B'nai Amoona was of sufficient interest to its readers to be identified by name.

Precisely because it was so easy for B'nai Amoona members to move into the more prestigious reform community, most of the founding families ceased to be affiliated with the synagogue in any meaningful sense by the second generation. Sons and daughters might maintain a formal membership in B'nai Amoona if a parent was still alive or even in the parents' memory, but if the succeeding generations remained active within a Jewish congregation, it was usually in a reform one. In a number of instances

the children broke all ties and ceased to identify themselves as Jews.

It is difficult to document what paths the descendants of early B'nai Amoona families took, but we know that a son of Moritz Maizner joined United Hebrew.[36] Most of A. J. Marglous' children chose Temple Israel; however, his daughter, Fannie (Mrs. Paul Roberts), remained at B'nai Amoona.[37] Rabbi Spitz of B'nai El officiated when Willie Emmer married Julia Levy. The same rabbi officiated at the wedding of Leo Priver (Priwer) and Lena Frey, both children of B'nai Amoona founders.[38] While the fact that a reform rabbi performed these marriage ceremonies does not constitute proof that the couples ceased to be affiliated with B'nai Amoona, it certainly suggests that they were moving towards reform Judaism. Hilda Levy, the daughter of Jacques and Henrietta Levy, married Lee Sale, the younger brother of Rabbi Sale of Shaare Emeth. Not only can we assume that the young couple joined that congregation, but when the mother, Henrietta Levy died, it was Rabbi Sale who officiated at her funeral.[39]

Those parents who were able to do so provided their children with advanced education. Moritz Schuchat's son, Louis, became a surgeon. Victor Lichtenstein studied music in Paris for four years before returning to St. Louis to become a concert violinist, conductor and music instructor. Abraham Frey, the son of David Frey, received a bachelor's degree and a law degree from Washington University and later became a judge.[40] Such levels of education provided access to higher social circles and may have led some to break their ties with B'nai Amoona.[41] Even if the children of founders did not take advantage of this option, most likely the grandchildren did.

There is, however, at least one notable exception. Gittel and Yussel Cohen were probably members of Sheerith Israel before they, along with their daughter and son-in-law, Dories and Israel Meyerson, joined Schuchat in founding B'nai Amoona. The Meyersons' daughter, Frieda (Olschwanger), became a figure of major importance in B'nai Amoona during the first half of the 20th century. From her the line passes to her daughter, Florence (Kramer), then to her daughter, Barbara (Shechter), and finally to her daughters, Karen and Sharon, who belong to the sixth generation at B'nai Amoona.[42]

The movement of B'nai Amoona members into the reform community was no doubt eased by the congregation's more liberal approach to orthodoxy. In the parlance of the time a distinction was made between radical-reform and conservative-reform movements, but no such division was formally recognized by the adherents of orthodoxy. Nonetheless, among the orthodox as well, there were both liberal and strict interpretations of law and custom. However, the actual split among orthodox Jews awaited the emergence of Conservative Judaism at the beginning of the 20th century.

But even before the split, people accustomed to moderate orthodoxy would not have found it too difficult to shift to a conservative-reform congregation, such as United Hebrew or B'nai El. In fact, United Hebrew seemed to attract most of the descendants of B'nai Amoona's founding generation since B'nai El, located on the South Side, was geographically inconvenient. The radical-reform congregations of Temple Israel and Shaare Emeth, besides being doctrinally more extreme, were also the bastions of the German-Jewish elite. For social as well as philosophical reasons, therefore, they were beyond the reach of most B'nai Amoona families at this time.

Evidence of B'nai Amoona's liberal leanings can be found in the 1889 dedication ceremonies of the synagogue at 13th and Carr Streets during which several practices were permitted that were deviations from orthodoxy. For instance men and women were allowed to sit together, although this was usually prohibited in the sanctuary. Included on the program was a march with the Torah scrolls, but as Rabbi Rosentreter set out to complete the circuit, a fierce debate broke out between him and one of his congregants who objected to the fact that the rabbi was not wearing a *tallit*, or prayer shawl. The rabbi defended himself by saying the dedication was not a divine service. The rejoinder was that any service that invoked the Holy Name was a divine service. The murmur of dissatisfaction increased in volume when Mrs. S. B. Sale, a sister-in-law of Shaare Emeth's Rabbi Samuel Sale, and Bertha Sale, his sister, sang out the chants, Shema Yisroel and Ki Mitzion. One unhappy congregant declared that female voices in an orthodox *shul* were a sacrilege. The final affront occurred when Rabbi Sale, a prominent exponent of radical-reform Judaism, rose to deliver the guest sermon.[43]

Before one assumes that Rabbi Rosentreter was engaging in arbitrary behavior, it should be noted that the program was no doubt planned well in advance and, in fact, the printed version was available in the *Jewish Voice* two days ahead of time.[44] The dissension expressed on the occasion and in a subsequent letter to the editor[45] could not have represented the opinion of B'nai Amoona's leadership. It seems probable, therefore, that these exceptional practices had the support either of most of the congregation or of those who counted most.

But why were these deviant practices allowed at all? It seems fairly clear that they were designed to make the large number of reform Jews who were present for the occasion feel comfortable. In order to defray the indebtedness of the congregation, it was necessary to receive substantial contributions from those with means, which meant wealthy reform Jews. As a matter of fact, when Dr. Sale made his expected appeal for funds, the audience responded generously.[46]

Although there may have been a good reason on this occasion for permitting some deviation from accepted orthodox practice, those who are strict interpretors of law and custom do not make compromises. Not all of B'nai Amoona's members were happy about the turn of events, as the protesting voices raised at the time and subsequently in print make clear. But the rabbi and those who supported him prevailed and there is no reason to assume that the majority of the congregation did not concur with their decisions.

From what we know of Rabbi Rosentreter's background, the flexibility he exhibited on this occasion comes as no surprise. Although a strictly *halachic* Jew in his personal life, Adolph Rosentreter was a product of the Hildesheimer seminary in Berlin.[47] This rabbinic institute was founded by Rabbi Azriel (Israel) Hildesheimer, an adherent of German neo-orthodoxy, a philosophy which advocated the integration of orthodoxy within the modern world. Many of the ideas of the movement are reminiscent of those later propounded by the theorists of Conservative Judaism.

Born in Gollantsch, Germany, on December 27, 1858, Adolph Rosentreter was one of the five children of Meyer and Frommet Rosentreter. After graduating from *gymnasium* in 1878, young

Rosentreter attended the University of Berlin until 1880.[48] While there is some thought that he received a doctorate from this institution, most probably he did not. The rabbi is addressed by the title of "Doctor" with insufficient consistency to consider its usage as more than honorific.[49] From 1877 to 1884, Rosentreter served as rabbi of a congregation at Meseritz, a town about 30 miles from Frankfurt. He also apparently performed some rabbinic functions for the Jewish communities of Roebel and Kettwig.[50]

Shortly after arriving in St. Louis in 1884 with his entire family, Adolph Rosentreter was invited to become rabbi of the newly formed B'nai Amoona congregation. On January 10, 1885, at the age of 26, the young rabbi became the congregtion's spiritual leader, a position he maintained until 1911.[51] The rabbi married Fanny Schwabe Plaut on August 15, 1886. The couple had four children: a boy who died in infancy; two girls, Emmy and Frieda; and another son, Meyer. On February 7, 1903, at 46 years of age, Fanny Rosentreter died, leaving behind her husband and three young children.[52] In the summer of 1904, Rabbi Rosentreter met Eva Gottschalk, a friend of his sister Rose and a visitor from Berlin to the St. Louis World's Fair. They were married on November 27, 1904.[53]

The unusually positive reception accorded B'nai Amoona by the reform community has to be largely attributed to its rabbi. German born and educated, Adolph Rosentreter not only shared cultural bonds with reform German Jews but also had close family ties. According to the rabbi's granddaughter, Mercedes Friedman, the rabbi's father, Meyer Rosentreter, brought his family to St. Louis because his first cousin, Isaac Russack, was already well established here. Russack, who served as president of United Hebrew for many years, was a prominent figure in the Jewish community.[54] In addition, Rabbi Rosentreter's brother, Michael, married Annie Wieder, whose father was a leading member of Temple Israel.[55]

It is interesting to note that at significant moments in his own life Rabbi Rosentreter called upon reform colleagues for rabbinic services. When he married his first wife, Fanny Plaut, Rabbi Moritz Spitz of B'nai El solemnized the union.[56] Rev. Dr. Isaac Epstein, a reform rabbi without a congregation, officiated at Meyer Rosentreter's funeral.[57] When Fanny Rosentreter died,

Rabbi Leon Harrison of Temple Israel conducted a service at the family residence and Rabbi Spitz officiated at the cemetery.[58]

In considering why Rabbi Rosentreter turned to reform instead of orthodox colleagues on these occasions, it should be noted that any male Jew over age 13 who is conversant with Jewish law is permitted to perform a marriage ceremony. As a result, marriages in the orthodox community were frequently sanctified by anyone accorded the title "reverend" whether a *shochet*, *mohel*, *hazzan*, or Hebrew scholar. However, Missouri state law recognized a religious marriage ceremony as valid only when it was performed by "a minister of the gospel who has been regularly ordained."[59] At the time Rabbi Rosentreter married his first wife there may not have been another orthodox rabbi in St. Louis, or if one was present, there may have been a great social gulf separating him from the Rosentreters. However, by the time the rabbi married Eva Gottschalk, his second wife, Zechariah Rosenfeld had become the leading orthodox rabbi in the city and it was he who solemnized this marriage.[60] As for funerals, since an officiant is not required in either Jewish or secular law, the rabbi presumably chose to call upon those with whom he had a personal relationship.

Rabbi Rosentreter remained associated with B'nai Amoona for 27 years but not always on a full-time basis. At the end of September 1893, Rosentreter left his position as rabbi to pursue a career at the Washington National Bank, where his brother was president. No doubt monetary considerations, particularly in that year of severe economic depression, motivated his decision. There is some question as to whether he was even receiving a salary at the time from B'nai Amoona.[61] However, in August 1895, when his successor, Rabbi H. Saft, became too ill to continue in the post, Rosentreter voluntarily resumed his rabbinic duties. He continued on a temporary basis until July 1896, when he was once more officially reappointed rabbi of the congregation.[62]

Although it seems that Rabbi Rosentreter in the beginning was paid by B'nai Amoona for his services,[63] his income was inadequate to support a growing family. As a result, in 1905, Rabbi Rosentreter again decided to return to the Washington National Bank, where he assumed the position of assistant cashier in the savings department.[64] This time, however, Rosentreter did not

resign his position as rabbi. Instead a remarkable agreement was reached. The following is an excerpt from the resolution passed by the officers of the congregation:

> *Whereas*, now our good rabbi has decided to embark upon a mercantile pursuit into which he carries the exalted principles of our faith, but still generously offering us his ministerial services *free of charge*, thus carrying out one of the noblest injunctions of the Jewish sages, namely "not to use the Torah as an instrument"—be it
>
> *Resolved*, that, we, the Board of Directors, on behalf of the Congregation B'nai Amoona, express thanks to Rabbi Rosentreter for his past labors in our midst resulting to both our spiritual and material advance; and be it further
>
> *Resolved*, that we accept his unselfish and generous offer. . . .[65]

Rabbi Rosentreter from this time on earned his living either through banking or insurance. He remained in the employ of the Washington National Bank and its successor, the American Trust Co., until his health became poor. Then he switched to selling insurance policies for the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co.[66] Simultaneously, Rabbi Rosentreter continued to function as the spiritual leader of B'nai Amoona and then later of a series of other orthodox congregations, namely Beth David, Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol and B'rith Sholom.[67]

In addition to his dual careers, Rosentreter performed many other functions associated with his rabbinic role. He was administrator of the congregations he served and teacher and principal of their Sabbath schools.[68] At B'nai Amoona, the rabbi was for a number of years secretary to the Daughters of Israel, the ladies auxiliary that he helped found.[69]

It is said that Rabbi Rosentreter performed most of the orthodox weddings in St. Louis during the more than 40 years he was an active rabbi in the city. His son, Meyer Rosentreter, recalled that while the rabbi worked at the bank, he would marry couples during his lunch hour in a room set aside for this purpose. Instead of charging the approximately 3,000 couples at whose weddings he officiated, the rabbi would give the newlyweds $5 from his own pocket with which to start their wedded life, his son related.[70]

In his capacity as rabbi, Rosentreter also officiated at innu-

merable funerals for which he did not receive remuneration.[71] Furthermore, he was frequently called on to arbitrate disputes. The rabbi's son recalled that virtually every evening some people would appear at the Rosentreter home to ask the rabbi to resolve their differences. In particular, during this period when labor unions were either weak or non-existent, he was called upon to intercede on behalf of Jewish workers who were being exploited by Jewish employers.[72]

The rabbi was a great believer in personal charity.[73] From 1919 to 1923, Rabbi Rosentreter wrote regularly for *Modern View* under the pseudonym, M. Uno.[74] According to his granddaughter, Phyllis Dubinsky, the name was a play on sound and should be read: ummmm—you know (who the writer really is).[75] The charming little stories that appeared in these columns were morality tales that carried messages about loving and caring for one's fellow man. In particular, the reader was admonished to respond generously to those in need. Rabbi Rosentreter loathed "scientific charity," which he felt was conducted in such a manner as to destroy the pride of the recipient. He was far less concerned about being taken advantage of than about helping those who would benefit from his intercession. Whenever word reached him of a Jewish man or woman alone in the hospital or living in want, he made it his responsibility to find out how he could help.

It is fitting that the rabbi died as he lived. From an obituary published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, we learn that in the August preceding his death, against the advice of doctors, he arose from a sickbed when notified by an undertaker that a rabbi was needed to conduct the funeral of a poor Jewish man. Apparently, the strain proved excessive and resulted in a heart attack from which he never recovered. Rabbi Rosentreter died on April 14, 1930, at 71 years of age.[76]

From all indications, Rabbi Rosentreter was well liked and admired by those who knew him. His colleague, Rabbi Spitz, once wrote of him: "One of the most zealous and indefatigable charitable workers in this community is Rev. A. Rosentreter. While his religious views are diametrically opposed to ours, he being a strict Shulh'an Aruch Jew, a Gesetzestreuer [adherent of the law] of the Hildesheimer school, we nevertheless love and admire him for his noble unselfish labors on behalf of his poor Jewish breth-

ren."[77] When Rabbi Rosentreter first left his ministry in 1893, the officers of B'nai Amoona expressed their regret that he was leaving "a position which he has filled with so much skill and unanimous satisfaction." Again in 1905, they described him as a man who "has endeared himself to the members by faithfulness, zealousness, ability and loving kindness, proving himself a loyal friend and a minister of strong conviction and steadfast principle. . . ."[78] After Rosentreter's death, Rabbi Halpern wrote of his predecessor, "St. Louis Jewry has lost one of its saintly men who ministered to our community for almost a half a century."[79] At his funeral, hundreds of people gathered to pay their last respects. Family, friends, business associates, rabbis from every other congregation in town, Christian ministers, including Catholic Archbishop John J. Glennon, and throngs of seeming strangers were there. All had in common that this man had touched their lives.[80]

During B'nai Amoona's first century, remarkably few men served the congregation as rabbinic leader. The first rabbi held the position for only a few months. He was Dr. Aaron Levy, who was brought to St. Louis from Monroe, La., to serve as rabbi of Sheerith Israel. A newspaper article at the time indicated that Rabbi Levy preached his trial sermons in English and German and that his English was remarkably good for someone who had been in the United States for only eight years.[81]

Aaron Levy, who became rabbi of Sheerith Israel on September 15, 1883, presumably was involved in the split that occurred the following July which resulted in the formation of B'nai Amoona. His name is mentioned in all the announcements regarding the new congregation that appeared in the *Post-Dispatch*.[82] In fact, there is every reason to conclude that it was Levy himself who provided the information for these notices. Probably he turned to a secular outlet because from April 1884 to March 1885 there was no Jewish newspaper published in St. Louis.

What little we know about Aaron Levy does more to obscure than illuminate his life. For example, in 1904 Rabbi Spitz indicated that Levy had been a teacher at B'nai El's Sabbath School.[83] It is not clear when this occurred. Before coming to Sheerith Israel, Levy had been in Louisiana and while rabbi of Sheerith

Israel, he no doubt was in charge of its Sabbath school. Perhaps he taught at B'nai El following his brief tenure at B'nai Amoona. More important than timing, however, is the question the information raises about Dr. Levy's religious commitment. Was he a reform or orthodox rabbi? If the former was the case, it might explain his abrupt departure from B'nai Amoona just three months after becoming rabbi of the congregation. In addition, Aaron Levy is identified in the 1932 Jubilee book as the son of Jacques Levy, a subsequent president of B'nai Amoona, who did have a son called Aaron.[84] There is no way of knowing whether these two men were the same person.

Until Rosentreter's break with B'nai Amoona, only one other man served as rabbi of the congregation. After Adolph Rosentreter left the ministry in 1893 to take up a career in banking, the congregation brought in Rabbi H. Saft from Denver to fill the vacancy. Saft, who delivered his sermons in German and English, was appointed in January 1894 with a one-year contract.[85] In this case the implication is even stronger that the man was of reform training and conviction. Spitz wrote of Rabbi Saft a few years later that "in a strictly orthodox congregation he was out of his proper sphere." At Saft's funeral the officiants were Rabbis Messing of United Hebrew and Harrison of Temple Israel, although Rabbi Rosentreter was in attendance. In later years, Saft's son became a Bar Mitzvah at United Hebrew.[86]

B'nai Amoona was very fortunate in securing consistent and effective spiritual guidance during the early decades of its existence. Most orthodox congregations had to contend with intermittent and not always able rabbinic leadership during this period. Just as instability no doubt contributed to the failure of so many small *shuls*, the quality of Rabbi Rosentreter's leadership throughout his long affiliation with the congregation was largely responsible for B'nai Amoona's growth and prosperity. This was directly acknowledged by Rabbi Spitz, an outside observer, who upon learning of his colleague's decision to return to banking wrote, "Mr. Rosentreter's gain is certainly B'nai Amoona's loss, for to him mainly this congregation owes its growth, popularity and high regard won in the community." The board of directors echoed virtually the same sentiments in these words, "The B'nai Amoona Congregation owes much of its growth, usefulness

and success to the indefatigable labors of the Rev. A. Rosentreter. . . ."[87]

Not surprisingly, B'nai Amoona reached a low point in its fortunes when it had no strong rabbinic leader. In 1893, after Rabbi Rosentreter's temporary withdrawal from the ministry, the membership split into two hostile camps, one of which was led by the president, Sol Goldstone. Periodically, one or the other of these factions would attempt to air their differences in the columns of the *Jewish Voice.* Rabbi Spitz usually refused to print their letters, but he did make comments on them, providing a glimpse of what was going on.[88]

The reappointment of Rabbi Saft was apparently one of the issues in dispute. Initially his contract was not renewed, but this decision was overturned in what was apparently a successful maneuver to oust the controversial Goldstone.[89] Spitz, who in this case was by no means an impartial observer, hailed the victory of the congregation's "better elements."[90] However, the unfortunate Saft derived little benefit from the battle fought on his behalf. Shortly thereafter he became seriously ill and by June 1895 was forced to resign his post altogether. He never recovered his health and died a young man two years later.[91]

During its first three decades, roughly coinciding with Rabbi Rosentreter's period of tenure, the congregation laid the foundation for its future. On October 15, 1886, the congregation's officers, led by President Marcus Rosenblum petitioned the St. Louis Circuit Court for a decree of incorporation. Accompanying the application was a copy of the first constitution giving the institution's legal name as "Benai Amoona Congregation."[92] An amendment to the constitution filed in 1912 officially changed the name to "Congregation B'nai Amoona."[93]

The constitution stated that the services would be "strictly Orthodox" and that "the prayers are always to be recited in the Hebrew language." The document goes on to describe the board of five officers and six trustees and to describe their duties individually and as a body. The duties of the staff are also outlined. The "minister" was required to attend all religious services on the Sabbath and holidays and to deliver a sermon whenever requested to do so by the president. He was also expected to solemnize weddings, officiate at the funerals of members and their

immediate families, prepare the children of members for Bar Mitzvah and confirmation, and establish and maintain a Sabbath school for the instruction of members' children in the Hebrew language and the Jewish religion.[94]

Any "Israelite" could apply for membership by submitting his request in writing along with one month's dues. The application was then voted upon at a meeting of the congregation at which at least two-thirds of the board was present. There is no statement as to what percentage of the vote was necessary in order for a prospective member to be accepted.

A member's major obligation was to remit his dues monthly and in advance. If a member's account fell into arrears, neither he nor his family was entitled to any burial benefits during this period or for 30 days after all his accounts had been settled. This could entail a serious financial loss. A member in good standing was eligible to receive death benefits for himself, his wife and his children. The benefits included a grave, a hearse and three carriages for each burial. In addition, each member and his wife were guaranteed seats in the synagogue. They could send their children to the Sabbath school and have them prepared for Bar Mitzvah and confirmation, all free of charge.[95]

Besides securing legal recognition, another immediate concern was the need to find suitable quarters for the growing membership. As already indicated, the initial meeting place was identified in the *Post-Dispatch* as Pohlman's Hall at Broadway and Franklin Avenue. Within just a few weeks, this temporary location was too cramped to accommodate the growing ranks. As a result, on November 1, 1884, B'nai Amoona rented facilities at Ninth Street and Washington Avenue, where the congregation was to remain for the next few years. At the time, the area was primarily one of homes and churches. Just across the street, stood the old St. Louis University. Today this section is in the heart of downtown St. Louis.[96]

Three years later, the membership had increased to the point where it was necessary to find larger accommodations. For the High Holidays in 1887, the congregation rented an auditorium that could hold 1,000 worshipers in order to provide sufficient seating for the "increasing number of members and friends of orthodox ritual." By Sukkot, B'nai Amoona moved to its next ad-

dress at 823 Franklin Avenue, where the congregation rented a spacious, newly built hall.[97] This entire block was obliterated when the Cervantes Convention Center was built.

Although settled in new quarters, B'nai Amoona congregants had reached the point where they were considering purchasing their own building. Until this was done they would have to be content with a makeshift synagogue. The first orthodox congregation to take the costly step of purchasing its own synagogue, was Sheerith (sometimes Anshei) S'fard. When this congregation of poor Russian Jews scraped together enough funds to make the down payment on a house purchased for $4,000,[98] the *Jewish Voice* lauded its enterprise and questioned why none of the other orthodox congregations had managed to do the same. B'nai Amoona, in particular, came in for chiding so that when the congregation settled on its first building, Rabbi Spitz, the newspaper's editor, applauded. "The B'nai-Amoona have at last aroused themselves from their lethargy and gone to work in earnest. Last Wednesday morning [October 31, 1888] they, represented by Messrs. Lichtenstein and Maizner, have purchased the property of the First German Baptist Church. . . ." The structure, which was located on the southwest corner of 13th and Carr Streets, cost $10,000, and $500 secured the purchase.[99] Today this area has become an industrialized sector of the city and a parking lot is all that remains where the building once stood.

For the next several months, President Leopold L. Lichtenstein, Vice President Herman Maizner and Rabbi Rosentreter were busily engaged in canvassing the town for donations to help reduce the congregation's debt. Since they could not hope to raise enough funds from among their own people, they approached wealthy reform Jews. The response was apparently favorable since the *Voice*'s editor reported, "Brother Rosentreter smiles, and that indicates success."[100]

The congregation took formal possession of the building on April 1, 1889. Daily services were held in the school rooms downstairs while the sanctuary underwent renovation to transform it from a church into a synagogue. Among other changes, the orientation of the room was shifted so that the worshipers could face east towards Jerusalem.[101] On June 30, 1889, B'nai Amoona was ready to dedicate its first synagogue.

The new synagogue was a brick building with seating capacity for 250 people. Jacob Friedman recalls that the officers of the congregation had seats up on the podium and that men and women sat separately, but on the same level. The *Aron Kodesh*, or ark, was described as plain but tastefully arranged. One of the first gifts from the women's auxiliary was a richly designed ark curtain, imported from Berlin. The *al-menor* or *bimah*, from where the Torah was read and the service conducted, was not in the center of the room as customary in orthodox *shuls* of the period, but rather was directly in front of the rabbi's pulpit.[102] We know the building was not equipped with electric power, since one of the major controversies of the Goldstone era was whether or not the congregation should undertake the expense of putting in electric lights. The president supported the plan, but he was opposed by the "better elements," who objected to putting up funds for what they considered an unnecessary luxury when money was scarce.[103]

In less than 15 years, B'nai Amoona was considering selling the synagogue at 13th and Carr. According to Rabbi Rosentreter, although the building was not in a Jewish neighborhood when B'nai Amoona acquired it, by the turn of the century the district around it was largely made up of poor Eastern European Jews.[104] This meant that B'nai Amoona's own congregants, who were wealthier, longer-term residents and already "making it" in America, no longer lived in the vicinity of their *shul*. In June 1906, before B'nai Amoona had even obtained alternative facilities, the building was sold. The purchaser was Shirei T'hillim, most probably a poorer orthodox congregation whose members were recent immigrants from Eastern Europe.[105]

It became urgent that the congregation find a new location before the High Holidays. On July 31, 1906, B'nai Amoona acquired the Central Presbyterian church, situated on the northeast corner of Garrison and Lucas Avenues, where an apartment building now stands. The deal was regarded as a great coup for B'nai Amoona since the church was considered "one of the most beautiful houses of worship in St. Louis." It was built in 1876 for $145,000 when the neighborhood was fashionable, but sold for only $30,000. At the dedication ceremonies, one of the speakers thanked the minister and members of the Central Presbyterian

church for selling their building not for what it was worth, but for what the B'nai Amoona congregation could afford to pay. A committee headed by Abraham Graber was responsible for the transaction and Benjamin Burenstein, who served as president for a number of years, came in for special recognition for his role in acquiring the new house of worship.[106]

On September 16, one week after taking possession of the property, B'nai Amoona dedicated its new synagogue. It is notable that rabbis from both reform and orthodox congregations participated in the event. Among the reform spiritual leaders, Rabbis Harrison and Sale were unable to attend, but their colleagues Rabbis Sonneschein, Messing and Spitz either delivered addresses or led the assembly in prayer. The orthodox community was represented by Rabbis Rosenfeld, Spector and Abramowitz, who respectively led the circuit with the Torah scrolls, gave a blessing and read from the scriptures. Even the Christian clergy was represented in the person of the Rev. J. L. Mauze, pastor of Central Presbyterian. He spoke of Christianity's indebtedness to the Jews for monotheism, the Bible and Jesus. Rabbi Rosentreter gave the dedicatory sermon and other members of his congregation addressed the huge crowd that crammed into the new building. The only woman to play a role was young Hilda Goldwasser, who near the opening of the ceremonies, presented the key to Building Committee Chairman Abraham Graber.[107]

By 1906, B'nai Amoona could look back on four different sites in 22 years, not counting the first temporary meeting place. A growing membership was among the factors that both encouraged and necessitated all these shifts in location. No matter what the size of the initial founding group—whether eight as Rabbi Halpern wrote, 17 as Rabbi Rosentreter claimed, or 32 as the *Post-Dispatch* reported[108]—what is significant is that the congregation began small and immediately started to grow. Just a matter of weeks after their first meeting, the members of B'nai Amoona had outgrown the capacity of their initial meeting place and had to rent larger quarters at Ninth and Washington. By the fall of 1887, these facilities were already too confining and new accommodations were leased at 823 Franklin. By 1888, the congregation was in a position to buy its first building and in 1906 it

was ready to purchase a considerably more expensive property.

While the annual reports showed that the membership was growing, actual figures appeared only sporadically. In 1889, 110 families are listed as members, 144 in 1902, 225 in 1907 shortly after the move to Garrison and Lucas, and down a bit to 200 in 1909.[109] Although these figures provide a very sketchy picture, they do reflect that the congregation was flourishing. By comparison, Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, which no doubt was exceptionally small, did not have more than 25 to 30 families on its membership roles from about 1890 to the early 1920s and in 1914, B'rith Sholom had only 24 families.[110]

A sharp boost to B'nai Amoona's membership probably resulted from a merger with its parent congregation, Sheerith Israel, which was effected in 1893. It seems that a major reason for Sheerith Israel's failure to prosper was the congregation's inability to secure a rabbi. On April 23, the Torah scrolls were removed from the synagogue at 11th and Franklin and brought to B'nai Amoona. With that, Sheerith Israel ceased to exist as a congregation. Its name, however, was perpetuated in the cemetery until 1924, when the cemetery was renamed B'nai Amoona Cemetery.[111]

Information on the congregation's financial state is also very limited. We can, nevertheless, deduce an overall pattern of growth and prosperity, punctuated by some periods of economic distress. In 1893, when Rabbi Rosentreter first left to take a position in banking and again in 1894, B'nai Amoona was having difficulty making ends meet.[112] The congregation was no doubt suffering from the depressed conditions that were affecting the entire country.

These lapses, however, were temporary and it appears that B'nai Amoona was, for the most part, doing well. How else could the congregation have afforded to purchase its first building in 1888 for $10,000 and its second in 1906 for $30,000? In addition to these large outlays, which presumably were paid off over a period of time, there was a modest operating budget. According to Rabbi Rosentreter, the congregation in the early years managed to cover all its expenses, including the salaries of the rabbi, cantor and sexton, for about $2,400 per year. Even by 1900, the annual budget was still under $3,000.[113]

The congregation raised the money it required through various means. As already noted, when B'nai Amoona undertook to purchase its first building, a committee was appointed to solicit donations from well-to-do reform Jews.[114] By the time B'nai Amoona bought its second synagogue, however, there was no evidence of canvassing among the reform community. Either the practice had gone out of fashion or else B'nai Amoona was in a stronger financial position.

Grand balls, especially masquerades, were favorite money raisers of the period[115] and during the summer months, picnics served the same purpose.[116] In 1906, just after the purchase of the Garrison and Lucas synagogue, the ladies auxiliary sponsored a week-long bazaar during Hanuka, which netted $2,500 for the building fund.[117] Since no orthodox congregation at this time had a membership large enough or prosperous enough to generate all its funds, the active participation of the greater Jewish community made these events successful.

Needless to say, money was also raised within the congregation. While we know that members were required to pay dues, the first year for which we have a precise sum is 1912, when the allotment was $20 per annum.[118] Obviously as the membership grew, so did income from this source. In addition, items such as Torah scrolls, the ark curtain, a pulpit and a silver *kiddush* cup were frequently donated by members.[119] Contributions were made in memory of loved ones or in honor of significant family events. Special occasions, such as a Siyum Sepher Torah—the ceremony of completing and consecrating a Torah, were fundraising events[120] and money was solicited from the membership for exceptional undertakings, such as purchasing a new building or establishing a Talmud Torah.[121]

On one extraordinary occasion during Goldstone's presidency, tickets were sold at 25¢ for Saturday morning services. This innovation caused quite a stir among the Jewish community and Rabbi Spitz's sarcastic comments generated a heated response by Goldstone. The president explained that the tickets were sold for a charitable purpose. Moreover, he said, the doors to B'nai Amoona were and always had been open to all who wished to attend and those who came to services without tickets were made welcome. He then went on to chastise the editor for lending his

ear to "two or three very miserable professional congregational barnacles who at our last election were very promptly and properly cleared out and who are now taking advantage of every opportunity to blackmail and belittle our congregation in the eyes of the community. . . ." In an appended note, Rabbi Spitz denied being unduly influenced and insisted that selling tickets for Sabbath services was improper, no matter how charitable the cause.[122]

From the very beginning, it appears, selling seats to nonmembers for the High Holidays was a way of bringing in funds. But selling permanent seats to members seems to have been introduced for the first time at the synagogue on Garrison and Lucas. The pews were auctioned off to the highest bidders and the top prices paid were $525, $500 and $400.[123]

In addition, the ladies auxiliary of B'nai Amoona could be counted on to make contributions in cash, goods or services. This organization, officially known as the Frauenverein der Toechter Israels, the Ladies Society of the Daughters of Israel, was founded in 1886. In a sermon delivered during Passover that year, Rabbi Rosentreter strongly urged the formation of a ladies society whose objective would be to aid the sick and attend to the dead, especially among the poor. In May, the new group of B'nai Amoona women was organized with 45 members. Fannie Plaut was elected the first president and the rabbi himself served as secretary for a number of years.[124]

A history of the society, which was written in 1918 and placed in the cornerstone of the synagogue B'nai Amoona built at Academy and Vernon Avenues, suggests that the death of a child in a well-known family led to the formation of the Daughters of Israel.[125] Several women were required to prepare the body in accordance with the tenets of orthodox Judaism. Presumably Rabbi Rosentreter wished the women of his congregation to form a permanent association that would be available to perform these rites whenever needed.

As this information implies, the organization had certain aspects of a burial society. Fortunately, the minutes of the society for the years 1916 to 1928 are still intact. They report that the Daughters of Israel was obliged at the time of a member's death to "administer the *Tarah* [*tahara* or washing of the body], fur-

nish the shroud, death watch and supply some carriages or motor as the occasion demands." Memorial notices of deceased members appended to the minutes included the names of those women who represented the society at graveside services. Most of the women paid for their shrouds in advance, although sometimes the family covered the cost after death. In fact, funds deposited for this purpose were a major source of income for the sisterhood.[126]

Although Rabbi Rosentreter claimed that this organization was the first of its kind in the city,[127] it is difficult to ascertain what he meant by this statement. Certainly there were other women's auxiliaries associated with the reform temples, just as there were charitable women's groups, particularly within the reform community. Perhaps the Daughters of Israel was the first benevolent society affiliated with a Jewish congregation.

In this period charitable institutions were not organized on the broad scale with which we are familiar. While the reform Jewish community sponsored one major welfare organization, much of the effort to alleviate the want and suffering of the poor was carried on by individuals or small groups. The Daughters of Israel fitted into this pattern. In 1887, one year after its founding, the society was reported doing good work among poor Jews who lived in the thickly populated district where B'nai Amoona was situated (Ninth and Washington). Much of this aid must have been in the form of personal service, since disbursements for the year amounted to only $197.90[128] As the years pased, however, the Daughters of Israel relinquished much of its role as a direct service organization.

In addition to helping poor Jews, the Daughters of Israel contributed in many ways to the well-being of B'nai Amoona. In 1886 and 1889, the organization presented Torah scrolls to the congregation. Members decorated the facilities at Ninth and Washington and bought the ark curtain for the synagogue at 13th and Carr. They sponsored balls and bazaars in order to raise money for new buildings, and on Hanuka they held festivities for the entire congregation.[129] Although more specific information is lacking it seems safe to assume that the women's society figured in all of B'nai Amoona's major undertakings.

The younger members of the congregation also had a group, called the B'nai Amoona Young People's Aid Society, which was

founded in 1904. The name suggests a benevolent orientation, although the only notices to appear in the newspaper referred to outings or dances.[130] In addition, the congregation boasted a baseball team which in 1907 seemed a "sure bet" to win the pennant in its league, composed of teams from Jewish organizations.[131]

While the activities of groups associated with B'nai Amoona contributed to its prosperity, they reflect only indirectly the congregation's primary focus, which was the maintenance and perpetuation of orthodox Judaism. In order to achieve this goal, the members were intent on transmitting the Jewish heritage to the next generation. By educating the children in the traditions of their fathers, the parents were encouraging them to maintain time-honored commitments, despite the distracting and destructive influences of the American environment.

Just a little over a year after its founding, B'nai Amoona had a flourishing religious school. The number of pupils had already increased to the point where it was necessary to engage a second teacher in addition to Rabbi Rosentreter. The candidate, a Mr. Horwitz, was described as one of the city's best German teachers, which presumably was the language of instruction. By 1889, there were 53 students enrolled in three separate classes, taught by the rabbi and two other teachers. Both boys and girls from age seven and up attended the classes, which were conducted during the regular school year, with additional sessions sometimes scheduled for the summer months.[132]

B'nai Amoona's religious school, which met on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, was known as a Sabbath school.[133] Presumably Sabbath schools were subsequently called Sunday schools when classes were restricted to this day. Religious schools of this type were patterned after those prevalent in Germany among both reform and neo-orthodox communities.

While similar in format to schools affiliated with reform temples, B'nai Amoona's religious school no doubt differed in essentials. The curriculum at B'nai Amoona undoubtedly included Hebrew, traditional prayers and services and the requirements of Jewish orthodoxy, such as laws dealing with *kashrut* (dietary laws) and keeping the Sabbath. These subjects would have diverged considerably from those pursued in reform religious schools.[134]

Jacob Friedman, who celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at B'nai Amoona on October 15, 1904, vividly recalled his experience at B'nai Amoona's religious school, where his instructor was Rabbi Rosentreter. The rabbi tolerated "no monkey business," Friedman reported. If "you wanted to be 'Bar Mitzvahed' in the right way, to be a Jew like he used to say, listen to him and you would make it." On one occasion young Jacob was chatting to the boy next to him while the rabbi was lecturing the class. So, "he gave me a klop," Friedman recalled. "I'll never forget Dr. Rosentreter hit me with a cane over the back in Sunday school." Since young Jacob's grandfather, Levi Freedman, was president of the congregation at the time, it could be that more exemplary behavior was, expected of him. Before his Bar Mitzvah, Friedman pointed out, the rabbi took special pains to ensure that he could recite his portion letter perfect so that he would be a credit to his grandfather.[135]

In an article published in 1925, Rabbi Rosentreter said that B'nai Amoona had a daily *cheder* while located at 13th and Carr (1889–1906) and Jacob Friedman remembered attending Hebrew lessons there during the week.[136] However, a special meeting of the congregation was called in March 1908 to establish a Talmud Torah at B'nai Amoona.[137] Since a Talmud Torah, the same as a *cheder*, usually referred to a late afternoon school where the children met to study the Hebrew language and religious texts, it is not certain what was new about the school inaugurated at this time. Perhaps the previous classes were designed to prepare boys for their Bar Mitzvah; whereas the Talmud Torah was intended to offer a broader course of study, possibly for both sexes.

Very little is known about the Talmud Torah except that it was unanimously resolved to go ahead with the plan as soon as $500 could be raised for the purpose. The first $400 was subscribed from among those attending the initial meeting and a few prominent individuals volunteered to canvass the absent members for the remaining sum. They obviously succeeded in realizing their goal, for the school was opened that year under the direction of Adolph Abby. At the annual meeting the following October, the congregation voted $1,000 to support the school.[138]

Nevertheless, the Talmud Torah did not prosper. In his annual address delivered in 1909, President Harry Siegfried emphasized the important role the Talmud Torah could play in enabling

members to bring up their children as Jews. "They must know the teaching and foundations of Judaism, its principles and its morals." He then went on to describe the "discouraging opposition and cold indifference" with which the supporters of the religious school had met. He spoke of those who felt the progress being made was too slow and who expected to see fine scholars emerge in a single season. He called upon the critics to turn their energies toward advancing the effort rather than condemning it. Despite President Siegfried's optimism about the school's future, the Talmud Torah ceased to exist by 1914.[139]

Just as education was meant to perpetuate Jewish traditions among the succeeding generations, religious services kept those traditions alive for Jews who continued to be observant. The services at B'nai Amoona were orthodox. The same prayers were recited in the identical order as at all orthodox *shuls* and nothing was omitted. The entire service, except for the rabbi's sermon, was in Hebrew.[140] At B'nai Amoona, however, both Rabbi Rosentreter and his temporary replacement, Rabbi Saft, preached in German or English; whereas in a congregation of Eastern European immigrants the common spoken language was Yiddish.

Perhaps the characteristics of an orthodox service can be most effectively illuminated by examining the modifications that had been introduced by that time in Reform Judaism. In a reform temple virtually the entire service was conducted in the vernacular, with Hebrew being reserved for a few prayers. The portions of the Torah read during the service were greatly abbreviated and major changes made in the liturgy. In sharp contrast to the observances still adhered to in orthodox synagogues, men attending reform services no longer wore the *tallit* or covered their heads. Reform temples permitted mixed seating of the sexes and women participated in the choir. Organs had been introduced in many reform temples, which, from an orthodox point of view, was not only imitative of Christian practice, but also in violation of Jewish law forbidding the playing of instruments on the Sabbath. Reform services were usually scheduled for Friday night or Sunday morning instead of Saturday.[141]

In an orthodox synagogue Rosh Hashana and Shavuot were celebrated for the traditional two days and Sukkot and Pesach for eight days, with four days being designated as the *yontif*. The

reform Jews had reduced the two-day holidays to one and observed Sukkot-Simhat Torah and Passover for seven days, with only two days being considered full holidays. Among reform Jews Tisha b'Av had been eliminated entirely from the calendar of observance; whereas orthodox congregations continued to fast on this day in memory of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and to read the Lamentations of Jeremiah. During Purim, the Book of Esther was always recited in orthodox synagogues, but among reform Jews it was read only by the conservative wing.[142]

A distinctive but non-traditional custom followed at the time by both B'nai Amoona and the reform temples was the presentation to women of bouquets of white roses by their husbands and children during a recess on Yom Kippur. Another practice common to the period was the wearing of formal dress by the officers of the congregation on holidays.[143]

One of the requisites of Orthodox Judaism is that services be held each morning and evening, every day of the year. In order to fulfill this obligation a minimum of ten Jewish men, or a *minyan*, has to be present. It was a matter of pride among orthodox *shuls* to be able to claim that this minimum was met and, therefore, services were conducted twice daily without fail. Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, in a letter to the editor of the *Jewish Free Press*, stated that it was the only congregation in St. Louis to achieve this goal.[144] But B'nai Amoona laid claim to the same distinction and Rabbi Rosentreter asserted that while the congregation was located at 13th and Carr, not a single service was ever missed.[145] Mrs. Edna (David) Garland recalled that her family joined the congregation in 1912 because her brother, Harry Specter, needed a *shul* where he could say *kaddish* for their father. Although the father had been a founder of Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, the young man could not rely on finding a *minyan* there. For this reason he became a member of B'nai Amoona where there was always a *minyan*, even if a few men had to be paid to be present.[146]

One prayer service adopted by the Jewish community which reflected the American culture was a Thanksgiving Day service. It was originally introduced about 1878 by the reform congregations of United Hebrew, B'nai El and Shaare Emeth.[147] When a

splinter group from Shaare Emeth broke away in 1886 to form Temple Israel, there was no longer sufficient harmony within the reform community for a joint observance. By 1891, however, both harmony and the Thanksgiving Day service had been restored. Temple Israel and B'nai Amoona were asked to join the original three congregations in giving thanks to God on this day of national celebration. United Hebrew served as host on this occasion and in subsequent years one or another of the reform congregations assumed this role. Although these services were not held every single year, they did occur with regularity. Occasionally only three or four congregations would take part, since the ministers of Shaare Emeth or Temple Israel were sometimes invited to participate in Thanksgiving services sponsored by Christian churches. In any case, from 1891 on, whenever the Jewish community observed Thanksgiving Day with a joint service, the rabbi from B'nai Amoona was a participant.[148]

At the end of its first quarter century, B'nai Amoona was the largest and most prosperous orthodox congregation in St. Louis. Even before that, whenever reference was made to the orthodox community, B'nai Amoona was usually singled out for special mention. This was the case in the article, "Jews and Judaism," which appeared in the *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis* (1899) and in the booklet published on the Jewish community in time for the World's Fair (1904).[149] According to Rabbi Rosentreter, a journalist passing through the city in 1900 wrote, "Besides New York and San Francisco I found only one good orthodox congregation, the B'nai Amoona in St. Louis." And in the words of Rabbi Rosentreter himself, "It was a matter of distinction to belong to it."[150]

Senior Rabbis



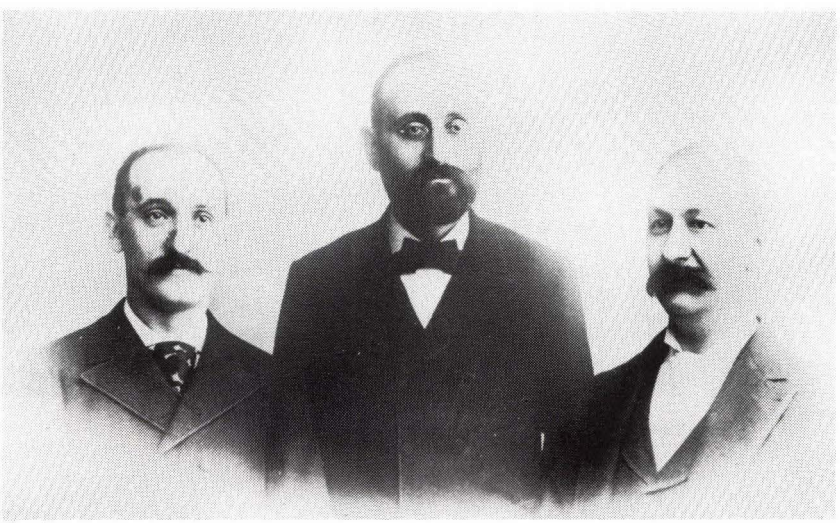
Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter, ca. 1904. Courtesy Missouri Historical Society.



Fanny Schwabe Plaut Rosentreter. Wife of L.M. Plaut, B'nai Amoona's first president. First wife of Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter. First president of the Daughters of Israel (B'nai Amoona Sisterhood).



Eva Gottschalk Rosentreter, ca. 1908. Second wife of Rabbi Rosentreter.



David, Adolph and Michael Rosentreter, 1898. Michael Rosentreter served as B'nai Amoona's treasurer for a number of years and David Rosentreter as a trustee.



Rabbi Abraham Ephraim Halpern, 1917.



Rabbi Halpern, ca. 1962.



Bessie Feinberg Halpern, wife of Rabbi Halpern.



Rabbi Halpern, ca. 1935.



Bessie Halpern with daughters (l. to r.) Laeh and Fayga, 1920s. In background is Gertrude Fleishman Haffner. Group is at the Kenesiah clubhouse on the Meramec River.



Rabbi Halpern at Men's Club breakfast, ca. 1960–62. Hazzan Jacob Renzer is seated third from left.



Signing the marriage certificate. Rabbi Halpern with Barbara and Martin Heligman, 1958.



Forty years of brides. Front row (l. to r.): Helen Scissors, Adele Roman, Lucille Hurwitz, Alethea Sagan. Back row: Fannie Daniel, Helen Mushlin, Evelyn Chervitz, Ida Orenstein, Arline Kalishman, Carole Goldfarb, Mrs. Halpern, Rabbi Halpern, Mildred Fischer, Adeline Weissman, Mildred Poger and Rose Mass.



Testimonial Dinner in honor of Rabbi Halpern's 25th anniversary with B'nai Amoona, 1942.



Rabbi Bernard Lipnick (second from left) and Rabbi Halpern with group of dignitaries at dedication of the chapel at Jewish Hospital, 1958.



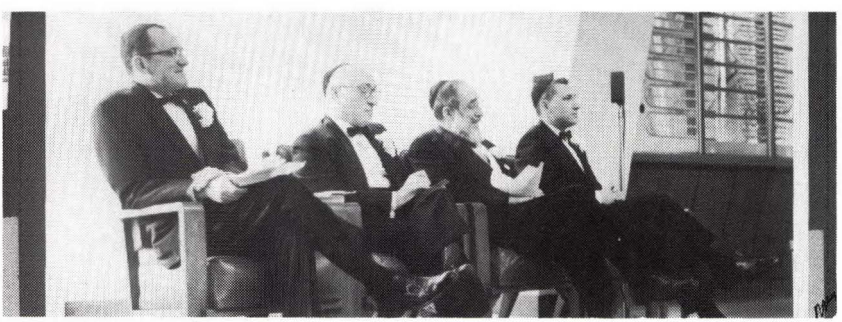
Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, 1981.



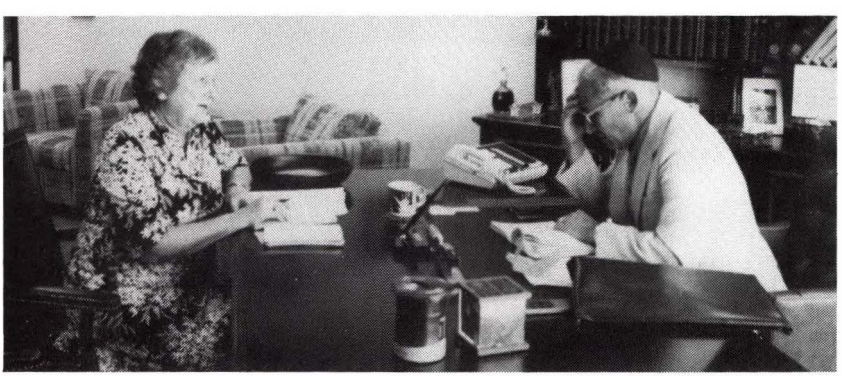
Rabbi Lipnick in his office at B'nai Amoona (Washington and Trinity), 1954.



Rabbi Lipnick and his wife Harriet, 1981.



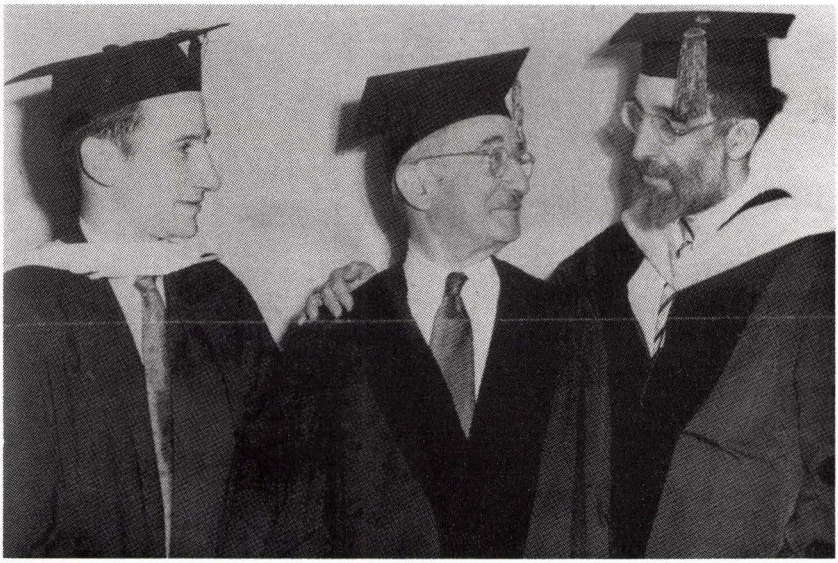
Installation of Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, 1963. Seated on the *bema* with the rabbi are (l. to r.) Rabbi Jerome Lipnick, Dr. Louis L. Kaplan and Rabbi Louis Finklestein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary.



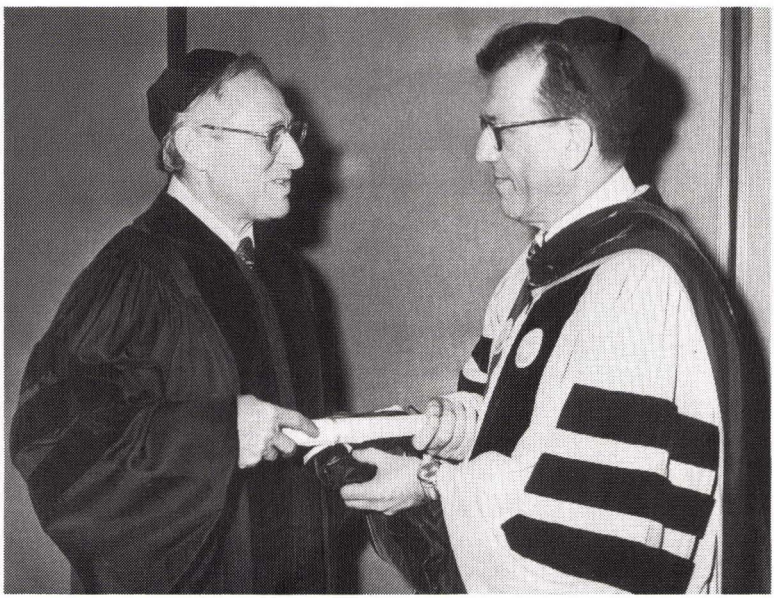
Rabbi Lipnick at work in his office at B'nai Amoona (Mason and Conway) with his secretary of 20 years, Miriam Freedman, 1981.



Testimonial dinner in honor of Rabbi Lipnick's 25th anniversary with B'nai Amoona, 1976. Standing with the rabbi are (l. to r.) President Harold Guller and Past-President Meyer Kranzberg.



Rabbi Halpern receiving an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1953. Standing with the rabbi are his son Mordecai, who was ordained on the same occasion and Chancellor Louis Finklestein.



Rabbi Lipnick receiving an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977. Making the presentation is Chancellor Gerson Cohen.

Chapter Two

A New Era

From 1880 the Orthodox Community was largely increased by many immigrants driven to us by the persecutions of the Russian and Rumanian despotism. They were the poorest of the poor. They came here without money, without knowledge of language. . . . For the next 20 years a great many of them were helped by the mercy of their brethren more fortunately situated. The German Jews did their utmost to alleviate suffering. At this time the Orthodox Jew, who was mostly from Russia and Poland, acquired the name of beneficiaries and beggars. Orthodox and "Schnorrers" became synonyms.

Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter
The Orthodox Community of St. Louis[1]

UNTIL ALEXANDER II'S ACCESSION TO THE THRONE of Russia in 1855, the medieval way of life of that country was largely unaffected by the political, social and economic revolutions that rocked Europe from the late 18th century. When the new czar undertook to bring his empire into the modern era, his Jewish subjects—the largest concentration of Jews in the world—became beneficiaries of his more liberal policies. The wealthy, skilled and educated were permitted to leave the Pale of Settlement, the western provinces where Jews had been confined since the mid-17th century. Jews were granted somewhat freer access to the universities, professions and government service. Some of the most terrible methods used to force Jewish boys into military service were abolished.

In 1861, Alexander II delivered the death blow to the feudal age by emancipating the serfs. Neither he nor his government,

however, provided the agricultural laborers who left the land with an alternative means of support. In their search for a livelihood the newly freed peasants crowded into villages, towns and cities, where they encountered many Jews employed as artisans, small tradesmen and merchants. The age-old antipathy the Russian peasant harbored against the Jews was aggravated by a new sense of economic competition.

Alexander's efforts at modernization gave rise to a volatile situation that encouraged revolutionary movements. In 1881, the czar was killed by an assassin's bomb and the brief flirtation of Russia's autocracy with liberalism was abruptly ended. In the reactionary period that followed, the privileges recently accorded the Jews were retracted and their living conditions became even worse than before. The "Temporary Regulations" of May 3, 1882, (May Laws) and subsequent decrees restricted Jewish residence to the towns of the Pale, thus forcing them out of villages where previous generations had settled. They also invalidated the titles under which some Jews had owned property in the interior of Russia and in the cities and villages of the Pale. Suddenly hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced into the overcrowded towns of the Pale, where they could find neither homes nor work. The regulations also set rigid quotas that either ended or restricted admission of Jews to secondary schools and universities, professions and government service.

In the years following Alexander's assassination, the Jews of Russia were subjected to three waves of pogroms (1881–84, 1903–06, 1917–21), each of which surpassed the preceding one in barbarity. Since the government found itself powerless to solve the country's problems, it was eager to use the Jews as scapegoats and thus deflect the people's wrath. The official attitude was that these attacks were a justifiable response on the part of the Russian populace to Jewish economic domination and exploitation. The new restrictive legislation, according to this line of thinking, would benefit all concerned. By protecting the population against the harmful activities of the Jews, it would remove the cause for pogroms and thereby bring relief to the Jewish victims.

Oppressive legislation, violence and the lack of hope that their lot would improve so long as Russia was ruled by the czars triggered the mass migration of Russian Jews to the United States be-

ginning in 1881. Large scale Jewish emigration was, in fact, in accordance with the policy of Russia's rulers. Konstantin Pobedonostev, the most powerful figure in the state under Alexander III (1881–94), summarized Russia's plans for its Jewish residents, "One-third will die, one-third will leave the country, and the last third will be completely assimilated within the Russian people."[2]

Although Russian Jewry constituted the overwhelming majority of Jewish immigrants coming to the United States during the period, Jews from all of Eastern Europe, including not only Russia, but also Poland, Austria-Hungary and Rumania, were seeking a better life in the "Golden Land." And while persecution was the most harrowing cause of migration, an insoluble economic crisis made inevitable the mass movement of peoples from the Old World to the New. Between 1800 and 1900, the Jews of Eastern Europe multiplied to 6.8 million from 1.5 million,[3] a growth rate of more than 450 percent, despite the large scale emigration that had already been in effect during the last two decades of the 19th century. Even in countries with highly developed economies, it would have been virtually impossible to cope with this extraordinary population explosion, which was occurring among all the peoples of Eastern Europe. Given the extremely backward nature of the Eastern European countries, the problem was insurmountable. For example, starvation claimed 55,000 lives a year in the heavily-Jewish province of Galicia in Austria, causing Jews to abandon their homes there despite the fact that the ruler was the benevolent Emperor Franz Joseph.[4] The mass emigration of Eastern European Jewry to the United States continued unabated until 1924, when Congress firmly shut this country's "open door."

The mass migration to the United States from Eastern and Southern Europe came at a fortunate time. America was undergoing rapid agricultural and industrial development and was hungry for laborers to till the soil and operate the industrial machinery. Immigration on an unprecedented scale answered the need.[5]

The overwhelming majority of the new immigrants settled at their port of entry, which was usually New York, and less frequently Boston, Baltimore or Galveston. From the first point of settlement, some dispersed to other large cities, mostly in the

East. Those immigrants who ventured farther inland often had relatives or friends already settled in the country, who promised support during the difficult period of adjustment. Less fortunate were those heeding the advice of immigrant aid officials, fellow travelers, or long-term residents, who convinced them that they would fare better where the concentration of recent arrivals was not so great. These travelers were given third-class tickets by immigrant aid societies to Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis or elsewhere, packed into crowded railroad cars and sent on to their destination.[6]

The areas of the country experiencing marked growth during the period were the ones that succeeded in attracting new population. St. Louis' stagnation during the 1870s was linked, in part, to a low population increase of only 40,000 for the decade. The Missouri State Board of Immigrants was created in 1879 to ensure that not only the city but the entire state received a fair proportion of the new immigrants. This body was commissioned to advertise the state's resources to newly arrived immigrants in the hopes of enticing them to settle within its borders. St. Louis apparently benefited from the effort, since its population rose by more than 100,000 in the subsequent decade, thereby contributing to the prosperity of the 1880s.[7]

In 1880, there were an estimated 280,000 Jews in the United States. They were descendants of Spanish-Portuguese settlers, a larger number of German-speaking immigrants and some early arrivals from Eastern Europe. In the succeeding decades, about 2 million Eastern European Jews arrived before World War I, and another half million landed on these shores before restrictive immigration laws dammed the human flood. By 1925, the number of Jews in the United States had grown to 4.5 million. Jews now represented 4 percent of the country's total population.[8]

In 1882–83, the "inpouring of Russian and Roumanian [Jewish] exiles" into St. Louis began and a decade later the *Jewish Voice* noted, the "city is thronged by an unprecedented number of poverty-stricken co-religionists."[9] All figures on St. Louis' Jewish population during this period of mass immigration are at best informed guesses. As of 1860, an estimated 5,000 Jews resided in St. Louis. In 1888, the estimate ranged from 10,000 to 12,500. By the turn of the century, the city's Jewish population was esti-

mated at 8,000 families or an overall figure of 40,000, according to *The Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1905. In 1925, one source put the number of Jews in St. Louis at more than 50,000.[10]

The accuracy of these figures is not of concern. What is important is that they reflect a rapid rate of increase in the city's Jewish population similar to that experienced in the nation as a whole. This increase was brought about primarily by the influx of Eastern European Jews.

German Jews, already well-established in the United States, viewed the immigration of their Eastern European brethren with very mixed feelings. Everything about this new group of immigrants—their outlandish costumes and appearance, their extreme poverty, their orthodox religion, their Yiddish language—seemed to mock at the strenuous attempts by German Jews to fit into modern American society. The latter feared that all the progress they had made in breaking down barriers and gaining recognition for themselves from their Christian neighbors would be jeopardized. As the secretary of the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society of New York put it, "Only disgrace and the lowering of the opinion (in) which American Israelites are held by this community can result . . . (from) the continuing residence among us of such an addition to the Jewish population." What he and other settled American Jews feared most was that these strange, new arrivals might, by their very presence, provoke a wave of anti-Semitism. Should this come to pass, the hatemongers would not be likely to make fine distinctions between the cultured Jews from German-speaking lands and their more backward cousins from Eastern Europe.[11]

For this reason, German Jews cringed whenever Eastern European Jews gained notoriety by public fights or scandalous behavior.

> More than once we have called serious attention to the fact that quarrels and fights and controversies affecting the good name of the community and of the Jews in general should be kept out from the secular press. It is really disgraceful and a cause of intense annoyance to the Israelites here and abroad to find such reports as regard disagreements between lodges, societies and individuals among the Jews in the daily press. They have no business there! They create *Rishus*, *Hillul Ha-Shem* [evil, a desecration of the

> Name], and bring us all, who are innocent of the scoundrelism of Semi-Barbarians, into disrepute. These Russians, some of whom we are sorry to say are the lowest *Mossrim* [scoundrels], must be made to understand that here they have to behave, have to live peaceably together, or we must publicly disown them.[12]

Dr. Moritz Spitz, rabbi and editor of the *Jewish Voice*, particularly resented the indiscriminate use by the secular press of the title "rabbi." He said it was wrongly used for "every Russian-Polish Chasan, Mohel or Shochet," whose activities generated unfortunate publicity. "You might as well confer the title of D.D. or Ph.D. on a ragpicker or peddler. . . . The title 'Rabbi' is not found in the gutters where the reporters claim to pick it up," he vehemently asserted.[13]

The German Jews also felt threatened by the political radicalism imported by some Eastern European Jews from their homelands. In a letter reprinted from the daily press by the *Jewish Voice*, Lewis Wittenberg, a Jewish Republican politician from St. Louis' Second Ward, tried to distinguish between the followers and the leaders of such movements. He described the followers as poor, ignorant Russian Jews, who were easily duped and the leaders as "men who are either too lazy or unable to gain a livelihood, and so they go into 'politics.'" This latter group he summarily dismissed as unscrupulous agitators.[14] The intent of the letter was to assure the greater community that these people were not representative of either the older Jewish settlers or the more recent Jewish immigrants.

The German Jews, who took great pride in their German culture, were embarrassed by the Yiddish "jargon" spoken by Eastern European Jews. All efforts to perpetuate the "uncivilized" and "unintelligible" tongue in literature, the theatre and the press were decried as wrongheaded attempts to keep alive an obsolete heritage. When the *Jewish Daily Forward* (the most successful Yiddish newspaper in the United States) was scheduled to begin publishing in New York City, the *Jewish Voice*'s editor "fervently hope[d] the scheme will never be carried out." German Jews found consolation, however, in the expectation that despite a temporary resurgence of Yiddish in America, the language was "destined to decay" and the Yiddish press was "doomed to extinction," as was noted with approval in a *Modern View* editorial.[15]

Lastly, reform Jews, who had carefully weeded out of their religious observance many of Judaism's most distinctive traditions, were repelled by the orthodox rites and customs still firmly adhered to by Eastern European Jews. When B'nai Amoona deviated somewhat from strict orthodox practice during the dedication ceremony for the 13th and Carr Streets synagogue, Spitz expressed approval. He wrote, "We cannot help admitting our sincere pleasure at seeing our brethren laying aside gradually the rigors of a mediaeval orthodoxy."[16]

Since most reform Jews were not at all prepared to welcome the Eastern European Jews into their own temples, they did not reject orthodoxy per se. What they rejected was "the sort of orthodox Judaism which the Russian Jews bring to this country." So while railing against the "thousand and one minyanim" crowded into old, unhealthy buildings, they were happy to support "a well conducted, moderate orthodox congregation," as B'nai Amoona was described. In fact, just a little more than a year after B'nai Amoona's founding, Rabbi Spitz urged that the congregation be given the moral and financial support required for it to undertake missionary work among the new immigrants. B'nai Amoona with its decent and respectable congregants, its capable and sympathetic rabbi, and its commitment to orthodox Judaism, he said, "possesses all the means to lift them [the Russian Jews] several degrees higher in the scale of manners and deportment."[17]

While the German Jews found a lot to criticize about the Eastern European Jews, they could not ignore the problems created by the immigration to the United States of increasing numbers of co-religionists. Few German Jews suggested that the Eastern European Jews, even the least desirable among them, be turned back. In an 1891 survey on "What Shall Be Done With Them?" i.e., the Russian immigrants, the *Jewish Voice* approached various prominent Jewish citizens. Nathan Frank, a former U.S. representative, was one of the few who urged use of a selective process that would "let into this country those immigrants whom we want and desire and who will make good citizens. The restrictions are modern and proper. So far as the Russian Jewish refugees are concerned, I will make no distinction. . . ."[18]

Although most German Jews did not advocate excluding the Eastern Europeans, there was throughout the 1880s little inclina-

tion on the part of Jewish communities outside New York to provide for the poor Jewish immigrants flooding into the country. When the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (H.I.A.S.) of New York, wrote to the United Hebrew Relief Association (U.H.R.A.) of St. Louis, asking it to assume responsibility for several hundred refugees, the response was that the St. Louis Jewish community was already overburdened with its own problems. Only continued pressure from New York resulted in the creation in March 1882 of a Russian Emigrant Aid Society, whose name was subsequently changed to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of St. Louis. Even so, the proffered help was reluctant. By September of the same year, the St. Louis branch of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society declared its funds were exhausted and proceeded to go out of existence. The United Hebrew Relief Association, which was left with the burden of providing for the poor immigrants coming to St. Louis, "notif[ied] all communities that any persons sent here who may become a subject of our charities will be immediately transported to the place from which he or she was sent."[19]

But the flow of immigrants did not cease and by 1890 a different attitude was being reflected in German-Jewish circles throughout the country. Perhaps Rabbi David Phillipson of Cincinnati expressed the shift most candidly:

> Whatsoever may be said of the lack of culture, the ignorance, the superstition, the filth, the laziness, of the Russian Jews, yet all this does not alter the pitiful aspect of the problem. Thousands of families torn up from their homes, root and branch, and set forth as exiles, strangers to a strange land! Can the spirit of persecution go further? There should go forth a raging protest of all the civilized nations of the earth, and perhaps Russia will be brought to her senses. But meanwhile we must receive the poor creatures and do for them what we can. The Russian immigrant with all his faults we welcome as a man, as a Jew, and as a sufferer into our midst.[20]

In a more commiserative statement, which appeared in 1891 on the editorial page of the *Jewish Voice*, similar sentiments were expressed, "In our deep sympathies for the Russian Jew we are a united band of brethren. . . . Orthodox or Reform, Conservative or Radical, we all feel the strong cord, which after all and in

spite of all, binds and knits us together in a sad emergency like the Russian persecution."[21]

Whether motivated by self-interest, compassion or the traditional Jewish concept of charity (*tzedaka*), the German Jews eventually committed themselves to helping their poor Eastern European brethren "make good" in America. Their accomplishments in this regard were truly impressive, as is attested to over and over again by non-Jewish contemporaries, including President Benjamin Harrison.[22] It can be said without exaggeration that the institutions the German Jews built and the procedures they developed served as models for the entire social service sector.

The most immediate concern of the German Jewish community was to provide the basic necessities for the immigrants arriving in this country. The reform Jews in St. Louis operated primarily through a single major charitable institution, the first one being the United Hebrew Relief Association. Originally founded in 1871 to aid Jewish victims of the Chicago fire, the U.H.R.A remained in existence after the crisis had passed. However, the demands on its resources were sufficiently limited that one man could handle all the requests for relief and less than $5,000 was distributed in any one year.[23]

In 1882, for the first time large numbers of Eastern European Jews arrived in St. Louis. The United Hebrew Relief Association found itself largely responsible for their welfare and during the fiscal year 1882–83, its aid expenditures rose above $5,000. If the financial records of this organization can be used as a guide, it seems that there was a temporary lull in Jewish immigration to the city, since disbursements dropped below this sum in subsequent years. Starting in 1887–88, however, relief expenditures began to rise. Because of overall economic conditions, the increase was not a steady one, but some sample figures reveal the general trend. Disbursements in 1895 were about $12,300; in 1896, they were down to about $8,000; in 1897, they were about $11,000; in 1898, about $14,000; and in 1915, about $36,600.[24]

The beneficiaries of these funds were primarily women, children and the disabled. A close examination of a five-month period (May 1–Sept. 30) in 1897 reveals how the money was spent.

Twenty widows with 27 children, nine deserted wives with 18 children and 21 other families received regular support pay-

ments. Temporary aid in cash or groceries was alotted to 264 families and 93 single persons. The charity also paid for transportation, medical treatment and burial for a number of clients and distributed coal, shoes and clothing to the needy.[25]

In addition, 119 families were provided with *matzo* for Passover that year. Support of this nature was not automatically forthcoming from a reform-sponsored institution. At one point the editor of *Jewish Voice* went out of his way to praise the U.H.R.A. for being sensitive to the religious convictions of its relief recipients despite the fact that some of the organization's officers considered *matzo* a luxury item.[26]

In 1896, a new administration took over the U.H.R.A. It attempted to reduce annual expenditures by cutting out rent payments. It would provide food and clothing for the poor but they would be expected to find rent money on their own. It was also decided that the welfare agency could no longer support able-bodied single men; however, there were no available funds for a labor bureau to help them find the jobs needed to make them self-sufficient. Apparently the organization's directors found themselves unable to maintain these resolutions, since by 1898, the agency was again paying rent, particularly for indigent women with children. That same year, the agency adopted the enlightened policy of lending small sums to individuals who wished to embark on business ventures—probably peddling. Of the $350 lent for this purpose, $140 was paid back before the year's end.[27]

As early as 1888, there was a call for amalgamating the various Jewish welfare agencies in the city in order to eliminate duplication of services and to thwart the activities of professional "schnorrers." The first effort at federation was made in 1897 when the United Hebrew Relief Society joined with three women's groups: the Sisterhood of Personal Service, the Ladies' Zion Society and the Hebrew Ladies' Sewing Society, to form the United Jewish Charities. A second consolidation in 1901 created the Jewish Charitable and Educational Union. This association combined under one administrative "roof" almost all the major reform-supported charitable organizations in St. Louis: the United Jewish Charities—which now also included the Social Settlement League, the Hebrew Free and Industrial School, the

Home for Aged and Infirm Israelites, the Jewish Alliance, the Jewish Hospital, and the St. Louis-based fund raisers for the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives in Denver and the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, where homeless children from St. Louis were sent.[28]

In 1913, a further process of amalgamation brought into the union: the Jewish Hospital Dispensary, the Jewish Day Nursery, the Jewish Shelter Home (for children), the Jewish Home for Chronic Invalids and the Miriam Convalescent Home. The Jewish Charitable and Education Union, which now encompassed every major reform-Jewish social welfare institution in St. Louis except the Y.M.H.A., changed its name in 1916 to the Federation of Jewish Charities.[29]

Ensuring the survival of the new immigrants was the most pressing concern of the German Jewish community, but the long-range goal went far beyond merely providing for the necessities. Once the German Jews accepted as an unalterable fact the migration to the United States of Eastern European Jews, they became determined to shape the future in this country of those they viewed as their backward, odd-looking, ignorant brethren. The key word was "Americanization."[30] To prevent the Eastern European Jews from reflecting badly on the German Jews, the latter believed it was necessary to transform the new immigrants into good American citizens as rapidly as possible. That usually meant making sure they became indistinguishable from the rest of the population in language, appearance, manners and, even to some extent, beliefs.

To accomplish this, reform rabbis such as Dr. Solomon Sonneschien—an exponent of extreme radical-reform doctrines—visited ghetto *shuls*. One wonders what language Dr. Sonneschein used to communicate with his apparently receptive audiences. Since it was unlikely that he spoke Yiddish, the enormous discrepancy between his ideas and those of his listeners was probably muted by their low level of comprehension. The immigrants, very likely flattered by the presence of this famous reform rabbi, were evidently content to hear him preach, regardless of whether they grasped his message. The rabbi, in turn, could return "uptown" satisfied that he had "uplifted" the poor Russian Jews.[31]

However, the major effort to turn the Eastern European Jews into proper Americans was through education. "Education . . . is the solution in this country," asserted Jacob Furth,[32] a prominent figure in the Jewish community both in St. Louis and nationally. In time this viewpoint became the consensus among German Jews.

The major institution in St. Louis through which education and acculturation were achieved was the Jewish Alliance. Founded in Philadelphia in August 1890, a branch of the Alliance was opened in St. Louis in October of the same year. Most of its initial subscribers were Russian immigrants. Although the organization made little headway at first, appeals by men such as Furth and Isidor Bush, whose names commanded respect among reform Jews, convinced them that it was in "the interests of the entire Jewish population of this country" for the Jewish Alliance to be given the funds and support it required. The avowed purpose of the Alliance was to "Americanize" the new immigrants as quickly as possible. "We will endeavor to instill into their minds American ideas; we will teach them American customs, American manners, imbue them with a love for American Institutions and help make them self-supporting, creditable citizens of the country in which we live, and [in] which we are all so much interested."[33]

Because the Jewish Alliance embodied the shared aspirations of both the settled and immigrant Jewish communities, it was the most effective institutional link between them. If German Jews were willing to contribute money and administrative expertise and to participate in programs in order to transform Eastern European Jews into good Americans, the immigrants were no less eager to realize this same goal. Where the two groups diverged was on the question of how much culture brought from the old country must be discarded before the Eastern Europeans could be looked upon as American. While the reform Jews would have dispensed with Yiddish, orthodoxy and Zionism, the first generation of immigrants, at least, refused to give them up. Rather than choose between the interests of the two groups, the Jewish Alliance, in its programming, attempted to satisfy both. A lecture series on American heroes, such as Washington and Lincoln, might be scheduled in the same season as a Yiddish theater pro-

duction. The German Jews, on the one hand, could feel that the Jewish Alliance was furthering the process of "Americanization" and the Eastern European Jews, on the other, could identify the agency as belonging to them.

The most important service offered by the Jewish Alliance was a free night school, where those who worked during the day could learn English. Inaugurated in October 1891, the night school enrolled 300 pupils during the first semester and another 150 had to be turned away due to lack of facilities. The ages of the students ranged from 10 to 60; however, in 1896, enrollment was limited to those 13 and older on the ground that young children should receive their education in the public schools. During the first year, the student body consisted primarily of newly arrived Jewish immigrants from Russia. Although Russian Jews continued to predominate, they were joined by Jewish immigrants from Rumania and Austria,[34] as well as non-Jewish immigrants living in the neighborhood. It should be noted that reform-sponsored social agencies never excluded non-Jews from the services they provided.[35]

As the years passed, the number of pupils increased and the curriculum expanded to encompass a basic grammar school education, and some specialized training. In 1901, five hundred thirty-six students attended classes in reading, spelling, conversation, composition, arithmetic, geography, American history, general history and bookkeeping.[36]

Until that year, classes were conducted four evenings a week in the Jefferson School, on the corner of Ninth Street and Washington Avenue. This was originally the heart of the poor Jewish district. In 1901, the Jewish Alliance became a constituent member of the Jewish Charitable and Educational Union and moved with the umbrella organization into newly built quarters at Ninth and Carr Streets[37]—not far from B'nai Amoona's 13th and Carr Synagogue. Although technically named after the Union, the building, as well as the entire range of social and educational services it housed, was commonly referred to as simply the Jewish Alliance. Ruth Crawford, an independent researcher who examined this facility in 1913–14 as part of an assessment of the city's immigrant population and the institutions serving their needs, wrote, "By far the most complete and effective piece of social work be-

ing done for the immigrants in St. Louis radiates from the Jewish Alliance on Ninth and Carr Streets."[38]

In addition to night school classes for adults, the combined facility offered classes for children in crafts, a Sabbath school, a kindergarten, a library, a day nursery, a dispensary, a visiting nurse service, a welfare agency, an employment bureau, a "Penny Savings Bank," legal aid services, and a full schedule of lectures, concerts and social events. The building functioned as a neighborhood center where clubs and societies held meetings and a "People's Synagogue" was established on the premises.[39] But even at the time of Ms. Crawford's investigation, the Alliance's home was already on the extreme eastern perimeter of Jewish settlement in a neighborhood that was rapidly becoming Italian. In 1916, an expert evaluator advised closing the structure because the Jewish population had moved west and in 1919 his advice was carried out.[40]

As the beneficiaries of German Jewish largesse, Eastern European Jews could not help being deeply affected by the negative image in which they were often viewed by their benefactors. But prejudice is not a one-way street. If German Jews looked askance at the language, appearance, behavior and religious practices of the Eastern European Jews, the newcomers, in turn, found much to reject about their co-religionists. In the eyes of orthodox Jews, Reform Judaism was well on the way to becoming a form of Christianity without Christ. In the words of Moses J. Slonim, a leading Zionist in St. Louis, "Reform, despite all its grandiloquent pretensions, was fundamentally an escape from Judaism."[41] This view was widely shared among the new immigrants who were appalled by the changes reform Jews had made in liturgy, ritual and doctrine. This same opinion was sometimes expressed by spokesmen of the conservative-reform movement. In the *Jewish Voice*, are found defenses of Sabbath versus Sunday services and even the plaintive cry, "We *have reformed enough*! Let us now try to *preserve*, by drawing a line which neither we nor our children should trespass."[42]

Besides rejecting the modifications introduced by Reform Judaism, orthodox Jews found themselves alienated by the atmosphere of reform temples. These were usually large, imposing structures in which a well-mannered congregation attended for-

malized services. What a far cry this was from the cramped, dingy neighborhood *shuls*, where people gathered with friends and *landsleit* (persons from the same birthplace) to pray with ardor.

"They didn't question the efficacy of prayers. They didn't relegate God to the distant heavens. . . ."[43] Here God was a personal God and each one called out to Him in his own voice. The commotion in orthodox *shuls* was formidable, because every member *davened* at his own speed and in his own manner with little concern for what the others, including the *hazzan* (cantor) and rabbi, were doing. But if decorum was non-existent, passion was authentic and on Yom Kippur the congregants cried real tears of repentance. "The East European influx . . . injected new life into the cold, rapidly assimilating community. It infused warmth into the synagogue service; intensified the study of Hebrew and stimulated scholarship. . . ."[44]

The sphere in which reform and orthodox Jews interacted most intensely was in the dispensation of charity. Even under the best of circumstances it was a situation bound to generate resentment, but given the cultural gap between the German and Eastern European Jews, it gave rise to stereotypes on both sides. In the mind of German Jews, "orthodox and 'schnorrers' became synonyms;" whereas in the eyes of the Eastern European Jews, German Jews were lacking in "Yiddishkeit."

To their credit, German Jews created institutions capable of ministering to the needs of the tens and then hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants streaming into the country each year for over four decades. However, in the process of applying systematic procedures, they often were callous in their treatment of individuals. Rabbi Rosentreter, who abhorred this aspect of "scientific charity," wrote of his experience in visiting a meeting of the Jewish welfare agency. He found men and women in attendance, whom he knew well and considered to be some of "the most charitable people of the town." But the rabbi was appalled when he witnessed one after another of the applicants turned down with a brusque refusal and frequently with a moral lecture to boot. The more fortunate among them were turned over to a committee for further investigation, but "not one of the alms-seekers received anything. I was bewildered."

Then a young man on crutches who had only one leg was ushered in.

> I seldom have seen a finer face or a more intelligent looking man. He was deathly pale. Hunger, shame, poverty and distress could be read in his expressive, wonderful eyes. You could not help but like the man. He inspired sympathy and pity. I thought everyone would be willing to help and to help substantially. The young man told us that he had just come from the City Hospital, where his leg had been amputated. In a clear voice and good English he asked for relief, by the extension "of three weeks" board. "I have never begged before," he said, "and I never will ask you again. I am only weak and wish to recuperate, which I can in three weeks. Then I will be able to work and support myself, and within five months I will pay back what you may lay out for me."

The president of the organization asked the young man how he had lost his leg and he responded that it had been crushed under the wheels of a train. Immediately, the welfare official suggested the man seek compensation from the railroad. "The applicant blushed. With great reluctance he said: 'I have no claim against the company. I stole the ride!'" Whereupon, the "presiding officer said: 'You have been a two-legged tramp; now you are a one-legged one. We don't help tramps.'" With this the young man was shown the door.[45]

The entire manner in which charity was dispensed was frequently an affront to the poor recipients. Increasingly large philanthropic agencies evolved in which the Eastern European Jews were given no voice. Their role, as beneficiaries, was to endure passively the embarrassing questions, unannounced visits and critical judgment social workers felt privileged to make in the process of weeding out those deemed unworthy of aid.

Despite the perception of some German Jews that many of the new immigrants were lazy, good-for-nothings, constantly looking for a handout, in reality, begging was for most Eastern European Jews an act of great shame. In America, poor immigrant Jews found that reduced circumstances might force them not only to beg, but also to look and act the part. This made the experience much more bitter for them. On one occasion, Rabbi Rosentreter heard of a family that was starving as a result of the breadwinner losing his job during a slack season. Despite the family's reluctance, the rabbi applied for assistance on its behalf. When the

investigating committee made a home visit to determine eligibility, the rabbi accompanied it. The committee found a neat, clean apartment with a white cloth on the table. On leaving, Rabbi Rosentreter was informed that these people could not be helped since they looked too prosperous. "I stood before a problem. I was raised differently. I always was willing to help anybody who asked for help but I certainly did prefer those who tried to keep clean and 'bekoved' (respectable)," he later wrote. The rabbi persuaded the investigators to return during mealtime. There they found the family sitting down to a dinner of dry potatoes and dry bread, which finally convinced the investigators of the applicants' dire need.[46]

Jewish charity traditionally had been personal: One poor Jew helped out another a little worse off. "Before they were able to support themselves, these newcomers . . . contributed to their own without much ado. They did not give by hundreds and thousands, but they gave their dimes and nickels." Within less than a decade after the arrival of Eastern European Jews in St. Louis, their names began appearing among the subscribers to the United Hebrew Relief Association. By 1910, the Eastern European immigrant community established a number of their own institutions, including a burial society and cemetery (Chesed Shel Emeth), an orthodox old age home, a society for lending money without interest to the poor, another to provide food and lodging to all who applied and a third to minister to the sick and impoverished. Various groups delivered *matzo* to the poor, gave dowries to prospective brides and helped the needy in myriad ways. In addition, the immigrant Jews founded congregations, Talmud Torahs and *yeshivot* (religious day schools). They collected substantial sums from their own limited means for the victims of the Kishinev pogrom (1903) and for Jews suffering in the war zones during World War I.[47]

The Eastern European immigrants who settled in St. Louis constituted the pool from which B'nai Amoona drew its "second generation" of congregants. It was they who in 1900 to 1920 succeeded the German-speaking founders. They identified B'nai Amoona's interests as their own; they kept the congregation functioning despite disintegrating forces that were at work and they carried it to new peaks of achievement.

This is not to suggest that the names of German Jewish families

no longer appeared among those actively involved in the congregation. Old-time members, such as Moritz Maizner, Israel Meyerson, Abraham Marglous, Isaac Emmer and Pincus Agatstein continued to sit on the Board of Trustees, although in some instances the appointments may have been largely honorific. For a time, at least, some sons, such as Solomon Maizner and Michael Goldwasser, followed their fathers in assuming leadership roles within the congregation; but this was unusual. In addition, some more recent German-speaking immigrants, such as Adolph and Bertha Cohn and Gustave and Minnie Friedlander, joined the congregation and played prominent roles. In both these cases, subsequent generations continued to be active and today the Cohns are represented by their grandchildren, Adele Roman and Sanford Spitzer, and the Friedlanders, by their granddaughter, Frieda Kreisman, and great-granddaughter, Arleen Emert.

Nonetheless, one perceives a gradual transformation in the membership of the congregation taking place during the first two decades of this century and the change may have begun even earlier. Although we know nothing about the national origins of Sol Goldstone, it is possible that ethnic antipathies played a part in the many controversies during his term (1893–94) as president. Perhaps those referred to as the "better elements" were German-speaking Jews and Goldstone was an Eastern European.

During Goldstone's presidency, Levi Freedman was vice president and Benjamin Burenstein, treasurer.[48] Both of these men were Eastern European Jews. Between 1894, when Goldstone was pushed out, and 1900, when Burenstein became president for the first time, both Burenstein and Freedman served on the Board of Trustees.[49] Then from 1900 to 1907 Burenstein and Freedman shared the presidency between them.[50] All the succeeding presidents of the congregation were probably either immigrants from Eastern Europe or, in time, the children of these immigrants. B'nai Amoona was in the process of becoming an Eastern European congregation both in terms of leadership and membership.

In order to understand the transformation, it must be first understood that while the synagogue is a religious institution, the decision as to which congregation a family joins is partly governed by social considerations. In 1925, Rabbi Rosentreter re-

marked about the St. Louis orthodox community, "As soon as they came to wealth they flocked to the rich men's congregations on account of the better social standing."[51] When B'nai Amoona's first generation of congregants, or more likely their children, acquired sufficient income, education and American culture, most of them either affiliated with a reform temple or ceased to be identified with the Jewish community.

Just as concerns about prestige influenced some B'nai Amoona families to leave for a reform temple, similar motivations led many Eastern European immigrants or their children to join B'nai Amoona. A newly arrived Eastern European immigrant would probably have felt uncomfortable at B'nai Amoona unless he had exceptional wealth or secular education. But once Eastern European immigrants began to prosper and become Americanized, they looked on B'nai Amoona, "the foremost and most modern of orthodox synagogues in St. Louis,"[52] as the ideal congregation. If the children and grandchildren of B'nai Amoona's founders wished to abandon orthodoxy altogether, Eastern European immigrants who became acculturated felt constrained by the brand of orthodoxy that had been imported from the old country. They wanted an orthodox Judaism more in keeping with the modern age.[53]

In terms of actual changes in orthodox law and custom, rather little had been introduced at B'nai Amoona that deviated from accepted practice, with one notable exception. At least as early as 1889, when the synagogue at 13th and Carr Streets was dedicated, men and women were allowed to sit on the same level, although not together. In the words of Dorothy Fleishman Schucart, "Our grandfather considered this so revolutionary that he would never set foot in the *shul*, not even for Alfred's nor Louis' Bar Mitzvah."[54]

One suspects, however, that B'nai Amoona was identified as "modern" more because of its membership than because of actual modifications. As Jews from German-speaking lands, B'nai Amoona's founders would have appeared more modern than their co-religionists from Eastern Europe. The fact that the founders spoke German or English would have been enough to make them seem this way. And to the degree that they were culturally Westerners like the greater American public, the image

was reinforced. To some extent being modern meant not standing out from the crowd. Moreover, if B'nai Amoona originated as a tiny *shul* composed of *landsleit*, it had long since passed beyond this stage. Its size, wealth, scope of activity and history made it more like the reform congregations, which were seen as the models of modernity.

Social concerns were by no means the only factor influencing a family's decision regarding the congregation it joined. Proximity carried at least as much weight; but the two matters were interrelated, since both were affected by increased prosperity.

Throughout B'nai Amoona's history the Jewish community has shifted westward. One stimulus for this progression was the pressure exerted by other immigrant and ethnic groups on the Jewish area. The primary cause, however, was the Jews' desire to improve their living conditions, as means permitted, by moving to nicer sections of St. Louis or St. Louis County.

Jewish institutions, with their costly investments in buildings and grounds, inevitably lagged behind the westward thrust. Even so, except for B'nai El, lodged for years on the South Side, reform congregations were financially better able to move westward at earlier dates than a congregation like B'nai Amoona. Despite its own fairly frequent changes in location, B'nai Amoona could not keep pace with its members who were moving farther and farther west. As a result, when some B'nai Amoona families moved beyond a comfortable distance from the synagogue, they found it more convenient to attend services or send their children to religious school at a nearby reform temple.

But if the movement westward deprived B'nai Amoona of some members, it also brought new ones into the congregation. While the descendants of the first generation of congregants were moving out of reach, Eastern European immigrants and their children, who were becoming more affluent, were moving into the vicinity of B'nai Amoona. Several informants, such as Pearl Fisher Barohn, Eva Drazen Gallup and Esther Blumo Flom, indicated that their families joined the congregation when they moved into the neighborhood. If having a synagogue close to home was more convenient for those who were no longer so observant, it was an absolute necessity for those who, in accordance with Jewish law, did not ride on the Sabbath or holidays.

A partial list of persons figuring prominently during the period 1900–20 includes: Benjamin and Pauline Burenstein (although she may have been German), Levi and Jennie Freedman, Dr. Michael and Bertha Golland, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Siegfried, Simon and Minnie Rosenberg, Abraham and Julia Graber, Phillip and Anna Miller, Charles and Etta Zatlin, Max and Gusta Laski, Hyman and Jennie Kessler, Jacob and Flora Slupsky, Solomon and Henrietta Abrahams, Samuel and Sophia Brener, Mrs. and Mrs. Simon Zuckerman, Solomon and Jennie Kurlander, Morris and Minnie Lipschitz, and Mr. and Mrs. Louis Goldman.

One remarkable family deserves special mention. Yudel Schwartz, who was married more than once, had six children. Among them was a son, Selig, who served as president of the congregation during this period. Several of the children and grandchildren of Yudel Schwartz joined B'nai Amoona and those who trace their descent through Yudel's daughter, Golde Schwartz Brockman, and her daughter, Essie Brockman Susman, can claim an unbroken line of six generations at B'nai Amoona. The living representatives include Bernard Susman and his son, Robert, and daughter, Susan Susman Gitt, and their children; Rose Susman Kaplan and her daughters, Shirley Kaplan Snitzer and Dorothy Kaplan Weiss, and their children; and Irvin Susman.

There is little that can be said specifically about these people. Benjamin Burenstein, at least early in his career, was in partnership with a man named Epstein selling wine. Levi Freedman began as a cutter and then, in partnership with his son-in-law Charles Zatlin, opened a women's clothing factory. Harry Siegfried manufactured men's trousers, as did Hyman Kessler, who later opened a ladies specialty shop. Initially, Abraham Graber sold *matzo*, but later owned a travel agency, which handled steamship tickets and foreign exchange. Michael Golland graduated from Missouri Medical College with a M.D. degree and Phillip Miller was a pharmacist.[54]

What they had in common was that they were Yiddish-speaking Eastern Europeans. Dorothy Fleishman Schucart recalled that while the congregation was still at Garrison and Lucas Avenues (1906–17), some members used Hebrew prayer books with German t nslations and others used prayer books with Yiddish.

However, in 1911, when the congregation needed a successor for Rabbi Rosentreter, it sought someone who could preach in Yiddish.[55]

While it is extremely difficult to document, one senses a change in atmosphere as B'nai Amoona's congregation became more Eastern European in composition. Emotions seemingly ran higher and were more openly expressed. As a group, Eastern Europeans seemed less concerned about propriety than Jews from Germanic countries and, therefore, more given to public displays of anger.

Although they shared much in common, the Jews from Eastern Europe were by no means homogeneous. There were pronounced divisions according to place of origin and when conflicts erupted, the epithets used revealed the splits. *Litvak*, which meant a Jew from the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and *Galitzianer*, a Jew from the Austrian province of Galicia, became shorthand terms for a broad range of derogatory stereotypes.

From the reminiscences of Shamas Isidor Katz, the picture emerges of a congregation of people given to hot flashes of temper and frequent squabbling over offices and honors. However, there is a serious problem in relying on the material. Since Shamas Katz was famous for his very colloquial manner of speech, it is difficult to know whether he is accurately describing the congregation or imposing his own colorful personality on his recollections. Even so, he is probably close enough to the mark to give us a sense of the people who made up Congregation B'nai Amoona in the early decades of this century.

Katz related in detail the conflict that forced Abraham Graber to give up a second term (1919–20) as president. The crisis was apparently triggered when Graber asked to examine B'nai Amoona's ledger. The secretary of the congregation, it seems, was offended and turned to his *landsleit* for support. They insisted that a general meeting be called. According to Katz, Graber's response was, "I have no scare for you Litvaks." At the meeting a man, who felt he had been insulted by Graber, got up, shook his fist and shouted, "You Galitzianer, you see that fist? I will make you blue eyes right away." Even though the obstreperous fellow was ejected from the hall, tempers did not cool. Consequently, the

congregation had difficulty electing a president that year. Graber's own comment on the subject was, "My dear friends, I want to let you know that I don't want to be president for a bunch of *shkotzim* [bums] like you."[57]

While we can merely speculate, it is possible that the membership transition was behind Rabbi Rosentreter's departure from B'nai Amoona. The facts are obscure. A notice in the October 27, 1911, issue of the *Jewish Voice* said only that Rabbi Rosentreter had resigned from B'nai Amoona. The sole explanation appeared a month later as part of an announcement that Rabbi Rosentreter had accepted a call from Beth David, a congregation of 25 families. The announcement said the rabbi had resigned because his business duties no longer allowed him time to minister to the large B'nai Amoona congregation.[58]

However, the evidence strongly indicates that the resignation was neither voluntary nor amicable. In 1915, when the pulpit at B'nai Amoona was again vacant, the editor of the *Modern View* advocated that Rabbi Rosentreter be invited to resume the post "which he filled for many years so ably and so creditably. The circumstances under which Dr. Rosentreter relinquished the position were such as did not satisfy all the members of the congregation, as many believe that a serious injustice was done to him at the time."[59]

When interviewed decades after the event in 1969, Meyer Rosentreter was still bitter about the way B'nai Amoona had treated his father, and the rabbi may have shared in this bitterness. Victor Sessler reported that his brother-in-law, Samuel Wohl, approached Rabbi Rosentreter and asked him to officiate along with Rabbi Halpern at Wohl's wedding, which was to be held at B'nai Amoona. Young Wohl's father, Louis, had served as *shamas* (or sexton) during Rabbi Rosentreter's tenure and the two men had been close personal friends. The rabbi's response was that he would go anywhere in the world for Samuel Wohl, except to B'nai Amoona.[60]

While we will probably never know the precise circumstances surrounding Rabbi Rosentreter's resignation, there are two versions of what transpired.

Meyer Rosentreter indicated that his father was forced to leave B'nai Amoona because he performed the marriage ceremony of a

17-year-old girl without her parents' consent. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky expanded on the story. She said her father maintained that the girl was pregnant so that Rabbi Rosentreter could not refuse to marry her, despite her father's opposition to the union. The bride's father, unaware of his daughter's pregnancy, flew into a rage when he learned she had been married and insisted that Rabbi Rosentreter resign from the congregation. In time the reason for the hasty marriage became amply clear and some members asked the rabbi to return, but he refused.[61]

A similar but not identical rendition of the events was left by Shamas Katz. According to him, the fathers of the bride and bridegroom were hostile to one another because one was a Russian and the other a Litvak. Faced with their fathers' mutual animosity, the young people determined to marry secretly. An aunt of the bridegroom prevailed upon Rabbi Rosentreter to officiate at the marriage ceremony, which the two mothers witnessed.

When the bride's father, who was an officer of the congregation, learned of the deception, he was incensed. All attempts to mollify him were of no avail. Even when the bridegroom's father sought a reconciliation, he was met with rebuff. The bride's father demanded that the Board of Trustees dismiss Rabbi Rosentreter and the board complied. But some years later, after Rabbi Halpern was installed at B'nai Amoona, the father at last accepted the marriage and asked Rabbi Halpern to perform another ceremony for the couple.[62]

There is little possibility of ascertaining to what extent either of these versions is accurate. It seems clear, however, that Rabbi Rosentreter's leaving B'nai Amoona was precipitated in some way by his officiating at the wedding of a young woman, who was marrying against the wishes of her parents or her father.

As a result, Rabbi Rosentreter was forced out of his position at B'nai Amoona, but he continued to serve as rabbi at various orthodox congregations in the city. His first subsequent appointment was at Beth David. From there he went to B'rith Sholom and then it seems back to Beth David. For some years he was at Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol and finally returned to B'rith Sholom, where he remained until the end of his life.[63]

Perhaps the central question that emerges is why Rabbi Rosen-

treter after all his years of service lacked sufficient support within B'nai Amoona to secure his position no matter whom he had offended. A possible answer is that as the membership changed from German to Eastern European, a gulf developed between the rabbi and his congregants. Victor Sessler recalled that when Eastern Europeans started coming into the congregation, they resented the fact that Rabbi Rosentreter preached in German or English.[64]

The rabbi was not insensitive to the difficulties that could arise because of a language barrier. In 1919, in defending the use of Yiddish, he related the story of a family who had immigrated to the United States from Russia. In their homeland they had been victims of a pogrom, which had cost the life of one daughter and left another permanently maimed. After settling in St. Louis, the family managed by dint of constant hard work to save enough money to buy a small house in the poor Irish neighborhood called Kerry Patch. There the family encountered persecution from neighbors who objected to the presence of Jews. When the mother lay on her deathbed, she asked Rabbi Rosentreter to speak at her funeral of the sufferings she had endured because of her faith.

Shortly thereafter she died and the rabbi was called upon to fulfill his commitment.

> I spoke from the depths of my heart in English. Looking around, I found that not one tear was being shed. Knowing these people for years and having lived among them, I could not understand their lack of feeling, and then it dawned upon me that they did not understand and I commenced to speak in "Yiddish." I repeated what I said . . . and, after the first sentence everybody was in tears! This was the beginning of my study of "Yiddish."[65]

Despite this touching illustration of Rabbi Rosentreter's efforts to reach out to Eastern European immigrants, it appears that he was unsuccessful with a significant number of his own congregants. According to Victor Sessler, another problem was that some B'nai Amoona members resented the rabbi's sermons against the exploitation of workers in sweat shops.[66] But we will never really know the full story of why Rabbi Rosentreter was forced to leave B'nai Amoona after serving as rabbi for 27 years.

With Rabbi Rosentreter gone, the congregation's immediate concern was to find a suitable replacement. An advertisement placed in Jewish newspapers called for a conservative, ordained rabbi, who was a good lecturer and Hebrew teacher.[67] The use of the term "conservative" is particularly interesting, since it suggests that well before Rabbi Halpern's arrival, B'nai Amoona identified itself with the liberal approach to orthodoxy that in time became known as Conservative Judaism.

Dr. Samuel Margolies, the first candidate interviewed for the position, was a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and a son of the leading orthodox rabbi in New York. But neither Rabbi Margolies nor another prospect brought in from Des Moines, Iowa, was hired.[68] The man who was invited to become B'nai Amoona's next rabbi was Moses Hirsch Rabinowitz.

Rabbi Rabinowitz's acceptance of the offer from B'nai Amoona was heralded with unusual fanfare by the *Jewish Voice*, which published a laudatory biography, accompanied by a large photograph. The new rabbi, who was 38 years of age, was born in Lithuania and immigrated to the United States in 1892. He received his rabbinic training at the *yeshivot* of Mir and Volozhin in his native country. Between 1896 and 1912, when he was appointed to B'nai Amoona, Rabinowitz served as rabbi of five congregations in New York and Providence, Rhode Island. He was a scholar of note, a prolific author in Hebrew and a great Yiddish orator. His capacity for preaching was extraordinary, as is illustrated by the fact that during his interview he delivered seven sermons in 10 days.[69]

On September 7, shortly after his arrival in St. Louis, Rabbi Rabinowitz presented his inaugural sermon at B'nai Amoona. For a time, at least, the congregation seemed well pleased with its choice and members took great pains to make the rabbi and his family feel welcome. At the October annual meeting, President Simon Rosenberg spoke in lyrical terms about the new rabbi. "He is, as I have often said, a *Kleelas Yofi* [crown of beauty], a precious ornament for our congregation, for us and every Yehudi of St. Louis. Such a man we needed, and we ought to consider ourselves fortunate in having retained the services of such an eloquent Jewish scholar as Rabbi Rabinowitz."

The following May (1913), the rabbi was reappointed for three

years. By December of that same year, however, the *Modern View* noted that "relations between B'nai Amoona and its minister, Rabbi Rabinowitz, are strained, and there is a prospect of a severance of relations." A few weeks later B'nai Amoona's pulpit was again vacant and Rabbi Rabinowitz returned to New York after only 16 months with the congregation.[71]

The only information regarding what may have caused the rift comes from Shamas Katz. The *shamas* tells us that on the preceding Rosh Hashana the rabbi failed to appear at the appointed hour so that morning services were begun without him. At the bidding of the president, Katz sent his young son to find out what was wrong. The boy returned to say that he had found the rabbi relaxing on the front porch with his arm around the *rebbetzin.* As the boy approached, the rabbi waved his hand to indicate he was coming. Incensed at the rabbi's apparent lack of respect for the holy day, some members objected that "such a bum should be our rabbi" and they "chased him away."[72]

If some in the congregation wanted Rabinowitz out, others continued to be his supporters. Both the Morris Lipshitz and Hyman Kessler families invited Rabbi Rabinowitz to return to St. Louis to officiate at weddings of a daughter in each family. And there is some evidence that he may have been related to the Kesslers.[73] On each of these occasions B'nai Amoona's pulpit was empty and Rabbi Rabinowitz preached to the congregation. In June 1914, just six months after the rabbi's resignation, a tremendous commotion was raised by Rabinowitz's detractors when he mounted the platform. But in February 1916, the second time he returned, the rabbi was such a success that he was asked to prolong his stay for a couple of weeks.[74]

Following Rabbi Rabinowitz's departure, B'nai Amoona began a new search for a rabbi. After eliminating some prospective candidates, the congregation settled on Rabbi Joseph Glushak, who was holding a pulpit in Washington, D.C. The rabbi was offered a three-year contract, which he accepted, and he arrived in September 1914 to assume his duties.[75]

Rabbi Glushak was a man of many capabilities. In addition to being a rabbi, he was also a *hazzan* and a *mohel* (the man who performs the circumcision ceremony) and on at least one occasion while in St. Louis he performed operatic arias.[76]

The rabbi preached in Yiddish and English,[77] which probably meant that he or his parents were Eastern European immigrants. But he may have been overly modern for the tastes of B'nai Amoona members. Shortly after his arrival, he placed a notice in the paper announcing his intention to start a mixed chorus of men and women to sing in Hebrew. However, the plan never materialized and when Rabbi Glushak functioned as *hazzan*, he was accompanied by the traditional all-male choir.[78]

The only available information that throws light on Rabbi Glushak's background is that his son was a medical doctor and a British citizen.[79] This suggests that his family may have lived a relatively long time in English-speaking countries and that the rabbi may have been too westernized to fit in well with his new congregation.

At the annual meeting in October 1914, the comments by President Harry Siegfried regarding the new rabbi suggest that he was not being readily accepted. Siegfried praised Rabbi Glushak for the excellent manner in which he conducted the High Holiday services and noted that the "members, in general, are well pleased." But the president found it necessary to urge the congregants to aid the rabbi with their goodwill, "especially now, until he is thoroughly familiar with us. We must all place our full confidence in him. He needs that help. . . . We must give him our full moral assistance and respect."[80]

These remarks, made just a few weeks after Glushak assumed his office, suggest that the members were not entirely satisfied with their choice. If this was the case, the attitude did not change, since a year later the rabbi was forced to resign. He left St. Louis for Detroit, where he became rabbi of Shaare Zedek congregation.[81]

If B'nai Amoona members felt they had made a mistake in hiring Rabbi Gushak, it proved to be a costly one. At the annual meeting in 1916, President Leon J. Cohen pointed out that B'nai Amoona was in poor financial condition as a result of the congregation, "having been compelled to go into debt in order to reimburse Rabbi Glushak. . . ."[82]

After Glushak's resignation, B'nai Amoona had difficulty filling the post of rabbi. According to Katz, one candidate after another was brought in, but none proved satisfactory.[83] It might

also have been that having erred twice in its selection of a new rabbi, the congregation was now more cautious about making a commitment. But a synagogue cannot survive indefinitely without a spiritual leader.

B'nai Amoona not only lacked stable rabbinic leadership after Rabbi Rosentreter's departure, but also it suffered from its location. Although the synagogue at Garrison and Lucas had been purchased as recently as 1906, by 1911 President Abraham Graber recommended that the building be sold and a new one erected farther west.[84]

Since it is hard to imagine that the neighborhood could have completely changed in just five years, it may be assumed that B'nai Amoona made a mistake when it purchased the Garrison-Lucas building. The site was in the path of the westward migration, but instead of continuing in a steady progression, the Jewish population apparently leaped over the area to settle east of Kingshighway in the city's West End. What had originally seemed a central location for the synagogue soon proved to be much too far east for most of B'nai Amoona's membership.

By 1913, the problem had become acute. At the annual meeting, President Simon Rosenberg bluntly stated that if B'nai Amoona was to continue progressing, it could no longer remain where it was. It must move west and the sooner, the better, he said. ". . . if we carelessly delay this step, I fear, some of these days, we will find that instead of B'nai Amoona being the leading Orthodox congregation, it will have to fall. . . ."[85]

A committee made up of Benjamin Burenstein, Abraham Graber, Solomon Abrahams, Hyman Kessler and Charles Zatlin was appointed to find a site in the West End on which B'nai Amoona could build a new synagogue.[86] The congregation was no longer content to make do with converted churches. A drive commenced to collect funds for this momentous undertaking. However, it proved to be quite difficult to sell the synagogue at Garrison and Lucas.[87] There were simply no prospective buyers for a synagogue or church in that part of the city.

For three years the congregation hesitated to purchase a new site before the old building had been sold. But in the spring of 1916, B'nai Amoona acquired a lot with a small building on it at Academy and Vernon Avenues, while continuing to use the much

larger building at Garrison and Lucas.[88] At the October meeting, however, President Leon J. Cohen announced that the congregation could no longer afford to operate two buildings. Since most members lived too far west to attend services at Garrison and Lucas, that building was to be closed. There was some delay in putting the decision into effect, but on February 1, 1917, the B'nai Amoona synagogue at Garrison and Lucas closed its doors.[89]

At the fall annual meeting in 1917, President Benjamin Burenstein reported that the former synagogue at Garrison and Lucas had been sold for $22,000. According to Shamas Katz, the buyer was a black church, which got little use out of the building before it burned down. Katz indicated that since B'nai Amoona still held fire insurance on the property, it received $20,000 from the claim and $8,000 went to the new owners.[90]

But before the move from Garrison and Lucas, B'nai Amoona's unfavorable location was reflected in declining membership. In October 1912, the congregation had 189 families, just slightly fewer than the approximately 200 members enrolled since the Garrison and Lucas synagogue was purchased. However, the building was large and could easily have accommodated twice as many people. President Simon Rosenberg strongly urged every member to bring their friends and acquaintances into B'nai Amoona. As he pointed out, the "best and most valuable asset of a congregation is a good and loyal membership."[91]

Although from October 1, 1912, to October 1, 1913, there was a net gain of 10 families in the membership, the situation was on the verge of deteriorating. Harry Siegfried, in delivering the annual president's message in 1914, assured his listeners that in a short time B'nai Amoona would build a beautiful new house of worship farther west and he pleaded, "In the meantime please remain loyal. We need your support."[92] Siegfried's successor, Leon J. Cohen, acknowledged two years later (1916) that the congregation had lost numerous members, but said it had gained others. He went on to state his belief that "the new members [are] of much better material to help to maintain our congregation and uphold the traditional honors of the B'nai Amoona congregation, which has been of long standing, a credit to the Jewish community of St. Louis."[93]

Rabbi Abraham Halpern, who arrived in 1917, later wrote

that B'nai Amoona congregation at this time had about 75 families. In terms of names on the book, this figure most likely was too low, but it probably accurately reflected the number who took an active interest in the congregation. Of more significance than the total number of members, however, is the fact that, according to Rabbi Halpern, only about seven families had their children enrolled in the Sunday school as of June 1916.[94] This means that not only was B'nai Amoona's membership shrinking, but its population was aging. What future could there be for the congregation, if it failed to attract the younger generation? As Rabbi Halpern put it, "B'nai Amoona was losing ground . . . and its existence was threatened."

Naturally, the congregation's financial condition was affected by the drop in membership. For the year 1911–12, there is an approximate breakdown of the budget that shows the following sources of income: $4,000 from dues which were $20 a family per year, $2,000 in donations, $700 from the sale of permanent seats and $700 from the rental of seats during the High Holidays. Expenditures included: the salaries of the rabbi, $1,800; *hazzan*, $1,500; *shamas*, $1,000; and a teacher, *baal koreh* [Torah reader], secretaries and janitor; utilities; interest and principal on the first and second mortgages held on the Garrison and Lucas synagogue, and repairs. Although there seems to have been no balance left over from the preceding year, $2,100 had already been collected for the current budget, leading President Simon Rosenberg to conclude that "the financial condition of the congregation is a healthy one" and never before had B'nai Amoona been so well off.[95]

But the financial news in succeeding years was not so good. There was a peculiar discrepancy regarding the finances of the congregation as of October 1, 1913. Rosenberg, the outgoing president, claimed a $500 balance from the previous year and said $2,200 had already been paid up for the coming year. However, his successor, Harry Siegfried, complained at the annual meeting a year later that when he began his term, the congregation's finances were in a deplorable state. Not only was the treasury empty, he said, but there were outstanding notes and past due accounts for which no provision had been made. He concluded by saying that all debts had since been covered and that

money borrowed from the cemetery board to tide the congregation over had been returned.[96]

If Siegfried found balancing B'nai Amoona's budget rough going, his successor was confronted with even more serious financial problems. Leon J. Cohen, who served as president in 1915–16, indicated that the need to compensate Rabbi Glushak after revoking his contract caused a huge deficit. Moreover, during the preceding 12 months at least 25 percent of the membership had been stricken from the books for failing to make good on their outstanding accounts. Cohen urged the congregation to halt plans for building a new synagogue and to remodel the building already standing at Academy and Vernon. He pointed out that a new building would cost between $50,000 to $75,000 and questioned whether the membership could possibly raise this sum.[97]

B'nai Amoona had another option altogether. In 1913, discussions were held to merge B'nai Amoona and Shaare Zedek, the two largest and wealthiest orthodox congregations in the city. While the prospect was applauded by outsiders, it obviously did not meet the approval of those involved, since nothing came of it. In 1916, the proposal was brought up again, only to be dropped a second time.[98]

The merger could have offered genuine advantages to both congregations. When the subject was first broached in 1913, B'nai Amoona had Rabbi Rabinowitz as its leader; whereas Shaare Zedek was having to make do without a rabbi. Even though in a short time both congregations had empty pulpits, there was another consideration. In the summer of 1914, Shaare Zedek became the first orthodox congregation in St. Louis to begin building its own synagogue. The cost was great and in spite of a heavy mortgage, it took three years to raise sufficient funds just to complete the building.[99] If the two congregations had merged, the enlarged membership would have provided a much broader financial base for the undertaking. Moreover, the location of Shaare Zedek's magnificent new synagogue at West End and Page Avenues, in the heart of the city's Jewish settlement, would have resolved one of B'nai Amoona's most pressing problems.

According to Shamas Katz, negotiations broke down over the issue of women's seating. Shaare Zedek, he said, wished to seat

women in an upper balcony, a standard practice in orthodox synagogues. At B'nai Amoona, however, women had been sitting on the same level, but separately, at least since 1889. B'nai Amoona also rejected the alternative of placing a *mechitza* or divider between the men's and women's sections.[100]

Although the attempt to merge the two congregations may have foundered over this particular issue, it is hard to imagine there was ever any real prospect for success. Neither B'nai Amoona, in existence for 30 years, nor Shaare Zedek, with its new building under way, would have been likely to relinquish willingly its identity. Yet how else could one congregation be created out of two? Instead, B'nai Amoona and Shaare Zedek chose to build their own synagogues, hire their own rabbis, seek their own memberships and mark their own courses of history.

People, Organizations and Events



Hazzan S. Friedman and choir, 1910.



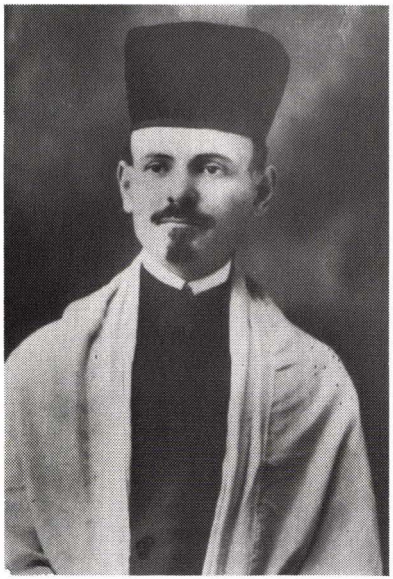
Hazzan Jacob Gowseiow and choir, 1922.



Hazzan Jacob Renzer and choir, 1963.



Hazzan Leon Lissek and the children's choir, 1982. Standing next to the *hazzan* is Bettijean DuBro, music director.



Hazzan Jacob Gowseiow, ca. 1920.



Hazzan Leon Lissek, ca. 1965.



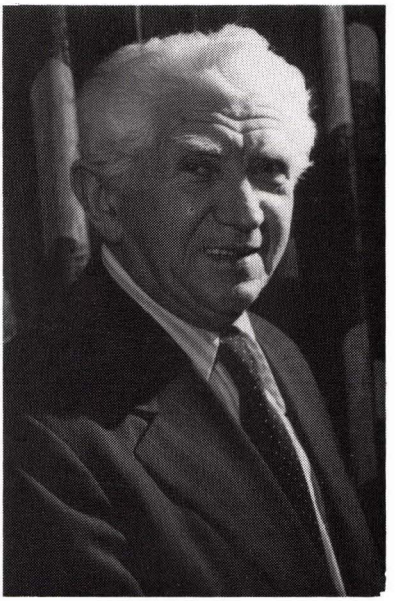
Hazzan Gowseiow with his wife Rose, daughter Tiby and sons (l. to r.) Isadore and Hyman, ca. 1925.



Hazzan Lissek with his wife Michal and children (l. to r.) Devorah, Shira and Shumel.



Shamas Isidor Katz, ca. 1960.



Shamas Jacob Sheinbein, 1980.



Bess Schiller, 1970. *Masgiach* of B'nai Amoona kitchens, ca. 1955–71.



Rabbi Halpern with presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona, 1943–60. (l. to r.) S. Barney Spitzer, Meyer Kranzberg, Nelson Gould and Harry Lander.



Presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona, 1960 to present. (l. to r.) William Rosenbaum, Dr. Manuel Snitzer, Alfred Fleishman, Sam Krupnick, Edward Balk, Maurice Gordon and Albert Price. Not shown are Robert Mass and Harold Guller.



Bertha Golland, president of B'nai Amoona Sisterhood (Daughters of Israel), 1903/04–36.



Frieda Olschwanger, president of the Mothers Club, 1921–32 and president of B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1940/41–42.



Officers and board members, B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1935.



Officers and board members, B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1949.



Presidents of B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1936–68. (l. to r.) Mitzi Hammerman, Dorothy Golub, Bernice Rubenstein Brusca, Lorraine Susman, Lucille Hurwitz, Minnette Hirsch, Lillian Kantor Franklin, Babette Kahn Lipsitz, Mildred Fischer, Rose Wolff and Rose Mass. Not shown are Frieda Olschwanger, Margaret Spitzer and Adele Roman.



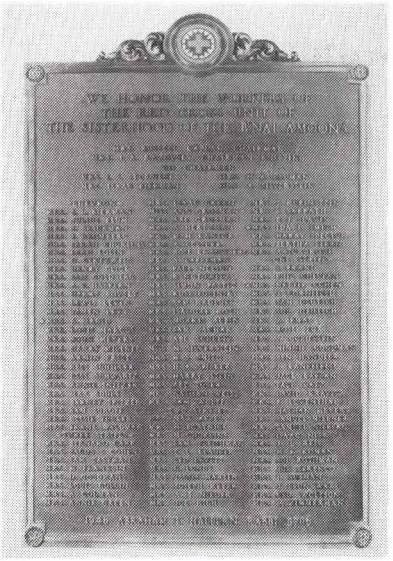
Presidents of B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1968 to present. (l. to r.) Gloria Spitzer, Barbara Shechter, Eunice Felder, Beverly Blitz, Jan Baron and Laura Snitzer.



B'nai Amoona Mothers Club, 1933.



B'nai Amoona Sisterhood membership tea held at Jewish Old Folks Home, 1945.



Plaque commemorating the Red Cross unit established by members of B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, 1946.



President Minnette Hirsch accepting plaque awarded to the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood by the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1967. Making the presentation is Rabbi Ralph Simon.



Committee for the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood Mitzva Ball, 1979. (l. to r.) Billie Oxenhandler, President Beverly Blitz, Geraldine Friedman and Rosalie Franklin.



Booths at B'nai Amoona Winter Carnival, 1950.



B'nai Amoona County Fair, 1953. (l. to r.) Vicki Gruber, Selma Frank, Lillian Franklin, Dora Edelman, Clara Rubin, Rose Kaplan, Lucille Hurwitz, Adele Roman, Mildred Fischer and Hattie Rubin.



Rabbi Halpern with Queen Helen Gould and her court at B'nai Amoona County Fair, 1953.



B'nai Amoona Sisterhood delegation. (l. to r.) Esther Klevens, Edith Price, Vivian Becker, Lucille Hurwitz, Clara Enger, Zena Schwartz and Miriam Freedman.



Annual campaign for the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1967. (l. to r.) Executive Director Bert Grossman, Adolph Sherman and Morton Gross. Standing is Future-President Robert Mass.



Israel Pilgrimage Festival, 1973. (l. to r.) Harry Freedman, Mildred Fischer, Fred Radman, Past-President Albert Price, Ethel Weber and Adolph Felder.

Representing six generations at B'nai Amoona.



Standing with Rabbi Lipnick and Dr. Abram Sachar, guest speaker at B'nai Amoona's Jubilee (1932) and Centennial (1981) celebrations are Harry, Sharon and Barbara Shechter. Not shown is Karen Shechter.



Front row: (l. to r.) Daniel and Jody Gitt. Second row: Kathy Londe, Susan Gitt, Rose Kaplan, Jane Susman, Shelby Susman and Shirley Snitzer. Back row: David Gitt, Kenneth Londe, Robert Susman, Lorraine Susman, Dr. Jules Snitzer, Jeffrey Snitzer and Bernard Susman. Not shown are Dorothy Weiss, James Susman, Abby Susman, Margie Snitzer, Richard Snitzer, Irvin Susman and Selma Susman.

Chapter Three

Conservative Judaism Takes Root

Orthodoxy in this community has meant, to some people, at least, everything that is old and outworn. There are those who cannot realize that there can be "Modern" Orthodoxy. Yet, B'nai-Amoona is a living example of such possibilities; its rabbi is progressive; its ideals are advanced; its strivings are modern.

Oscar Leonard, Director, Jewish Alliance
Jewish Voice, *April 23, 1919*[1]

AFTER MORE THAN TWO YEARS with an empty pulpit, the entire membership of B'nai Amoona was summoned to a meeting on January 21, 1917. It was proposed that the Jewish Theological Seminary be asked to choose from among their students a new rabbi for the congregation. They wanted "a nice young man who knows about Jewishness and about religion," someone who would try to please the people with his speeches and who would build up the Hebrew school. The Seminary responded that the right candidate for the position was Abraham Ephraim Halpern. The registrar of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Israel Davidson, wrote, "I feel confident that in securing the services of Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern you will get a man who will place your Congregation in the foreground." In reporting on Halpern's prospective visit, the *Jewish Voice* commented, "The gentleman comes . . . with such fine recommendations from the Seminary Officials, that his election as the future Rabbi of B'nai Amoona is confidently expected."[2]

Many years later Rabbi Halpern recollected his own feelings

when he agreed to consider a call from St. Louis. "I must admit it was with hesitancy that I told Dr. Adler, president of the seminary at the time, that I would take a chance and go away out West. . . . My classmates regarded it as a bit too venturesome, but I was ready to try the West and perhaps do some pioneering especially since the West and the South were regarded as strongholds for reform."[3]

It was arranged that Abraham Halpern should come for his interview over Pesach. On the night of April 6, he arrived at Union Station in the midst of a drizzling rain. Two days later, on the first day of the holiday, the prospective rabbi preached the first of four sermons he delivered that week. Even before the week was up, the *Jewish Voice* noted the great satisfaction expressed regarding the candidate and strongly urged the congregation to offer him the position. There is in this community, the *Voice*'s editor asserted, "room and even a pressing demand for a young conservative preacher like Rabbi Halpern."[4]

The day after the holiday period ended the congregation met and unanimously voted to invite Abraham E. Halpern to become rabbi of B'nai Amoona. Three men brought the young man to the synagogue. "When I came in all stood up and gave me a hearty welcome. I can tell you now that I still thrill at that experience. The men were much older than I was and yet welcomed me so graciously, and it was just that that helped me decide to remain."[5]

Nonetheless, Rabbi Halpern's ambivalence about coming to St. Louis still lingered. He was sorely disappointed when he saw the little building at Academy and Vernon where services were held. Although he appreciated the earnestness and devotion of the members, the congregation seemed very small to him. He was also reluctant to leave the center of Jewish life in the East. In the end, however, other factors carried more weight. Certainly, the warm welcome the rabbi received helped sway him to accept the offer. But a deeper motivation explains not only why he stayed but also why he was so successful in his new post. Rabbi Halpern was challenged by the prospect of making traditional Judaism a powerful force in a region where the reform movement was deeply entrenched. While he might have been more comfortable in an Eastern pulpit, he found a mission in St.

Louis, "I was going to make it my life's task to help build the community of the Middlewest."[6]

Even so, the young man was not ready for an unqualified commitment. At his suggestion the congregation offered him a one-year contract to be renegotiated the following Passover. ". . . .in this way we would each have 6 months before the High Holidays to change our minds."[7]

Abraham Halpern returned to New York where he graduated from the Seminary on June 3, 1917 with "the degree of Rabbi and Teacher and Preacher in Israel."[8] He had come to New York from Toronto, Canada, where his parents, Rabbi Isaac and Faige Halpern, settled after leaving their native Austria in 1888. Abraham Halpern was born June 8, 1891, the fourth of six children—three boys and three girls. His father, a founder of the Shomray Shabbos synagogue in Toronto, served as rabbi of that congregation until his death.[9]

As a boy, Abraham studied with his father, who instilled in him a profound love of Judaism. He acquired his secular education in the Toronto public schools and at McMasters College, University of Toronto. In 1913, at the age of twenty-two, Abraham Halpern entered the rabbinical school of the Jewish Theological Seminary.[10]

Newly ordained, Rabbi Halpern returned to St. Louis, where he preached his inaugural sermon at B'nai Amoona on August 18, 1917.[11] Near the end of his life he looked back and noted that his first major task after becoming rabbi of the congregation was to push through the building of a new synagogue.[12]

In April 1916, B'nai Amoona purchased for $7,000 a corner lot with a small chapel on it, which had been occupied previously by the Westminister Presbyterian Church. From the very beginning the congregation intended to erect a new synagogue on the site and to keep the little building for a school. Until the new B'nai Amoona could be built, however, the small church was altered to serve as a temporary place of worship. On September 23, 1916, B'nai Amoona held services for the first time at Academy and Vernon Avenues. During the next few months, daily, Sabbath and High Holiday services were conducted at both the new location and at the old Garrison and Lucas Avenues synagogue.[13] But since the financial burden of keeping two buildings open proved

too taxing, the Garrison and Lucas synagogue was permanently closed.

Left with only the small building at Academy and Vernon, the congregation was unable to accommodate all those who wished to join the High Holiday services in the fall of 1917. Fortunately, B'nai Amoona was offered the use of the auditorium of neighboring United Hebrew, located at Enright Avenue and Kingshighway. In turn, the reform congregation, finding its temple inadequate for its needs, sought the hospitality of the Second Baptist Church. The president of United Hebrew, Samuel Russack, a cousin of Rabbi Rosentreter, refused to accept payment from B'nai Amoona, but asked instead that the congregation make him a personal blessing, or *mi sheberach*, on Rosh Hashana.[14]

Despite United Hebrew's generosity, B'nai Amoona could not continue indefinitely without facilities of its own. Rabbi Halpern made it his top priority to raise funds for a new synagogue. On Shemini Atzeret his appeal brought in pledges of $13,000, but this was only the beginning, since $50,000 to $75,000 was required to build the new B'nai Amoona. By January 1918, enough money had been collected for the congregation to proceed. Architectural plans submitted by Adolph Meyer were accepted and on May 9 the ground-breaking took place.[15]

On Sunday June 16, the cornerstone was laid at a ceremony that drew a huge crowd. Rabbi Halpern presented the major address, entitled, "Judaism, the Religion of Israel." Both orthodox and reform rabbis participated in the event. In the printed program, Rabbi Rosentreter was listed as reading a Psalm of David. However, in subsequent reports his name does not appear, making it uncertain that he actually took part.[16]

Since World Was I was still in progress, there were patriotic overtones to the celebration. B'nai El's Rabbi Spitz delivered the Prayer for Soldiers and in the invocation Rabbi Samuel Thurman of United Hebrew prayed for the success of the Allied Forces. The decorations were in red, white and blue and the American flag canopied the platform. The congregation proudly displayed a service flag with 28 or 32 stars, depending on the source quoted, for every member serving in the country's armed forces.[17]

Nor was Israel forgotten. The homeland of the Jews figured

prominently in Rabbi Halpern's speech and the flag of Zion hung in front of the platform. The audience was called upon to sing "Hatikvah," as well as "America" and the "The Star-Spangled Banner."[18]

The honor of laying the cornerstone went to Hyman Cohen, who paid $500 for the privilege. A brass box was placed in the cornerstone containing the following items: the names of the members of B'nai Amoona; a list of the subscribers to the new synagogue; a copy of the bylaws; old deeds and records; a history and membership list of the Daughters of Israel, written by the secretary, Mrs. Minnie (Simon) Rosenberg; and copies of the *Jewish Voice*, probably other local Jewish papers as well, and the *St. Louis Republic*. According to Shamas Katz, people threw money into the box, totaling about $1,240. The box, with its contents, was then sealed into the cornerstone.[19] On June 17, 1981, the cornerstone was removed from the old synagogue and the brass box recovered. Because moisture had entered the box, the papers were disintegrated and only a handful of coins were recovered.[20]

In the fall of 1918, since the new synagogue was still under construction, B'nai Amoona again held High Holiday services at United Hebrew.[21] However, the members were so eager to worship in their own *shul* that even before the interior was completed, the building was dedicated on April 13, 1919, and two days later, on Passover, Rabbi Halpern officiated for the first time in the new sanctuary at Academy and Vernon. During the succeeding months the *Aron Kodesh*, tablets, pews, electrical fixtures and carpets were installed and by September all the furnishings were in place.[22]

The day the synagogue was dedicated was one of joyous fulfillment. When young Marvin Cohen opened the door, a privilege purchased by his grandfather, J. D. Cohen, "you should have seen our people, how they dashed in to get into *shul*. It was wonderful!"[23]

At the dedication ceremony, as when the cornerstone was layed, both reform and orthodox rabbis participated, but Rabbi Rosentreter was notably absent. The editor of the *Modern View* chided B'nai Amoona for the omission. "Such neglect is not to the congregation's credit. . . . Littleness and narrow prejudice must

have no place in circles where love of God and man is taught, and where it should be practiced."[24]

B'nai Amoona members, who attended services at the Academy and Vernon synagogue as children, recalled the interior of the sanctuary. The seating was divided into three sections. The section at the right was for women and the section at the left for men with the middle section split along the same line, women on the right and men on the left. The choicest seats were in the exact center, where a husband and wife could sit next to one another, separated only by a raised armrest that served as a symbolic divider. The seats were wooden pews, which had the special advantage of being "expandable." If a row was built to hold eight, a few more could always be squeezed in, especially small children wanting to sit next to a parent. The balcony also was divided into a men's section and a women's section. Here one found very orthodox women, young people and those who could not afford to pay for seats during the High Holidays.[25]

While the interior of the sanctuary was not plush, it had a special beauty of its own. Three magnificent stained glass windows, depicting Aaron, Isaiah and Moses, adorned the north, south and west walls and even the smaller windows around the room filtered light through colored glass.[26] The ceiling over the *Aron Kodesh*, on the east wall, was domed and painted blue with gold stars to resemble heaven. Ted Fischer remembered delighting as a young boy in the image it presented.[27] The *parochet* or ark curtain was hand made. The Daughters of Israel provided the silk and other materials and Ida Mass, whose name appeared at the bottom, embroidered the purple cloth with gold lions and biblical configurations. Robert Mass, then a boy of five, contributed the underlaying stitches, while his mother stitched the raised overlay.[28]

The new B'nai Amoona was intended to be not only a house of God but also a community center. This idea was so much in keeping with Rabbi Halpern's concept of a synagogue, that he probably introduced it to the congregation. "Our Synagogue will be what a Synagogue should be. It will not be a place where one comes once in a while to say a few prayers, but it will be the assembly for old and young. It will combine the three essentials of our religion, the 'Beth Hatfilah' (house of prayer), the 'Beth

Hamidrash' (house of study), and the 'Beth Hakneses' (house of assembly)."[29]

The new synagogue included a sanctuary for worship and a large auditorium for meetings and social functions, but the facilities for study were still lacking. The original intention was to use the old church building as a school, but the rooms were too small to allow the young pupils to sit comfortably at their lessons. So B'nai Amoona's next undertaking was to build a Talmud Torah.

To accomplish this goal, the congregation purchased the lot on Vernon Avenue east of the synagogue for $6,000. The house standing on the property was demolished and a school was built on the back part of the lot.[30]

Shortly before the Talmud Torah was completed, Rabbi Halpern described the plans for the new building. "The rooms will be light, airy, bright and comfortable and inviting for the children." The purpose was "to make the Hebrew school as attractive as the public school which the child attends." A library, containing books of Jewish interest, was included and the old church building was remodeled into a gymnasium and play room for the younger members of the congregation. These facilities made B'nai Amoona synagogue unique in the city of St. Louis.[31]

On May 8, 1921, the new Talmud Torah was dedicated. This time the roster of participating rabbis included Rabbi Rosentreter, who delivered the benediction. The ceremonies included a procession by the children of the Hebrew school, which concluded with a march into the synagogue. When seated, the pupils occupied nearly the entire center section. The school was dedicated to the children, for whom it had been built.[32]

The editorial comments in local Jewish newspapers applauded B'nai Amoona's achievement. The congregation was cited as a forerunner in the development of religious educational institutions and honored "for this new evidence of their Jewish idealism. The Congregation deserves to be recognized as the leader and guide for Orthodox Jewry in this city."[33]

As early as May 1921, the congregation decided that it needed to enlarge the synagogue, although the project was postponed until 1924–25.[34] The synagogue, erected only two years previously, was already too small to serve the needs of B'nai Amoona's rapidly growing membership. The enlargement was accom-

plished by extending the synagogue eastward, parallel to the school, onto the remainder of the Vernon Avenue lot. When all construction was completed, the new B'nai Amoona cost between $145,000 and $160,000.[35]

Long before the new synagogue was finished, President Selig Schwartz announced in a letter to the editor of the *Modern View* that he expected B'nai Amoona to "become one of the leading conservative synagogues of the West."[36] For some years before Rabbi Halpern's appointment, the terms "conservative" and "modern orthodox," were used interchangeably to describe B'nai Amoona. But with his arrival the congregation moved into the mainstream of Conservative Judaism.

Intellectually, Conservative Judaism emerged out of an influential movement known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or the Science of Judaism. Young German Jews, having experienced the effects on Jewish society of the Enlightenment and political emancipation, felt Judaism was becoming endangered in Western Europe. Many of their predecessors and peers responded to the opportunity to break out of the narrow confines of the Jewish community by abandoning altogether the heritage of their fathers. Eager to embrace German culture, which was perceived as modern, they rejected their Jewish identity in the process. This act of self-rejection fed into anti-Semitic propaganda, which spread like a virulent growth throughout the century. If Jews themselves declared the Jewish culture worthless, then prejudiced outsiders felt all the more justified in treating both Judaism and its practitioners with contempt.

The proponents of the Science of Judaism wished to protect the Jewish heritage from the destroyers both within and without the Jewish community. Their goal was to subject everything pertaining to the Jewish people and religion to critical scrutiny in order to establish that the Jewish civilization was on par with other world civilizations. Their studies encompassed all of Jewish literature including the sacred texts, history, archaeology, philosophy, law, and social science. Their goal was to isolate the traditional core of Judaism from the customary trappings in which the religion had become enmeshed over the centuries. They believed that while the core must remain inviolate, obsolete customs should be modified so that the Jews could adapt more successfully to the modern world.[37]

Leopold Zunz, who published his first tract in 1818, came to symbolize the movement. In his work he utilized modern methods of research and analysis and laid out a program of study that others followed. His personal ambition was to have Jewish studies incorporated into the general curriculum of humanism and, consequently, he urged the Prussian minister of culture to include the subject at the university; but his request was denied.[38]

With the establishment of Juedisch-theologisches Seminar at Breslau in 1854, the Science of Judaism found an institutional home. For the first 20 years, Zacharias Frankel, himself a part of the movement, served as director of the seminary. Numerous scholars, many of whom published prolifically on Jewish subjects, passed through its halls or came under its influence. A generation of rabbis and educators, who disseminated the ideas propounded by their teachers, were trained at the Breslau seminary. The first curriculum for advanced Jewish studies was developed. Moreover, the school served as a model for numerous other rabbinical seminaries of all denominations throughout Europe and the United States, including the orthodox Hildesheimer's Rabbinical Seminary where Rabbi Rosentreter received his education, the reform Hebrew Union College and the conservative Jewish Theological Seminary from which Rabbi Halpern graduated.[39]

While deriving its intellectual roots from *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Conservative Judaism can, nonetheless, be seen as an American phenomenon. It was a direct response to conditions prevailing in the United States at the end of the 19th century. Reform Judaism, which was the overwhelmingly dominant force among American Jews before massive Eastern European immigration, had been undergoing a process of increasing radicalization. This culminated in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which rejected all laws and ceremonies "not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization." Explicitly abandoned were the laws regulating diet, priestly purity, and dress; however, by the terms of the document any practice which could be looked upon as inconsistent with modern life was dispensable. The Platform also repudiated the age-old Jewish hope for a return to Zion and the restoration of a Jewish state.[40]

Moderate spiritual and lay leaders banded together to establish

an alternative to radical-reform's Hebrew Union College. The result was the Jewish Theological Seminary, which opened in 1887 in New York with Sabato Morais, a Sephardic Jew born in Italy, serving as the first president. The new seminary, however, lacked stability. Founded by Jews of traditionalist leanings, it had virtually no constituency among Jews from Western Europe and the leadership was too culturally remote to appeal to Eastern European Jews. Moreover, the men who joined to create the institution did not share sufficient common ground in their thinking to forge a clear-cut ideology. It was not enough merely to reject Reform Judaism's abandonment of much that was uniquely Jewish; the moderates had to delineate what they themselves stood for. In addition, the school failed to build a secure financial base. By the end of the century the seminary had foundered and would have gone out of existence had not individuals with diverse aims come together in mutual support of its revitalization.[41]

Prominent reform Jews, such as Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall, recognized that the Eastern European immigrants flooding into the country needed a new type of spiritual leadership. These men rejected old world Judaism as archaic, yet they feared the results if young immigrants simply threw over the religion of their fathers without putting anything in its place. In their view, this would be an invitation to political radicalism, hedonism and other objectionable behavior. What was needed was a rabbinate capable of combining familiar orthodox traditions with American culture. These men joined forces with Dr. Cyrus Adler, whose primary concern was the preservation of traditional Judaism in the American environment. They, along with other noted Jewish Americans, reorganized the Jewish Theological Seminary. The most significant step they took in this direction was to invite Dr. Solomon Schechter to serve as president of the academy.[42]

Born in Rumania of Hasidic parents, Solomon Schechter was at the time a reader in rabbinics at Cambridge University and a scholar of world renown. In England, however, his students were primarily Christian theologians. In America he would have the opportunity of training rabbis who would put his teachings about Judaism into practice. Although a staunch traditionalist, Schechter believed in the inevitability of change. "To Dr.

Schechter, Judaism was an historical growth; its concepts developed in every age and in every clime where Jews lived and were subjected to the influences of all these environments; it struggled and succeeded to retain its individual identity by subjecting the external pressures to its own genius. The ideas which Judaism could digest and absorb it moulded to its own purposes; the others it rejected." Change and adaptation, in Schechter's view, were constants throughout Jewish history, but the change had to be harmonious with that which gave the Jewish religion its unique identity.[43]

Dr. Schechter's arrival at the seminary in 1902 marked the beginning of a new era. He very quickly attracted to the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary distinguished young scholars, who over the succeeding decades defined the principles of Conservative Judaism and published its basic literature. They also educated an American rabbinate that implanted these ideas throughout the country.[44] Among this group of rabbis was Abraham E. Halpern, who brought Conservative Judaism to the city of St. Louis and to his new congregation. In the rabbi's own words: "The B'nai Amoona stands for Conservative Judaism."[45]

June Sachar, who graduated from B'nai Amoona's Hebrew school in 1928, wrote an essay for the yearbook in which she defended Jewish traditions.

> We can strip the old faith of its old traditions, of the husk which seems so hard and burdensome today. But those who do so soon find that . . . their Jewish life becomes anemic. More than the ethical kernal is needed. More than abstract principles are required. We must have rich traditions, sanctified by ages of devotion, made lovely by centuries of pious veneration.[46]

These thoughts echo Conservative Judaism's commitment to maintaining an inviolate core of rituals and symbols that give the Jewish religion its structure. In a sermon entitled "The Value of the Jewish Ceremony," which he preached during his interview, Rabbi Halpern insisted that a religion based solely on ethical principles was too abstract to endure. Religious ideals must be given form and expression by ceremony, he said. The rabbi believed that "ceremony in Jewish life has been the key to the success of Judaism. . . ." Through ceremony the Jew was linked to

his God, his people and his religion, and it was this bonding that enabled the people of Israel to survive despite the centuries of persecution.[47]

Given the premise that it is practice, and not just precepts, that makes a religion vital, it is not surprising to find Rabbi Halpern passionately championing traditional observance. Throughout the decades of his ministry the rabbi urged his congregants to incorporate Jewish traditions into their daily lives. After discovering that very few children enrolled in the Hebrew school said morning and evening prayers, he took the parents to task. "It is tragic to see how the spiritual life of our children is being weakened because the child is not taught the meaning and value of starting his day with a word of prayer and thanksgiving to God. . . . The duty of emphasizing this belongs to the parents and *they* are responsible. . . ." On another occasion he pointed out that people who hired someone else to say *kaddish* for their deceased parents were defeating the whole purpose of the act.[48]

But Rabbi Halpern placed his greatest emphasis on observing those days in the calendar that set the Jews apart. On Passover the house must be made *Pesachdik*. Lunches should be prepared so that no one had to buy meals outside and on the designated days everyone should come and "celebrate Pesach together in shule." The *seder*, which the rabbi termed "the outstanding ceremonial that is observed by Jews," should be impressive so that all who participate would derive a sense of glory.[49]

While the other holidays also came in for special mention, the day which received the most attention was Shabbat. Rabbi Halpern believed that on this one day a week Jews should devote themselves to their religion. He called upon the women to greet the holiday on Friday evening by lighting candles.

> It is inconceivable that any Jewish home should be satisfied to discard this most beautiful ceremony of Jewish life. . . . With the table prepared for the Shabbos meal, the mother of the home approaches the lights with a sense of sanctity and reverence. She not only recites the prayer for the lighting of the candles but includes a special prayer for the welfare of her home and her household. . . . It adds a touch of holiness to the Shabbos and makes it different from the other days of the week."

The men, too, were urged to honor the sacredness of the day by reciting *kiddush*, or the prayer sanctifying the Sabbath. He discounted the excuse that it was hypocritical for men who worked on the Sabbath to make *kiddush*. ". . . just because you must unfortunately desecrate the Shabbos is all the more reason that you do all you can to strengthen the Shabbos spirit in the home." This, he went on to say, was the only way to keep the day alive.[50]

The rabbi pleaded with all alike—men and women, young and old—that they attend services on Saturday morning. He urged businessmen who were required to work to come at least once in a while, if not every week.[51] He told the women that there was no excuse for their absence. It is the mother's "sacred duty to strengthen our religious life by her personal example. . . ."[52] But sheer repetition indicates that those the rabbi was most concerned about were the children. Throughout the years the message resounded again and again, "Your children must come to shule. . . ."[53] While they are young, the mold is set for the men and women they will become; therefore, children must be influenced so that they will grow up to be committed Jews, he said. To achieve this required their regular attendance at Sabbath services.

While pushing strenously for greater commitment to traditional observance, Rabbi Halpern, at the same time, kept careful watch over practices adopted by American Jews that were having a corrosive effect on the Jewish religion. In 1918, just one year after his arrival in St. Louis, the young rabbi tackled the issue of the Jewish poor receiving Christmas baskets. This led to a lengthy debate, carried out in the columns of the *Modern View*, with some of St. Louis' most distinguished Jewish residents, including Shaare Emeth's venerable Rabbi Samuel Sale, participating.

It was the practice of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, in honor of the holiday, to distribute Christmas baskets to the needy. Jews were among those receiving baskets and the Jewish Charitable and Educational Union aided in the distribution. Rabbi Halpern spoke out against Christmas baskets for Jews. His position was a difficult one to maintain because it deprived some poor Jews of

needed sustenance. The rabbi tried to deal with this issue by making it clear that Jewish individuals and institutions were responsible for supplying the wants of their own poor. He also lauded Jews who supported the worthy charity so long as the beneficiaries were not Jews.

Rabbi Halpern rejected Christmas baskets for the same reason he objected to Jews having Christmas trees, hanging wreaths and exchanging Christmas presents. The holiday, he insisted, was not a national celebration like Thanksgiving Day or the Fourth of July, but rather a religious one commemorating the birth of the Christian savior. Jews, he said, should not celebrate the birth of Christ. "What," he asked, "has become of us? Where is our pride? Where is our own religion?"[54]

By the time the controversy was over, St. Louis Jewry was alerted to the fact that traditional Judaism had found an articulate young defender. But one wonders, however, whether Rabbi Halpern did not sometimes look upon himself as a voice in the wilderness. In one of the very first sermons he preached, entitled "The Faithful Few," the rabbi stated that in every age there were Jews ready to sell their birthright, hide their identity and sacrifice not only themselves but their people and religion. What kept the Jewish heritage alive," he said, "was a small band of faithful, who were needed now more than ever."[55]

"Unfortunately today we find nearly everywhere a coldness and indifference which is not a very healthy condition for the 'Am Segulah' 'The Chosen People.'" Many remain Jews because of outer pressures rather than from inner love, he said. But outer pressures can give neither the strength to withstand trials nor the faith to pass on the Jewish legacy to posterity. "It is only by a conscious effort on the part of the Jew to carry on, that we can hope for a survival of our faith and its ideals."[56] "The Jewish people are today in need of a real religious revival."[57]

Rabbi Halpern placed his hopes in the young. As a young man himself, he may have felt an affinity for those close to his own age, but his commitment to this group went beyond any personal inclination. A basic precept of Conservative Judaism was that the future of the Jewish religion in America depended upon making Judasim attractive to the next generation.[58]

Rabbi Halpern deeply regretted that, "In the past the young

people and children were thrown to the background through lack of vision on the part of the parents with the tragic result that many who would have remained within the fold of Conservative Judaism left us,"[59] he said. Since the rabbi was determined not to repeat the error, he focused a great deal of attention on the younger generation. Gertrude Fleischman Haffner recalled grumbling by a few about "catering to the young people," but in her estimation the rabbi "was farsighted. He knew exactly what he needed. . . ."[60]

Under the rabbi's active sponsorship a number of young people's groups were formed. Perhaps the most successful in this period was Kenesiah. The name means the "gathering," but it also has a second meaning, the "entrance," and, in fact, Kenesiah served in both capacities. It brought young adults together for numerous activities and it was the "entrance" for many of them into the congregation.

Kenesiah was founded in November 1920 for young men and women, 18 years of age and older. Subsequently, the minimum age was raised to 21. The organization was open to any young Jew, regardless of whether his or her family was affiliated with B'nai Amoona. In fact, most of the group, which in time totaled more than 100, came from outside the congregation's membership.[61]

"The purpose of this 'live-wire' organization," it was explained, "is to bring the young people together socially, to take an active interest in the community, and to create a spirit that will tend to the preservation of Traditional Judaism." Kenesiah members took part in athletic activities, literary discussions, dramatic performances, dances and social services. Prominent individuals were invited to address the meetings.[62]

Gertrude and Henry Haffner, who at one time served respectively as president and vice president of the organization, were one of the several "Kenesiah couples." What they remember best were the parties. They recalled a Halloween hayride that ended at B'nai Amoona auditorium, which had been splendidly decorated for the occasion. On Sundays, there were frequent excursions to the Meramec River clubhouse that the group had purchased. Usually the group was accompanied on these all-day affairs by the rabbi, his wife and children. It was typical of Rab-

bi Halpern that he involved himself personally in Kenesiah's activities. In fact, all the executive meetings of the organization were held at his home and Mrs. Halpern invariably baked for the occasion.[63]

The rabbi was equally concerned about creating organizations for youngsters. In 1917–18, a chapter of Young Judea was founded. It apparently did not take root but the Junior Forum proved more successful. This group, composed of boys and girls 15 to 17 and later 17 to 21, met on Sunday mornings to discuss topics of Jewish interest. The organization, which was both social and educational, enabled the rabbi to maintain contact with recent graduates of the Hebrew school.[64] Subsequently, the teen-agers formed other groups, among them the X-L's, Neora, Nishre Yehudah, the Alumni Club and the B'nai Amoona Debating Team. The younger children were accounted for by Boy Scout, Cub Scout and Girl Scout troops. If these organizations were meant to provide a "home" within the congregation for the younger people, they must be considered successful, for many who passed through their ranks later became adult congregants.

"The B'nai Amoona is not only a congregation for the parents but for the children as well. Our aim is to bring the children nearer to their parents and to make our synagogue the common meeting ground for parents and children." The unique contribution of Conservative Judaism was to bridge the gap between the immigrant parent and the American-born child or in Rabbi Halpern's oft-repeated phrase, to bring together "Parents and Children in one House of God."[65] The means of achieving this goal was to uphold traditions, while modernizing the forms in which they were observed.

The first step in this direction was taken even before Rabbi Halpern arrived in St. Louis. In June 1917, a notice appeared in the *Modern View* that at B'nai Amoona, "Yiddish sermons will be discontinued and a definite appeal to the younger and modern element of orthodox Jewish folk will be made."[66] In order to attract the younger generation, it was necessary to speak to them in their own language, which was English. In any case, as a native English-speaker himself, it is unlikely Rabbi Halpern would have felt comfortable preaching in Yiddish.

"The first time I heard English in a synagogue was at B'nai

Amoona and this impressed me tremendously." In these words Maurice Kranzberg expressed what so many of the younger generation experienced when they attended B'nai Amoona synagogue. It was innovative and it was modern. B'nai Amoona was the first non-reform congregation in St. Louis to introduce English sermons, responsive readings in English and prayer books with English instead of Yiddish translations.[67]

In the typical orthodox *shul* only the *hazzan* chanted the prayers; whereas at B'nai Amoona there was community singing. At B'nai Amoona the rabbi insisted upon order and quiet during the services. Al Fleishman vividly recalled the atmosphere in orthodox *shuls* of the period. "Everybody *davened* for himself and if there was a *hazzan*, you were lucky if you could hear him. When the Torah was read, it was time for intermission; everybody walked out. The noise was unbelievable." Under Rabbi Halpern people were discouraged from talking or otherwise disrupting the service and they were expected to sit attentively until the conclusion. As a result, there was a marked change in behavior so that Israel Goodman was able to write proudly in the 1932 Jubilee book, the "B'nai Amoona has preserved respect, dignity and decorum, grace and charm in Orthodox Jewish life. . . ."[68]

"Kids were not treated with respect until Rabbi Halpern came." To make children feel welcome at the services, the rabbi had the front seats in the center section specially reserved for them. Simon Rosenberg and Jacob Gidlowitz sat with the boys to help them follow the prayers and to make sure they were not "cutting up" and Mildred Tzinberg Fischer remembers playing the same role on the girls' side. At the end of the service all the children lined up in front of the sanctuary to sing as a group.[69]

In an effort to attract young adults, Rabbi Halpern introduced the later Friday night service. Although this service had been tried under Rabbi Rabinowitz (1912), there was a decided difference. This time it was geared to a young crowd. There was a heavy emphasis on responsive reading in English and congregational singing, and the subjects of the rabbi's sermons ranged from topics of Jewish interest to current events, social issues and recent literature.[70]

Being a realist, Rabbi Halpern recognized that many young people worked on Saturday and could not attend Sabbath ser-

vices. The purpose of the Friday night service was to provide an alternative religious service at a convenient hour. At first the response was excellent, particularly from the young people; but in time the appeal wore off and attendance dropped. Finally, in 1928, the Friday night services were discontinued due to a lack of interest and were not reintroduced until 1944, when the tragic events in Europe stimulated a resurgence of Jewish consciousness.[71]

Rabbi Halpern was not content merely to have the younger generation present in the synagogue; it was necessary that they be able to appreciate what was taking place. The means of achieving this end was Jewish education. "The greatest asset of any Synagogue is the school. If our children be given the proper Jewish training, made to understand what the Jewish religion is, and its value, we would soon find that instead of our children leaving us, they would remain with us."[72]

If there was a single area to which Rabbi Halpern devoted the most attention during his 45 years in the ministry, it was Jewish education. This orientation was very much in keeping with the precepts of Conservative Judaism, which assumed that if Jews were knowledgeable about their religion, they would be less susceptible to the forces of assimilation. At the graduation exercises of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1916, Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, then principal of the Teachers Institute, told the assembled crowd, "Jewish education must come to be regarded as the one constructive activity in Jewish life which is of supreme importance, and to which every man, woman and child in Israel should be in duty bound to contribute something. . . ."[73]

Prior to Rabbi Halpern's arrival, B'nai Amoona operated a Sunday school and, from 1908–14, a Talmud Torah, where children studied Hebrew, Jewish history and religion on a daily basis.[74] The Talmud Torah collapsed, and although the Sunday school continued in existence, by 1917 only a handful of children were attending the sessions.[75] The inauspicious location of the Garrison and Lucas synagogue and the lack of a spiritual leader undoubtedly contributed to the decline in enrollments.

During one of his trial sermons Rabbi Halpern emphasized the critical importance of religious education. "To the parents of this community I wish to say that you owe a great debt to the Jewish

people, and that debt is the proper training of the child by giving him a thorough Jewish education in the history and literature of his people."[76] It is not surprising, therefore, that Rabbi Halpern made the reorganization of the B'nai Amoona Religious School an immediate concern.

In the fall of 1917, about 75 pupils attended Sunday school classes and the rabbi met one afternoon a week with a small group of older children who already knew some Hebrew to instruct them in grammar and Bible translation.[78] By 1918, Hebrew classes were being conducted two afternoons a week and the Sunday school was doing well, but further expansion had to await the construction of new facilities. In 1922, with the Talmud Torah completed, a third day of Hebrew classes was added and by 1925 the religious school was in session five days a week.[79]

The first class graduated in 1919, but Rabbi Halpern was not happy about losing contact with children who were only 14 years old. That same year a Hebrew class was introduced for this group and in 1923, a Hebrew high school class was announced for graduates of the preceding two years.[80] Although these advanced Hebrew classes did not prosper, the Junior Forum (1921) and the Alumni Club (1926) kept recent graduates involved in the synagogue and prolonged their Jewish education on an informal basis.[81] The Alumni Club, whose first president was Maurice Kranzberg, left its mark by publishing in 1927 and 1928, a yearbook called *The Scroll.*

The curriculum of the B'nai Amoona Religious School included the Hebrew language, prayer book and Bible translation, Jewish history to modern times and the interpretation of symbols, ceremonies and festivals.[82] The primary emphasis, however, was on enabling the child to follow the service. As a result, comprehension of the text was minimal and the ability to speak or write Hebrew exceptional. During the week the pupils concentrated strictly on the language and the study of Jewish history was confined to Sundays, when those attending Hebrew classes were mixed together with a larger group, enrolled only in Sunday school. Although an appreciation of Jewish ritual was included in the curriculum, it was not until the children's final year, when Rabbi Halpern taught the class, that the children concentrated on the holidays and their significance. Rose

Schramm Mass recalled that this made the last year considerably more interesting than the preceding ones.[83]

Although it was an ideal of Conservative Judaism that the teachers in religious schools be trained for their positions, such people were hard to find in St. Louis during the 1920s and 1930s. A notable exception was Jules Biegelsen, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary Teachers Institute, who arrived in 1935. As a rule, Rabbi Halpern recruited college students, frequently themselves products of the B'nai Amoona school. More than one of these teachers felt that his or her qualifications for the job were meager. Their knowledge was limited and often they lacked the ability to teach. The end result was frequently poor teaching of an unimaginative curriculum to children who resisted learning.[84]

Virtually everyone asked to recall his Hebrew school experience echoed the same thought—nobody liked it. After attending public school from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., it was difficult for young children to sit through another set of classes from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. They would have much preferred to have been outside playing with their friends. However, even if no one claimed to enjoy Hebrew school, those who went took their attendance for granted in much the same way they viewed their attendance at public school. Their parents expected them to go and that was it. "It was a way of life."[85]

If a child resented the school, the resentment was expressed in mischievous behavior, resistance to learning and the lack of retention of what was studied once the bonds were severed. Those who grew up to be committed Jews acquired their attachment not so much at school, but at home. While the school could reinforce what was learned in the home, it could not take the place of the home in fostering Jewish consciousness. Consequently, Rabbi Halpern, who was sensitive to the issue, took as one of his major themes the need for B'nai Amoona congregants to establish Jewish homes.

"The home is our fortress for the preservation of our religious life." "The home must be the training ground for the Synagogue and the school. . . . It must instill into the child when he is young the love for things Jewish." This was to be done, the rabbi said, by maintaining the spirit of the Sabbath, observing the dietary laws and offering prayers of thanksgiving to God at desig-

nated times throughout the day. Since the American environment was not conducive to living a Jewish life, it was all the more essential that Jewish traditions be kept alive in the home, he emphasized. "Without a definite and positive expression of the true Jewish life in the home there is no future for Judaism."[86]

The task of making sure the home was Jewish fell to the mother. In the past the father was charged with overseeing the religious life of his family, but now the mother bore this responsibility. "On her rests the task of inspiring the household." "She can inspire the child with all that is beautiful in Judaism. She can encourage the father to a stronger religious life." The practice of Jewish traditions "can become vital through the influence and earnestness of the woman in the home." "Hers is the duty of the revival of the Jewish spirit."[87]

If a Jewish woman was to fulfill her role as wife and mother, it was necessary that she be knowledgeable about her religion. For this reason Conservative Judaism stressed the importance of educating girls.[88] Women typically had received limited religious education. At best, it enabled them to pick their way through the service and to observe rituals without necessarily understanding their meaning. If American Jewish women were to become the caretakers of Judaism, minimal education was no longer sufficient. Consequently, Rabbi Halpern reiterated over and over again, "Send your girls to the Hebrew school."[89]

The rabbi also recognized the need to improve the Jewish awareness of adult women. He offered sessions in Jewish history, interpretation of ceremonies and the Bible at meetings of the Daughters of Israel. He scheduled morning classes in beginning Hebrew to enable women to follow the prayer book. A study group on *Ethics of the Fathers* met at his home once a month. The rabbi would sometimes teach the Bible from the pulpit at Friday night or Saturday morning services.[90] But most of all, he urged women, especially young mothers who were raising the next generation, to attend Sabbath services.[91]

Rabbi Halpern wanted women to be active members of the congregation. On his recommendation, the Mothers Club was founded in 1919. It served the dual purpose of involving young mothers and providing an organization to look after the children in the religious school. According to Mrs. Fannie (Alex) Hertz-

man, the rabbi initiated the formation of a separate organization when the Daughters of Israel refused to support the school. Mrs. Flora (Harry) Yavitz served as the first president of the Mothers Club, which was unique in St. Louis at the time. The Mothers Club sponsored all the social events for the children, including celebrations on Simhat Torah, Hanuka and Purim; graduation exercises and an outing for the graduates; the alumni dance and the annual summer picnic. The club provided Bibles for the graduates and prayer books for Bar Mitzvah boys. They purchased a motion picture projector for the synagogue and established B'nai Amoona's first library of Jewish books.[92]

The Mothers Club remained in existence for more than 20 years, during which time two other women, Mrs. Frieda (Benjamin) Olschwanger and Mrs. Esther (Louis) Marcus served as presidents. According to Mrs. Fannie (Hyman) Ellman, the club attracted the younger women, while the older ones were concentrated in the Daughters of Israel. The two organizations raised money independently for different purposes and the rivalry between them was keen. As soon as one group planned an affair, the other would follow suit, sometimes causing a conflict. In 1940, a mock trial was held in which Rabbi Halpern sat as judge. The final verdict was that the Mothers Club had outlived its usefulness and in the best interests of the congregation it should merge with the Daughters of Israel to form a single women's auxiliary, which is what occurred.[93]

Even during the period when the Mothers Club was active, the Daughters of Israel continued to be the major women's organization at B'nai Amoona. Beginning about 1934, the name "Sisterhood" was used interchangeably with that of "Daughters of Israel," and, by 1939, the older title had more or less passed from use in notices, although the official change in name to "B'nai Amoona Sisterhood" did not take place until 1950.[94] The older members, in particular, preferred the name "Daughters of Israel" and continued to use it even after the official name change.

For much of this period (1903–36), one impressive woman, Mrs. Bertha (Michael) Golland, served as president of the Daughters of Israel and the society prospered under her leadership.[95] The Daughters of Israel was a mainstay of the *shul*. The

women could be counted on to raise substantial sums for every important undertaking of the congregation, such as the building of the new synagogue and Talmud Torah at Academy and Vernon. In 1919 they held a bazaar that brought $3,000 into the building fund. Other gifts in cash and kind were made repeatedly. They equipped the new synagogue and school with an altar, ark curtain, carpets, dishes, desks and a piano.[96]

The Daughters of Israel filled its treasury through events, such as a popular annual boat excursion, card parties, raffles, dinners and dances. An initiation fee of $5.00 was assessed each new member and dues were collected at every meeting. The provision of shrouds continued to be a major source of income. Most shrouds were either paid for in advance on an installment basis or the cost was covered by the family after death. However, if either the woman or her family could not afford to pay, the Daughters of Israel was duty bound to furnish the shroud free of charge. For this reason the women's group did not automatically accept every applicant for membership. If a prospective member was old and poor, she might be turned down. As before, the women washed and dressed the bodies of departed "sisters," in accordance with traditional requirements.[97]

The money the Daughters of Israel collected was distributed to the congregation, to local and national Jewish institutions and in small sums, to needy families.[98] The women also provided invaluable services both to B'nai Amoona and the Jewish community. But perhaps the organization's most important function was to provide a "home" for the women of the congregation. Although B'nai Amoona included women on its Board of Trustees in 1930, they represented only a tiny fraction of the whole.[99] It was the Daughters of Israel that enabled the women of the congregation to exert an influence and to make a genuine contribution.

The men, too, were urged to play a more active role in the congregation. In December 1930, the B'nai Amoona Men's Club was formed with I. Eli Goldstein as the first president. The organization was meant to be a social club, which would attract younger men into the congregation. B'nai Amoona President, Isadore Mathes, who first proposed the group, described its purpose. "It should be a place where our future leaders are trained and [sic] to

create interest for the young men so that they will be prepared to carry on the work when their time comes."[100]

However, the organization did not flourish. Mathes, whose term as president of the congregation spanned most of the 1930s, repeatedly called for more active interest in the Men's Club. When the club lapsed in 1933, he made a special plea that it be reinstituted. Later that year the Men's Club was reorganized with Sam Ferer as president, but its problems were not yet solved. The club had difficulty attracting enough younger men to fulfill its function as the training ground for the next generation of congregational leaders.[101]

In 1923, through the initiative of Beryl Lesser, the older men of B'nai Amoona formed a Chevra Mishnayoth. The members met with Rev. Aaron Mass each morning and evening before services to study *Mishna*, *Ayn Yakov* and *Chumash*. On Saturday afternoons they shared *Shalosh Seudot*, or the third meal between *Mincha* and *Maariv* services. When a member died, they recited *kaddish* for him throughout the first year and again every year on his *yahrzeit*, or the anniversary of death. In 1927, the membership of the group was opened to women.[102]

In keeping with the views of Conservative Judaism, Rabbi Halpern urged the congregation to make substantial changes in its practices. ". . . while the B'nai Amoona was known as a 'moderners Shule' they still sold aliyahs on holidays and made 'Mi Sheberachs' and 'Shnadering' [making pledges] was the order of the day."[103] Typically, in orthodox *shuls*, an *aliya*, or the privilege of being called up to the Torah, was auctioned off to the highest bidder and people offered contributions for a personal blessing called a *mi sheberach*. These financial transactions took place right in the middle of services. However, since orthodox Jews could not carry money on the Sabbath or holidays, only pledges were made and the money was collected by the *shamas* when business was once again permitted.

Rabbi Halpern and others with a more modern outlook found this practice offensive. They believed that the procedure greatly detracted from the dignity of the service and that a system which so obviously favored the well-to-do, was out of keeping in a house of God. During Passover 1922, the congregation inaugurated a new method of distributing *aliyot*, that bestowed on rich and poor alike equal honors.[104]

To make up for the loss of funds from "shnadering," membership dues were raised to $48 per year. (In 1912 the dues were $20 a year.) Although members consented to the increase, the congregation's only reprisal against those who failed in their obligation was to suspend them from membership. Since this ran counter to the goal of bringing more families into B'nai Amoona, the rabbi instead pleaded with the members to increase their dues voluntarily. "Now that we have eliminated . . . *Auctioning* in a Shule, are you going to stand back and not give your assistance? *We want every member to feel that he has done something towards the progress of the B'nai Amoona.*"[105]

The deficit was also met by other means. The most successful innovation in this regard was the installation of memorial tablets in the sanctuary. Members purchased bronze plaques that perpetuated the names of departed loved ones.[106] On the anniversary of death a light was placed next to the name of the deceased and the congregation recited *kaddish* in his or her memory.

With the election in 1923 of Sam Hamburg Jr. as president of the congregation, B'nai Amoona's financial problems were temporarily resolved. Hamburg proved to be an excellent fund raiser. During his first term in office he brought in more than $50,000. Of this sum, $17,500 was used to pay off the first mortgage on the Academy and Vernon synagogue; $9,000 was spent on improving the auditorium and equipping the gymnasium; and the remaining $24,500 went into the operating budget.[107]

Although B'nai Amoona's expenses continued to increase more quickly than its income,[108] the situation was not serious until the Great Depression began in 1929. As an institution dependent upon voluntary donations, no matter whether in the guise of dues or contributions, the synagogue was hard hit by the financial troubles of its members. As early as 1930, President Hamburg was urging members not to curtail their support for B'nai Amoona. But faced with economic crises in their own lives, many members responded by giving little or nothing to the synagogue. Others, who were personally not badly affected, nonetheless, used the Depression as an excuse to cut back on their commitment.[109]

Isadore Mathes, who became president in 1932, called for sacrifice. "Religion to me means something more than merely attending services. It means the willingness on the part of our

members to make sacrifices. I am not impressed when a man pays his dues and even makes a contribution but does not really miss it when he does it. The true test is when you sacrifice to do it."[110]

The *Klei Kodesh* (rabbi, cantor and *shamas*) were required to make sacrifices too by accepting substantial cuts in their salaries. It was Rabbi Halpern himself who offered to take a decrease in salary when the congregation was unable to meet its obligations.[111] The figures for the years 1928–29 and 1935–36 show that the rabbi's salary was reduced to $6,150 from $9,000; the *hazzan*'s to $2,700 from $4,200; and Shamas Katz to $1,200 from $3,580.[112] If it had not been for donations received for special services, these men would not have been able to support their families.

Although B'nai Amoona's financial condition throughout the 1930s was not good, the congregation continued to make ends meet. The operating budget was cut from approximately $41,600 in 1928–29 to $23,100 in 1935–36. Despite the sharp decrease in expenditures, receipts from dues dropped by 53 percent in this period; therefore, additional funds had to be found. In the 1935–36 budget a special appeal for the Hebrew school and donations of $1,500 each from the Daughters of Israel and the B'nai Amoona Cemetery Association enabled the congregation to continue functioning.[113] While the Sisterhood had in the past made substantial contributions, these had been for designated purposes, such as the building fund, not for day-to-day expenses.[114] The Cemetery Association previously had lent money to the congregation, but had never made an outright donation. Moreover, the Cemetery Association in 1934 took over from the commercial lender the remaining mortgage of $25,000 on the synagogue and reduced the interest rate on the loan to 3 percent from 6 percent. Until its financial situation improved the congregation paid only the interest on the debt.[115]

Since dues constituted by far the major source of revenue,[116] the long-range financial health of the congregation depended upon augmenting this source of income. During the Depression, however, raising family dues would have had a negative effect. The answer, therefore, lay in increasing the number of members.[117]

In 1917, President Benjamin Burenstein reported in his annual

message that 150 families belonged to B'nai Amoona.[118] After the new synagogue was built, membership expanded rapidly, reaching 250 in 1923. At that point it came to a standstill, since the sanctuary was too cramped to accommodate any more people.[119] In 1924–25, the congregation proceeded to enlarge the synagogue so that it would hold another 150 couples. B'nai Amoona was particularly anxious to make room for the grown sons and daughters—the next generation—of members.[120]

The additional space had the desired result and B'nai Amoona's membership soared until it peaked at 426 families in 1928. Over the subsequent decade, however, a decline set in which brought the membership down to 308 by 1936. In response to the decrease in membership frequent appeals began appearing in the *Bulletin*, calling for "a special effort to bring in new members."[121] But it was soon apparent that there would be no resurgence as long as B'nai Amoona remained at Academy and Vernon.

During the period between the two world wars, the *Klei Kodesh* played an exceptional role in giving B'nai Amoona its identity, in carrying it through both triumphs and crises, and in enabling it to become one of the most important Jewish congregations in St. Louis. B'nai Amoona was blessed by having a rabbi, *hazzan* and *shamas*, whose terms of service spanned a number of decades. The solid foundation of leadership they provided left a permanent imprint on the congregation.

At the center was Rabbi Abraham Halpern. B'nai Amoona was his first and only pulpit and he dedicated his life to promoting the welfare of the congregation. A year after arriving in St. Louis, Rabbi Halpern, on June 25, 1918, married Bessie Feinberg of Philadelphia. The young couple met through her brother Louis, who was ordained as a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary one year before Rabbi Halpern. As the daughter of a rabbi, Bessie Feinberg Halpern was well-equipped for the role of *rebbitzin*, which she fulfilled superbly. "She set an example for the congregants by being a good wife to her husband and coming to *shul*, being friendly and extending herself." Like her husband, Mrs. Halpern devoted herself to the congregation. She was an active participant at every function and could always be counted upon to lend a helping hand. As a member of the Sisterhood she

inspired the women to greater efforts. Rabbi and Mrs. Halpern had three children: Fayga, Laeh and Mordecai.[122]

In 1893, B'nai Amoona elected its first *hazzan*, the Rev. M. Jonap, who remained with the congregation just a little over six months. There followed several temporary replacements, one of whom was Simon Rosenberg, a later president of the congregation. It was not until the Rev. S. Friedman took over the position that the congregation had a *hazzan* for any length of time. In 1913, the Rev. Friedman celebrated his 10th anniversary with B'nai Amoona, but it seems he left shortly thereafter. For the next few years the congregation made do with men who served for only short terms.[123] Then on April 6, 1920, the Rev. Jacob Gowseiow was elected *hazzan* of B'nai Amoona.

Born in the village of Motol in the Russian Pale of Settlement, Hazzan Gowseiow assumed as his birthday Novermber 26, 1881, although he never knew the exact date. As a boy, he studied with his father, who was the community's cantor and *shochet* (kosher slaughterer). Young Jacob began his own singing career in his father's choir at the age of 10.

In 1901, he came to America with the help of two sisters who were already in the country. In New York, Jacob Gowseiow met a friend's sister, Rose Rosenthal, who became his first wife on August 21, 1910. The couple had three children: Isadore, Hyman and Thelma (Tiby). Gowseiow went to work in his brother-in-law's cigar factory, but following a dispute, he quit the job and went to Chicago where he tried to make a living as a *hazzan*. An opening at Sheerith S'fard synagogue brought the Gowseiow family to St. Louis in 1919. The following year on the second day of Passover, the Rev. Gowseiow sang at B'nai Amoona and two days later he was invited to become the congregation's new *hazzan*.[124]

Shamas Isidor Katz, the third member of the *Klei Kodesh* during this period, was the first of the three to affiliate with the congregation. Before his appointment as *shamas*, three men are known to have served B'nai Amoona in this capacity. In 1893, S. Greenberg was listed as the sexton of B'nai Amoona. He was followed by Louis Wohl, who was with the congregation from at least 1896–1904 and probably longer. From 1906–12, Herman Maizner, a past president of the congregation, acted as *shamas*,[125] until he was succeeded by the Rev. Katz.

Born in Hungry on June 12, 1877, Isidor Katz was educated at the Hebrew Academy in Budapest. He and his wife, Esther (Schreiber), immigrated to the United States in 1907 with their two older children, Morris and Pamela. Two more children, Sarah and William, were born in this country. The Katz family lived first in New York and then in Texas, before settling in St. Louis. Very likely the Rev. Katz served as *shamas* at B'rith Sholom before coming to B'nai Amoona on May 1, 1913.[126]

The names of a number of persons who figured prominently in B'nai Amoona during this period have already been mentioned in passing. It is interesting to note that many of those providing leadership to the congregation were at the same time playing a major role in the St. Louis Jewish community. "Throughout the fifty years of its existence B'nai Amoona members have been the initiators and perpetuators of the orthodox institutions of the city."[127] Israel Goodman, the author of these words, which appeared in the 1932 Jubilee book, went on to cite the numerous organizations which particularly benefited from the active support of B'nai Amoona members.

Perhaps the Jewish Orthodox Old Folks Home more than any other institution in the city of St. Louis could be looked upon as being almost a B'nai Amoona achievement. Although the reform community sponsored a Home for Aged and Infirm Israelites, the atmosphere there was such that holding divine services once or twice a month on Saturday afternoons was considered by some backers to be too "orthodox."[128] Observant Jews, who more and more constituted the population requiring a public home where they could end their days, needed a place that offered strictly kosher food, a synagogue where the inhabitants could pray three times a day and an enviromnent conducive to the study of Talmud. As a result, in 1907, against all expectations of success, the orthodox community managed to put together enough money to open Beth Moshav Z'keinim (Home for the Aged), as it was initially called. [129]

The first president of the sustaining society was Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter, and most of the officers and board members throughout the years were associated with B'nai Amoona. Prominent among this group were Mrs. Rebecca (Abraham) Kahn, Benjamin Burenstein, Samuel Epstein, Dr. and Mrs. Michael

Golland and Harry Siegfried, which by no means completes the list. As the Jewish Orthodox Old Folks Home, the subsequent name, expanded, added on new wings and provided care for an increasing number of residents, B'nai Amoona members, such as Sam Hamburg Jr., Gustave Cytron and Isadore Mathes, played major roles in funding and maintaining the facility.[130]

Another community enterprise that came to fruition because of the efforts of B'nai Amoona members was the kosher kitchen at Jewish Hospital. When the original Jewish Hospital opened in 1902, what made it "Jewish" was the fact the reform Jews provided the overwhelming proportion of funds and Jewish medical personnel were welcomed on the staff.[131] No attempt was made to meet the particular needs of observant Jews by making kosher food available. As a result, a pious Jew would either refuse to go to the hospital or would depend upon family or friends to bring in his meals. Those who had neither of these options would try to eat as little as possible of the "treife" hospital food.

The orthodox community wished to resolve the problem by establishing its own hospital. The Jewish Kosher Hospital Society, in existence from 1912 to 1915, made a serious attempt to raise the necessary funds. Many members of B'nai Amoona actively supported the association. They included Benjamin Burenstein, Rebecca Kahn, Michael and Bertha Golland, Harry Siegfried and Hyman Kessler. In the end, however, the society failed to subscribe even the modest amount of $25,000, which it had set as a goal.[132]

As early as 1912, Aaron Waldheim, president of the Jewish Hospital, was interested in meeting the Jewish Kosher Hospital Society halfway, since he opposed the Jewish community dividing its wealth and energies between two separate "Jewish" hospitals. At a meeting with representatives of the society, Waldheim spoke of creating a kosher kitchen in the existing facility. At the time, however, the group was hoping to achieve a great deal more. Leaders of the group wanted the hospital to serve strictly kosher food to all patients, whether or not they were observant or even Jewish, and to hire a Jewish superintendent and only Jewish nurses and attendants, so that Jews would feel "at home" in their surroundings. Consequently, the effort at compromise failed.[133]

By 1924, when the ground was broken for the new Jewish Hos-

pital on Kingshighway, the Jewish Kosher Hospital Society was defunct. Orthodox Jews, now concerned only with meeting the needs of their own people, began lobbying for the inclusion of a kosher kitchen in the plans. Playing major roles in this regard were Rabbi Halpern and Rebecca Kahn. This remarkable woman, who was a member of B'nai Amoona's founding generation of German Jews, was one of the most widely respected persons in the Jewish community. Aaron Waldheim, still president of Jewish Hospital, responded favorably to their solicitations and when the new building opened in 1926, it contained two fully equipped, separate kitchens for the preparation of kosher food.[134] Rabbi Halpern looked upon the kosher kitchens as one of his proudest achievements and he served until the end of his life as the *mashgiach*, or supervisor who makes certain all the laws of *kashrut* are observed.[135]

In other communitywide enterprises as well, B'nai Amoona members provided leadership and support. Mrs. Fannie (Abraham) Shank almost single-handedly was responsible for the establishment of the Jewish Orphans Home in 1919. Until then St. Louis Jewish children without homes were sent to Cleveland where they were brought up in an orphanage run by the reform community. This arrangement was unacceptable to observant Jews.[136]

Rabbi Halpern spoke vigorously in favor of a union of traditionally oriented congregations, which led to the founding in 1924 of the Vaad Hoier. In fact, the initial meeting that gave rise to the organization was held at B'nai Amoona.[137] The rabbi was equally concerned about joining forces with reform leaders to bring all orthodox and reform charitable institutions under one authority. This was a very difficult goal to achieve in a period when the barriers between German and Eastern European, reform and observant Jews were still seemingly insurmountable. Rabbi Halpern worked closely with David Sommers, president of Temple Israel who became a member of B'nai Amoona as well, to form in 1926, a united Jewish Federation of Charities,[138] which is still serving the St. Louis Jewish community.

"Palestine was always endeared in the hearts of B'nai Amoona. Zionism in St. Louis at its very inception and to this day, found amongst its leaders the men and women of the congregation." St.

Louis was one of the first cities in America to respond to Zionism's call by forming local chapters. Around the turn of the century the city's most prominent Zionist was B'nai Amoona member, Simon Goldman, who founded a colony called "Poriah" in Palestine near Lake Kinneret, which was forced to disband a short time later because of the outbreak of World War I. In 1937, Rabbi Halpern and Prof. Gustave Klausner were among the delegates to the World Zionist Congress in Zurich, Switzerland. From there the rabbi traveled to Poland and Palestine and upon his return he spoke to a number of gatherings. He reported both on the pathetic condition of the Jewish community in Poland and the promising achievements of Jews in the Holy Land. Other B'nai Amoona members actively involved in Zionism were Rabbi and Mrs. Adolph Rosentreter, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Golland, Gustave Cytron and Samuel Kranzberg.[139]

In March 1932, B'nai Amoona celebrated its 50th Jubilee. At Friday night services reform and conservative rabbis joined in congratulating the congregation on its long and noteworthy history. The following morning a special service, which included the ceremony of *hakafot*, or circling the sanctuary with the Torah scrolls, was held. To symbolize the transmission of Jewish law from generation to generation, the Torah scrolls were taken from the ark by the parents and returned by the children. The weekend culminated with a banquet at which Dr. Abram Sachar, a member of a B'nai Amoona family, was the featured speaker. Dr. Sachar, who at the time was a professor at the University of Illinois, spoke on "The Jew in the Modern World."[140]

In passing the half century mark, B'nai Amoona members could take pride in a history of achievement and from this draw the strength to forge ahead. Tragedy was lurking in Europe, the Depression was depriving many people of the necessities of life and for B'nai Amoona the 1930s was a period of decline. Yet the congregation was right to look forward optimistically to a bright future.

Children



Victor Sessler, 1911.



Dr. Manuel J. Snitzer, 1922.



Joseph Freedman, 1963.



Bonnie Korenblat, 1978.



Rabbi Halpern with Jerry Kraus, 1952.



Hazzan Gowseiow with Norton Beilenson, 1950.



Rabbi Lipnick and Hazzan Lissek with Nancee Siegel, 1978.



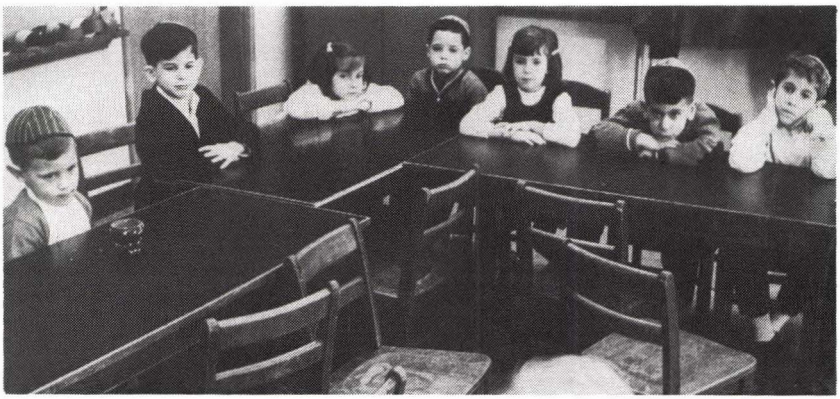
Rabbi Halpern leading Tallis and Tefillin service, 1961.



Rabbi Arnold Asher leading young boys in prayer, ca. 1965.



Rabbi Sheldon Switkin, Hazzan Lissek and Rabbi Lipnick with young Torah readers, 1973. (l. to r.) Michael Izsak, Irl Grodsky, Neil Perlmutter, Gary Chervitz, Nesher Asner, Scott Simon, Michael Weiss and Jeff Roth.



Religious School Kindergarten class, 1965.



Religious School Daled class, 1961. Seated in back is Religious School Supervisor Jules Biegelsen.



Religious School Tet class, 1965. On the left is teacher Melvin Cooperman.



B'nai Amoona preschool class, 1975–76 with teachers (l. to r.) Vicki Schulman, Marilyn Minoff and Nancy Richard (Director).



Celebrating Passover, 1971. (l. to r.) Nancee Siegel, Brad Friedman and Michael Lander.



B'nai Amoona preschoolers celebrating Purim, 1980. (l. to r.) Kimberlie Glassman, Tammy Glassman, Allison Iken, Elizabeth Goldenhersh and Kimberly Midows.



Rabbis Asher and Lipnick and Dr. Isadore Fish of the Board of Jewish Education giving out awards, ca. 1965. (l. to r.) Richard Mellman, Sheila Schultz and Donnie Stuhlman.



Rabbis Asher and Lipnick with Boy Scouts receiving the Ner Tamid award, 1965. (l. to r.) Gary Bourd, Alan Marks, Bob Susman and Paul Chod.



Clarinet section of B'nai Amoona children's orchestra, 1961. (l. to r.) Susan Matlof, Sheila Krawll, Sherri Danzig, Steve Koslov, Donnie Stuhlman and Joe Freedman.



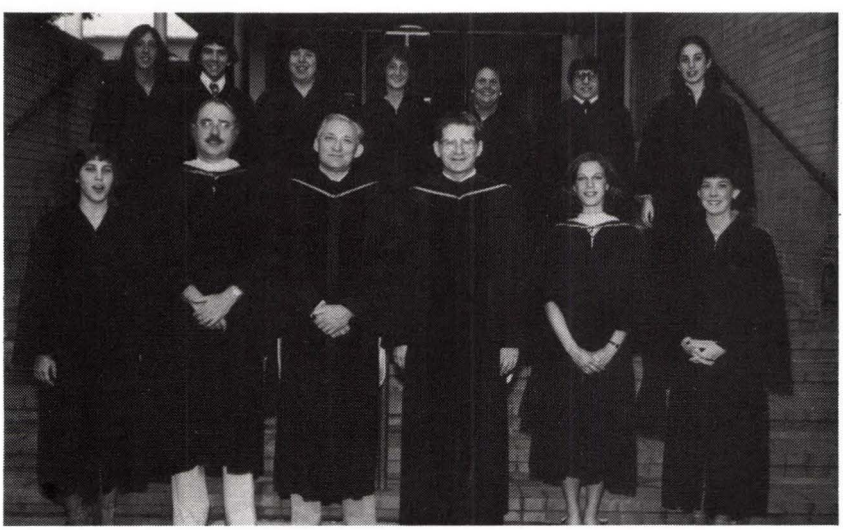
Men's Club Father's and Children's Dinner and Amateur Night, 1961.



United Synagogue Youth conclave, 1980.



Editorial Staff of *The Scroll*, 1928. Front row: (l. to r.) Evelyn Binder, Isabel Lazarus, Rosalie Bierman, Leah Palans and Ruth Bierman. Back row: Maurice Kranzberg, Jeanette Hertzman, Meyer Kranzberg and Sol Bilinshy.



Graduates B'nai Amoona Religious School, 1979. Front row: (l. to r.) Marjorie Chorlins, Executive Director Marvin Walts, Rabbi Lipnick, Rabbi Jack Riemer, Educational Supervisor Maxine Stein and Sharon Fivel. Back row: Renita Kornblum, Samuel Crall, Jodie Rich, Karen Shechter, Kayla Soule, Marc Kurtz and Lynnsie Balk.



Rabbis Halpern and Lipnick with the graduates of B'nai Amoona Sunday School, 1958. In the second row is Dr. David Reiss, Director of the College of Jewish Studies.



Tzion class embarks for Nir Galim, 1980. Front row: (l. to r.) Brad Kerman, Eric Kraus, Bennett Sandler, David Lanson and Betsy Brown. Back row: Aaron March (leader), Maxine Goldman (leader), Steve Elfenbaum, Randi Fiman, Michael Simon, Steve Young, Carolyn Hyman, Cindy Enger, Allison Katz, Amy Talonn, Susie Halpern and Nancee Siegel.

Chapter Four

Realizing A Dream

Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 25:8

WHEN B'NAI AMOONA PURCHASED the site for a new synagogue at Academy and Vernon Avenues, all agreed that it was an ideal location. Most of the members still lived to the east and points farther west were viewed as the countryside. As the Jewish population moved westward, they were expected to settle in the vicinity of B'nai Amoona. For once the congregation was ahead of the westward migration and its leaders confidently looked forward to a promising future.[1]

However logical these calculations were, they unfortunately proved wrong. In 1924, just five years after B'nai Amoona was dedicated, Rabbi Halpern was already bemoaning the fact that 80 percent to 90 percent of the members were living at Skinker Boulevard or points farther west. Even if this figure was an exaggeration, the trend did not look auspicious for the congregation's future. The Jewish population was bypassing the area in large numbers to settle near DeBaliviere Avenue and Skinker Boulevard and in University City.[2]

As early as 1922, one year after the Talmud Torah was built, Isadore Mathes proposed that B'nai Amoona look for a new site close to Skinker and Delmar.[3] The congregation, however, had neither the will nor the finances to undertake another major building program so soon after completing the Academy and Vernon synagogue. In fact, when it was decided in 1924–25 that the new building was too small to accommodate a growing

membership, the congregation further committed itself to the Academy and Vernon location by enlarging the sanctuary.

Rabbi Halpern, however, continued to dream of moving the synagogue westward. During visits to the Samuel Bierman family in the late 1920s, the rabbi frequently voiced the opinion that if B'nai Amoona was to maintain its position in the community, it must move west with the Jewish population. For a time the rabbi even had his eye on the lot in University City, upon which Shaare Emeth subsequently built its temple in 1932.[4]

The area surrounding B'nai Amoona—bounded by Kingshighway on the east, Union on the west, Page on the north and Delmar on the south—was for a time a Jewish neighborhood. Many Jewish families lived there and Jews established small businesses in the vicinity. A major Jewish institution, the Y.M.H.A., opened its new building on Union Boulevard in 1927. At nearby Soldan High School, Jewish students enrolled in sufficiently large numbers to warrant offering a full program of Hebrew classes, taught first by Dr. David Reiss and later by Jules Biegelsen.[5]

Nevertheless, Jews lived in this section of the city in large numbers for only about fifteen years (ca. 1920–35). Even at their peak, Jews did not predominate in what was a mixed, white working and lower-middle class neighborhood. Miriam Sandmel Freedman recalled being afraid as she walked to school because children from other ethnic groups would threaten her. The fearsome Gallagher gang would sometimes accost B'nai Amoona pupils on their way to Hebrew school. Abe Garland can still visualize Shamas Katz rushing out, broomstick in hand, to chase the attackers off.[6]

Most shops catering to a Jewish clientele were found on Page, where they were accessible to a larger Jewish population. Jewish settlement was concentrated more heavily east of B'nai Amoona near Shaare Zedek at Page and West End Avenues and to the north between Page and Easton Avenues (Martin Luther King Boulevard), which was a poorer neighborhood than the one in which B'nai Amoona was situated.[7] When the Jewish population shifted from the city's West End, Jews tended to move around and past the neighborhood of B'nai Amoona.

In the end, B'nai Amoona delayed too long before making its move. When the Depression hit, all the board could hope to do

was maintain the congregation on a drastically reduced budget. The prospect of erecting, or even purchasing, a new building was out of the question. Consequently, the congregation had to contend with a shrinking membership. Some people left because of financial difficulties, but most just moved out of the neighborhood. By the end of the 1930s, very few Jewish families were left in the area.[8]

This loss of population was reflected in declining Hebrew school enrollments. To cope with the problem, the congregation in 1934 tried offering a bus service to bring the children from distant parts of the city and county to Academy and Vernon. But the idea was dropped due to lack of response. Some parents who continued to affiliate with B'nai Amoona chose to send their children to Sunday school at a more conveniently located reform temple and to hire private tutors to prepare boys for Bar Mitzvah.[9]

At the annual meeting in October 1936, Congregation B'nai Amoona resolved to purchase a site on which to build a new synagogue.[10] Despite this initial step, several years passed without B'nai Amoona coming any closer to realizing its goal. Whether this delay was due to a lack of funds or the inability to find a satisfactory location is unknown. The result, however, was that by the time the congregation was ready to act, World War II had intervened and prevented any new construction. Consequently, in March 1942, B'nai Amoona purchased the Xenia United Presbyterian Seminary on the corner of Washington and Trinity in University City.[11] For the time being the congregation had to make do with renovating the existing facilities, which were bought for $30,000.

The Xenia United Presbyterian Seminary consisted of two three-story buildings, both facing Washington Avenue. The larger one to the west, which had been the seminary, was to be razed. The congregation planned to erect in its place a new sanctuary as soon as the war was over. The building to the east was to be used indefinitely for the religious school.[12] The first floor was altered to provide classroom and office space and the rabbi was well-pleased with the results. "Nothing short of a miracle was performed in transforming the East building at Trinity and Washington into the beautiful edifice that it now is. It is everything that a school building should be. . . ."[13] The second floor

of the same building was refurbished to serve as a temporary *shul*, and the third floor, where there was a small auditorium, was used for meetings and social functions. The whole undertaking cost considerably more than the congregation had anticipated.[14]

In the fall of 1942, Shabbat services, the daily *minyan* and club meetings were scheduled at the new building and by March of the following year the old synagogue was closed.[15] In 1944, B'nai Amoona sold the Academy and Vernon building for $32,500 to the newly opened Rabbi Hayyim Fischel Epstein Hebrew Academy. Since B'nai Amoona's accommodations in University City were too small for the congregation during the High Holidays, an agreement was concluded whereby B'nai Amoona was entitled to lease for a nominal fee its old synagogue these three days a year. The arrangement remained in effect through 1948.[16]

While B'nai Amoona awaited the time when new construction could begin, Rabbi Halpern took advantage of every possible occasion to remind members of their responsibility and to solicit funds. "St. Louis *must* have at least one large conservative synagogue,"[17] he asserted. Since B'nai Amoona was the only conservative congregation in the city at the time, it was up to its members to ensure the future of Conservative Judaism by erecting a new synagogue.

When the war ended in 1945, B'nai Amoona could move ahead. The first important decision to be made was where the new synagogue would be built. The congregation already owned the site at Washington and Trinity, but many argued that the lot there was too small, since it offered room neither for expansion nor parking. B'nai Amoona had the option to buy a large plot of undeveloped land on the south side of Delmar between Old Bonhomme and McKnight Roads, where an apartment complex now stands. Ted Fischer recalled Frank Dubinsky arguing forcefully that if the congregation built on this spot, the location would be good for 50 years.[18] But those preferring to remain at Washington and Trinity prevailed.

There were financial considerations to take into account. Some were reluctant to spend another $90,000 for land at a time when the congregation was being called upon to raise an estimated $350,000 for the new building. Also since the Delmar site was a

landfill, construction costs would run considerably higher.[19] It would be much less expensive to build the sanctuary on the lot at Washington and Trinity. In addition, the initial hope was to realize a return on the investment made in the east building by incorporating it as a permanent part of the final structure. In fact, throughout 1944 and 1945, an architect's sketch for the new synagogue, which appeared in the *B'nai Amoona Bulletin*, demonstrated such a design.

In the end, however, Jewish law probably weighed more heavily than monetary concerns. Observant Jews are required to walk to the synagogue on Shabbat and the holidays.[20] How then could a synagogue be built at such a distance from the members' homes that they would be forced to ride in order to attend services? Rabbi Halpern was fully aware that many members already rode to *shul*. It is one thing, however, to tolerate an unfortunate situation and quite another to create it. If most members were even to have the option of walking to the synagogue, B'nai Amoona had to remain where it was.

In 1945, the congregation took the momentous step of engaging Eric Mendelsohn as architect for a new synagogue.[21] An artist of international renown, Mendelsohn was born in Allenstein, Germany, in 1887. He studied economics at the University of Münich and architecture at professional schools in Berlin and Münich. Mendelsohn was deeply influenced by the Expressionist movement in German architecture, art and film, which flourished during the first two decades of this century.

With the advent of Hitler in 1933, Mendelsohn left Germany and lived for periods in Belguim, England and Palestine. His years in the Mideast (1934–39) were particularly fruitful. During this period he designed the Hadassah University Medical Center on Mount Scopus, part of the Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture in Rehovot and the Government Hospital in Haifa, as well as a number of private dwellings and commercial buildings. After the outbreak of World War II, he immigrated to the United States (1941).

There followed a hiatus in Mendelsohn's career during which he lectured and organized exhibitions of his work. The commission from B'nai Amoona in 1945 offered a new beginning in more than one sense of the term. Not only was this to be Mendelsohn's

first building in the United States, but also his first synagogue. Over the years Mendelsohn had applied his innovative concepts to commercial, industrial, residential buildings and hospitals, but he had never attempted a religious structure. In designing B'nai Amoona, Mendelsohn presented his vision of a synagogue and in the process created for the first time in the United States a modern styled synagogue.[22]

The architectural styles previously employed in the construction of synagogues were borrowed from Romanesque, Byzantine, Classical, Moorish and Gothic modes, all of which had evolved in other times and places, among other peoples. Since no Jewish style of architecture existed, tradition in synagogue architecture was merely that which was familiar. When someone in the congregation objected to Mendelsohn's design for B'nai Amoona, saying it looked like a supermarket, Mendelsohn queried, "What is a synagogue supposed to look like?"[23] The only requirements are that the congregation must face east and that the ark containing the Torah scrolls be the focal point. But there being no prescribed style, Mendelsohn felt free to design a synagogue in keeping with the modern world. The architect believed that those who rejected a contemporary style for a synagogue were in effect saying that religion was no longer relevant to society.[24]

More than anyone else, Sam Ferer was responsible for the new B'nai Amoona. It was he who chose Eric Mendelsohn as the architect and persuaded the congregation to accept Mendelsohn's innovative design. Along with Barney Spitzer and Rabbi Halpern, Ferer raised the very substantial funds required for the undertaking. Having determined to see the synagogue built, Ferer simply refused to give up until the goal was realized. He overrode all opposition, donated a great deal of his own money and persuaded others to do the same. In recognition of his extraordinary efforts, the congregation named the auditorium Ferer Hall.[25] To honor the Sisterhood for its tremendous contributions, Bertha Golland, a longtime president of the organization, was memorialized in this same room.[26] In gratitude to Barney Spitzer, who served as president of B'nai Amoona throughout this period and played a singular role in bringing the project to fruition, the congregation dedicated the chapel to the memory of his parents, Morris and Lottie Spitzer.[27]

The building of the new B'nai Amoona synagogue did not progress smoothly. Originally, the congregation envisioned spending $350,000 on the project and when about half that amount was in hand, Mendelsohn was commissioned to draw up the plans. Basing his figures on building prices at the time, the architect submitted a cost estimate in February 1946 of $380,400. However, when the congregation solicited contractor's bids in December of that same year, it was stunned by the returns. The figures showed that it would cost $715,600 to build the synagogue, more than twice what the congregation had intended to spend. The congregation had the choice of either raising substantially more money or else waiting for the building market to become more favorable. But the hope that building costs would soon decline proved illusionary. The country was in the midst of a postwar economic boom and everyone contemplating new construction had to contend with skyrocketing prices.

As the situation stood, B'nai Amoona was without a real home. The refurbished building at Washington and Trinity, which was never meant to serve as the permanent synagogue, was wholly inadequate for its needs. If B'nai Amoona was to have a future it had to build a new synagogue. Consequently the congregation had no alternative but to find the additional funds.

In February 1948, the board voted to proceed with a restricted version of the original plan. Under the new conception the north wing, which included most of the schoolrooms, was left out. The loss was a serious one because the synagogue designed by Mendelsohn necessitated demolition of the old east building, which the congregation had hoped to continue using as a school. This meant the children would be crowded into the remaining classroom space scheduled for the new facility.[29]

The board placed a ceiling of $550,000 on building expenditures. To achieve this end, other features were also cut. The separating wall between the auditorium and the sanctuary, which in the original plan was to slide down into the floor, was replaced by one which had to be folded manually. The air conditioning system had to be changed and hardwood floors were eliminated. A conference room was also left out and the walls in front of the *bema* remained bare.[30]

Despite the compromises, it was a thrilling day on September

19, 1948, when ground was broken for the B'nai Amoona synagogue. The large crowd in attendance included members and guests, children from the school and the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops. Participating in the program were Rabbi Halpern, the newly appointed assistant rabbi, Simcha Kling; a past president, Isadore Mathes; all the current officers, headed by President Barney Spitzer; the *Klei Kodesh*; Bernard Bloom, the supervising architect; and representatives from the University City government. The honor of turning the first shovelful of earth went to Sam Werber and a number of others followed after him. In his closing remarks, Rabbi Halpern "thanked God that the B'nai Amoona was finally to have a Synagogue that would add the 'holiness of beauty' to our concept of the 'beauty of holiness' through Traditional Judaism."[31]

In the fall of 1949, the congregation, for the first time in seven years, was not split up during the High Holidays. Before that the main services had been at Academy and Vernon with auxiliary services in University City. Although the building was not yet completed, the B'nai Amoona congregants gathered together on *erev* Rosh Hashana (September 23) to worship in their new sanctuary. It was necessary to rent folding chairs for the occasion and to borrow a closet from Goldenberg Furniture Co. to serve as an ark. Despite some discomfort, Shamas Katz reported that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur that year were among the happiest ever experienced by the congregation. This judgment is confirmed by a letter one of the members wrote to Rabbi Halpern. "To once again sit with the many, many people one has always associated with the B'nai Amoona—to see our beloved Rabbi seated as on a throne gratefully rejoicing with his congregation over the wondrous progress and the many obstacles overcome in building this beautiful Edifice, is beyond words."[32]

The dedication of the B'nai Amoona synagogue took place the weekend of September 1, 2, and 3, 1950. The celebration was inaugurated that Friday night by a special service, which featured a procession with the Torah scrolls. Before being returned to the ark, the scrolls were passed from members of the older generation to representatives of the younger one. All the reform rabbis and those observant rabbis who lived within walking distance participated in the program. Hazzan Gowseiow and the choir

chanted the prayers. Rabbi Halpern gave the dedicatory address and Rabbi Kling closed with the benediction.

Shabbat services the next morning were conducted by the young people of the congregation. There was another procession with the Torah scrolls. This time the class of 1951 received the scrolls from the graduating class of 1950. Kenneth Kranzberg, son of future president, Meyer Kranzberg, had the special honor of becoming a Bar Mitzvah on this day. Two girls, Sondra Sandler and Dee Radman, took part in the service.

At the culminating event on Sunday, Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was the guest speaker. The long list of notables conveying their good wishes included: Eric Mendelsohn; Rabbi Samuel Klibansky, senior orthodox rabbi in St. Louis; the Very Rev. Father Paul Reinert, president of St. Louis University; Dr. Arthur Compton, chancellor of Washington University; several ministers from neighboring Protestant churches; and representatives from the University City government. B'nai Amoona's auxiliaries were represented by Max Jackoway who spoke for the Men's Club and Mrs. Rose (Irwin) Wolff, for the Sisterhood. When later asked the most interesting experience she encountered during her tenure as president of the Sisterhood, Mrs. Wolff replied, "Being the only woman on the dais when all the Rabbis and civic leaders were there to dedicate the new Synagogue."[33]

The synagogue, which B'nai Amoona had struggled so hard to build, received great acclaim. Numerous articles and lectures applauded Mendelsohn for his achievement and congratulated the congregation for having the courage to give the architect a free hand. In his design of B'nai Amoona, Mendelsohn created a synagogue, at once simple yet dramatic in appearance, which pioneered a new era in the architecture of religious buildings.

Dominating the scene is a parabolic roof arching over the sanctuary and projecting sharply beyond the western wall. The dynamic feeling this conveys is heightened as one enters the sanctuary, which is the focal point of the building. Daylight streams through the clerestory set in the western wall and also enters by way of a monitor running down the center of the arched shell overhead. The effect is to focus all attention on Mendelsohn's striking bronze and aluminum ark, set in a recess at the base of

the monitor. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, the present spiritual leader of the congregation, has aptly described the impression this makes. "The entire ceiling sweeps down to the Ark—or, more correctly, the Ark sweeps up into the ceiling and hangs suspended over every seat."[34]

The primary challenge facing the architect was achieving the most effective use of space on a very small lot, measuring only 200 feet by 180 feet. Since on the High Holidays the congregation required two to three times the seating capacity necessary for Sabbath services, Mendelsohn's adroit solution was to link the sanctuary with the assembly hall by means of a moveable wall. This same principle was applied to the wall separating the sanctuary from the chapel. The end result was that when the barriers were pushed back, 1,600 people could be accommodated rather than the usual 674.

The architect was fully aware that a modern synogogue fulfills multiple functions. In addition to a place of worship, provision had to be made for classrooms, offices, recreation facilities, kitchens and storage areas—all within the severely restricted physical limits of the plot. Mendelsohn confronted the problem by designing a building in the form of a hollow square set around a landscaped courtyard. This made for efficient use of the land, while providing attractive accommodations for the varied activities. In addition, the building and courtyard helped to buffer street noises from the sanctuary, which was located in the innermost corner of the lot to ensure quiet and repose during worship.[35]

Almost immediately after B'nai Amoona held the first services in 1949, a campaign was launched to raise the additional funds needed to complete the educational wing. Construction of this section of the building began in early 1950 and was completed by the end of the year. Nonetheless, the congregation quickly found itself in need of more space. In 1954, President Meyer Kranzberg told the congregation that it "must try to do something about expanding our facilities so that we can better serve St. Louis Jewry and Conservative Judaism."[36]

In 1956, the decision was reached to provide much needed space by expanding into the interior courtyard. The new construction, which was completed by September 1957, gave B'nai

Amoona five additional classrooms, considerably more office space, an enlarged lobby and a large storage area in the basement.[37] In 1965, the congregation demolished two adjacent apartment buildings on Washington Avenue, which had been purchased some years previously, in order to build a parking lot.[38] With this, the synagogue at Washington and Trinity was at last completed.

Perhaps the person best able to describe the significance of the B'nai Amoona synagogue is the man who designed it. For the dedication ceremony Eric Mendelsohn wrote these words:

> The inauguration of your new Synagogue, which I had the good fortune to design, is an important event in the memorable history of your Congregation. For your Congregation was the first in our country willing to accept a design for its Synagogue which does not try to imitate the past.
>
> And, though at first glance, your new House of Worship might appear to be a decisive break with our people's ancient traditions, a careful study will convince even the most reluctant that this tradition has been maintained in all its principles.
>
> But, as much as the fabric of our life changes with every technical invention, so our man-made forms change with every new concept. This is especially true in our time when the impact of new physical forces subject our human behavior to profound changes, make us the witnesses of the beginning of a new age of man.
>
> One small expression of this new era is your Synagogue. Its daring construction is proud—as the monumental buildings of all early historical periods were—to show its structural method as its formative principle.
>
> The flexible plan of your building, the dynamic force of the Temple proper, the festive atmosphere of its Assembly, the honest design of its Offices and Classrooms—every part is determined by its use, everything according to its kind.
>
> And, finally, the building as a whole integrates all parts into an architectural organism from which no part can be taken away without destroying the whole—the proof of every artistic achievement.[39]

Having built its new synagogue, the congregation's major financial concern was to find the funds to pay for this gigantic undertaking. The original building, together with the educational

wing added in 1950, cost about $800,000. The figure given for the new construction in 1956–57 was $130,000.[40] Adding the cost of the land, the improvements made on the later demolished east building, the purchase price of the two adjacent apartment buildings, the parking lot, and expenditures for minor remodeling, the entire enterprise cost close to $1.2 million.

The single largest source of funds used to defray the debt was donations. While the bulk of such funds came from a handful of large givers, all members of the congregation were pressed to contribute their fair share. "*EVERY* member will have to donate a considerable sum if we are to have a Synagogue and School to accommodate you and your children. The burden may not be left to the Few. It must be carried by *ALL*."[41]

For years the members were pressed to respond voluntarily to frequent appeals for more funds. In 1952, however, a step was taken to ensure that every family gave a minimum donation. From that date, all those applying for new membership were required to pledge at least $100 to the building fund, payable over three years.[42] The assumption was that previous members had already given that much and more.

A consistently large donor to the building fund was the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, which began raising funds for this purpose as early as 1938. Throughout the years the women's organization contributed tens of thousands of dollars. Just during the period when Rose Wolff served as president (1946–52), the Sisterhood turned over $70,000 to the congregation. In the years that followed, the women's group continued to contribute regularly and on the same scale. Some of these funds were donated in honor of Bertha Golland and Fannie Hertzman, longtime and devoted members of the Sisterhood.[43]

In order to pay off its multiple mortgages on the synagogue and educational wing, the additional construction undertaken in 1956–57, and the apartment buildings at 6818 and 6826 Washington Avenue,[44] the congregation introduced new devices to raise money. One scheme that failed was the "sale" of various segments of the building to large donors. For $25,000 a person could have his name, or that of his parents, inscribed on the ark; for $5,000, on a window of the clerestory or on a school room; or for $1,000 on a Torah crown or breastplate. The entire project

was scrapped due to lack of interest on the part of the members.[45]

The most successful innovation for raising substantial sums was the sale of permanent seats in the sanctuary. The proposal was first made in 1950 and the response was tremendous. Within four years only 45 seats remained unsold. In 1954, it was ruled that permanent seats would no longer be sold to those who had joined the congregation after January 1 of that year and a short time later the sale of permanent seats virtually ceased for a number of years.[46]

Selling the sanctuary seats proved to be a mixed blessing. While financially the sales brought in funds that helped considerably in reducing the congregation's indebtedness, there were undesirable side effects. The 1954 ruling regarding who was permitted to purchase permanent seats made an unfortunate distinction between members of the congregation. A more serious difficulty, however, arose when people inherited the seats from their original owners. The only regulation regarding inheritance was that the beneficiary had to be a member of the congregation or become affiliated within three months. But no limit was set on the number of seats a person could inherit so long as a maintenance fee of $30 per year was paid for each seat not covered by dues, which provided two seats per family membership.

The problems created by someone owning several seats become apparent during the High Holidays when the synagogue is crowded with worshippers. Every dues-paying member is entitled to a seat, but for those who are not seat owners, this usually means a place in the auditorium, the chapel or downstairs at the auxiliary service. Since an owner may claim his seat regardless of what time he arrives, the seats in the main sanctuary are often left empty while those already present are required to sit in less desirable areas or else an early arrival is ejected from a seat when the owner appears. People owning seats sometimes invite nonmembers to use them, leaving regular members to find places wherever they can. The situation causes resentment.[47]

Although various methods were introduced to pay off the building debt, the congregation's main source of income continued, as before, to be dues. Dues were supposed to cover operating expenses, which included interest on the mortgages. In fact, very often the revenue fell short of expenditures. In 1958,

outgoing president, Harry Lander, indicated that only 85 percent of the budget was covered by dues. "The balance is scrounged for, begged for, and pinched for,"[48] he observed.

In 1946, the average member family paid $60 per year in dues, although some paid more or less according to their circumstances. By 1948, the average family was paying $75, and in 1950, it was ruled that couples with children eligible to attend religious school should pay $100 per year.[49] While the distinction between those with and without children of school age was later dropped, the annual dues rose steadily over the years. In 1959, for instance, there was an across-the-board increase of 25 percent. Even so, the congregation still faced a budgetary deficit.[50]

Distinctions in the assessment of dues were made, however, for two types of members. In 1953, B'nai Amoona, concerned about attracting younger people into the congregation, created an associate membership for those under 30 who did not have children old enough for religious school. This membership was offered to single persons at $25 per year and to couples, at $40 and the building fund pledge was waived. Upon reaching age 30 or enrolling a child in school, an associate member was expected to assume regular membership and pay the same dues as applied to the rest of the congregation.[51]

The other members treated differently with regard to dues were those who could afford to pay more than the minimum. In particular, the officers hoped to offset the loss of funds that resulted from offering low-priced membership to young people by increasing the yearly assessment of the well to do. While the more affluent had always been urged to pay more than was required, in 1960 and 1961, Presidents Nelson Gould and William Rosenbaum began to prevail personally upon selected members to increase their annual payments.[52]

Of course, income from dues depended not only on the sum paid by each member, but also upon the size of the congregation. While B'nai Amoona remained at Academy and Vernon, it suffered from a shrinking, aging membership. In 1937, Frank Dubinsky, then chairman of the Building Committee, was quoted by the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* as saying B'nai Amoona had 350 members,[53] which was probably an overstatment. The real figure was no doubt closer to 300. Rabbi Halpern, who

noted the passing of older members, strongly urged members to bring their sons and daughters into the congregation. ". . . we need added strength if the B'nai Amoona is to continue as a stronghold for Traditional Judaism in St. Louis. We cannot be satisfied to mark time. We must extend our influence in the community through a larger membership and *you* must help in this important step."[54]

The shift to University City in 1942 had an immediate and salutary effect upon the membership rolls. Since B'nai Amoona was the first traditional congregation to establish itself in St. Louis County, many who had been uncomfortable in a reform temple affiliated with B'nai Amoona, despite its temporary facilities. As a result, at the annual meeting in 1943, President Isadore Mathes reported that the congregation numbered over 500 members. A year later Rabbi Halpern indicated that more than 230 families had joined B'nai Amoona since the move to Washington and Trinity.[55]

The opening of the new synagogue brought a flood of new applications from those attracted by the combination of modern architecture, traditional services and a congregation of "go-getting, upwardly mobile individuals," which was how B'nai Amoona was perceived.[56] In his last annual address in 1955, President Meyer Kranzberg pointed out that when he took office in 1951, the congregation had 784 members and four years later the congregation number 956. Although the rate of growth in time slowed down, partly due to overcrowding, new members continued to seek affiliation with B'nai Amoona. By 1960, there were 1,064 names on the membership list and in the last sermon he wrote in March 1962, Rabbi Halpern stated, "Today we can boast of an outstanding new synagogue with a membership of over eleven hundred families."[57]

As early as 1954, when membership was a little over 900, there was talk of closing the rolls, but this idea was rejected.[58] The arguments pro and con are not cited in the Minutes, but at least one reason why the congregation could not close off membership is obvious. However big B'nai Amoona might have become, its future depended upon drawing young families into the congregation. In 1960, President Gould warned, "If you will look around you now, you will find very very few young members in their

early twenties, middle twenties, and even late twenties. So when you consider that this is the type of member which we need to build the future of B'nai Amoona, you can readily realize that it is very important that some means be found to get these younger members into our Congregation." Gould recommended that 75 to 100 new members in this age category be brought in each year and that a particular effort be made to enroll the sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of members.[59]

With the steady increase in membership, Rabbi Halpern found that he could no longer handle by himself all the responsibilities of his office. He particularly needed help in administering the religious school. During the last years at Academy and Vernon the school had seriously declined. But with the new synagogue and the growth in membership, more and more members' children were enrolling in the Hebrew and Sunday school classes. The congregation needed someone to take charge of this expansion, reorganize the school and improve the quality of education.

In 1947, the Board of Trustees voted to look for an educational director and the following year the board found its candidate in Rabbi Simcha Kling. Rabbi Kling received his undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati and a master's degree in education from Columbia University in New York. He studied for two years at the Hebrew University in Palestine and on June 6, 1948, was ordained rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The young rabbi arrived in August 1948 with his wife, Edith. She was a graduate of the Teachers Institute and joined the faculty of the B'nai Amoona Religious School.[60]

Although Rabbi Kling bore the double title of assistant rabbi and educational director, his primary duties were with the school. He only functioned as a rabbi on a stand-in basis. Shortly after his arrival, Rabbi Kling was called upon to lead the auxiliary High Holiday services at Washington and Trinity, while Rabbi Halpern officiated at the main services, held for the last time at the old Academy and Vernon synagogue. In subsequent years when the congregation was once more united under one roof, Rabbi Kling was in charge of the High Holiday services for young adults.[61]

When Rabbi Kling arrived in 1948, there were about 125 children attending Hebrew school and 400 in the Sunday school.

Although some growth took place during his three years as educational director, Kling's major concern was to provide order and supervision to a school that had been lacking in both for some years. It was a major feat just to keep the school functioning under very trying physical conditions. During the first year classes were held in the old east building while construction was going on just outside the windows. By the next year the old buildng had been torn down so that the Hebrew school was now located at neighboring Shaare Emeth, while the Sunday school was at the Y.M.H.A. on Union Boulevard. The following year the school children were temporarily crammed into the inadequate space available in the new synagogue until the educational wing was at last completed in late 1950.[62]

Despite these difficulties, Rabbi Kling undertook to introduce a sequence of study and he went out of his way to find better class materials. He supervised teachers, provided some teacher training and for the first time at B'nai Amoona called teachers meetings. He called for a fixed budget for the school to facilitate planning and programming. He recommended that class size be cut and more teachers hired. At the time the rabbi took over there were no girls enrolled in Hebrew school; so he instituted special classes for girls. Rabbi Kling also organized a class for post-Bar Mitzvah boys and established a Junior Congregation. The rabbi organized the first United Synagogue Youth (U.S.Y.) group and Leadership Training Fellowship program and he introduced Camp Ramah to the congregation. Under his influence the first few children from B'nai Amoona attended this Hebrew-language summer camp, with scholarship subsidies from the Men's Club.[63]

In August 1951, Rabbi Kling tendered his resignation, effective as of September 1. While Jewish education was a primary interest, he wanted to become more actively involved in rabbinical duties than was permitted at B'nai Amoona. Therefore, when he was offered the pulpit of Congregation Beth David in Greensboro, North Carolina, Rabbi Kling accepted the position. Today the rabbi is the spiritual leader of Congregation Adath Jeshurun in Louisville, Kentucky.[64]

In his letter of resignation, Rabbi Kling pointed out that since the religious school was scheduled to open on September 10, the

congregation had better act quickly to secure a replacement as educational director. Rabbi Halpern urgently requested his friend, Dr. Max Arzt, then vice chancellor at the Jewish Theological Seminary to find a suitable candidate. Dr. Artz's choice was a newly ordained rabbi, Bernard Lipnick, who had unexpectedly found himself at the end of the summer looking for a job. Rabbi Lipnick had just learned that he would not be able to realize his hope of becoming a military chaplain.

Ever since boyhood, Bernard Lipnick had wanted to join the Navy. However, this desire conflicted with an equally strong commitment to train as a Jewish educator. Although he vacillated between the two, in the end he always opted for Jewish education. Having graduated from the Seminary, Lipnick looked forward to fulfilling both dreams by becoming a military chaplain. He tried very hard to be accepted, first by the Navy and then by the Army, but was thwarted by an excessively high blood pressure reading.[65]

Returning to New York from Camp Ramah in Wisconsin where he had spent the summer serving as head counselor, the young rabbi was summoned by Dr. Arzt, who told him, "I want you to go to St. Louis to be Abe Halpern's assistant." When Lipnick objected, saying he did not want to be anyone's assistant, he wanted to be an educator, Arzt countered with, "Go as an educational director, whatever you want, but go to St. Louis and talk about it."[66]

Lipnick came to St. Louis where he was interviewed by Rabbi Halpern, Barney Spitzer and Meyer Kranzberg. They offered him the job. Although reluctant to become a junior rabbi, Rabbi Lipnick was positively influenced by his experience at Camp Ramah. There he had formed a very positive impression of Midwestern youth. He had been particularly impressed by two B'nai Amoona girls, Estelle Goldberg and Libby Seltzer. If they were representative of the young people with whom he would be working, he thought, then B'nai Amoona might be a good place for him.[67]

To make certain that he would not be drawn from education into congregational duties, Lipnick refused the title of assistant rabbi and came to B'nai Amoona just as educational director.[68] This suited Rabbi Halpern who lacked both the experience and

personality to work comfortably with an assistant rabbi. When the discussion regarding Kling's replacement took place, Rabbi Halpern stated firmly that the congregation needed someone to work full-time in the school and that this person need not be a rabbi.[69] Since Lipnick had been ordained, this meant he was conveniently on hand to step in if required, but a clear demarcation of the respective spheres of the two rabbis would reduce the prospect of conflict.

Bernard Lipnick was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on April 29, 1926, the son of Thomas and Augusta Lipnick. He was educated in the Baltimore public schools and at Johns Hopkins University, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in 1947. Simultaneously, he pursued his religious education at the Baltimore Hebrew High School and College, from which he received two diplomas. He subsequently continued his Jewish studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary, from which he graduated as rabbi, teacher and preacher on June 3, 1951.

The two major influences on Bernard Lipnick were his older brother, Jerome, and Dr. Louis L. Kaplan. It was Jerome Lipnick's pursuit of Jewish education and the rabbinate that encouraged his younger brother to follow a similar path. Both young men studied at the Baltimore Hebrew High School and College, where they came under the aegis of Dr. Kaplan, the school's dynamic dean. Although himself not a rabbi, Kaplan's influence led quite a number of young men, including the Lipnick brothers, to train for the rabbinate.[71]

By the time negotiations between Rabbi Lipnick and B'nai Amoona were concluded, he had little time between his arrival and the assumptions of his duties. Arriving in St. Louis on a Friday afternoon, Rabbi Lipnick somehow had to pull things together before Sunday morning so that the school could open as scheduled. He had wired ahead asking that a faculty meeting be called for Saturday night. Long after the meeting ended, Rabbi Lipnick sat up trying to create a semblance of order. Despite innumerable difficulties, B'nai Amoona Religious School opened for classes on time and Rabbi Lipnick began his new career.[72]

In the *Bulletin* announcement that introduced Rabbi Lipnick to the congregation, his duties were identified as encompassing the school, adult study groups, youth groups, L.T.F. (Leader-

ship Training Fellowship), United Synagogue Youth group, married couples groups, scout troups, Junior Congregation, and so forth. This list might have made a lesser man hesitate, but Rabbi Lipnick saw it only as a foundation on which to build. The place to start was the religious school. "I was totally dedicated—totally dedicated to making this the best school in Jewish history that the world had ever seen, including Mars and Saturn. . . ."[74]

When Rabbi Lipnick took over B'nai Amoona Religious School in 1951, it already was a large operation with 441 children in Sunday school and 155 in Hebrew school. Under the rabbi's leadership the school grew steadily. In 1961, the last year he served as educational director, there were 681 in Sunday school and 340 in Hebrew school.[75] For a couple of years thereafter, the school continued to grow, largely due to the momentum that Rabbi Lipnick had begun.

Although numbers were not the only consideration, they were a source of concern. If the next generation was to be knowledgeable about its Jewish heritage, then it was necessary that the children attend religious school. On frequent occasions both rabbis prodded the parents to assume responsibility for their children's Jewish education. In a television sermon Rabbi Halpern argued that it was wrong for parents to let a child wait until he grew up to choose his own religious affiliation. By then, he said, it would be too late. And Rabbi Lipnick called attention to the "alarming number of parents . . . who show indifference to their children's Hebrew education."[76]

But parents weren't merely reminded of their responsibility; a Parents-Teachers Association stimulated interest in the school. A P.T.A. had been organized in 1949 by Rabbi Kling, but it met only once or twice a year.[77] Under Rabbi Lipnick's influence the P.T.A. became a much more vital group. In a booklet on the B'nai Amoona Religious School published for the year 1961–62, the Parents-Teachers Association was described as providing service to the school by operating a snack bar, selling school books, aiding in the formation of car pools, conducting a Hebrew school enrollment campaign, disseminating information on Jewish camps, sponsoring the annual Purim party, assisting in model *sedarim* and furnishing help to the school office. In addition, it

established closer contact between parents and teachers, offered suggestions on school policy and joined in the sponsorship of adult education programs.[78]

Perhaps the P.T.A.'s impact was most strongly felt in its efforts to boost the enrollment of girls in Hebrew school. In May 1952, at the suggestion of Rabbi Lipnick, the P.T.A. staged a mock trial in which the defendant, played by Meyer Kranzberg, was accused of failing to send his daughters to Hebrew school. Not surprisingly the arguments against the defendant proved so overwhelming that he changed his plea to guilty and threw himself on the mercy of the court. Judge Barney Spitzer suspended sentence but gave the defendant only until the following September to register his girls in Hebrew classes.[79]

While the evening was no doubt great fun for all concerned, even those "in the wrong," it did have a serious intent. The P.T.A. launched a concerted campaign to bring more girls into Hebrew school. A committee, composed entirely of women, personally contacted every mother whose daughter was not enrolled in Hebrew classes. As a result, the gap between the number of girls and boys in Hebrew school was greatly reduced. By 1961, there were 111 girls in the primary grades, 38 percent of the total enrollment of 294. A survey three years earlier had already shown that B'nai Amoona was above the national average in the number of girls attending Hebrew school.[80]

Once the children were in the school, the major concern became the quality of their education. Rabbi Lipnick was constantly examining and re-examining the curriculum to see that it provided a solid grounding in Hebrew and the sacred texts, while at the same time offering a stimulating course of study. He closely supervised the teachers to make certain they were prepared and had lesson plans. In 1958, he brought his former teacher, Dr. Louis Kaplan, to St. Louis to evaluate the B'nai Amoona Religious School and afterward carried out a number of Kaplan's recommendations. Lipnick introduced standardized testing so that it was possible to measure achievement. He utilized the latest methods, such as the oral-aural approach to language teaching. To encourage the children to enjoy their religious school experience, he instituted a regular program of group singing, dramat-

ics, arts and crafts, and educational films. The students published their own newspaper called *Kolaynoo*, which appeared up to three times a year.[81]

One way of producing better-educated young Jews was to increase the number of years the child spent in school. The strongest motivation for sending boys to religious school was to prepare them for the Bar Mitzvah. If the Bar Mitzvah was to be more than an isolated event, a boy had to acquire a basic comprehension of Hebrew and the Jewish religion. Thus, in 1946, B'nai Amoona ruled that a boy must attend Hebrew and Sunday school for a minimum of three years in order to become a Bar Mitzvah. After assuming his post as educational director, Rabbi Lipnick proposed extending the minimum requirement to four years. Although initially tabled, the measure was passed by the board in 1954.

If the Bar Mitzvah brought boys into Hebrew school, then it was hoped that a similar ceremony would promote the enrollment of girls. With this in mind, Rabbi Halpern announced in February 1949, that girls who reached the age of 13 and had attended Hebrew school for a minimum of two years would be eligible to become Bat (or Bas) Mitzvah.[83] Since previously no girls or women were allowed on the *bema*, the institution of this ceremony represented a radical departure from tradition; yet it seemed to cause no stir of opposition. The ritual restrictions regarding women were honored by holding the Bat Mitzvah on Friday nights instead of Saturday mornings and by prohibiting girls from reading from Torah, which was a major aspect of the boys' ceremony.

The first Bat Mitzvah at B'nai Amoona took place on December 8, 1950, when Dee Radman (Bank) inaugurated the ceremony.[84] Only gradually did the Bat Mitzvah become popular, in part because the number of prospective candidates depended upon expanding the enrollment of girls in Hebrew school. Eventually, however, the Bat Mitzvah for girls became almost as accepted as the Bar Mitzvah for boys.

Since the major reason for instituting the Bat Mitzvah was to motivate girls to study Hebrew, it was felt that initially the requirements should be less stringent than those which applied to boys. However, as more and more girls began attending Hebrew

classes, the lower standards were called into question. In 1956, Rabbi Lipnick persuaded the school board to require girls wishing to become Bat Mitzvah to attend Hebrew and Sunday school a minimum of three years and in 1959, the minimum was raised to four years, the same as for boys.[85]

Beginning the child's religious education at an early age by extending the number of years required for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah represented only half the battle. It was believed every bit as important to see that the child continued in religious school beyond age 13. The usual pattern had been for a child to drop out of Hebrew classes right after the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, although he might continue to attend Sunday school until graduation which, in 1951, was at age 15.[86] This meant that the child was subject to diminishing Jewish influence during the critical teen years, when he was most vulnerable to the undermining effects of the American culture.

This problem had long been understood by Jewish educators. For this reason, Rabbi Halpern early in his career introduced at B'nai Amoona various classes and clubs to keep teen-agers involved in the synagogue. While these had had some success, they had ceased to exist during the years when B'nai Amoona went into decline. A major reason for hiring an educational director was to have someone assume the responsibility for reinstituting a youth program. During his short period in St. Louis, Rabbi Kling laid a foundation. From this base Rabbi Lipnick built an extensive program for young people, which offered a wide variety of educational, religious and social options.

Rabbi Lipnick developed at B'nai Amoona a College of Jewish Studies with both high school and college departments. In 1956, the first few students graduated from the high school and in 1960, Meryl Klevens and Alan Zeffren became the college's first two graduates. The College of Jewish Studies was a tremendously ambitious project. While those who attended classes profited from their experience, in the end B'nai Amoona did not have enough students to sustain the program.[87]

Another way of extending the Jewish education of teen-agers was through the Sunday school. In 1961, the age of graduation was raised to 16 from 15. This kept the children in religious school until they were a little more mature. Introduction of the

additional year was accompanied by a revision of the curriculum for the post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes. The course of study proposed for the eighth grade was the History of the Jews of America and the History of Modern Israel, for the nineth grade, the Prophets and other Biblical Texts and Modern Jewish Life in Literature, and for the new tenth grade, the Religions of Our Neighbors and the Applications of Judaism to Social Problems. A very conscious goal of the course on other religions was to provide Jewish youngsters with sufficient understanding of other religions in relationship to their own so that they could better appreciate Judaism.[88]

The Leadership Training Fellowship enabled a select group of young people, ages 15 to 17, to combine Jewish education with community service. The purpose of the nationwide organization, which was sponsored by the National Federation of Men's Clubs, was "to train youth for positions of eventual leadership in the Congregation and Community." Those enrolled in the program committed themselves to a minimum of six hours of formal Hebrew studies every week, attendance at synagogue services and community work, consisting largely of assistance within the congregation.[89]

The top priority of B'nai Amoona congregation was not just to teach the young about their religion, but to encourage them to live as Jews. While education was a prerequisite, it could not be isolated from practice. Participation in religious services was the means of developing in the children the habit of prayer and observance. For this reason, as part of the preparation for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the child was expected to attend Saturday morning services regularly for at least the year before the event.

Since it had long been recognized that children came to services reluctantly because they found them tedious and incomprehensible, an attempt was made to begin a Sabbath service geared to the young. The result was known as the Junior Congregation. The term actually came into use at B'nai Amoona as early as 1938, when Rabbi Halpern announced that the Alumni Club was changing its name to the Junior Congregation.[90] The name was changed because the rabbi wanted all the teen-agers in the congregation, regardless of whether or not they had graduated from the religious school, to feel welcome at a weekly study

group he planned to lead. But the time was not propitious and this early Junior Congregation did not flourish.

Another attempt at establishing a Junior Congregation occurred in 1947, but since no one was really in charge, the effort came to little. The Junior Congregation did take root after Rabbi Kling's arrival in 1948. Under his leadership a small group of boys and a few girls met weekly to conduct their own Sabbath services. Once a year they were invited to lead the adult services in the main sanctuary.[91]

The main dissatisfaction with the Junior Congregation was that so few young people participated. In November 1950, Rabbi Kling announced that in the previous two years the average attendance at the Junior Congregation was 40.[92] When Rabbi Lipnick took over in 1951, attendance initially took an upswing and the *Bulletin* reported, "Rabbi Lipnick has brought a new spirit into the children." However, subsequent statements regarding the need to increase attendance at the Junior Congregation indicated that the problem of interesting children in prayer services was unresolved.[93]

Various efforts were made to attract children to the Junior Congregation. In 1955, it was decided that the Junior Congregation should hold a separate Shacharis service and then be brought into the main sanctuary for the remainder of the Shabbat service.[94] This combination had the advantage of giving the children their own place but also making them feel a part of the congregation as a whole. In his 1958 evaluation of the B'nai Amoona Religious School, Dr. Kaplan advised dividing the Junior Congregation into two groups, one consisting of young children and the other of teen-agers. Apparently a major difficulty was that the older youths rejected being part of a children's service. The result was the creation of a Junior Congregation for ages five through 11 and a Youth Congregation for ages 12 to 17. These innovations succeeded in bringing the number of children attending services up to an average of 100 a week in 1960, but this figure still represented only about one-third of those enrolled in Hebrew school and less than one-sixth of those attending Sunday school.[95]

Another way of involving children in prayer was through the Tallis and Tefillin service and breakfast, which was held once a

month on a Sunday morning. Organized in 1950, the service was meant to encourage boys who had become Bar Mitzvah to observe religious ritual. By 1952, two of the Bat Mitzvah girls joined the group, although they, of course, used neither a *tallit* nor *tfillin*. In time fathers were invited as well and the occasion became a time for young people and their fathers to join together in prayer.[96]

In developing a broad-based program for young people, the social component was not ignored. In fact, all the groups sponsored by the congregation simultaneously offered educational, religious and social aspects. What distinguished them was a matter of emphasis. The first primarily social group, which was organized following the move to University City, was a chapter of United Synagogue Youth. The B'nai Amoona group, founded in 1949, has the honor of being the second oldest chapter in the country. The movement began in Minneapolis in 1947, when two rabbis conceived the idea of creating a conservative Jewish organization for young people. The idea spread quickly and, according to Rabbi Kling, a national structure emerged out of a regional conference held by the first two groups and a third from Des Moines.[97]

The original chapter at B'nai Amoona was composed of eight alumni, 15 and 16 years old. From this base the United Synagogue Youth Program expanded into seven different groups, encompassing children in the sixth through 12th grades and by 1957, U.S.Y. at B'nai Amoona could claim more than 200 members. The organization's four point program consisted of: "(1) Healthy and Enjoyable Social Activity, (2) Orientation Towards the Synagogue, (3) Imparting the Values of a Full Jewish Life, (4) Community Service."[98]

In addition, B'nai Amoona continued to sponsor Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops; the Girl Scout troop seems to have disappeared. In 1953, a softball team, the B'nai Amoona Bluebirds, was formed and the team became a runner-up in a league of Jewish schools. Nor does this complete the list of youth groups active during the period. "We had at one time in our youth activities program 450 kids. We were larger than the J.C.C.A. [formerly the Y.M.H.A.], which was in the process of moving from Union to its new site. During the transition B'nai Amoona

in many ways took up the slack, because University City was the center of Jewish life."[99] The youth program expanded to the point where Rabbi Lipnick could no longer handle the load himself. In May 1957, Gary Cohn became the first full-time youth director at B'nai Amoona.[100]

The congregation also made an attempt to keep in touch with young people away at college. This was primarily achieved through the College Homecoming begun in 1956.[101] Held every December, the event variously took the form of a special Shabbat service and/or a brunch with the rabbi.

The overriding purpose of B'nai Amoona's multifaceted program for young people was to produce adults committed to Judaism. In 1960, a writer on American Jewry said that "the basic function of Jewish education" was "to 'innoculate' the next generation with that minimum of religious practice and belief that is considered necessary to keep alive a level of Jewish self-consciousness that will hold the line against assimilation."[102] These might be looked upon as the maximal and minimal goals of a Jewish educational and youth program. Within these parameters did the program developed at B'nai Amoona succeed? The problem is how does one measure success. If it is merely a matter of determining whether the young people who passed through the program remained committed to Judaism to a greater or lesser extent, then surely there were many failures. But if it is measured in terms of the impact the B'nai Amoona program had on individual lives, then there were many successes.

In 1959, Alan Lazaroff left to pursue his studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He was the first B'nai Amoona Religious School graduate, since Rabbi Halpern's son, Mordecai, to chose this path.[103] Subsequently, a number of young men and women from B'nai Amoona have sought careers in the rabbinate, as a cantor and in Jewish education and community work. Others in letters to one or the other of the rabbis have testified to the positive effect of their experience at B'nai Amoona. A graduate wrote, "Thank you with all my heart for making my years at B'nai Amoona so fruitful and successful." A soldier at his base wanted the rabbi to know that he was editing a newspaper put out by the Jewish chaplain's office, serving as cantor and participating in activities for Jewish personnel. In conclusion he stated,

"You might say that this is a testimonial letter to the educational approach of B'nai Amoona." In response to an examination question a pupil in the fourth year of Hebrew school answered that "through my studies, I feel that I've made a closer relationship between myself and the Jewish Heritage. . . ." A thank you note from parents following their son's Bar Mitzvah promised, "We shall try as a family to be worthy of the faith you place in us and the faith you so beautifully teach us." Finally, on the third anniversary of her Bat Mitzvah, a young girl wrote, "My Bas Mitzvah, I feel, was one of the most influential points of my religious upbringing." "I realize now how worthwhile my Hebrew education [has been], although I may have considered it otherwise then."[104]

While a great deal of effort was devoted to training the young to be good Jews, the adult population of the congregation was not overlooked. In 1949, Rabbi Kling began an adult study group on the Bible. From this beginning he built a program of adult classes, offered both in the morning and evening, on a variety of Jewish subjects.[105]

Rabbi Lipnick continued the adult classes much as they were until 1959, when he initiated a Joint Adult Study Institute under the sponsorship of the three conservative congregations: B'nai Amoona, B'rith Sholom and Shaare Zedek. It was the first time these three congregations had found a common project on which to work.[106] The much larger audience made feasible a broader-based curriculum. In 1961, for example, there were classes offered in Learning to Read Hebrew, Translation of the Prayer Book, Conversational Hebrew, Torah and Rashi, Bible and Contemporary Problems, Jewish Medical Ethics, Adult Chorus, and Jewish Ceremonial Skills. The focus of an accompanying lecture series was "Judaism for Today."[107] To maintain interest, the lecture theme and some of the courses changed from year to year, although the Hebrew language and the sacred texts were always included.

The Adult Study Institute was by no means the only opportunity for B'nai Amoona members to pursue Jewish learning. The Sisterhood provided the women of the congregation with an active educational program. In 1952, the women's organization inaugurated a Bible study group, which proved to be very popu-

lar. In the years that followed, interested members met bimonthly to continue their studies under the leadership of one of their own members, Rabbi Halpern or Rabbi Lipnick. In 1955, the Sisterhood began a class in Hebrew. Initially the purpose was to teach women enough Hebrew to follow the prayer book but within two years it became necessary to offer in addition to the class for beginners, another one for those who were more advanced. Moreover, the Sisterhood conducted a creative series of one-day workshops on Hanuka, Shabbat, Passover, Sukkot and Kashrut.[108]

The men were invited to take part in an advanced study group on Mishna or to learn from the *hazzan* how to chant the Haftorah. For a period, married couples participated in discussion groups on the Bible and interpretation of the prayer book. The B'nai Amoona Cultural Forum, in existence from 1954–56, offered the congregation as a whole a series of educational programs.[109]

One of the most interesting educational opportunities made available to the congregation was the *kallah*. The word derives from a Hebrew root meaning "circle" and referred to meetings at which the rabbis of Babylonia gathered to exchange ideas and religious inspiration. The conservative movement revived the *kallah* as a laymen's institute, where a "circle" of Jews came together to learn about Judaism and renew their Jewish involvement.

One of the first conservative rabbis to introduce the *kallah* to his congregation was Jerome Lipnick who inspired his brother, Bernard, to adopt the same approach.[110] In the fall of 1952, the first Midwest *kallah* was held in an Ozark mountain retreat. About 25 men from B'nai Amoona and Congregation Beth Sholom in Kansas City spent a weekend away from the disturbances of their everyday life. Under the leadership of Rabbis Bernard Lipnick and Gershon Hadas of Beth Sholom, the men experienced an intense period of study and Jewish living.[111]

The *kallah* in the Ozarks continued as an annual event for B'nai Amoona and Beth Sholom men,[112] but it had obvious limitations. The facilities permitted only a small number of participants and no provision was made for women. Consequently, in 1955, the first "in-house" *kallah* was held at B'nai Amoona. The

advantage of isolation was sacrified to make the *kallah* available to a much broader public. This was the beginning of a very fruitful program series that has brought to B'nai Amoona many scholars and Jewish leaders of the stature of Abraham Heschel, Bernard Mandelbaum, Max Arzt and Gerson Cohen.[113]

The B'nai Amoona library was developed as an educational resource for young and old alike. The initial effort to create a congregational library dates back to 1920, when the Mothers Club collected some books of Jewish interest and established the first Jewish circulating library in the city.[114] Despite this beginning, little was done over the years to build the library. When Rabbi Lipnick arrived on the scene, he found a few books, stashed in an out of the way place. Rabbi Lipnick joined forces with Etia Kaufman, B'nai Amoona's first librarian, to find a central location for the library, to organize the collection and to expand the holdings greatly. By 1960, the B'nai Amoona library had acquired some 3,000 volumes and was cited by the Jewish Book Council of America as fulfilling the minimum requirements for a Jewish library.[115]

As was the case with the children, social groups for the adult members of the congregation functioned to reinforce Judaism. The women were urged to join the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, whose history nearly paralleled that of the congregation. Lucille Hurwitz, president from 1953–55, described the purpose of the organization with these words, "To strengthen Judaism and make it meaningful, dynamic, and vital in the life of the Sisterhood member and her family through the Synagogue and the home."[116]

The Sisterhood underwent major changes over the years. When Mrs. Babette (Samuel) Lipsitz, daughter of Rebecca Kahn, took over the presidency from Bertha Golland in 1936, she wished to make the Sisterhood more attractive to younger women. To accomplish this, she introduced a cultural component to the meetings. Programs were planned and guest speakers invited to address the ladies on topics of interest.[117] A similar generational shift occurred in 1952, when Mrs. Rose (Robert) Mass became the youngest president in the Sisterhood's history and the first B'nai Amoona Religious School graduate to hold the position. Mrs. Mass, like Mrs. Lipsitz before her, brought a new emphasis

which reflected the orientation of the younger generation. During her term the first Bible study class sponsored by the Sisterhood was organized and this marked the beginning of a continuing commitment to education on the part of the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood.[118]

From the very first philanthropy was a prominent focus of the women's society, but it now took a different turn. The making of shrouds and washing of the dead were abandoned about 1946 and the group ceased collecting funds for other Jewish organizations or needy families.[119] Yet the Sisterhood remained heavily involved in charitable work. The channels for engaging in community service were influenced by the times. During World War II the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood formed an outstanding Red Cross chapter under the leadership of Mrs. Rose (Russell) Kaplan. With more than 100 members, it was the largest and most active unit in the city. The Sisterhood cooperated with the U.S.O. to provide social activities and home hospitality for Jewish servicemen stationed in the St. Louis area. After the war the women collected money and goods for the relief of survivors of the Holocaust.[120]

One of the finest charitable activities undertaken by the Sisterhood was the training of members to be certified Braille transcribers. The project began in 1957 during the presidency of Mrs. Adele (Melvin) Roman, daughter of past President Mrs. Margaret (Barney) Spitzer. Mrs. Roman and three others became the first of a number of B'nai Amoona women to qualify as English Braillists and Mrs. Miriam (Harry) Freedman led the way, which others followed, in qualifying as a Hebrew Braillist.[121]

In addition to serving the community, the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood continued to provide essential support to the congregation. Its fund-raising efforts, particularly for the new synagogue, far surpassed any previous achievement. Nor was this the limit of the women's contribution. There were simply no major undertakings at B'nai Amoona in which the Sisterhood did not participate. At the dedication ceremony in 1950, Rose Wolff, then president of the group, aptly characterized the relationship between the congregation and its women's auxiliary. "I am inclined to believe that the *shidach* [betrothal] the congregation made with the Sisterhood, has been a most successful one. We are very proud of

our achievement, and rightly so, and you have our assurance, that we will continue to work loyally, faithfully and wholeheartedly for our *shule*."[122]

Once when Mrs. Wolff attended a regional convention in Kansas City, she was described as "the lone Wolff," which suggests her status as the sole representative from B'nai Amoona and probably from St. Louis.[133] One of the achievements of the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood during this period was to assume an increasingly prominent role in the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America. In 1956, Lucille Hurwitz became the first B'nai Amoona member to serve on the national board and in that same year Rose Mass was elected vice president of the Midwest region.[124] Beginning in 1954 with "The Magic Door" and followed in 1956 by "B.A.S. Town," original Sisterhood productions, won prizes in national competitions.[125] Another reflection of the Sisterhood's growing identification with the conservative movement as a whole was the Torah Fund. Introduced in 1952, this money-raising campaign for the Jewish Theological Seminary has received increasingly substantial support over the years.[126]

In his annual message to the congregation in October 1945, President Barney Spitzer made a special plea for the reorganization of the Men's Club. He requested Vice President Meyer Kranzberg to undertake the task. Kranzberg responded by revitalizing the Men's Club and serving as its president for six months, when he handed the gavel over to Nelson Gould.[127]

Until this time the Men's Club had led a somewhat checkered existence. During the 1930s the group failed to attract many members, particularly from the younger generation, and for a period during the war (1943–45), it seemed to languish entirely. The Kranzberg presidency marked a new beginning. From this point the Men's Club became an important supporting group within the congregation and for the first time it began fulfilling consistently its function as a training ground for congregational leaders. Starting with Barney Spitzer, president of the Men's Club from 1937–43, eight out of the 13 men who have served as president of the congregation since this time have been past presidents of the club. Past President Bert Grossman made himself indispensable as executive director of B'nai Amoona for 20 years (1954–73). Ted Fischer, a former president of the Men's Club, is

one of the most indefatigable workers B'nai Amoona has ever known. And the list goes on.

"The Men's Club offers an opportunity for the men of B'nai Amoona and their friends to get together, in an informal way, at stated intervals, for both entertainment and instructive programs." Specifically the Men's Club supported the congregation's youth program by sponsoring the Leadership Training Fellowship group, hosting the annual Hanuka celebration and awarding the Men's Club Leadership medal to the outstanding student in the religious school.[128] In 1949, the Men's Club contributed the first scholarships for children attending Camp Ramah and has consistently been the major contributor to the B'nai Amoona Camp Scholarship Fund, created in 1956. It introduced a fathers' and children's night and for many years sponsored an annual congregational picnic.[129]

"The Men's Club stands ready, always, to assist the Congregation and Auxiliaries, with manpower for any project for the good of B'nai Amoona." The club provides ushers for services year round. Its members furnish a *minyan* for services held at the home of a B'nai Amoona family sitting *shiva* (the seven days of mourning). At all times Men's Club members have been ready to pitch in to help make a congregational or Sisterhood event a success.[130]

In 1951, the Men's Club looked outward to the community by inaugurating an interfaith program. The Rev. Sidney Sweet of Christ Church Cathedral was invited to be the guest speaker at Friday night services on Men's Club's night. Some days later the club held a buffet dinner for members of men's groups associated with nearby synagogues and churches. For several years thereafter, a Friday night interfaith program for the entire congregation was sponsored by the Men's Club.[131] Nationally, the Men's Club has played a role by conducting an annual campaign for the Jewish Theological Seminary and in 1954, Past President Marvin Seltzer became the first president of the newly created Central States Region of the National Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs.[132]

In 1955, a B'nai Amoona couples club was formed under the name Young Married League (Y.M.L.). Albert and Edith Price served as the first presidents of the group. Rabbi Lipnick, by then

married, and his wife played a major role in establishing the congregation's newest auxiliary. Meyer Kranzberg, president of B'nai Amoona when Rabbi Lipnick first arrived, was worried because young people were not moving into positions of responsibility. He encouraged Rabbi Lipnick to do what he could to stimulate an interest in the congregation among the younger element. The solution was the Young Married League. At first older members of the congregation objected to the formation of another auxiliary for fear that it would funnel membership away from the Men's Club and the Sisterhood. But as Y.M.L. members grew older and began to assume leadership positions within the congregation and the other groups, the opposition dissipated.[133]

The Young Married League became an effective way of integrating younger members into the congregation. Husbands and wives participated with others their own age in social and cultural programs sponsored by B'nai Amoona. Parents with children in the religious school met the parents of their children's classmates. The club provided younger members with the opportunity to become better acquainted with the rabbis. The group fostered synagogue attendance by husbands and wives. Members of the club became familiar with other congregational activities, which led many of them to take a more active part. In the words of Mrs. Shirley (William) Katz on the occasion of Y.M.L.'s first anniversary, "All this gives us a feeling of belonging—a feeling of warmth—a true welcome whenever we enter our B'nai Amoona."[134]

> . . . my dear absentee you are making it difficult for us, of the Synagogue, to fulfill our contract with you. . . . For we are organized to raise the level of Jewish understanding and loyalty of our group. We seek to bring Jewish spirit into homes. We aim to lay a solid and permanent foundation for the Jewish future of our children. We propose to preserve and renew the vital insights and traditions of our history. We hope to strengthen the link that unites Jew with Jew and individual with people. We mean to keep alive in the midst of a world that sometimes seems to be on the point of dissolving into chaos and conflict, great religious and ethical values and ideals. Your presence on Sabbath would not of course insure the attainment of these difficult objectives. But my dear absentee member, it would give us a greater opportunity to approach them.[135]

This "Address to an Empty Pew," written by Rabbi Morris Adler of Detroit, Michigan, was reprinted in the *B'nai Amoona Bulletin* in March 1949. The words eloquently sum up the primary concern of any rabbi, which was that his congregants live as Jews. Rabbi Halpern continued to stress the same themes he had been emphasizing throughout his years in the pulpit. He called upon B'nai Amoona members to keep the Sabbath holy and observe the holidays. He inquired whether members turned to God each day in prayer and taught their children to pray. He chided his people for failing to come to *shul* on the *yahrzeit* of their departed relatives. He talked about the inconsistency of serving *treife* (non-kosher) meals at a Bar Mitzvah or wedding. "The days and weeks and the months fly by, and some of us continue in the same old pattern of thoughtlessness," he said. "Our homes are the same; we do not turn to God in prayer each day; we do not inspire our children with the warmth of Jewish living; we do not respond to the needs of our people."[136]

As previously, the rabbi placed great emphasis on attendance at services. One Passover when there was a particularly large turnout, especially of young people, the rabbi was moved to exclaim, "If at times we are not quite sure whether we are accomplishing much, this doubt was dispelled during the Pesach services."[137]

But it was not enough for members to attend services a few times a year; the rabbi wanted to see them in *shul* every Shabbos. He called upon the officers of the congregation and board members to set an example. He addressed himself in turn to younger members, businessmen and women, urging them to set aside Saturday mornings for religious observance. He proposed that a Service Committee be established to approach members personally and ask them to attend services. In 1952, the congregation adopted the policy of having the names of those observing birthdays and anniversaries the following week read out during the service and this had the effect of inducing some to come to *shul* who otherwise would not have attended.[138]

As a matter of fact, B'nai Amoona was remarkably successful in bringing people to Sabbath services. By 1960, the average attendance on a Saturday morning was 400 to 500. But when someone asked Rabbi Halpern, "Aren't you ever satisfied with the attendance in shule?", his reply was, that he would "never be

satisfied until every member of our wonderful congregational family attends services at all times and not just a few times during the year."[139]

To encourage more regular attendance on the part of members who could not be persuaded to come on Saturday mornings, the later Friday night service was brought back in 1944. It was discontinued in 1946 due to lack of interest and reintroduced in 1950. By this time the congregation had moved into its new synagogue and was experiencing a tremendous expansion in membership. The result was much more enthusiasm for the Friday night service than had existed previously. When the Bat Mitzvah ceremony was scheduled during this service its success was ensured. The families of the girls usually provided refreshments for an Oneg Shabbat, making the evening a pleasant social, as well as religious occasion. The later Friday night service drew capacity crowds.[140]

Despite B'nai Amoona's comparative success in attracting members to services on a weekly basis, the majority of those affiliated with the congregation came to the synagogue only on the High Holidays. From the day the new building opened, the main sanctuary, even with the additional seating in the auditorium and chapel, could not accommodate all who wished to attend at this time of year. Initially a solution was to establish separate services for the members' children. In 1949, Rabbi Kling conducted a service for young people, ages 16 to 21, and the teachers had a service for children, ages 10 to 15. In the years that followed the pattern of separate children's services continued with some variation. For a while Rabbi Halpern traded places with the assistant rabbi on the second day of Rosh Hashana so that the older group of young people could have contact with the senior rabbi. By 1952, there were four different children's services, encompassing ages five to 17. The young adults, 18 and above, worshiped with the main congregation.[141]

A major complaint about this arrangement was that families could not sit together in the synagogue on what were considered the most significant religious observances of the year. Consequently, various "family services" were introduced during times when overall attendance tended to drop off. In 1951, a family service, conducted by Rabbi Halpern, was scheduled for Yom

Kippur afternoon. In 1957, all members were invited to pray together with their children at the evening service both days of Rosh Hashana. This service proved quite popular and in 1961, the attendance was estimated at 1,500 the first night and 1,000 the second.[142]

Even though the children of the congregation were required to attend separate services, there still was not adequate space for all the adults in the expanded main sanctuary. As early as 1952, it was necessary to establish an auxiliary service in the downstairs recreation room to accommodate the overflow crowd. By 1956, total holiday attendance was estimated at more than 3,000. For years the auxiliary services were conducted by Rabbi Maurice Lyons, who had performed in the same capacity during the long period when B'nai Amoona congregation was split between the Academy and Vernon synagogue and the old east building at Washington and Trinity. In 1960, Rabbi Lipnick, who until then had been conducting the service for teen-agers, took over from Rabbi Lyons and it became customary for the assistant or associate rabbi to lead the auxiliary service.[143]

"The B'nai Amoona stands firm in its conviction that the spiritual life of the Jews can best be maintained through the traditions of our fathers. . . ." While Rabbi Halpern took great pride in the fact that B'nai Amoona remained "steadfast" in its adherence to Jewish traditions,[144] he was required to make some concessions to changing times. Even before the new synagogue was ready for occupancy, the issue was raised regarding separate seating for men and women. Although many members recall that the rabbi was reluctant to change the tradition, this is not reflected in the *Minutes*.[145]

At the board meeting of November 1, 1948, Louis Schwartz "brought up the subject of eliminating the segregation of men and women at our services. After much discussion, both pro and con," it was decided that a committee should study the question and report to the general meeting. The only remark attributed to Rabbi Halpern on this occasion was that he felt "all innovations do not bring members to the temple, but if elimination of segregation would add to the spirituality, he was in favor of the elimination." At the general meeting a month later, the matter was raised for discussion. Rabbi Halpern declared himself to be in

favor so long as provision was made for those men and women who wished to continue sitting separately. This was accepted and the seats in the two wells, immediately to the right and left of the *bema*, are still reserved for this purpose.[146]

Another deviation from tradition that the rabbi felt compelled to accept was congregants riding to *shul* on Shabbat and the holidays. The change began long before the congregation moved to University City. As people left the vicinity of Academy and Vernon, they faced the choice of either driving to services or not attending at all. Even though most took care to park a block or two away, Rabbi Halpern was fully aware of what was happening. Although he much preferred just to ignore the issue, when confronted with a direct question—"Should we ride and come to *shul* or should we stay away?" his response was, "It's better to come to *shul* than to not come. You do the best you can."[147]

In 1962, Rabbi Halpern had been scheduled to attend the Midwest Regional Conference of the Women's League at the end of March. He was to be honored at the convention for his long and fruitful 45 years in the rabbinate. The occasion was to be a special joy because the convention host was Temple Aaron in St. Paul, Minnesota, where his daughter and son-in-law, Laeh and Bernard Raskas, were *rebbitzin* and rabbi. But before the date arrived, the rabbi became ill with a heart ailment and was hospitalized. After lingering a few weeks, Abraham Halpern died at the age of 70. His wife, Bessie, who was with him at the time, as she had been for most of his life, related that the rabbi died as he lived, with a Bible in his hand and communing with God.[148]

Those who experienced the loss most intensely were the people who knew Rabbi Halpern best. After his wife and family, there were the many, many B'nai Amoona members whose lives Rabbi Halpern had touched. ". . . you have spun a thousand strands that bind you to your people—bonds of grief and joy. . . ."[149] These words, written by Rabbi Louis Feinberg, Mrs. Halpern's brother, on the occasion of Rabbi Halpern's 25th anniversary with his congregation, effectively capture how the rabbi's life intertwined with those of his congregants.

He was there in times of sorrow. If a member died when Rabbi Halpern was out of town, he would interrupt his trip to return

for the funeral. Whenever a member was in the hospital, Rabbi Halpern and his wife would stop by to offer good cheer. But the rabbi was equally concerned about being present on happy occasions. When one family received a baby for adoption, the rabbi was there to rejoice with them. He expressed his welcome by pulling out his pocket calendar and noting down the little boy's Bar Mitzvah date. Thirteen years later that date was kept. Similarly, when Leopold Sessler turned 90, the rabbi insisted upon paying a congratulatory call even though the streets were buried under a foot of snow. These were the personal touches which the recipients never forgot.[150]

During the first decades of his ministry the congregation was small enough for Rabbi Halpern to establish close relationships with a large number of B'nai Amoona families. But size does not tell the whole story. The rabbi clearly saw himself as a pastor and in this role he excelled, as the testimony of his former congregants establishes again and again. Pearl Barohn recalled how grateful her bedridden mother was when virtually every Sunday, Rabbi and Mrs. Halpern came by for a visit. Esther Flom will always remember the day she went to register her son for Sunday school and was turned away because she could not afford the membership fee. As she walked out the door crying, Rabbi Halpern came running after her to inquire what was wrong. When he learned that Mrs. Flom had just lost her husband in the war, he told her, "If your husband could give his life for this country, you can come to this synagogue for nothing or for as much as you care to pay."[151]

Personal involvement expressed itself in the way Rabbi Halpern related to the B'nai Amoona groups. Mildred "Sis" Fischer noted that when the women were busy at work in the kitchen, the rabbi would invariably come by to say hello and ask how they were getting on. During rehearsals for a Sisterhood show he would stop to listen and sometimes even learned the songs. These gestures made the women feel that the rabbi appreciated their contribution and motivated them to do even more for the congregation.[152]

Nor did Rabbi Halpern overlook the children. There are many members of B'nai Amoona today who affiliated with the congregation because of a lasting affection they formed as children for

Rabbi Halpern—the man they called "Doc." "He was a terrific person. I became attached to him when I was 15 years old and so did everybody that went to any of his classes." "I knew him as a kindly person with a twinkle in his eye, who could laugh and could joke with you." Miriam Sandmel Freedman recalled that she and a friend regularly attended Sabbath services at B'nai Amoona even though their parents were not members. The rabbi would greet the young girls and exchange a few words. After Mrs. Freedman had a family of her own, it seemed natural for her and her husband to join the congregation. When she first appeared, the rabbi gave her a warm welcome. "Do you remember me?" she asked. "Of course I remember you," he responded.[153]

As has been amply demonstrated, Rabbi Halpern's influence extended well beyond his own congregation. In 1942, Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman of Temple Israel wrote, "Rabbi Halpern has been a staunch, courageous, and out-spoken champion of Orthodox Judaism in our community. His strong loyalties have not prevented him from cooperating in many fields with those [with] whom he differed in religious matters. He is appreciated not only in his own congregation but in the larger Jewish community." Shortly after Rabbi Halpern's death, Rabbi Jerome Grollman related, "Four years ago when I was elected Rabbi of United Hebrew Temple, it was Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern who pronounced the final benediction at the Installation Banquet. . . . In order to be present for the banquet, Rabbi Halpern had interrupted and terminated by several days a long awaited visit to his children out of town. This gesture of affection was typical of his personality. He never hesitated to extend himself or spare himself in behalf of his congregants, his friends, and people in general."[154]

While B'nai Amoona members as individuals and innumerable others as well were enriched by their contact with Rabbi Halpern, it was the congregation as a whole which was the major beneficiary of his years of service. B'nai Amoona was Rabbi Halpern's only pulpit and he devoted his life to making it "one of the foremost congregations not only in that region [the Middle West] but in the country." These words, taken from the citation read at the Jewish Theological Seminary when Rabbi Halpern was awarded the honorary degree of doctor of divinity, acknowl-

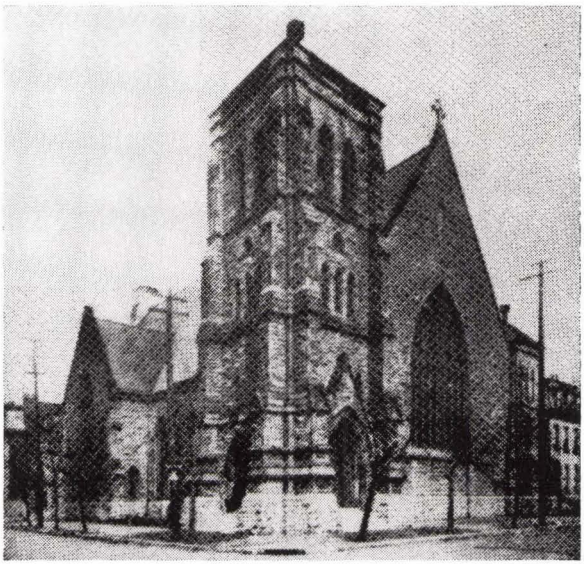
edged the pioneering role he played in the "preservation and advancement of Torah in this land."[155]

A young man, fresh from the seminary, Abraham Halpern built B'nai Amoona into a bastion of traditional Judaism. On the rabbi's 25th anniversary with his congregation, Abram Sachar wrote, "Your ministry in St. Louis covers the span of a whole generation, a generation which has lived through war, depression, and many attendant confusions. You based your service on a steadfast devotion to traditional Judaism. As a result, you gave anchorage to many, many families and helped them through this most difficult period."[156]

It seems fitting to close with final words of tribute from Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, who was Rabbi Halpern's colleague, friend and successor.

> The Rabbis said that certain sounds have the ability to reach from one end of the earth to the other. One of those sounds is the sound of the soul, when it departs from the body. When the soul of Rabbi Halpern departed from his body, on April 7, 1962, and began its journey back to God, the sound of it reached, literally, from one end of the earth to the other. People in all walks of life—Jewish and non-Jewish, those in St. Louis and out of St. Louis, young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned—countless thousands of people heard the sound. . . . If the sound of the departure of Rabbi Halpern's soul was heard from one end of the earth to the other, it was heard especially at B'nai Amoona. Its members and their families were shocked in a manner which defies description. Someone said that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. B'nai Amoona in many ways, was and still is, the lengthened shadow of Rabbi Halpern.[157]

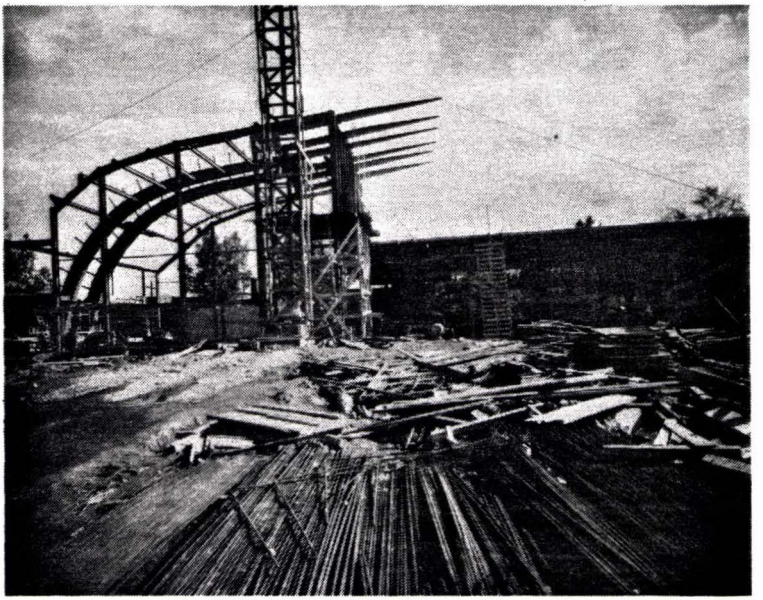
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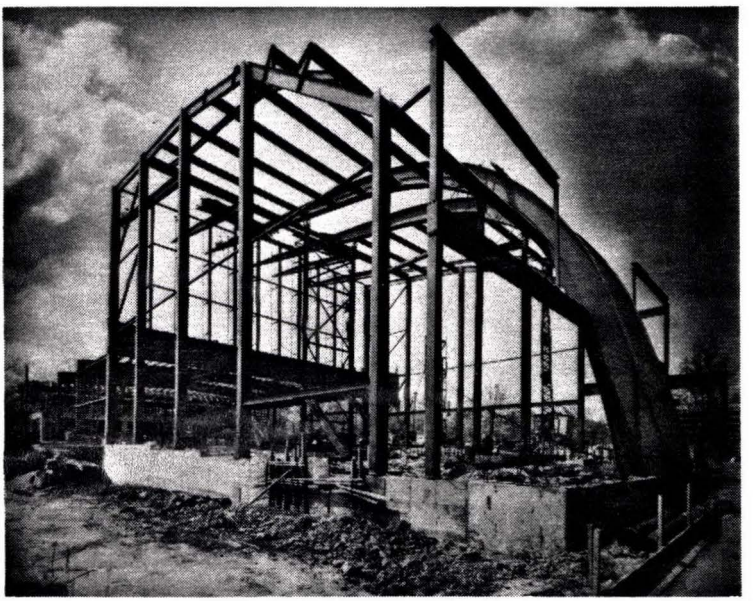


B'nai Amoona synagogue at Garrison and Lucas, purchased 1906. Formerly the Central Presbyterian church.



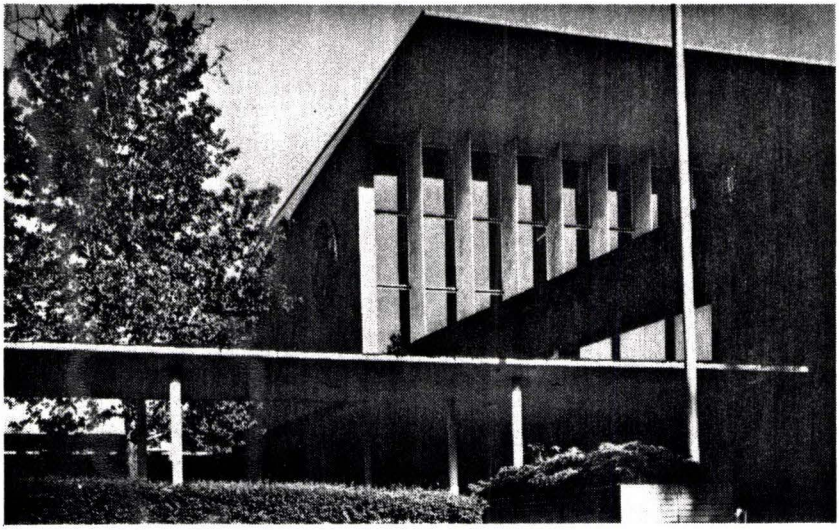
B'nai Amoona synagogue at Academy and Vernon, dedicated 1919. The stained glass window of Moses with the Ten Commandments is clearly visible in front.



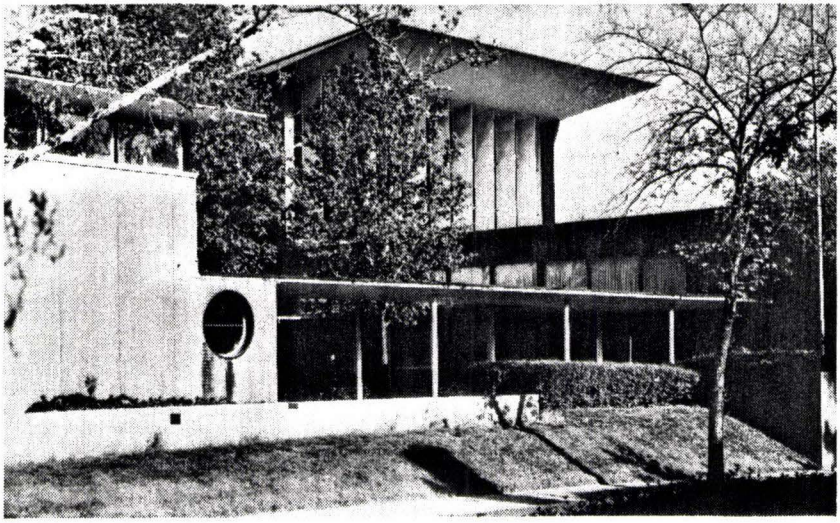


Two views of the steel frame which holds the parabolic roof of the B'nai Amoona synagogue under construction at Washington and Trinity, 1948–49.

B'nai Amoona synagogue at Washington and Trinity, dedicated 1950. The award-winning building was designed by Eric Mendelsohn.



A close-up of the western clerestory through which the setting sun illuminates the sanctuary.



The parabolic roof overshadows the auditorium below. On the left is the school wing which runs the entire northern length of the building.



The sanctuary at Washington and Trinity. The Aron Kodesh is set at the base of the monitor which runs through the center of the parabolic roof. Windows in the monitor allow light to enter the sanctuary.



B'nai Amoona closes purchase on the site at Mason and Conway, 1971. Seated: Secretary of the congregation Elaine Wolff. Standing: (l. to r.) Past-President Robert Mass, Executive Director Bert Grossman, Irwin Tzinberg, Jim Manion (realtor), Rabbi Lipnick, Vice President Dr. Harry Teicher, Treasurer Max Salniker, Rabbi Switkin, Vice President Ted Fischer and Hazzan Lissek.



Rabbi Switkin leads a line of children to the dedication service held on the land at Mason and Conway, 1972.



Planting a tree during the dedication of the land at Mason and Conway, 1972.



Laying the cornerstone of B'nai Amoona's educational and administrative building at Mason and Conway, 1980. Looking on is Milton Goldenberg, chairman of the Building Committee.



Rabbi Lipnick and President Edward Balk inserting documents into the "time capsule" placed in the cornerstone of the building at Mason and Conway, 1980.

Dedication of B'nai Amoona's educational and administrative building at Mason and Conway, 1981.



Rabbis Jeffrey Cohen and Lipnick enter the building with Torah scrolls.



Hazzan Lissek in procession with Torah scroll.



Shamas Sheinbein, Secretary of the congregation Barbara Shechter, Estelle Hoffman and President Maurice Gordon during the service.



(l. to r.) Ted Fischer, Rabbi Cohen and Hazzan Lissek.



Architect's sketch of educational and administrative building at Mason and Conway.

Chapter Five

Coming of Age

. . . today, from that humble beginning, we, who are the "Sons of Faith," represent one of America's top Conservative synagogues—in membership, in activity, and in the respect we receive nationally. We are literally, among the top 25 congregations in America. But what of tomorrow?

Dr. Manuel J. Snitzer, President
Congregation B'nai Amoona
September 15, 1964[1]

On May 7, 1962, the Board of Trustees voted to elevate Bernard Lipnick to the position of rabbi of B'nai Amoona. The decision was confirmed by acclamation at the annual meeting of the entire congregation the following November.[2] Rabbi Lipnick was formally installed on January 13, 1963, by Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The installation was the climatic event of a weekend-long *kallah*, led by the two men who had so influenced the rabbi: his former teacher, Dr. Louis L. Kaplan and his brother, Rabbi Jerome Lipnick.[3]

The meaning of the installation was beautifully captured in an open letter addressed to Rabbi Lipnick by Sisterhood President Mitzi Hammerman. ". . . we are in a world where we have lost our landmarks, and need guideposts so that we, as Jews, can live a life invested with spiritual meaning, depth, and dignity. And so we turn to you—because you have the blessed gift of bringing to life the vibrant, meaningful words of Torah which will be these guideposts in forming the pattern for Jewish living as they were for our ancestors."[4]

The man who became the third major rabbi in B'nai Amoona's

history, was well-known to the congregation since he had come in 1951 as educational director. Although Rabbi Lipnick, when he first arrived, was determined to concentrate solely on education, he found it impossible to limit himself in this way. Inevitably by working with the children, he became involved with their parents. He helped organize the Young Married League, which brought him into close association with the younger members of B'nai Amoona. He became acquainted with those who enrolled in adult classes that he taught. In these and a myriad other ways Rabbi Lipnick immersed himself in the congregation as a whole.[5]

With the passing of years the question of Rabbi Halpern's successor inevitably arose. Although Rabbi Lipnick had insisted upon coming to B'nai Amoona as just the educational director, he realized that it would be untenable for him to become subordinate to a younger, less experienced man. The only way he could remain at B'nai Amoona was as Rabbi Halpern's presumed successor. This meant de-emphasizing education—his first love —to take on more and more rabbinical duties. His increased role in this sphere was recognized when Rabbi Lipnick became assistant rabbi in 1958 and again in 1961, when he advanced to associate rabbi. On this latter occasion the board explicitly stated that "if and when Rabbi Halpern retires, Rabbi Lipnick will become the new rabbi" and some months later all parties concerned agreed that Rabbi Halpern would become rabbi emeritus on or before December 31, 1964.[6]

About two years after Rabbi Lipnick's arrival in St. Louis, Rabbi and Mrs. Halpern introduced him to Stephanie "Stevie" Friedman, the daughter of Joseph and Lily Mae Friedman, prominent members of the congregation. The couple married on December 27, 1953 and in the years that followed three boys, David, Daniel and Jesse, were born. As *rebbitzin*, Stevie Lipnick played an active role in the Sisterhood, the youth program and the Young Married League.[7]

Not long after his installation, Rabbi Lipnick noted that within the preceding nine years virtually the entire senior rabbinate of St. Louis had either died or retired.[8] This generational shift touched B'nai Amoona even more profoundly than other congregations. For a half century, or the span of two generations, three

men had served as the *Klei Kodesh*—the rabbi, cantor and *shamas*—of the congregation. With the death of Rabbi Halpern, a vigorous era in B'nai Amoona's history began to draw to a close.

On March 31, 1966, the Rev. Isidor Katz, *shamas* of B'nai Amoona for more than 50 years, died at 88 years of age. He had resigned as *shamas* just six months previously.[9] Katz, who had come to the congregation in 1913, was a most unforgettable man. When asked to recall the former *shamas*, virtually everyone had an anecdote to offer.

Those who were children while the congregation was still at Academy and Vernon remembered with amusement how Shamas Katz chased after them when they misbehaved. If the children ran across the grass, climbed the fence or made too much noise during services, Katz would come running out with a big grin on his face, shouting "bums," "scoutboys" (a reference to the Boy Scout troop), and a string of other colorful epithets, "but you knew he meant business."[10]

Even so, Shamas Katz did not inspire fear. Children loved to listen to his dramatic portrayals of biblical stories, which were always expressed in a very colloquial idiom. For example, in his version of Jacob wrestling with the angel, the *shamas* explained that Jacob crossed a river in search of a forgotten water jug. By the time Jacob arrived at his destination, night had fallen. The *shamas* then went on:

> Somebody gave a hold on him and Jacob said, "Who are you?" So that feller said, "I came to beat you. I want to knock you down." So Jacob said, "Let's go." So they was wrestling that feller with Jacob a whole night. They made such a dust that through the dust nobody could see what goes on. The morning star started to rise up and that feller says to Jacob, "Listen, it is time already that you shall leave me alone. I want to go." So Jacob says, "What's the matter? You are a nice thief that you are scared that somebody will catch you and have you arrested." So that feller said, "I am not a nice thief. I have no scare for nobody, but it is time to go." So Jacob says, "Where you want to go? Tell me." So he said, "I got to go back up to our headquarters (that means in the heaven)."[11]

Albert Price, who at one time taught the graduating class of the religious school, noted how effective this informal approach

was in teaching the children. As a matter of fact, it worked equally well with the adults who would come to the daily services early in order to hear Katz expound on the Bible, prayer, custom and ritual. Those who listened to Katz recognized that beneath the entertaining humor was considerable learning and a deep, abiding commitment to Judaism.[12]

The daily services were Shamas Katz's domain and he took his responsibilities very seriously. He would personally call all those who had *yahrzeits* to remind them to come to *shul.* This was not to ensure a *minyan* at the daily services, for this was not yet a problem. Rather the *shamas* was concerned that each congregant honor his departed relatives as tradition required. When someone failed to appear, he would confront the individual at the first opportunity. His personal approach was most successful in getting people to observe these memorial dates.

Katz was a very visible figure within the congregation. He was present every day of the year, morning and evening. On Shabbat he usually walked up and down the aisles, stopping to greet those he knew—and he knew everyone—despite the fact that services were going on. It was his job to apportion the *aliyot*, which he did with some drama. Usually the *shamas* would wait until the last minute before the person was needed up on the *bema* and then point suddenly to the next candidate, who more often than not was sitting in the middle of the row.[13]

Traits such as these earned Shamas Katz the affectionate nickname of "Casey," after the mythical baseball hero. When the congregation honored Shamas Katz on December 10, 1961, with a testimonial dinner, Esther Klevens and Ethel Weber wrote a number of songs for the occasion. The lyrics, as the following stanza illustrates, captured the love so many felt for this memorable man.

> He greets us each Shabbos morning
> Dancing eyes and face aglow
> We love Casey, why oh why do we love Casey
> Cause he's a joy to know.[14]

When the Rev. Katz died, Rabbi Lipnick noted that as *shamas,* he "had as much to do with mourners as anybody ever had." Throughout the period of *kaddish* and on *yahrzeits,* "he received

innumerable mourners into his chapel, comforted them, shepherded them through the intricacies of the service, instructed them, corrected them when they needed it, and acted as their religious guide and mentor. . . ." Yet ironically Katz himself died on the eve of Passover which meant that *shiva* for him would last less than a day. "That Mr. Katz will have no Shiva, to speak of, is exactly the way he wanted it. And that this eulogy, because it is Nisan, must not be morbid, is also exactly the way he would have wanted it. For, Mr. Katz was many things, but throughout his long, productive and wonderful life, he, above all, was life-oriented—he was 'lively.' "[15]

The third member of the *Klei Kodesh*, Hazzan Jacob Gowseiow, died on April 11, 1972, at 90 years of age. Just a few months previously the congregation had celebrated his seventh Bar Mitzvah or 91st year. On January 22, Hazzan Gowzeiow officiated at Shabbat services and led the choir as he had done thousands of times before, but on this occasion he also recited the Haftorah, the portion reserved for the Bar Mitzvah celebrant. Instead of the father, grandfathers and uncles being called to the Torah, Hazzan Gowseiow watched with pride as his three grandsons were awarded this honor. When the president of the Men's Club, Norton Beilenson, made the customary presentation he was standing before the man who had trained him for his own Bar Mitzvah years before.

Hazzan Gowseiow, whose association with B'nai Amoona began in 1920, trained during his long, productive career about 1,800 boys and girls for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The learning process, while sometimes not so pleasant, was always successful. As Rabbi Halpern once said regarding the Bar Mitzvah preparation, ". . . we've never lost a boy yet." Hazzan Gowseiow was an artist with minimal patience for youngsters who did not take their studies seriously. If a child became unruly or didn't practice, he would yell or rap knuckles to get attention. The result was that children towed the line with him and worked hard. Once the *hazzan* saw the child cared about what he was doing, he would make jokes and the atmosphere would become less tense. ". . . when they call me 'Chaz' instead of 'Chazan' I know we are friends." Years later at some chance meeting, a grown man eager to renew acquaintance, would stop Hazzan Gow-

seiow with the words, "Don't you remember me? You taught me my *maftir*."[16]

The congregation's current cantor, Hazzan Leon Lissek, knew Hazzan Gowseiow during the last three years of his predecessor's life and remembers him as a dedicated cantor and a great musician. "He would sleep and eat cantorial music." Hazzan Gowseiow was a "cantor's cantor," a model of what younger colleagues aspire to be. Hazzan Joseph Levine described the reception accorded Gowseiow at the Cantors' Assembly Convention in 1967 when the elderly *hazzan* rose to sing the grace. The voice "a little dusty perhaps, but sparkling still . . . like old wine in a cellar stored jug. . . . And the line of his chant . . . and the fervor and sincerity behind it . . . devoid of frills or other deviants from the molten gold of the tradition of his childhood . . . swept along every responsive soul in that gala audience. . . . And when he stepped back from the microphone . . . people remained standing . . . and they applauded for five minutes. . . ."[17]

Hazzan Gowseiow was a man who remained youthful throughout a long life. After losing his wife, Rose, he married Tillie Cornick on November 8, 1947. The couple enjoyed many years together, sharing a common passion for music.[18] Once Hazzan Gowseiow attributed his longevity to the inspiration he derived from cantorial and Jewish music. He retired in 1960 after 40 years as *hazzan* of B'nai Amoona, but in 1965–66 and again in 1968–69, when the congregation was without a cantor, he came out of retirement for two more years of service. Even in retirement, music governed his days. During these years Hazzan Gowseiow devoted himself to composing and arranging a substantial collection of *hazzanut* or cantorial recitatives.[19]

On the second day of Passover in 1969, Jacob Gowseiow celebrated his 50-year association with B'nai Amoona. In his sermon that day Rabbi Lipnick paraphrased a famous parable when he asked:

> Hazzan Gowseiow, how do we bless you?
> Shall we wish you success as a Hazzan? You have achieved that,
> Shall we wish you high position? You occupy very high position among us.
> Shall we wish you honor? You are one of the most revered and honored colleagues in the American Cantorate.

Therefore, let us wish you this:
May it be God's will that all your children be like you.
Your natural children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
All of the 1,800 children, whom you helped to admit into the adult fellowship of Israel.
And, all of the literally thousands of your spiritual children, who learned from you and who were elevated, through you, to a greater appreciation and understanding of the faith.
May they be like you![20]

These three longtime servants of B'nai Amoona—Rabbi Halpern, Hazzan Gowseiow and Shamas Katz—were not forgotten after their deaths. Shortly before his death, Rabbi Halpern cooperated with his son-in-law, Rabbi Bernard Raskas, in selecting the sermons that he wished to leave "as a heritage to his congregation and to his grandchildren." The result was *A Son of Faith*, which was published with a subsidy from the B'nai Amoona Sisterhood. The Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern Educational Foundation perpetuated Rabbi Halpern's lifelong commitment to Judaism by providing funds for present and former students of the B'nai Amoona Religious School who wanted to pursue careers as rabbis, cantors, educators and community workers within the conservative movement. The school wing of B'nai Amoona synagogue was named after Rabbi Halpern. In 1965, the St. Louis Rabbinical Association remembered Rabbi Halpern, one of the organization's founders, by presenting B'nai Amoona with a *mezuzah* in his honor designed by artist, Ludwig Wolpert.[21]

Hazzan Gowseiow's most meaningful memorial was his own legacy, the two-volume work of cantorial recitatives which was published in his lifetime with a subsidy from the Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern Educational Foundation. Entitled, *Neginot Yaakov*, the collection has been valued by both fledgling *hazzanim* and masters of Jewish liturgical music. In addition, after Gowseiow's death, his family established a scholarship in his name for students entering the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary.[22]

The B'nai Amoona Library was renamed in memory of the Rev. Isidor Katz, whose private library was added to the collection. For many years Shamas Katz's son, William, provided the

funds for the annual *kallah*, which was named in his father's honor.[23]

Just as these years saw the passing of an older generation, they also saw a number of new faces at B'nai Amoona. The duration of their stays varied, as did the impact they made. In many instances their contributions to the congregation were quite significant and some are remembered with love by those who knew them.

Among those best remembered is Rabbi Arnold Asher. He came to B'nai Amoona immediately after his ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary in June 1963. The congregation was too big to function with just one rabbi; so Rabbi Asher became the first assistant rabbi under Rabbi Lipnick. His welcome was of a kind that no one anticipated. Immediately after the holidays in the fall of 1963, Rabbi Lipnick entered the hospital for a back operation that kept him from his duties for nearly two months. As a result, Rabbi Asher, just a few months out of the seminary, suddenly found himself responsible for all the rabbinical duties of a major congregation. But the young rabbi rose to the occasion. "He conducted services, planned the religious and educational program of the congregation and ministered to the spiritual needs of the congregants. He did this with great warmth and effectiveness."[24]

This promising beginning was indicative of the relationship that Rabbi Asher formed with the congregation in the years that followed. Commenting on that relationship, Rabbi Lipnick said "the *shidduch* could hardly have been better." Rabbi Asher's contribution included systemizing and intensifying the College of Jewish Studies program, significantly increasing the number of children attending Jewish summer camps, establishing the B'nai Amoona Student Involvement Corps and improving the Adult Study Institute. In recognition of the role Rabbi Asher was playing, the congregation promoted him in 1965 to associate rabbi.[25]

While reluctant to see him go, the congregation wished Rabbi Asher well in 1967, when he left to become associate rabbi at neighboring Shaare Zedek.[26] Following the death of Rabbi Ephraim Epstein, Arnold Asher became rabbi of that congregation. His many friends at B'nai Amoona were pleased that he remained in St. Louis, where, until his death in 1978, he was one of the best-loved figures in the community.

Rabbi Sheldon Switkin became B'nai Amoona's next "second" rabbi. Since Rabbi Switkin had already spent two years as a chaplain with the U.S. Air Force, he was brought in as associate rabbi.[27] Rabbi Switkin, who remained for more than six years, became much more extensively involved in the congregation than was usual for a rabbi in the junior position. This was largely due to the extraordinary circumstances prevalent during the period he was with the congregation. During 1967–73, the years of Rabbi Switkin's tenure, B'nai Amoona experienced considerable instability among its religious and educational staff. In 1968, the educational director gave notice he was leaving so late in the season that it was impossible to find a replacement. Even during the following year, when there was ample time to conduct a search, the personnel committee found a dearth of suitable candidates. As a result, Rabbi Switkin took over the administration of the religious school for two years, a role that neither he nor Rabbi Asher before him had been expected to fill. In the fall of 1968, the cantor's contract was terminated and both rabbis took over some of his duties. Then in 1970–71, Rabbi Lipnick took a sabbatical to complete work for his doctorate. Rabbi Switkin was called upon to assume virtually all of his colleague's rabbinical and pastoral duties. In recognition of this fact, the word "associate" was dropped from Rabbi Switkin's title and he became "rabbi."[28]

Rabbi Switkin who remained at B'nai Amoona until November 1973, recalls his years with the congregation fondly. The congregation "felt that they needed and deserved two rabbis," and consequently gave both men "a great deal of love, respect and *kovod*," Switkin said. He expressed gratitute too for the opportunities afforded him, "I was able to be involved in everything . . . and for me it was marvelous. To this day we still receive New Year cards from over 200 people from St. Louis." The rabbi has returned to St. Louis on several occasions to perform weddings for old friends. Since leaving B'nai Amoona, Rabbi Switkin has held pulpits in New York and Columbus, Ohio.[29]

In August 1974, Rabbi Sanford Tucker, newly ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, came to B'nai Amoona as rabbi/educational director. His main interest was in education and he had taught at Camp Ramah and at several religious schools during his student days. After two years with the congregation, Rab-

bi Tucker decided to concentrate entirely on Jewish education. He left in June 1976 to take a position in a Jewish day school in Charlotte, North Carolina.[30]

For the next two years the congregation was without a second rabbi. Then in July 1978, Rabbi Jack Riemer came as a scholar-in-residence. Rabbi Riemer, who had been spiritual leader of Beth Abraham congregation in Dayton, Ohio, was no stranger to B'nai Amoona members. In 1973, he had led the fall *kallah,* during which time he lectured and discussed Jewish prayer, the Psalms and the Mahzor. Rabbi Riemer has to his credit a long list of publications, including *New Prayers for the High Holy Days, The First Words of Prayer, Jewish Insights into the Social Issues of Our Time* and most currently, *Jewish Reflections on Death.* He is also a regular contributor to numerous journals of Jewish and general thought both here and abroad. While in St. Louis, Rabbi Riemer began a column in the *St. Louis Jewish Light* on the *sedra* of the week.[31]

Rabbi Riemer and his wife were immediately welcomed to B'nai Amoona as part of the "family." The members responded to the rabbi's warmth and they were gripped by his sermons. When Rabbi Riemer left in May 1978 to become rabbi of a congregation in California, Rabbi Lipnick had this to say about his friend and colleague.

> I, as many of my colleagues in the Rabbinate and as much of the American Jewish community, are students of Rabbi Riemer. We have learned from him and we have been enriched by him, particularly by the uniquely personal messages which he derives from our traditional sources. Rabbi Riemer's insightful comments on the Bible, his unique way of finding personal, relevant messages in the tradition and his engaging presentation of that material, has made his sermons, his book reviews and his other writings among the most influential and perceptive on the American Jewish scene.[32]

Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen, a native of Australia, arrived a few months later to become the congregation's next associate rabbi. His background was quite distinct from that of his predecessors. Rabbi Cohen had been serving as the European director of the World Council of Synagogues, which meant his congregation was virtually all of Europe. He traveled from one Jewish commu-

nity to another, wherever his rabbinical services were required.[33] While at B'nai Amoona, Rabbi Cohen has devoted much of his time to the young people of the congregation, from the preschoolers to young married couples.

After the retirement of Hazzan Gowseiow, B'nai Amoona had some difficulty in finding a steady replacement for him. From 1960 to 1965, Cantor Jacob Renzer served the congregation. He was succeeded in 1966 by Cantor Joseph Levine who remained until 1968. Then in June 1969, Cantor Leon Lissek became B'nai Amoona's *hazzan*.[34]

Born in Paris, France on February 8, 1936, Leon Lissek immigrated to the United States in 1950 with his mother, step-father and two brothers. The family settled in Buffalo, New York, where young Leon continued his secular and religious education. In 1958, he entered the University of Buffalo and graduated from there two years later with an associate degree in business and a diploma in music. Lissek then entered the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1966.

While a student and for two years thereafter, Hazzan Lissek served as cantor of Ramat El congregation in Philadelphia. Through friends in the congregation he met his future wife, Michal Chasin, and they married on June 16, 1968. The couple have three children: Devorah, Shmuel and Shira.

As cantor of B'nai Amoona, Hazzan Lissek sings at all services and on many other occasions. He is responsible for the adult choir. He works with each child for nine to 12 months in preparation for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. He is a freqent participant in concerts sponsored by the Jewish community and is a founder and current president of the St. Louis Circle of Jewish Music. He has made two recordings of cantorial and Jewish music and conducts a weekly radio program, "The Cantor's Voice."[35]

Following the Rev. Katz's retirement, Jacob Sheinbein took over as *shamas* and he has been serving the congregation in that capacity ever since.[36] Born on January 15, 1905, Jacob Sheinbein immigrated from Russia in 1921. His family settled in St. Louis, where he met Edith Komm whom he married on June 3, 1934. The couple's four children have all affiliated with the congrega-

tion and his 11 grandchildren are, on his late wife's side, the fifth generation at B'nai Amoona. In 1977, Mrs. Sheinbein became the *mashgiach* of the B'nai Amoona kitchens and when she died in 1980, Mr. Sheinbein took over these duties as well.

In February 1981, the Men's Club honored Shamas Sheinbein at the Israel Bonds dinner. Despite harsh winter weather, a substantial crowd turned out to express appreciation to this kind, selfless, gentle man.

> Mr. Sheinbein's dedication and devotion to his personal family and to his extended B'nai Amoona "family" and friends is known by all. Mr. Sheinbein is known to awaken at 4:30 a.m. to buy fresh bagels for the *minyan* breakfasts at B'nai Amoona. It is also true that in bad weather Mr. Sheinbein has walked six blocks in snow and ice to catch a bus to get to *shul* in time to open its doors. Everyone who has had the good fortune of knowing, loving and being with Mr. Sheinbein has been touched by his warmth, gentleness, concern, sense of humor, dedication and love for life, people and Judaism![37]

Extensive changes in personnel tell only part of the story of the congregation during the past two decades. B'nai Amoona also found itself facing a broad range of new and pressing issues. In some cases the problems were not unfamiliar, but rather they emerged with such urgency as to appear quite threatening. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of great social ferment. The fabric of society was rent by public protest, marching in the streets and rioting. Old values were rejected and new ones espoused. It was a time for experimentation with sex, drugs and religious beliefs. Jewish children in disproportionate numbers, it seemed, were in the forefront of these movements. Parents, who had raised their children in observant homes, brought them regularly to synagogue and sent them to religious school, were baffled by much of what was happening. Instead of growing up to be committed Jews, some of these young people were putting their faith in social causes and in the process cutting their roots.

The results were alarming. In 1962, Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, warned, "As Jews, we have to fear ignorance of Judaism, and indifference to the Synagogue, far more than we have to fear anti-Semitism." At

the installation of officers in 1964, Rabbi Lipnick lamented, "Judaism is at a low ebb in our midst. . . . The fact is our commitment to Judaism is very tenuous and highly superficial. . . . My single desire is to inspire a commitment to Yiddishkeit—on the part of our youth and our adults, and everyone who is in any way associated with our Congregation."[38]

Intermarriage was no longer something that happened in other people's families. B'nai Amoona members saw their own children and those of their friends taking non-Jewish spouses. While the figures on intermarriage are highly speculative, the trend is unmistakable. Based on data for 1957, Nathan Glazer estimated the rate of intermarriage at 3.5 percent. However, since this ratio applied for the Jewish population as a whole, it was artificially low. Arthur Hertzberg pointed out that if the young people were separated out of the sample, then 15 percent to 20 percent in that age group were marrying outside the faith by 1963–64. A little more than a decade later, this same researcher concluded that 40 percent of young Jews were marrying non-Jewish partners.[39] The rapid rise in intermarriage, the falling birthrate and increasing assimilation led many to fear for the survival of the Jewish people.[40]

What could the synagogue do to recover its young? Parents and children alike had to be better informed of the dangers awaiting them. There were programs on drug abuse and on intermarriage. Classes were scheduled to make Jews more knowledgeable about proselytizing sects. An earnest effort was made to affirm the positive role of the family as the repository of Jewish identity. The rabbis continued to stress the importance of traditional observance. Education became a tool for making Judaism "relevant" to youngsters.[41]

Parents were urged to confront openly the issues that concerned the young.

> We must speak with them rather than talk at them. We must enter into a true discussion of what is on their minds rather than use precious time in the attempt to force upon them routine, unimaginative pat answers to obsolete questions. Our task [is], to cultivate free enquiry and creative expression while at the same time we portray by example the Jewish way of life as a legitimate answer to a meaningful existence in the twentieth century.[42]

Another way of coming to grips with the problem was by making the synagogue a socially active institution. Social concerns were not new to the Jewish people. Certainly Rabbi Halpern used his pulpit to declaim against injustice wherever he found it. During the Depression he castigated employers who deprived their workers of sustenance and he accused financiers of being worse criminals than Al Capone because of their manipulations of the stock market.[43] What made the 1960s and early 1970s different was the emphasis on activism. In 1964 Rabbi Lipnick wrote:

> There is the tendency in all religious institutions—and we were no exception—to view Social Action as being of no special concern to religion. Judaism however, as distinguished from Jewish institutions, abhors such a dichotomy. One of the major trusts of Judaism, if not the major thrust, has been the encouragement of the kind of Social Action, such as civil rights, which helps to bring society closer to what is called the Kingdom of Heaven.[44]

Rabbi Lipnick thrust himself into the middle of the crisis in 1965 by joining a group of more than 50 clergymen from St. Louis who went to Selma, Alabama, to protest the denial of voting rights to blacks. The demonstration required great personal courage on the part of those involved. Just days before a white minister from Boston, the Rev. James Reeb, had been bludgeoned so severely by hostile whites that he subsequently died from his injuries. After returning home, Rabbi Lipnick received an anonymous letter threatening his life and the lives of his family. In Selma, the group was prevented by a phalanx of armed and helmeted police from completing its peaceful march to the courthouse, yet the participants felt they had accomplished what they set out to do. Their presence signaled a national concern for what was taking place in this small Southern town and helped to inhibit further brutality. They also demonstrated that white religious leaders were prepared to stand with the blacks in their fight for civil rights.[45]

At home B'nai Amoona supported efforts to rehabilitate deteriorating neighborhoods in University City. As the once largely Jewish community experienced rapid integration, formerly prosperous areas, including those in the vicinity of the synagogue, verged on becoming slums. If the process was to be halted and re-

versed, considerable funds had to be committed to a program of renovation. On Yom Kippur in 1961, Rabbi Halpern spoke favorably about an urban renewal measure soon to be voted on by the public. When the referendum was passed by an overwhelming vote, Mayor Nathan Kaufman expressed his thanks. "I am confident that the substantial majority is in good measure due to the fine reception your congregation gave to your message. When the history of University City is recorded I am certain that the community will take note and long remember the responsiveness of B'nai Amoona Congregation on Civic matters."[46]

In the years that followed, the B'nai Amoona rabbi and board consistently urged members to support urban renewal efforts. Rabbi Lipnick pointed out that regardless of where B'nai Amoona congregants lived, they were citizens of University City because this was the locale of their spiritual home. After the congregation decided to buy land farther west, the rabbi called upon the Social Action Committee to redouble its efforts to keep University City strong.[47]

In 1968, the Social Action Committee began an ambitious campaign to improve the quality of life for poor blacks in north St. Louis. The committee joined in a Block Partnership Program with the residents of 2433 O'Fallon Street in the Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex. The first tangible results of the partnership came in January 1969, when for several consecutive weekends B'nai Amoona members and tenants of the building cleaned and painted the hallways and stairwells. The B'nai Amoona group furnished the materials and a good part of the labor force.[48]

From these beginnings the Block Partnership Program grew into a substantial enterprise. At the end of 1970, the chairman of the Social Action Committee reported that B'nai Amoona was running evening classes in reading, typing, sewing, and arts and crafts for Pruitt-Igoe residents. The congregation provided the instructors, class materials and the machines. The previous summer, the congregation organized daily transportation for 25 youngsters who were taking a course in botany at Shaw's Garden. The B'nai Amoona group purchased and installed safety peepholes in apartment doors. The committee planned to set up a four-day-a week child-care center for the small children of

working mothers. In addition, they donated hundreds of items of clothing, outfitted two baseball teams and with their partners engaged in a number of social activities throughout the year.[49]

The Block Partnership Program was not the only outlet for social action. The Sisterhood sent a small group of women to the Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church at Garrison and Lucas Avenues—diagonally across from where the B'nai Amoona synagogue once stood. The women tutored in reading and arithmetic a group ranging in age from teen-agers to the elderly.[50]

In other areas of social action, B'nai Amoona members have become increasingly involved in protesting the suppression of Soviet Jewry and in aiding those who are able to leave. In recent years the women of the congregation, in particular, have actively supported the Kosher Meals on Wheels program, which provides hot, nutritious kosher meals for the elderly and housebound.[51]

B'nai Amoona could long claim among its numbers many of the most prominent Zionists in St. Louis, and during the 1960s and 1970s, the congregation as a whole became even more intensely involved in aiding the state of Israel. Although B'nai Amoona congregants had participated in the Israel Bonds Campaign from its inception, in 1960, the board undertook to sponsor the annual drive within the congregation, thus insuring a marked increase in contributions. In the wake of the Yom Kippur war (1973), the congregation pledged to purchase $1 million in Israel Bonds and during the year 1973–74, it actually exceeded its self-appointed quota by $200,000.[52]

As important as these donations were, fund-raising was by no means the limit of B'nai Amoona's involvement in the Jewish homeland. In March 1973, the congregation held a combined *kallah* and Israel Pilgrimage Festival to honor Israel's 25th anniversary. The guest speaker for the weekend-long event was Prof. Moshe Davis, head of the Hebrew University's Institute on Contemporary Jewry. Two days of study sessions and services preceeded the festival which opened on Saturday night. A major purpose of the celebration was to give participants "a feel for the country." To create the right atmosphere, the B'nai Amoona auditorium was decorated to resemble the old city of Jerusalem. The focus of all attention was a hand-constructed replica of the Western Wall. Harry Freedman, who painted the structure, re-

ported that the final work was so authentic some people were moved to tears by the sight. Twenty-two booths ringing the auditorium featured Israeli imports and proceeds from the sales went to the state of Israel.[53]

Following the Yom Kippur war, the congregation's Israel Affairs Committee sponsored a series of communitywide "teach-ins" to keep the public informed about the situation in the Middle East. Throughout the year of crisis (1973–74), these forums were held on a monthly basis. The Israel Affairs Committee continued its educative role the next year by means of public forums, discussion groups for B'nai Amoona members and a weekend *kallah* away from home. At the biennial convention of the United Synagogue of America in 1975, the congregation was recognized for the excellence of its program on Israel by a Solomon Schechter award.[54]

During the anxious period following the Yom Kippur war, President Al Fleishman led the way in making a commitment to Israel. Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, Fleishman flew to Israel to observe the crisis firsthand. When he returned home, he was able to convey to the congregation the terrible effects the war was having on the population and country.[55]

In April 1974, Fleishman persuaded a group of B'nai Amoona members to tour Israel. While this was not the first group trip to Israel sponsored by B'nai Amoona, there was a special significance to visiting at this time. The participants wanted to bolster Israeli morale, contribute to Israel's economy and demonstrate to Arab terrorists that American Jewry would not be frightened off by their tactics.[56] In the years since, B'nai Amoona has sponsored numerous tours to Israel, variously led by Al Fleishman, Rabbi Lipnick and other members.

Ties between the congregation and Israel have been forged in other ways as well. Since 1972, B'nai Amoona youngsters have been participating in a summer program at Moshav Nir Galim. The congregation has supported the conservative (M'sorati) movement in Israel by forming links with representative congregations. Most recently, the board recommended that members support Ramot Zion congregation in Jerusalem, whose *rebbitzen* Debbi Kantor Price, is a former student and teacher in the B'nai Amoona Religious School. Approximately 30 young people from

B'nai Amoona have settled in Israel. Al Fleishman correctly stated, "B'nai Amoona has always been one of Israel's staunchest supporters. By our visits to Israel . . . by our contributions to the Federation . . . through the purchase of Israel Bonds . . . by the activities of the Israel Affairs Committee . . . and by many other things we do we show our love for Israel and our support for its people."[57]

A new issue that has had a pronounced impact in the last decade is the role of women in the synagogue. In 1972–73, following a lengthy self-appraisal, the congregation concluded, "The level of dissatisfaction about women's role in worship is minimal so far, but it is evident that this will be an area of increasing concern."[58] While traditional Judaism clearly places women in a secondary role, this position was not seriously challenged until the women's movement stimulated a close examination of all social institutions. Religious institutions came in for particular scrutiny because of their claim to be guided by moral principles. Is it moral to treat women as second-class citizens? This was the question raised by young, educated, observant women. Deanna Kiem effectively caught the mood of the times in a poem she wrote when she was in the second grade.

I am a girl so no tallis for me,
My brother's a boy so tallis for he.
A kepah for him and he's all set,
While all I need on my head is some net.[59]

The easiest place for women to expand their role was within the lay power structure or the Board of Trustees. In fact, in 1973, when the board voted on several issues regarding women on the agenda of the United Synagogue of America convention, a more active role for women in the congregation was the only item that received overwhelmingly favorable support.

President William Rosenbaum noted in 1962 that women had been represented on B'nai Amoona's board for more than 40 years.[60] However, they clearly had been a tiny minority. From 1960 to 1973, women constituted only 11 percent of the board.[61] Since 1974, the average has risen to 26 percent. However, it was not until 1970, when Mrs. Elaine (William) Wolff was elected secretary, that a woman served on the executive committee,

where much of the real decision making takes place. Over the next decade the position of secretary became the women's office on the board. Then in 1979, Mrs. Mildred (Ted) Fischer, after having served a two-year term as secretary, broke the barrier by becoming a vice president of the congregation. In 1980, Mrs. Fischer was joined on the executive committee by Mrs. Barbara (Harry) Shechter who was elected secretary, making it the first time women held two out of the seven executive offices.[62]

In 1973, growing resentment over the Bat Mitzvah ceremony came to a head. Parents felt that although their daughters worked as hard and were expected to fulfill the same requirements as boys, they were being shortchanged. The "living congregation," as Rabbi Lipnick put it, was the Shabbat service on Saturday morning. The service scheduled on Friday night had no basis in tradition and in time it became just a Bat Mitzvah service, attended almost exclusively by guests of the families involved. More and more people, including the rabbis, became unhappy with this arrangement. One of the complaints was that the "services held on Friday night were empty with very little content." Exacerbating the problem, was the fact that the later Friday night service was held only once a month, meaning that as many as four girls might become Bat Mitzvah at one time. In order to keep the service a reasonable length, the girls were each given only a fragment to perform.[63] Clearly, girls were not being accorded the same recognition as boys.

When Albert Becker, chairman of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Committee, moved at a board meeting that the Bat Mitzvah be incorporated as part of the Shabbat morning service, the motion received majority support but there were five dissenting votes. According to the bylaws, if a ritual change is opposed by five or more trustees, then the proposal must be submitted to a general meeting of the congregation. Here the measure must receive a two-thirds majority vote. Such a meeting was called for April 2, 1973 and after much discussion, the motion finally carried.[64]

While young girls were now able to participate in the Shabbat morning service, the same privilege was not so easily granted to adult women, who in the past have not been welcomed on the *bema*. Reasons for the exclusion ranged from a superstition regarding women of menstruating age touching the Torah to the

tradition prohibiting men from hearing female voices during services for fear they might be distracted from prayer.

Uncertainty about how to respond to the issue has inevitably led to inconsistency. For example, at B'nai Amoona there are no women in the adult choir, although the youth choir is mixed.[65] However, adult female relatives of the B'not Mitzvah are allowed to read the prayers for the United States and Israel. Moreover, Al Fleishman insisted, as a condition of his installation as president in 1973, that the Sisterhood be allowed to make a presentation to the Bar and Bat Mitzvah children, as did the Men's Club.[66]

The congregation does not count women in the *minyan*; so if fewer than 10 men show up, the daily service is canceled. This causes resentment among women. Also women, including young girls, are not permitted to read from the Torah. The *maftir* or Torah portion read by a Bar Mitzvah boy, is assigned to a male relative, usually the father, during a Bat Mitzvah ceremony. It is interesting to note that the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international body of conservative rabbis, ruled as early as 1955 that women may be granted *aliyot* on special occasions and in 1973, the Assembly advised that women may be included in the *minyan*.[67]

It was just a matter of time before the question of adult women participating to a greater extent in the Shabbat service was raised. In May 1980, the issue was presented to the board in the form of the following resolution.

a) An adult woman may become Bat Mitzva providing she completes a prescribed educational program. The Bat Mitzva ceremony shall conform to the present form of Bat Mitzva.
b) A person of any age, including an adult woman, shall henceforth be permitted to celebrate a Hanukat Bat Mitzva on the anniversary of her Bat Mitzva.
c) A woman who has become Bat Mitzva may be called upon to chant the Haftora at any time, not only on the anniversary of her Bat Mitzva.

Although the proposal was approved by a simple majority of the trustees, there were more than five dissenting votes, which meant it had to be submitted to the congregation as a whole. At

the general meeting called on June 30. 1980, the change was approved with the support of three-fourths of those present.[68]

Subsequently, the Ritual Committee laid out the conditions for an adult Bat or Bar Mitzvah. During a course of study over approximately two years, the candidate must attain proficiency in Hebrew, Jewish thought and Jewish practice. The candidate is expected to work with the cantor in preparing the Haftorah and he or she must attend Shabbat services regularly.[69] To date no adult Bat or Bar Mitzvah has been celebrated in the congregation; however, on the second day of Sukkot in September 1980, Harriet Brown became the first woman to chant the Haftorah at B'nai Amoona.[70]

The problem is not yet resolved. There is no doubt that some women will continue to press for the right to be recognized as equal to men in terms of participation in the religious service. Just as certainly, the traditionalists within the congregation will vehemently oppose any expansion of the women's role in the service. Although extremely frustrating, this type of confrontation is, nonetheless, creative. The tension generated by the need to change on the one hand, while holding fast to tradition on the other, is at the heart of Conservative Judaism and is what gives the movement its vitality. In the last analysis change does take place, but slowly and reluctantly, which helps to preserve the core of tradition.

In 1971, President Sam Krupnick, reporting on a United Synagogue of America convention from which he had just returned, said he had found nearly universal agreement that the Jewish people were in trouble. Speaker after speaker noted that if Judaism was to survive, something must be done to stimulate a positive identification among Jews with their Jewish heritage. The home and community were no longer playing the role they had in the past in transmitting Jewish values. It was up to Jewish education to step into the breach and ensure that the next generation would be Jewish.[71]

Neither the problem nor the answer was new, although there did seem to be a new sense of alarm about the future. "America is killing us!" Rabbi Lipnick once exclaimed.[72] The threat did not come from pogroms or gas chambers, but rather from the ease with which so many Jews abandoned their Jewish identity and

assimilated into the greater population. Some leaders even began to speculate that the American Jewish community might disappear altogether in the 21st century. Could Jewish education meet the challenge?

B'nai Amoona Religious School reached its highest total enrollment in 1963 when 760 children registered for Sunday school, 320 for Hebrew school and 47 for the College of Jewish Studies. The peak enrollment for Hebrew school came one year earlier when 356 children attended the daily sessions. From this point there was a gradual but steady decline in enrollment, which had an undermining effect. By 1966, Rabbi Lipnick was asking, "How much of a population dip . . . can a school take before its quality, not to mention its future, is in jeopardy?"[73]

While for a time there was hope that the shrinking enrollments might be just a temporary condition, it quickly became apparent that it was an irreversible trend. In part the trend reflected an overall drop in the number of school-age children, as those born during the post-World War II baby boom reached maturity. In addition, B'nai Amoona was facing a familiar problem. The Jewish population was moving westward again, leaving the synagogue behind. Parents living in the far western part of St. Louis County found it too difficult to drive their children back and forth to religious school five days a week.

The congregation tried to deal with the problem by eliminating one of the daily sessions in 1965. Two years later the board began talking about setting up a branch school in the western part of the county or even moving the whole school farther west. By 1969, there was no longer any choice; the school had to relocate if it was to hold on to its students.[74] However, even this solution did not resolve the most critical problem of all. It had simply become too expensive for B'nai Amoona to run a quality religious school.

B'nai Amoona's problems with its religious school were not unique. Consequently, the Jewish Federation called upon Rabbi Lipnick to head a committee appointed to examine the educational requirements of the entire St. Louis Jewish community. The conclusion reached after exhaustive study was that the Jewish Federation should establish a Central Agency for Jewish Education (C.A.J.E). One of the responsibilities of this agency would

be to develop a communitywide, elementary Hebrew school system, which would replace the separate afternoon schools operated by the congregations and the Board of Jewish Education.[75]

The experiment in community education began in 1971–72 when the Aleph and Bet classes (third and fourth graders in public school) from B'nai Amoona were combined with the equivalent classes from the now defunct Board of Jewish Education under the supervision of the Central Agency for Jewish Education. Leah Hakimian, who had been administering the B'nai Amoona Religious School, was asked to head the new community Hebrew school. The experiment proved a success, and by 1973, C.A.J.E. was responsible for the first four years of Hebrew school—the Aleph, Bet, Gimmel and Daled classes. Initially, the classes were held at Temple Israel, which resolved B'nai Amoona's problem of location .[76]

Today C.A.J.E. administers a single, elementary-level, afternoon Hebrew school for the entire St. Louis community. The classes are offered at two different locations for children living in the eastern and western sections of the county, which alleviates some of the problems created by a school being a great distance from the child's home. Also a unified program enhances the possibility of employing highly qualified teachers and supporting them with in-service training and a superior resource center.[77] The problem of enrollment, however, has not been resolved. Even given the fact that there are fewer Jewish children of school age now than there were 20 years ago, the figures are still discouraging. For 1980–81, the total enrollment in the C.A.J.E. elementary school was 309, which is less than B'nai Amoona achieved when the congregational Hebrew school was at its peak. Out of the total number of students, B'nai Amoona contributed 103 or one-third, the single largest group, but this is less than the number of children (125) who attended Hebrew classes at B'nai Amoona in 1948.[78]

Until 1981, the children attended C.A.J.E. classes three days a week and returned to their own synagogues on Sunday mornings so that contact was maintained between the children and the congregation. But serious difficulties evolved under this arrangement. Since the children attended religious school six hours a week in a different locale, they identified that time and place

with their Jewish education. Many didn't really see the point of coming to B'nai Amoona once a week for an hour-and-40-minute session[79]

A more successful process of integration was achieved with the pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Hay class. Students were integrated back into B'nai Amoona because their twice-a-week classes were held in the synagogue and they were required to attend Shabbat services. They were able to come closer to Rabbi Lipnick through their open-ended sessions with him each Wednesday afternoon. They were brought closer to their families because emphasis was placed on the Bar or Bat Mitzvah being a family event. In 1980–81, the year began with a five-week study program for both parents and children to prepare them for the new responsibilities the child assumes when he or she religiously becomes an adult. Finally, they formed a close-knit unit of their own by their supportive presence at one another's Bar or Bat Mitzvah and by sharing such occasions as the Hay class Shabbat, dinner and *kallah*.[80]

The concept of community which was developed residually among the Hay class became the primary focus for the post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Vov class. The concept was developed by Rabbi Lipnick who explained his thinking in this way.

> Our educational program was generally acknowledged as relatively effective. Yet the doubt gnawed all the while, the doubt that, despite all of our apparent successes, we really weren't doing the job. The children were not really learning very much and, worse, their commitment to Jewishness was really not very deep. . . . I became driven by the conviction that unless something were done soon, unless some alternatives to the Religious School as we know it were developed, another generation—or two, or three—would be lost.[81]

In considering what this alternative might be, Rabbi Lipnick thought of the very positive effects of Jewish camping on most youngsters. Many B'nai Amoona children spent their summers at a Jewish camp where they became immersed in a total Jewish environment. This experience reinforced a commitment to Judaism in a way the school never could achieve. On a smaller scale the B'nai Amoona Sunday school graduating class had for some years been holding a successful annual *kallah* at a country retreat. Finally, a prototype program called B.A.S.I.C. (B'nai Amoona

Student Involvement Corps) had been developed by Rabbi Lipnick and carried out by Rabbi Asher. The limitations of this program helped Rabbi Lipnick lay a firmer foundation for the Vov class experiment.[82]

The Vov class program was a non-conventional approach to education, involving annually nine weekend *kallot* held away from home. The students worked on a theme which they chose with the help of their teacher. While the teacher prepared extensively, the sessions were conducted in a highly informal manner which encouraged free-floating discussion and allowed the topic to develop in unexpected directions. Often this led to a keener appreciation of ethical principles than could have been achieved in any other way. Between the monthly sessions, the class spent two days a week at the synagogue preparing for the next weekend *kallah*.

The purpose of the experiment emerged only as the year progressed. A 14-year-old participant expressed it as "learning to live together Jewishly." The total experience, involving many levels of interaction, gave rise to a Jewish community of peers—"a single, functioning, integrated, family-like, life-enhancing *community*." In retrospect, it occurred to Rabbi Lipnick that this was what had been missing from Jewish education.

The once intact Jewish community of University City had disappeared, leaving nothing in its place for which the school could serve as gateway. Students were being prepared to live as Jews, but they did not live in a Jewish environment. This made much of what they studied seem irrelevant. "I am convinced that an educational system that tries to function in a vacuum, that tries to prepare children without a context in which their studies make sense and have meaning, is bound to fail." What the Vov class did was provide a substitute community.[83]

When the first year of the Vov class was over, the students "demanded" that they continue into the next year. Reconstituted as Tzion, the group continued its classes twice a week and its weekend *kallot*. But what gave the Tzion class its overriding purpose was its goal of going to Israel the following summer as a group. In June 1972, thirteen students and their teacher-counselors, Ron and Susie Wolfson, left for Nir Galim, and a new program had evolved.[84]

Nir Galim is an orthodox *moshav* or agricultural settlement

which is organized into family units. Each American youngster is placed in a family where there is a teen-ager of the same sex and approximate age. The American student lives the life of the Israeli host. He or she works in the fields, observes religious ritual, shares the same friends and engages in the same recreation. The "tour-bus" view of the country, which is the usual experience for most foreign visitors, is replaced by an intense living situation. By adopting an Israeli life style, the American child is strengthened in his Jewish practice, knowledge and identity. In the view of all observers the program has a unique and often long-lasting impact. Many of these young people return home with a commitment to Judaism that has altered their lives.[85]

The Vov-Tzion program worked best during the first few years after its inception. The underlying concepts meshed perfectly with the times. Children entering their teens in the early 1970s were in a revolutionary mood. The Vov class experiment took this mood and turned it into constructive channels. The children were offered the opportunity to break out of traditional settings. They were invited to challenge accepted norms and chart their own way. All this was accomplished within the framework of Jewish observance, so that Judaism became an integral part of their search for meaning.

But the times have changed. Children today are more ready to take society as they find it. They are more family-oriented and less eager to form their own community. The once novel idea of weekend *kallot* is now taken for granted. Moreover the program in the past few years has suffered from weak leadership. Also, in evaluating the great success of the Vov class in the initial years, one has to take into account the extraordinary role played by the first leader, Ron Wolfson. His total involvement and personal charisma are qualities hard to duplicate.

Discussing whether the Vov class experiment can still work, Rabbi Lipnick said, "The basic insights are still there." But as he is the first to acknowledge, the program must be altered to suit the needs and personalities of today's students. Educational Director Sherry Hecht says that more structure is needed. Young people, she says, no longer seem able to handle so much freedom. They don't know what they want to talk about and are stymied when asked to plan their own programs.[86]

One weak link in the whole program has been what to do with the children who choose not to go to Israel. The "community" formed during the Vov class is broken up. One group becomes Tzion and spends the subsequent year preparing for its trip to Israel. The other becomes Zayin and is supposed to perform service for the Jewish community. In 1980–81, the Zayin class helped immigrant teen-agers adjust to life in this country. However, the Zayin class this year was almost too small to function and certainly too small to form a community equivalent to the Tzion group. Moreover, the type of activities the Zayin class engages in do not foster the kind of cohesion the Tzion class experiences from the trip to Israel. Also the Zayin children often feel painfully cut off from their former friends when the latter become part of the rather exclusive Tzion group.[87]

Educational experimentation has not been confined to school-age children. One of the most successful educational efforts sponsored by the congregation has been the preschool. B'nai Amoona Preschool opened in September 1973 with six pupils. Under the able direction of Nancy Richard and her equally capable successor, Jan Baron, the school has flourished. Enrollment quickly expanded to the limits of the physical facility. Children two to five years old attend sessions during the school year; those three to five also enjoy a day camp during the summer months.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on making Judaism a vital part of the children's experience. The preschoolers learn about the Jewish holidays by participating in the traditions of their people. On Sukkot they decorate their own 4-foot-high *sukka* and on Hanuka they make gifts for their parents. Tu b'Shvat, Purim and Pesach are also occasions for festivities. But the most improtant celebration of all is Shabbat. Each week two children are chosen to play the Shabbat mother and father. In this role the proud little girl and boy lead the group in lighting the candles and reciting the blessings over bread and wine. Everyone sings, dances and eats the *hallah* they have helped to bake.[88]

One of the motivations for founding the preschool was the hope that it would provide the base for a conservative day school in St. Louis. After eight years this dream has come true. In January 1981, the congregation agreed to sponsor a Solomon Schechter Day School. Rabbi Howard Siegel was named the first principal

and in September 1981, the first two classes, kindergarten and first grade, opened with 21 students.[89]

The school, which is governed by a communitywide committee, has been set up as an independent, self-financing institution. B'nai Amoona's two sister conservative congregations, B'rith Sholom Kneseth Israel and Shaare Zedek, have actively supported the effort. But the man most responsible for the creation of the Solomon Schechter Day School is Rabbi Lipnick. He hopes within this closed environment to foster the growth of informed and committed young Jews. In commenting upon the vote of approval by the B'nai Amoona board, the rabbi stated that this may be the most significant step the congregation has taken for the second century. "It will prevent the voice of the Jews from being lost in an environment of assimilation."[90]

". . . the decline of Jewish life, in the past several generations, started when Jewish education passed from adults to children." Rabbi Lipnick called upon his congregants to reverse the trend by committing themselves to study. There have been numerous opportunities for B'nai Amoona members to advance their Jewish education. The Adult Study Institute, which continued until 1971 to be sponsored by the three conservative congregations, offered a variety of choices. After this date the separate programs of the conservative and reform synagogues were combined under the auspices of the St. Louis Rabbinical Association, which now makes available an elaborate course of study on a communitywide basis. The Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, as it is now known, adheres closely to the format developed in the preceding programs.[91]

In addition, B'nai Amoona members are invited to participate in the extensive educational offerings of the Sisterhood, in the County Torah sessions begun by Rabbi Switkin and currently taught by Rabbi Lipnick, in home seminars, in the Men's Club Hebrew Literacy campaign and numerous other educational programs.[92] As before, the weekend-long *kallot* offer congregants the opportunity to explore in depth a subject of Jewish interest under the guidance of a prominent leader in a particular field. In past years the *kallot* have examined such topics as new directions in Jewish education, the challenges of modernity, Jewish family life, the role of women, the Jewish cultural heritage and a host of other issues.[93]

Conscious of the numerous problems facing B'nai Amoona and the entire Jewish community, the synagogue's auxiliaries have tried to play their part in making Judaism a meaningful force in their members' lives. The Sisterhood's most significant approach to the problem can be summed up by the term *mitzva*. A Hebrew concept most closely translated as "good deeds," *mitzva* became a full-blown program, in which the Sisterhood's members were encouraged to dedicate themselves to Jewish values, study and service.

The program began in 1970 with a "Choose your New Mitzvah Day." Each participant was asked to take the first step of choosing one new *mitzva*, which she had not previously been fulfilling. It might be a course of study, attendance at services, observance of rituals, voluntary work or a contribution. But the emphasis was on involving oneself, not just making donations. In the first year the results were dramatic. Membership rose; active participation increased; more members attended services and classes; and the Sisterhood's treasury received a substantial boost.[94]

The Sisterhood confronted the undermining effects of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s by giving prominence to Jewish family life. The Jewish Family Living Series sought to strengthen the quality of life in the home. Classes in Jewish cooking and Jewish arts and crafts had the same goal. A major motivation for urging members to improve their Jewish education was the belief that if the mother was to instill in her family an appreciation for Judaism, she must herself be knowledgeable. The Sisterhood encouraged holiday and Shabbat observance. Programs such as the Sisterhood Shabbat are observed as family affairs. In the words of Past President Lorraine Susman, "The Jewish home has been one of the great forces in the survival of our people. The Jewish wife and mother must continue to create the climate for Jewish family living."[95]

New issues concerning women have also received attention. By means of programs such as, "Women: Balcony or Bema," the Sisterhood has explored what roles in the synagogue are open to its members. The Sisterhood has also confronted the Jewish views on issues of vital concern to women such as sex, abortion, birth control and marriage.[96] As its own ranks have declined to 550 from 750, the Sisterhood has asked how the organization can be

made attractive to women in a younger age group. Personal contacts, persuasion and a free baby-sitting service are means the Sisterhood has employed in its efforts to induce younger women to join the auxiliary and assume positions of leadership.[97]

The Sisterhood's strength is that it has continued to respond to change. The current president, Gloria (Sanford) Spitzer, noted that when new to her office, she attended a national convention of the National Women's League expecting to pick up ideas for her presidency. Instead, as soon as people discovered she represented B'nai Amoona, their response invariably was, "What's new, dear?" Mrs. Spitzer found that other delegates were accustomed to looking to B'nai Amoona for leadership. "The biggest thing about our Sisterhood is that we are innovative," she said.[98]

The Men's Club has had more difficulty staying abreast of the times. Although more than 300 men pay dues, only a handful show up at meetings, unless the program is of general interest to the congregation. When the younger men and Rabbi Lipnick objected to meetings devoted almost entirely to card playing, this activity was eliminated, but then the older men found less reason to attend. At this point the group lacks a base of support. Even so, the Men's Club continues to make a significant contribution to the congregation. Its members function as ushers at all religious services and the club raises a very substantial sum to support B'nai Amoona youth spending their summers at Jewish camps and in Israel.[99]

The B'nai Amoona youth program has also lost considerable ground during the past two decades. As the number of children within the congregation dwindled, so naturally did the membership pool for youth groups. The problem was aggravated by the fact that families with children were the ones most likely to be living at a great distance from the synagogue. Whereas in the past young people participating in B'nai Amoona youth activities could walk to the synagogue or get there by bus, today many need to be driven in by car. In addition, youngsters no longer turn so readily to religious institutions for social outlets. Activities sponsored by the schools or other community agencies are more likely to draw their interest.

Carolyn Kleiman, a past president of United Synagogue Youth (U.S.Y.), says she sees a reverse in this trend. The B'nai Amoona

chapter, which now numbers forty, is on the upswing, although there is still a marked imbalance in the number of girls over boys. Ms. Kleiman expects the move to new facilities in west county will also have a beneficial effect. Moreover, the hiring once again of a full-time youth director should stimulate renewed interest in the congregation's U.S.Y. program.[100]

The group for young marrieds, which now goes by the name B'nai Amoona Couples Club, presently has 26 members. In the past, membership has been twice as high. From its inception, the Couples Club was intended to integrate the younger adults into the congregation. Members acquire a circle of friends at B'nai Amoona with whom they share cultural, social and religious activities. A number of congregational leaders have passed through the ranks of the organization.[101]

Some of the goals of the Couples Club have been realized to an even greater extent in the *havurot*, the most recent sub-groups within the congregation. As Rabbi Lipnick explained it, the "B'nai Amoona orbit should surround a lot of smaller enclaves where warmth, contact and personal relationships can be engendered." A large membership permits B'nai Amoona to engage in numerous undertakings which would be otherwise prohibitive, but to ensure that individual interaction is not lost, it is necessary to establish small, intimate groups within the congregation. This is the purpose of the *havurot*.[102]

The first *havura* at B'nai Amoona was founded in 1979. Today there are six in number, each consists of 10 to 12 family units. In creating a *havura*, there is a conscious attempt to bring together people who share common interests. While the groups tend to be homogeneous in age, this is only one criterion among many which are taken into account. The members meet once a month at one another's homes for a study session, a speaker, a holiday celebration or whatever they choose. Since the meetings usually have a Jewish orientation, many members find that Judaism is taking on more significance in their lives. Individuals, who never before built a *sukka* or concerned themselves with holiday celebrations, are now observing traditional practices within their *havurot* and perhaps their homes.

The *havurot* also bring the participants closer to the synagogue by providing them with a group of friends at B'nai Amoona. Of-

ten members will attend services together or other *shul* functions. In this way some *havurot* members are becoming more active within the congregation.[103]

While B'nai Amoona's auxiliaries provide important avenues for enriching the Jewish content of their members' lives, attendance at services remains the most important part of congregational membership. Religious observance was and continues to be the congregation's reason for existence and the occasion on which this is most directly experienced is Shabbat. Despite a general decline in religious practice throughout the American Jewish community, B'nai Amoona still attracts 300 to 400 people every Saturday morning and when a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is scheduled, that number can exceed 600.[104]

Rabbi Jack Riemer in his farewell message wrote, "The excitement and the spirit of the B'nai Amoona family at Shabbat services, or at holidays, is matched by no synagogue that we know of anywhere in the country." Hazzan Leon Lissek commented: "I am the envy of every cantor in the country," because there is a full congregation every single Shabbat. Rabbi Sheldon Switkin, who recently revisited the congregation, noted that, "Every Shabbos was exciting and I felt it again this weekend." People came because it was like "a family gathering." During his years here the rabbi found there were very few three-day-a-year Jews. The members came to services, if not every week, then once a month or several times a year.[105]

Some come to hear the rabbi's sermon, others to listen to the *hazzan* chant and still others because they enjoy their own participation. Many, no doubt, are drawn by a feeling of belonging. "It is really a great big family. People look for one another and you are noticed if you are not there. It is a nice feeling." Describing in this manner what attendance at Shabbat services means to him and many other "regulars," Past President Albert Price continued, "What I think of as the congregation is the Shabbos congregation." A person can't just come on the High Holidays or send their children to Hebrew school and expect to feel involved.[106]

Despite the tides of social change that had an erosive effect on religious commitment in the 1960s and 1970s, B'nai Amoona has held its own. Although there has been some shrinkage in membership, the decline has not been great. B'nai Amoona reached its

peak in membership in the early to middle 1960s. It is very difficult to arrive at the top figure because those who paid no dues were counted in the total in some years and excluded in others. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that at its largest B'nai Amoona consisted of close to 1,100 families.[107]

As of June 30, 1981, the congregation had 935 families, of whom 903 paid dues. Non-dues-paying members included the *Klei Kodesh*, elderly persons in nursing homes and members' newly married children who are given one year's free membership.[108] The real drop in membership represents a loss of about 150 families. Since many contend that the congregation at its peak was too big for the comfort of its members, this modest decrease is not a cause for concern.

The problem is not one of numbers but of age. In January 1972, a statistical analysis of the membership showed that 70 percent of the congregation was 50 years of age or older. Only 3 percent of the members fell into the 20-to-30 age bracket. Six percent were 30 to 35 and another 6 percent 35 to 40. In other words, only 15 percent of the members were under 40.[109]

In recent years the problem has worsened slightly. The 1980 membership roster showed that 2 percent of the members were 20 to 30; 5 percent were 30 to 35 and 6 percent were 35 to 40, for a total of 13 percent under age 40. Seventy-one percent of the congregation is over 50.[110]

There is agreement throughout the congregation that if B'nai Amoona is to secure its future, it must attract younger members. Many have believed that the major impediment to bringing in younger members has been the synagogue's location. As early as 1966, when the religious school enrollment was showing a decline, there were those who urged the congregation to purchase land farther west, where many Jews were settling. This was considered insurance; if and when B'nai Amoona had to move, the land would be available.[111]

However, a substantial segment of the congregation was opposed. The stands people took were very much influenced by the times. In 1967, when the matter came to a head, blacks were moving into University City and many whites were fleeing. Those who opposed purchasing land out west accused supporters of "abandoning University City."[112]

On December 4, 1967, a special meeting of the congregation

was called to consider purchasing a parcel of land on Conway Road. After a heated discussion, those present voted 256 to 115 in favor of purchasing the Conway Road site. But despite the 69 percent support, nothing came of the decision because the land in question was found to lie in a floodplain.[113]

Another three years passed before the Future Planning Committee was able to find a suitable location at a satisfactory price. In January 1971, the congregation was asked to approve the purchase for $270,000 of 30 acres of land on Mason and Conway Roads. This time the resolution was passed with only six dissenting votes. On March 4, 1971, B'nai Amoona purchased the site.[114]

During the next few years nothing was done with the land. Then at the annual meeting in June 1975, it was proposed that the congregation authorize a fund-raising campaign for an educational, administrative, *kallah* and social facility to be erected at Mason and Conway. The motion was defeated by a vote of 91 to 64. Rabbi Lipnick concluded that the opposition was based mainly on "the suspicion of many that a yeah vote would result in the construction of duplicate facilities which would . . . lead eventually to the abandonment of our present building."[115]

But the situation could not remain static. A growing segment of the congregation was convinced that unless B'nai Amoona established a presence in west county, it would continue to lose ground both in terms of membership and in religious school enrollment. As of 1980, 45 percent of the members lived west of Lindbergh Boulevard. And, an analysis made in 1977 showed that 63 percent of the families with children in the religious school lived in west county.[116] Not only was a growing proportion of the overall congregation moving to the far west county, but younger members with children were most likely to be found in this area. If B'nai Amoona was to attract and hold this group, it seemed the congregation must build on the Mason and Conway site. Rabbi Lipnick urged, ". . . we need a building on our land and we need it now."

> B'nai Amoona like Judaism itself, is family-oriented. Its program has always encompassed all ages, old and young, and those in between. To tolerate a B'nai Amoona without children is to damage beyond repair the high quality of our program and its importance both to our members and to the community.[117]

At the annual meeting in 1976, the congregation approved a fund-raising campaign for a multipurpose building to be constructed at Mason and Conway Roads. In December 1977, the sum authorized for this purpose was increased to $2 million. Ground was broken on June 1, 1980, and the new building was dedicated October 18, 1981.[118] B'nai Amoona at Mason and Conway now houses the congregation's religious school, a branch of C.A.J.E.'s elementary Hebrew school and the Hebrew High School, the B'nai Amoona Preschool, the Solomon Schechter Day School, the congregation's administrative offices, and the library. The building includes a large auditorium, small meeting rooms and lounges, separate meat and milk kitchens and a chapel where the daily *minyan* is held. The congregation's sanctuary continues to be located at Washington and Trinity.

Raising funds for the Mason and Conway site and building has been a major concern. Since B'nai Amoona is an older congregation, many of its members are living on fixed or limited incomes, which prohibits them from undertaking any further financial obligations. Consequently, the funds for the new building have come overwhelmingly from those able to make large donations. In addition, the Sisterhood has pledged $100,000 to the drive.[119]

The congregation's primary source of income continues to be dues. Current dues are $520 per year plus an obligatory building fund pledge from new members of $500, or $600 if paid out over five years. Even so, less than half of the membership pays at this rate. Those on reduced dues include poorer members, single persons, and couples under 35 who have no children registered in the C.A.J.E. Hebrew school.[120]

Although B'nai Amoona's dues are considered high, they are advantageous for those with children in religious school. Most congregations charge parents school fees when they enroll their children in Hebrew or Sunday school. At B'nai Amoona the entire congregation bears the cost of educating the next generation. Rabbi Halpern felt that the future of Judaism, as well as the congregation, required that parents not be turned away by high fees for the religious school. Consequently, it has always been a source of pride for B'nai Amoona that "we have never separated the school from the *shul*."[121]

In 1981, Rabbi Bernard Lipnick marked his 30th anniversary with B'nai Amoona. These have been notable years for him as

well as for the congregation. He came to St. Louis fresh from the seminary to serve as B'nai Amoona's educational director. Subsequently, he assumed the additional roles of assistant and then associate rabbi, and in 1963, Bernard Lipnick was installed as the congregation's senior rabbi. In the years that followed, he completed work on a doctorate in education at Washington University; he received the degree in 1972. His dissertation, which was an examination of the Vov class experiment, later appeared in book form under the title, *An Experiment that Works in Teenage Religious Education*. In 1977, Rabbi Lipnick received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary. On December 18, 1973, Rabbi Lipnick married Harriet Pogrelis Sophir, who has made a substantial contribution to the congregation, B'nai Amoona benefits particularly from her professional skills as a producer and choreographer and from her imaginative ideas in programming.[122]

From the vantage point of three decades Rabbi Lipnick can look back upon many accomplishments. His main emphasis has been Jewish education. "I regard education as my greatest dedication within my entire rabbinate." The rabbi teaches from the pulpit, in courses, and through service. The consensus is that in all these areas he excels. His sermons are profound in content, elegant in style and stirring in delivery. Phil Polsky noted that his wife was so moved by Rabbi Lipnick's sermon, "The Death Wish," that she gave up smoking. Those who have participated in his adult education classes have found them thought provoking. The rabbi's commitment to service has made him a leader in the community. Whether it is a matter of presenting the Jewish view on abortion in a panel discussion, putting himself on the line for civil rights or supervising *kashrut* at the Jewish Hospital, Rabbi Lipnick lives by the ethic that Jewish morality requires one to be an active participant.[123]

Rabbi Lipnick is a tremendous organizer. Harry Golden once characterized him as someone with "the precision of mind and bearing of a retired general in business. . . ." It is safe to say that Rabbi Lipnick has been the driving force behind the congregation's very many achievements during the past 30 years. He devotes himself tirelessly to whatever task is at hand and is deter-

mined that the end results be the best ever—the best school, the best youth program, the best couples club, the best centennial celebration and, or course, the best congregation.[124]

Rabbi Lipnick is deeply devoted to B'nai Amoona and to Conservative Judaism. Nationally, he has played a role in promoting the interests of the Jewish Theological Seminary and has served as a member of its prestigious Rabbinic Cabinet. Within the congregation his commitment expresses itself in an unwillingness to let either himself or his congregation rest on past laurels. He continually presses the members to learn more about Judaism, to observe Jewish law conscientiously, to live by Jewish values more closely—in effect, to be better Jews. In always reaching higher, the rabbi seeks to realize the creed he lives by, which can be most effectively summed up in his own words, "I like to think my rabbinate has been quality."[125]

In 1981–82, Congregation B'nai Amoona is celebrating its centennial with a yearlong series of commemorative events.[126] While they rejoice in past achievements, the congregation will at the same time be looking towards its second century. When asked to consider the congregation's prospects, B'nai Amoona members were not complacent. They readily pointed out the many problems facing not only the congregation but also American Jewry, namely, intermarriage, assimilation, lack of Jewish consciousness, disintegration of family life, diminishing regard for social justice and a rise in anti-Semitism. Twelve-year-old Andrea Grebler expressed her concern in this way, "Judaism is fading among people. People might consider themselves Jews, but that is it. They don't go to *shul* or keep Shabbat at all."[127]

Nevertheless, members believe that B'nai Amoona has a definite role to play in coming to grips with these problems. The congregation, most agree, must attract younger members, promote greater family participation, provide an atmosphere of warmth and caring for all ages, encourage Jewish learning among young and old alike, liberalize rules regarding women's participation in services, lead the way in putting Jewish values into practice and seek always to revitalize Judaism both intellectually and emotionally. Chaim and Marilyn Zimbalist had this to say, "B'nai Amoona should continue to guide and teach parents and children

to learn about their beautiful and wonderful heritage and hopefully continue to inspire and spark them to live Jewish lives that are filled with daily practices of *mitzvot*."[128]

In fact, B'nai Amoona faces the future rich in resources. The congregation looks back on a past of great accomplishment and it can confront the present with strength and vitality. There is a decided feeling of affirmation about the congregation. Rabbi Jack Riemer, with the vision of "someone who comes from afar," described B'nai Amoona as "a remarkable congregation." He went on to list just a few of the reasons why. "The attendance every Shabbat morning is extraordinary. . . . The sense of roots and of tradition here is very strong. . . . This is a congregation that has a deep commitment to its young people. . . . There is one more thing that I find special about this synagogue, and that is the warmth and spirit of its members." A new member wrote to the rabbi, "I can truthfully say that when I entered your *shul* for the first time several months ago, I knew at once that this was it. The warmth and personal touch that you and everyone connected with the *shul* and membership at large convey is the most beautiful thing I have ever encountered." Ethel Weber and Esther Klevens put their feelings into song:

The *shul* I pray in
The hushed tranquility
The rabbi and his teachings,
The guiding hands for me
The Sisterhood and Men's Club
The great activity
But especially the people
That's B'nai Amoona to me.

But perhaps it is fitting to leave the last word for the next generation. Ten-year-old Aimee Kirsch declared, "I think B'nai Amoona will have a good future."[129]

Footnotes

Beginnings

1. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (hereafter *P.D.*), August 15, 1884.
2. *P.D.*, August 31, 1884.
3. *P.D.*, January 16, 1885.
4. *Modern View* (hereafter *M.V.*), 25th Anniversary De Luxe Edition, June 1925, p. 42. In another place in the same article Rabbi Rosentreter gives July 30, 1884 as the date of origin.
5. *Ibid.*
6. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of St. Louis City and County*, Philadelphia, 1883, p. 1740: *Jewish Tribune* (hereafter *J.T.*), October 20 and November 24, 1882.
7. Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Golden Jubilee* (hereafter *Jub.*), 1932, pp. 7–8.
8. *Jewish Voice* (hereafter *J.V.*), October 24, 1902 and October 15, 1909.
9. John W. Leonard, ed., *The Book of St. Louisans*, St. Louis, 1906, p. 496: *Jewish Free Press* (hereafter *J.F.P.*), April 10, 1885 and August 13, 1886; Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
10. *J.T.*, October 13, 1882.
11. *J.V.*, February 25, 1910.
12. *Jub.*, 1932, pp. 34–35.
13. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 28.
14. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 28 and March 17, 1932; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 34; Deed to Sheerith Israel Cemetery, October 12, 1871; Averam B. Bender, "History of the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Congregation in St. Louis, 1879–1969," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin, XXVII* (Oct. 1970), p.70.
15. Shamas Isidor Katz, Reminiscences, June 29, 1965.
16. *Jub.*, 1932, p. 9.
17. *J.F.P.*, April 10, 1885.
18. *Jub.*, 1932, p. 8.
19. *M.V.*, March 17, 1932; Katz, August 12, 1964; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 34.
20. *J.T.*, March 21, 1884; *P.D.*, October 31, 1884.
21. *M.V.*, March 17, 1932.
22. *J.F.P.*, October 30, 1885; *J.V.*, September 6, 1889 and February 6, 1891; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
23. *J.F.P.*, March 12, 1886; *J.V.*, August 14, 1891 and May 3, 1907; Leonard, 1906, p. 495, Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Cemetery Book* (hereafter *Cem. Bk.*); Henrietta Hoschild; Babette Kahn Lipsitz; Seva Roberts.
24. *J.F.P.*, February 12 and April 30, 1886; *J.V.*, May 11 and November 2, 1888.
25. *J.F.P.*, August 12 and September 23, 1887; *J.V.*, November 26, 1891, June 2, 1899, May 29, 1903 and July 21, 1905; Victor Sessler.
26. *J.T.*, February 8, 1884; *J.F.P.*, January 21, 1887; *J.V.*, February 17, 1888, January 11, 1889 and January 20, 1893; Abraham Rosenthal, *Jewish Progress in St. Louis*, 1904; Katz, June 29, 1965; Henrietta Hoschild; Seva Roberts; Meyer Rosentreter.
27. *J.F.P.*, November 6, 1885.
28. *J.V.*, May 25 and July 13, 1888, January 1 and May 15, 1891; Leonard, 1906, p. 496.
29. *J.V.*, July 13 and 27, 1888, June 14, 1889, August 14, 1891 and June 17, 1898; Leonard, 1906, p. 496; Henrietta Hoschild.
30. *J.V.*, June 2, 1899, March 6, 1903 and January 26, 1906.
31. *J.V.*, November 26, 1891.
32. *J.V.*, April 15, 1904.
33. *J.F.P.*, April 23, 1886; *J.V.*, July 27, 1900.
34. *J.V.*, May 8, 1903.
35. *J.V.*, May 19, 1893.
36. Henrietta Hoschild.

37. Seva Roberts.
38. *J.V.*, January 5, 1900, March 28, 1902 and May 31, 1918.
39. *J.V.*, January 16, 1903 and July 26, 1912.
40. *J.V.*, June 29, 1894, January 8, 1904 and June 23, 1911; Leonard, 1906, p. 514–15.
41. Schuchat remained a member of B'nai Amoona. Lichtenstein's affiliation is unknown. Frey, who married a niece of Rabbi Sale, joined Shaare Emeth.
42. Gertrude Olschwanger and Barbara Shechter.
43. *J.V.*, July 5, 1889.
44. *J.V.*, June 28, 1889.
45. *J.V.*, July 26, 1889.
46. *J.V.*, July 5, 1889.
47. *J.V.*, March 16, 1888; Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky.
48. *J.F.P.*, June 25, 1886; *J.V.*, January 18, 1889 and May 26, 1893; *Cem. Bk.*; Leonard, 1906, p. 495.
49. *e.g.*, *J.V.*, September 29, 1893 and September 14, 1906.
50. Leonard, 1906, p. 496; Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; Mercedes Friedman.
51. *J.V.*, October 27, 1911; Leonard, 1906, p. 495 and 1912, p. 511.
52. *J.F.P.*, August 13, 1906; *J.V.*, September 6, 1888, July 26, 1889 and February 13, 1903; Leonard, 1906, p. 496; Mercedes Friedman.
53. *J.V.*, November 11 and December 2, 1904; Leonard, 1906, p. 496; Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; Mercedes Friedman.
54. *J.V.*, June 14, 1901; Mercedes Friedman.
55. *J.V.*, May 8, 1891 and August 5, 1904.
56. *J.F.P.*, August 13, 1886.
57. *J.V.*, January 11, 1889.
58. *J.V.*, February 13, 1903.
59. *J.V.*, February 17, 1905.
60. *J.V.*, December 2, 1904.
61. *J.V.*, September 29, 1893; Rosenthal; Leonard, 1906, p. 496.
62. *J.V.*, June 28 and August 23, 1895 and July 24, 1896.
63. *e.g.*, *J.V.*, October 17, 1889; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
64. *J.V.*, May 5, 1905; Leonard, 1906, p. 496.
65. *J.V.*, May 12, 1905.
66. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; Meyer Rosentreter.
67. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky.
68. Katz, August 12, 1964; Bender, p. 80; Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky.
69. *J.F.P.*, May 16, 1886; *J.V.*, January 25, 1901.
70. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; Meyer Rosentreter.
71. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky.
72. Meyer Rosentreter.
73. *M.V.*, January 9, 1925; M. Uno column *in passim*.
74. *M.V.*, July 14, 1919 and December 21, 1923.
75. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky.
76. *Ibid.*
77. *J.V.*, March 16, 1888.
78. *J.V.*, September 29, 1893 and May 12, 1905.
79. Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern, *M.V.*, April 1930.
80. Mercedes Friedman.
81. *J.T.*, August 31, 1883; *P.D.*, August 15 and 22, 1884.
82. *P.D.*, August 15, 22 and 31, 1884.
83. *J.V.*, March 25, 1904.
84. *J.V.*, July 26, 1912; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 10.
85. *J.V.*, December 8, 1893, January 19 and April 20, 1894.
86. *J.V.*, June 4, 1897 and February 22, 1901.
87. *J.V.*, May 5, 1905 and May 12, 1907.
88. *J.V.*, June 23 and November 10, 1893, September 7, 14 and 21, 1894.

89. *J.V.*, November 9, 23 and 29, 1894.
90. *J.V.*, November 23, 1894, October 2, 1896 and January 22, 1897.
91. *J.V.*, June 28, 1895 and June 4, 1897.
92. B'nai Amoona Congregation, Decree of Incorporation and Constitution, October 15, 1886.
93. Amendment to Constitution, 1912.
94. Constitution, 1886.
95. *Ibid.*
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97. *J.F.P.*, August 19, September 9 and 30, 1887.
98. *J.V.*, August 31, 1888.
99. *J.V.*, September 28 and November 2, 1888.
100. *J.V.*, December 28, 1888 and February 1, 1889.
101. *J.V.*, February 1, March 29 and July 5, 1889; Jacob Friedman.
102. *J.V.*, July 5, 1889 and April 3, 1891; Katz, June 29, 1965; Jacob Friedman.
103. *J.V.*, September 7, 14 and 21, 1894.
104. *J.V.*, September 12 and October 31, 1902; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
105. *J.V.*, June 15 and August 3, 1906; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
106. *J.V.*, August 3, September 14 and 20, 1906 and October 18, 1907; Pierre Baptiste, *Central Presbyterian Church: a Historical Perspective*, 1978, pp. 9–10.
107. *J.V.*, September 7, 14 and 20, 1906.
108. *P.D.*, October 31, 1884; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 7.
109. *J.V.*, October 6, 1899, October 24, 1902, October 18, 1907 and October 7, 1909.
110. *J.V.*, April 10, 1914; Bender, p. 73.
111. *J.V.*, April 14 and 21, 1893; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 17.
112. *J.V.*, September 29, 1893 and September 14, 1894.
113. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
114. *J.V.*, November 16 and December 28, 1888 and February 1, 1889.
115. *J.F.P.*, January 21 and February 11, 1887; *J.V.*, January 27, 1888, February 8 and October 25, 1889, January 16, 1891, January 10, 1902, March 17, 1905 and January 22, 1909.
116. *J.F.P.*, April 29 and June 3, 1887; *J.V.*, July 27, 1888 and July 19, 1889.
117. *J.V.*, October 5, November 23 and December 21, 1906.
118. *J.V.*, October 4, 1912.
119. *J.F.P.*, August 21, 1885 and September 10, 1886; *J.V.*, September 20, 1889, April 3, 1891 and April 10, 1908; Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Bulletin*, October 16, 1964.
120. *J.V.*, September 26, 1889.
121. *J.F.P.*, April 29, 1887; *J.V.*, February 8, 1889, December 21, 1906, March 6, 1908 and January 29, 1909.
122. *J.V.*, November 3 and 10, 1893.
123. *J.F.P.*, September 2, 1887; *J.V.*, September 20, 1889, September 7 and 20, 1906 and May 3, 1907.
124. *J.F.P.*, April 30, May 14 and September 1886.
125. Daughters of Israel, *Minutes* (hereafter D.I. *Min.*), June 16, 1918.
126. *J.V.*, February 13, 1903; D.I. *Min.*, June 16, 1918 and *in passim*.
127. *J.F.P.*, May 14, 1886; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
128. *J.F.P.*, April 29, 1887.
129. *J.F.P.*, September 10 and 24, 1886; *J.V.*, November 23, 1888, February 8, March 15, September 20 and December 13, 1889, April 3, 1891, January 13, 1896, December 23, 1898, October 5 and December 21, 1906; D.I. *Min.*, *in passim*.
130. *J.V.*, April 15 and November 4. 1904, May 4, 1906 and May 15, 1908.
131. *J.V.*, August 2 and 23, 1907.
132. *J.F.P.*, January 8 and July 9, 1886; *J.V.*, August 23 and October 17, 1889 and August 2, 1901; Jacob Friedman.
133. *J.V.*, October 17, 1889.
134. Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen; Jacob Friedman.
135. *J.V.*, October 14, 1904; Jacob Friedman.
136. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42; Jacob Friedman.

137. *J.V.*, March 6, 1908.
138. *J.V.*, March 6 and October 30, 1908 and October 15, 1909.
139. *J.V.*, October 15, 1909 and October 16, 1914.
140. Victor Sessler.
141. Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen; *J.V.*, *in passim*.
142. Ibid.
143. Jules Dubinsky; Jacob Friedman; Victor Sessler.
144. *J.F.P.*, September 10, 1886.
145. *J.F.P.*, October 30, 1885; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.
146. *J.V.*, March 15, 1912; Eva Gallup.
147. *J.T.*, November 23, 1883.
148. *J.V.*, October 30, November 26 and December 4, 1891, November 18 and 25, 1898, November 28, 1901, November 21, 1902, November 26 and December 4, 1903, November 24 and December 2, 1904, November 16, 1906 and November 22, 1907.
149. William Hyde and Howard L. Conrad, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, New York, 1899, p. 1129; Rosenthal.
150. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 42.

A New Era

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13. *J.V.*, October 16, 1891 and October 6, 1893.
14. *J.V.*, March 8, 1888. Also *J.V.*, August 25, 1893.
15. *J.V.*, April 10 and 28, 1891 and January 3, 1896; *M.V.*, July 14, 1919.
16. *J.V.*, July 5, 1889.
17. *Jewish Free Press* (hereafter *J.F.P.*), October 30, 1885; *J.V.*, April 10, 1891, September 8, 1893, August 16, 1895 and August 2, 1912.
18. *J.V.*, July 3, 1891. Also Sandweiss.
19. *Jewish Tribune*, October 6, 1882; *J.V.*, October 15 and 29, 1897; *M.V.*, June 1925, pp. 32–33; Sandweiss.

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24. *J.V.*, October 19, 1888, November 1, 1895, December 4, 1896, October 29, 1897, November 4, 1898 and January 15, 1915.
25. *J.V.*, October 29, 1897 and November 4, 1898.
26. *J.V.*, March 30, 1888 and October 29, 1897.
27. *J.V.*, December 4, 1896 and November 4, 1898.
28. *J.V.*, October 12, 1888, October 15 and November 29, 1897; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 33.
29. *J.V.*, January 28, 1916; *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 33.
30. *J.V.*, August 28, 1891.
31. *J.V.*, September 21, 1888, October 4, 1889 and July 31, 1891.
32. *J.V.*, July 3, 1891.
33. *J.V.*, May 1, July 3 and August 28, 1891.
34. *J.V.*, October 23 and 30 and November 6, 1891; September 25, 1896, October 26, 1900 and October 30, 1903.
35. Crawford, p. 86.
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37. *M.V.*, June 1925, pp. 30–33; Sullivan, 166–67.
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39. Crawford, pp. 86, 88; Sullivan, pp. 167–71.
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50. *J.V.*, October 26, 1900, October 24, 1902, October 16, 1903, May 12, 1905, September 14, 1906 and October 18, 1907; Rosenthal.
51. *M.V.*, June 1925, p. 28.
52. *J.V.*, November 26, 1917.
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54. Dorothy Fleishman Schucart.
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56. *J.V.*, October 18, 1912; *M.V.*, May 14, 1915; Dorothy Fleishman Schucart.
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58. *J.V.*, October 27 and November 30, 1911.
59. *M.V.*, October 22, 1915.
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61. Phyllis Rosentreter Dubinsky; Meyer Rosentreter.
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64. Victor Sessler.
65. *M.V.*, July 4, 1919.
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68. *J.V.*, January 12 and April 12, 1912.
69. *J.V.*, August 2, 1912. Also *J.V.*, February 11, 1916.
70. *J.V.*, September 6 and 12 and October 4, 1912.
71. *J.V.*, May 2 and December 12, 1913 and January 2, 1914.
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76. *J.V.*, May 5 and September 18, 1914 and February 5, 1915.
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78. *J.V.*, September 11, 1914; *M.V.*, May 14, 1915.
79. *J.V.*, July 31, 1914; *M.V.*, August 21, 1914.
80. *J.V.*, October 16, 1914.
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82. *J.V.*, October 20, 1916.
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84. *J.V.*, April 21, 1911.
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90. Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Golden Jubilee* (hereafter *Jub.*), p. 13; Katz, August 20, 1964, p. 60.
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Conservative Judaism Takes Root

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8. *New York Times* (hereafter *N.Y.T.*), June 4, 1917.
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11. *J.V.*, August 17, 1917.

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13. *M.V.*, April 7 and September 22, 1916; *J.V.*, April 28 and September 22, 1916; Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Golden Jubilee* (hereafter *Jub.*), 1932, p. 12.
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15. *M.V.*, April 7, 1916; *J.V.*, October 12, 1917, January 11, April 12 and May 17, 1918.
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23. *Jub.*, 1932, p. 14; Katz, p. 3.
24. *M.V.*, April 18, 1919.
25. Pearl Barohn; Jules Dubinsky; Ted Fischer; Eli Goldstein; Robert Mass; Albert Price.
26. Bessie Halpern; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Site visit, October, 1980.
27. Ted Fischer.
28. Daughters of Israel, *Minutes* (hereafter D.I. *Min.*), November 20, 1918, January 15, March 6, April 30, June 18 and July 16, 1919; Robert Mass.
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31. *Bu.*, December 24, 1920; *J.V.*, May 13, 1921; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 15.
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33. *J.V.*, May 13, 1921; A.E.H., newsclipping, May 1921.
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87. *Bu.*, November 19, 1926, February 25, 1927 and March 22, 1929.

88. Karp, p. 27.

89. *Bu.*, November 5, 1926.

90. D.I. *Min.*, September 1, 1920; *Bu.*, December 30, 1921, November 19, 1926, December 9, 1927, October 26, 1928, February 19, 1937 and December 16, 1938; *M.V.*, January 11, 1924.

91. *Bu.*, November 21, 1924, January 24, 1930 and January 17, 1936.

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104. *Bu.*, February 24 and November 3, 1922.

105. *M.V.*, May 6, 1921; *Bu.*, November 3 and December 29, 1922.

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110. *Bu.*, November 17, 1933.

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121. Fin. St., 1927–28, 1935–36; *Bu.*, November 21, 1930.

122. *N.Y.T.*, June 12, 1916; *M.V.*, June 21, 1918; Fannie Ellman; Mildred Fischer; Laeh Halpern Raskas; Tiby Gowseiow Stone.

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132. Jewish Kosher Hospital Society, *Minutes* (hereafter J.K.H.S. *Min.*), April 21, 1912 to May 30, 1915 *in passim*; *J.V.*, November 15, 1912.

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137. *J.R.*, November 11, 1919 and October 17, 1924; *Bu.*, December 17, 1920 and January 27, 1922; Abrams, p. 56.

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139. *J.V.*, October 18, 1907, March 6, 1908, January 8, 1915 and February 5, 1926; *J.R.*, March 18, 1932, September 17, 1937 and September 1945; *Jub.*, 1932, p. 25; Jewish Federation of St. Louis, Board Meeting, October 12, 1937; A.E.H., Report to Y.M.H.A., Fall 1937; Abrams, p. 18; *E.J.*, "St. Louis."

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2. *J.V.*, January 18, 1924; Abe Garland.

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4. Arthur Bierman.

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12. Real estate flyer, ca. March 1942.

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14. *Bu.*, January 1, 1943; Ted Fischer.

15. *Bu.*, September and October 1, 1942 and March 5, 1943.

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17. *Bu.*, December 8, 1944.

18. Arthur Bierman; Fannie Ellman; Ted Fischer; Abe Garland; William Rosenbaum.

19. *Min.*, January 5, 1948; Ted Fischer.

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23. Maurice Kranzberg.

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26. Katz, June 30, 1965, p. 10.

27. *Bu.*, December 4, 1951.

28. Cost Estimate, M. Dinwiddie and Hill, February 26, 1946; Sam Ferer to Eric Mendelsohn, December 2, 1946; Sam Ferer to M.M. Feld, December 28, 1946; Katz, June 30, 1965, p. 7.

29. *Min.*, February 11, 1948; Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern in Congregation B'nai Amoona, *A Dream Comes True*, prob. 1949.

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31. *Bu.*, September 10 and October 3, 1948.

32. *Min.*, September 6, 1949; *Bu.*, September 23 and October 21, 1949; Katz, June 30, 1965, p. 9.

33. Rose Wolff, Reminiscences.
34. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, "Our Sanctuary," March 6, 1965.
35. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (hereafter *P.D.*), December 24, 1950; *Architectural Forum*, April 1953, pp. 108, 110; Soren, 7/1–2; Lindenbusch, 7/6–7.
36. *Bu.*, December 16, 1949, November 9, 1951 and November 26, 1954; Harry Hammerman.
37. *Bu.*, May 11, 1956 and September 6, 1957.
38. *Min.*, March 7, 1955 and January 4, 1965; *Bu.*, October 21, 1960.
39. Eric Mendelsohn to Barney Spitzer, September 1, 1950.
40. *P.D.*, December 24, 1950; *G.D.*, March 17, 1957.
41. *Bu.*, March 5, 1948; Ted Fischer.
42. *Bu.*, October 31, 1952.
43. *Bu.*, February 25, 1938, December 15, 1950 and December 4, 1951; *Min.*, March 3, 1952, May 4, 1953, April 1, 1957, January 4 and May 2, 1960 and April 2, 1962; Congregation B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, Reminiscences (hereafter Sis. Rem.), pp. 9–10.
44. *Bu.*, December 15, 1950, December 5, 1958 and October 21, 1960.
45. *Min.*, January 5, 1963; Ted Fischer.
46. *Bu.*, December 15, 1950 and November 30, 1956; *Min.*, October 4, 1954.
47. Maurice Kranzberg; Hyman Matloff.
48. Congregation B'nai Amoona, Budget - General Fund, November 30, 1955, November 30, 1957 and November 30, 1959; *Bu.*, November 14, 1958.
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50. *Min.*, April 6, 1959.
51. *Min.*, June 1, 1953; *Bu.*, July 3, 1953.
52. *Bu.*, October 21, 1960 and December 1, 1961.
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58. *Min.*, November 8, 1954.
59. *Bu.*, October 21, 1960.
60. *Min.*, June 2, 1947 and May 3, 1948; *Bu.*, May 21 and September 10, 1948; Rabbi Simcha Kling.
61. *Bu.*, October 3, 1948, September 23, 1949 and September 1950.
62. *Min.*, November 1, 1948 and January 8, 1951; Rabbi Simcha Kling.
63. *Min.*, March 1, November 1 and December 6, 1948, February 7, October 10 and November 14, 1949, September 18, October 9 and November 6, 1950, January 8 and March 5, 1951; Jules Biegelsen; Rabbi Simcha Kling.
64. *Min.*, August 27, 1951; Rabbi Simcha Kling; Vivian and Maurice Kranzberg.
65. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.
66. *Bu.*, September 28, 1951; Rabbi Bernard Libnick.
67. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Min.*, August 27, 1951.
70. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, Resume.
71. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Bu.*, September 28, 1951.
74. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.
75. *Min.*, November 12, 1951; *Bu.*, November 17, 1961.
76. Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern, June 30, 1957; *Bu.*, March 16, 1962.
77. *Min.*, November 14, 1949, April 2 and November 6, 1950.
78. Congregation B'nai Amoona Religious School, "Call and Recall," 1961–62.
79. *Bu.*, May 23, 1952.

80. *Bu.*, May 29, 1959 and November 17, 1961.

81. *Bu.*, September 6, 1957, January 3, 1958 and June 9, 1961; *Min.*, September 8, 1958, April 6, 1959 and September 5, 1961; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

82. *Bu.*, November 22, 1946; *Min.*, April 13, 1953 and April 5, 1954.

83. *Min.*, February 7. 1949.

84. *Bu.*, November 17, 1950.

85. *Bu.*, May 11, 1956 and May 15, 1959.

86. *Bu.*, May 2, 1947 and September 28, 1951.

87. *Bu.*, May 15, 1953; *Min.*, May 7, 1956 and June 6, 1960; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

88. *Bu.*, January 20, 1961; *Min.*, January 24, 1961.

89. *Bu.*, December 12, 1952, November 20, 1953, December 2, 1955 and December 19, 1958.

90. *Bu.*, November 18, 1938.

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93. *Bu.*, November 9, 1951 and January 8, 1952; *Min.*, December 3, 1956.

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97. *Bu.*, November 18, 1949 and November 22, 1957; *Min.*, January 8, 1951; Rabbi Simcha Kling.

98. *Bu.*, November 18, 1949, November 2, 1956 and November 22, 1957.

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101. *Bu.*, November 2, 1956; *Min.*, January 7, 1957.

102. Erich Rosenthal in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge, Ma., 1963, p. 164.

103. *Bu.*, May 15, 1959; Vivian Kranzberg.

104. *Bu.*, February 7, 1958, June 24 and November 18, 1960.

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106. *Min.*, December 1, 1958.

107. *Bu.*, December 2, 1960.

108. *Bu.*, September 19, 1952, November 20, 1953, September 24, 1954, January 4, 1955, February 1, 1956, November 1, 1957, June 13, 1958, November 6, 1959 and October 21, 1960; *Min.*, March 7, 1955 and March 7, 1960.

109. *Bu.*, October 23, 1953, March 23, 1956 and March 24, 1961; *Min.*, January 4, 1954; "Call and Recall."

110. *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 4, 1963; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

111. *Bu.*, December 12, 1952.

112. *Bu.*, March 12, 1954 and April 1, 1960.

113. *Bu.*, March 7, 1958, December 16, 1960, February 2, 1962, October 16, 1964 and March 5, 1965.

114. *J.V.*, May 14, 1920; *Modern View* (hereafter *M.V.*), May 14, 1920.

115. Congregation B'nai Amoona Religious School, *Kolaynoo*, March 20 and June 24, 1960; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

116. *Bu.*, June 24, 1955.

117. Sis. Rem., p. 11.

118. *Bu.*, September 9, 1952; Sis. Rem., p. 12.

119. Sis. Rem., p. 11; Fannie Hertzman.

120. *Bu.*, 1942–45, *in passim* and February 25, 1946; *P.D.*, July 9, 1944; Congregation B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, Biographies of Presidents (hereafter Sis. Biog.), p. 1; Rose Kaplan.

121. *Bu.*, January 22, 1960; Sis. Rem., pp. 14–15; Sis. Biog., p. 2.

122. Rose Wolff, September 3, 1950.

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124. *Bu.*, March 23, 1956; Sis. Rem., p. 13; Rose Mass.

125. *Bu.*, December 14, 1956.

126. *Bu.*, October 31, 1952; Congregation B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, "Reflections on our Heritage," p. 8; Rose Mass.

127. *Min.*, October 23 and December 3, 1945, February 4 and June 3, 1946.

128. "Call and Recall."

129. *Min.*, April 5 and May 2, 1949 and June 4, 1956; *Bu.*, April 4, 1952, June 15, 1956 and February 1, 1957.

130. *Bu.*, December 12, 1952 and January 13, 1956; "Call and Recall."

131. *Min.*, February 5, 1951; *Bu.*, February 10, 1951 and February 12, 1954.

132. *Min.*, November 8, 1954; *Bu.*, January 13 and April 3, 1956.

133. *Bu.*, December 2, 1955; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

134. *Bu.*, February 1, 1957, December 2, 1960 and February 5, 1965; "Call and Recall."

135. *Bu.*, March 18, 1949.

136. *Bu.*, April 2 and December 13, 1946, April 23, 1948, October 27, 1950, January 12 and December 2, 1951, May 23, 1952, November 20, 1953, November 2, 1956, January 9 and February 13, 1959.

137. *Bu.*, May 10, 1957.

138. *Bu.*, December 15, 1950, July 3, 1959, February 17, 1961, January 19 and February 16, 1962; *Min.*, January 14, 1952, January 5, 1953 and February 5, 1962; Maurice Kranzberg.

139. *Bu.*, May 10, 1957 and May 6, 1960.

140. *Bu.*, December 8, 1944, February 25, 1946, October 9 and 27, 1950 and December 2, 1960; *Min.*, February 3, 1958.

141. *Bu.*, September 23, 1949, September 1950 and September 19, 1952.

142. *Min.*, September 3, 1951 and September 3, 1957; *Bu.*, September 28, 1951 and October 13, 1961.

143. *Bu.*, September 19, 1952, November 30, 1956 and September 16, 1960.

144. *M.V.*, March 12, 1942; *Bu.*, March 13, 1954, Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Diamond Jubilee*, 1957.

145. Pearl Barohn; Jules Dubinsky; Fannie Ellman; Mildred Fischer.

146. *Min.*, December 6, 1948; Robert Mass.

147. Jules Dubinsky; Mildred Fischer; Eva Gallup; Abe Garland; Henry Haffner; Albert Price; Tiby Gowseiow Stone.

148. *Min.*, March 5 and April 2, 1962; *Son of Faith*, P. 307; Bessie Halpern.

149. Rabbi Louis Feinberg to Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern, November 1942.

150. Gertrude Brickman; Ted Fischer; Jeanette Gould; Bessie Halpern; Libby Hankin; Maurice Kranzberg; Albert Price; Victor Sessler.

151. Pearl Barohn; Mildred Fischer; Esther Flom; Abe Garland; Rabbi Simcha Kling; Maurice Kranzberg; Albert Price.

152. Fannie Ellman; Mildred Fischer.

153. Jules Dubinsky; Evelyn Binder Feldman; Miriam Freedman; Abe Garland.

154. Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman, November 1942; Rabbi Jerome Grollman, *United Hebrew Temple Light*, April 27, 1962.

155. *Bu.*, July 3, 1953.

156. Dr. Abram Sachar to Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern, November 14, 1942.

157. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, Funeral Eulogy for Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern, April 9, 1962, revised January 24, 1965, *Bu.*, May 4, 1962.

Coming Of Age

1. Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Bulletin* (hereafter *Bu.*), October 2, 1964.

2. Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Minutes* (hereafter *Min.*), May 7 and November 5, 1962.

3. *Bu.*, January 4, 1963; Congregation B'nai Amoona, Program, Kallah and Installation of Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, January 11 to 13, 1963.

4. *Bu.*, January 4, 1963.

5. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

6. *Bu.*, June 30, 1951; *Min.*, November 3, 1958, June 5, 1961 and February 5, 1962; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (hereafter *P.D.*), January 27, 1963; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

7. Miriam Freedman; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Edith Price.

8. *Bu.*, March 15, 1963.

9. *Bu.*, September 3, 1965; Shamas Isidor Katz, Memorial Tablet.

10. Esther Flom; Albert Price; Anna Marie Schenberg.

11. Shamas Isidor Katz, Reminiscences, July 1, 1965.

12. Reuven Kimelman to Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, April 1966; Robert Mass; Albert Price.

13. Robert Mass; Albert Price.

14. Testimonial to Rev. Isidor Katz, December 10, 1961; Esther Klevens and Ethel Weber.

15. *Bu.*, April 15, 1966.

16. *P.D.*, March 4, 1960; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (hereafter *G.D.*), January 17, 1972; Arthur Bierman; Eva Gallup; Albert Price; Tiby Gowseiow Stone.

17. *Bu.*, June 16, 1967 and January 21, 1972; Hazzan Leon Lissek.

18. Tillie Gowseiow; Tiby Gowseiow Stone.

19. *Bu.*, June 24, 1966 and January 21, 1972; Miriam Freedman; Tiby Gowseiow Stone; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

20. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, "Hazzan Gowseiow," April 4, 1969.

21. *Min.*, May 7 and December 3, 1962; *Bu.*, June 1 and August 24, 1962; Bernard S. Raskas, ed., *A Son of Faith: from the Sermons of Abraham E. Halpern, 1891–1962*, New York, 1962, preface; *St. Louis Jewish Light* (hereafter *Jew. Lt.*), January 20, 1965; Dedication of the *Mezuzah*, Program, January 24, 1965.

22. *Bu.*, September 2, 1966 and May 4, 1973; Congregation B'nai Amoona, News Release, January 1972.

23. *Min.*, June 6, 1966; *Bu.*, October 10, 1966 and February 20, 1970.

24. *Bu.*, November 19, 1965.

25. *Min.*, November 1, 1965; *Bu.*, November 19, 1965 and March 17, 1967.

26. *Min.*, March 6, 1967; *Bu.*, March 17, 1967.

27. *Min.*, June 5, 1967; *Bu.*, July 7, 1967.

28. *Min.*, May 6, September 3 and October 8, 1968; January 6, 1969 and June 1, 1970; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

29. *Min.*, May 3, 1973; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

30. *Bu.*, June 21, 1974 and June 11, 1976.

31. *Bu.*, October 26 and November 9, 1973 and July 10, 1978; *Min.*, June 5, 1978.

32. *Bu.*, May 14, 1980; Jeanette Gould; Gertrude Haffner; Maurice Kranzberg.

33. *Bu.*, September 30, 1980.

34. *Bu.*, October 21, 1960 and June 6, 1969; *Min.*, June 6 and September 6, 1965 and October 8, 1968.

35. Hazzan Leon Lissek.

36. *Min.*, February 7, 1964.

37. Tribute Dinner Program, February 10, 1981; *Bu.*, March 1, 1981.

38. *Bu.*, February 6, 1962 and January 1, 1965.

39. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge, Ma., 1963, p. 160; Arthur Hertzberg, *Being Jewish in America: the Modern Experience*, New York, 1979, pp. 83, 225.

40. *Bu.*, January 1, 1965 and November 15, 1976; Max Dimont, *The Jews In America: the Roots and Destiny of American Jews*, New York, 1978, pp. 9–10.

41. *Bu.*, November 5, 1965, September 9, 1967, February 2, 1968, March 6, 1970, February 1, 1974, October 22, 1976, October 12, 1979 and January 24, 1981; Gloria Spitzer.

42. *Bu.*, September 9, 1967.

43. *G.D.*, November 22, 1931 and June 12, 1932.

44. *Bu.*, November 6, 1964.

45. *P.D.*, March 11, 1965; *Jew. Lt.*, March 17, 1965; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

46. *Bu.*, October 13, 1961.

47. *Min.*, October 1, 1962; *Bu.*, November 2, 1962, March 15, 1963, December 15, 1967 and May 3, 1968.

48. *Bu.*, January 10, 1969.

49. *Bu.*, November 2, 1970 and February 19, 1971.

50. *Bu.*, February 17 and April 7, 1967 and March 15, 1968.

51. *Bu.*, February 5, 1971, May 18 and October 26, 1973, March 1 and November 22, 1974 and March 1, 1978.

52. *Min.*, March 7, 1960; February 1, 1974 and February 14, 1975.

53. *G.D.*, March 20, 1973; *Bu.*, March 23, 1973; Harry Freedman.

54. *Bu.*, November 9 and 23, 1973, February 1 and 16, March 15, June 21, November 22 and December 30, 1974, August 29 and November 14, 1975; Congregation B'nai Amoona, *Shabbat Sheet* (hereafter *Shab. Sh.*), August 31 and November 30, 1974.

55. *Bu.*, October 26 and November 9, 1973.

56. *Bu.*, January 18, 1974 and January 3, 1975.

57. *Bu.*, June 9, 1972, April 18, 1974, March 1 and June 1, 1981.

58. Congregation B'nai Amoona, "Self-Appraisal," 1972–73, p. 8.

59. *Bu.*, February 2, 1973.

60. *Bu.*, June 1, 1962.

61. *Bu.*, January 6 and October 20, 1961, October 19, 1962, October 18, 1963, October 16, 1964, November 1, 1965, November 18, 1966, October 12, 1967, November 4, 1968, November 21, 1969, November 13, 1970, May 12, 1972 and May 4, 1973.

62. *Bu.*, May 13, 1974, April 30, 1976, April 4, 1979, April 22, 1980; *Shab. Sh.*, June 7, 1975; *Min.*, April 4, 1977 and May 1, 1978.

63. *Bu.*, March 5, 1973; Miriam Freedman.

64. Congregation B'nai Amoona, Constitution and By-Laws, December 7, 1959; *Bu.*, April 2, 1973.

65. Hazzan Leon Lissek.

66. Alfred Fleishman.

67. *Minutes*, Rabbinical Assembly, undated; Seymour Siegel, ed., *Conservative Judaism and Jewish Law*, New York, 1977, p. 283.

1980; *Min.*, June 30, 1980.

68. President Edward Balk, Congregational Letter, June 23, 1980; *Min.*, June 30, 1980.

69. *Min.*, September 2, 1980.

70. Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen.

71. *Bu.*, December 24, 1971.

72. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

73. *Min.*, September 14, 1962; *Bu.*, September 20, 1963 and November 4, 1966.

74. *Bu.*, June 18, 1965, April 21, 1967 and December 19, 1969.

75. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

76. *Min.*, June 7, 1971 and September 4, 1973.

77. *Jew. Lt.*, August 13, 1980; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

78. *Min.*, November 1, 1948; Rabbi Howard Graber.

79. Sherry Hecht.

80. *Jew. Lt.*, August 13, 1980; Sherry Hecht; Esther Klevens; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

81. Bernard Lipnick, "The Class as a Community," *Moment*, 4, 6 (June 1979), p. 58.

82. *Bu.*, May 15, 1964, May 20 and November 4, 1966, February 17, 1967 and June 21, 1968; *Moment*, pp. 58–59; Miriam Freedman; Esther Klevens; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Albert Price.

83. *Moment*, pp. 60–61.

84. *Min.*, April 5 and October 6, 1971; *Bu.*, June 30, 1972; Bernard Lipnick, *An Experiment that Works: in Teenage Religious Education*, New York, 1976, pp. 158–59, 162–63.

85. Ronald G. Wolfson, "An Innovative Living Experience in Israel," *Jewish Education*, *44*, 3–4 (Spg.-Summ. 1976), pp. 70, 79.

86. Sherry Hecht, Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

87. Arthur Bierman; Sherry Hecht.

88. *Bu.*, July 6, 1973; *Min.*, September 4, 1973; Congregation B'nai Amoona, "The Future is Theirs," prob. 1975; *Jew. Lt.*, August 13, 1980.

89. "The Future is Theirs;" *Bu.*, January 30, May 1 and September 2, 1981.

90. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, Board Meeting, November 4, 1980; *Bu.*, January 30, 1981.

91. *Bu.*, October 5, 1962 and June 11, 1971; Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980.

92. *Bu.*, December 24, 1971, October 28, 1977, November 7, 1979 and September 30, 1980.

93. *Bu.*, February 18, 1966, February 17, 1967, January 10, 1969, November 8, 1974, October 3, 1978, March 9 and October 12, 1979, April 3 and October 31, 1980.

94. Materials on *Mitzva* Program submitted to the National Women's League; Laura Snitzer.

95. *Bu.*, October 5, 1962, June 19 and October 16, 1964, October 15, 1965, September 9, 1967, October 18, 1968, October 7, 1969, September 13, 1974, October 22, 1976, October 28, 1977 and September 12, 1979; Succot Tour, September 29, 1969; Mildred Fischer; Gloria Spitzer.

96. *Bu.*, January 7 and October 13, 1972 and September 30, 1980.

97. Mildred Fischer; Laura Snitzer; Gloria Spitzer.

98. Gloria Spitzer.

99. Congregation B'nai Amoona, Membership Roster, March 1980; Ted Fischer; Albert Price.

100. Carolyn Kleiman; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

101. *Min.*, June 4, 1962 and October 6, 1975; Albert Price; Debra Spigel.

102. Rabbi Bernard Lipnick.

103. *Bu.*, April 4, 1979; Barbara Poger.

104. Miriam Freedman.

105. *Bu.*, May 14, 1980; Hazzan Leon Lissek; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

106. Albert Price.

107. *Min.*, November 2, 1970.

108. Hyman Matloff.

109. "Self-Appraisal," p. 2.

110. Membership Roster, March 1980.

111. *Min.*, June 6, 1966; *Bu.*, October 21, 1966.

112. *Min.*, December 4, 1967; Robert Mass; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

113. *Min.*, February 5, 1968; Robert Mass.

114. *Min.*, January 5 and February 19, 1971; *Bu.*, March 19, 1971.

115. *Min.*, June 2, 1975; *Bu.*, June 20, 1975.

116. *Min.*, December 22, 1977, Appendix A; Membership Roster, March 1980.

117. *Bu.*, October 22, 1976 and January 27, 1978.

118. *Min.*, April 5 and May 5, 1976 and December 22, 1977; *Bu.*, June 17, 1980 and October 1, 1981.

119. Congregation B'nai Amoona Sisterhood, Budget, 1980–81.

120. Congregation B'nai Amoona, Dues Schedule, June 26, 1980; Hyman Matloff.

121. Ted Fischer; Robert Mass; Hyman Matloff.

122. *Bu.*, May 3, 1977; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, Resume; Miriam Freedman, Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Billie Oxenhandler.

123. Mildred and Ted Fischer; Vivian and Maurice Kranzberg; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Robert Mass; Phillip Polsky; William Rosenbaum.

124. Harry Golden with Richard Goldhurst, *Travels through Jewish America*, Garden City, N.Y., 1973, p. 260; Abe Garland; Hazzan Leon Lissek; Phillip Polsky; Rabbi Sheldon Switkin.

125. *Bu.*, September 3, 1965; Rabbi Bernard Lipnick; Phillip Polsky; Albert Price.

126. *Bu.*, October 1, 1981.

127. "Embarking on the Second Century," Responses *in passim* and Andrea Grebler, December 10, 1980.

128. "Embarking," Responses *in passim* and Chaim and Marilyn Zimbalist, December 21, 1980.

129. *Bu.*, October 25, 1974 and September 1, 1978; "Embarking," Responses *in passim* and Aimee Kirsch, December 1980; Esther Klevens.

Appendix A

Rabbis	
Rabbi Aaron Levy	1884–1885
Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter	1885–1893, 1895–1911
Rabbi H. Saft	1894–1895
Rabbi Moses Hirsch Rabinowitz	1912–1913
Rabbi Joseph Glushak	1914–1915
Rabbi Abraham Ephraim Halpern	1917–1962
Rabbi Bernard Lipnick	1963 to present
Assistant and Associate Rabbis	
Rabbi Simcha Kling	1948–1951
Rabbi Bernard Lipnick	1951–1962
Rabbi Arnold Asher	1963–1967
Rabbi Sheldon Switkin	1967–1973
Rabbi Sanford Tucker	1974–1976
Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen	1980 to present
Scholar in Residence	
Rabbi Jack Riemer	1978–1980
Hazzanim	
Hazzan M. Jonap	1893
Hazzan A. Newman	ca. 1899–1902
Hazzan S. Friedman	1903–1913
Hazzan Jacob Gowseiow	1920–1960, Emeritus 1960–1972
Hazzan Jacob Renzer	1960–1965
Hazzan Joseph Levine	1966–1968
Hazzan Leon Lissek	1969 to present
Acting Hazzanim	
Simon Rosenberg	1894
H. Maas	1917–1918
Shamashim	
Shamas S. Greenberg	1893
Shamas Louis Wohl	ca. 1896–1904
Shamas Herman Maizner	1906–1912
Shamas Isidor Katz	1913–1965
Shamas Jacob Sheinbein	1965 to present

Appendix B

Presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona

L. M. Plaut	1884–1885
Marcus Rosenblum	1885–1887
Leopold L. Lichtenstein	1887–1889
Herman Maizner	1889–1891
Jacques Levy	1891–1893
Sol Goldstone	1893–1894
Jacques Levy	1895–1897
Isidor Friedman	1898–1900
Benjamin Burenstein	1900–1902/03
Levi Freedman	1902/03–1907
Benjamin Burenstein	1907–1908
Harry Siegfried	1908–1910
Abraham Graber	1910–1911
Simon Rosenberg	1911–1913
Harry Siegfried	1913–1915
Leon J. Cohen	1915–1916
Benjamin Burenstein	1916–1917
Selig Schwartz	1917–1919
Abraham Graber	1919–1920
Louis Cohen	1920–1922
Hyman Cohen	1922–1923
Sam Hamburg, Jr.	1923–1932
Isadore Mathes	1932–1943
S. Barney Spitzer	1943–1951
Meyer Kranzberg	1951–1955
Harry Lander	1955–1958
Nelson L. Gould	1958–1960
William N. Rosenbaum	1960–1962
Dr. Manuel J. Snitzer	1962–1965
Albert Price	1965–1967
Robert Mass	1967–1970
Sam Krupnick	1970–1973
Alfred Fleishman	1973–1976
Harold Guller	1976–1978
Edward Balk	1978–1981
Maurice Gordon	1981 to present

Appendix C

Presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona Sisterhood (Daughters of Israel)

Mrs. Fannie Plaut (Rosentreter)	1886–1887
Mrs. Bertha Marcus	1887–1888
Mrs. Cecilie Riegler	1888–1899
Mrs. Pauline Stahl	1899–1902/03
Mrs. Cecilie Riegler	1903
Mrs. Bertha Golland	1903/04–1936
Mrs. Babette Kahn Lipsitz	1936–1940/41
Mrs. Frieda Olschwanger	1940/41–1942
Mrs. Margaret Spitzer	1942–1943
Mrs. Lillian Kantor (Franklin)	1943–1946
Mrs. Rose Wolff	1946–1952
Mrs. Rose Mass	1952–1953
Mrs. Lucille Hurwitz	1953–1955
Mrs. Mildred Fischer	1955–1957
Mrs. Adele Roman	1957–1958
Mrs. Dorothy Golub	1958–1960
Mrs. Bernice Rubenstein (Brusca)	1960–1962
Mrs. Mitzi Hammerman	1962–1964
Mrs. Lorraine Susman	1964–1966
Mrs. Minnette Hirsch	1966–1968
Mrs. Laura Snitzer	1968–1970
Mrs. Eunice Felder	1970–1973
Mrs. Barbara Shechter	1973–1976
Mrs. Jan Baron	1976–1977
Mrs. Beverly Blitz	1977–1979
Mrs. Gloria Spitzer	1979 to present

Appendix D

Presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona Men's Club

I. Eli Goldstein	1930–1932/33
Sam Ferer	1933–1935
Harold Tober	1935–1937
S. Barney Spitzer	1937–1942
Meyer Kranzberg	1946
Nelson L. Gould	1946–1947
Joseph Boxerman	1947–1949

Harry Lander	1949–1950
Max Jackoway	1950–1951
Bert Grossman	1951–1952
Marvin B. Seltzer	1952–1953
Ralph Rudman	1953–1954
Dr. Manuel J. Snitzer	1954–1955
Ted Fischer	1955–1957
William N. Rosenbaum	1957–1958
Robert J. Golub	1958–1960
Sam L. Zimmerman	1960–1962
Ben Kessler	1962–1963
Ruben Epstein	1963–1965
Dudley Klein	1965–1967
Julian Rainey	1967–1969
Manuel Lander	1969–1971
Norton Y. Beilenson	1971–1973
Maurice Gordon	1973–1976
Ben Ranger	1976–1980
Milton Lief	1980 to present

Appendix E

Presidents of Congregation B'nai Amoona Couples Club (Young Married League)

Albert and Edith Price	1955–1956
Albert and Vivian Becker	1956–1957
Irving and Carole Goldfarb	1957–1958
Chaim and Marilyn Zimbalist	1958–1959
Harvey and Evelyn Rosenberg	1959–1960
Harry and Charlotte Teicher	1960–1962
Melvin and Evelyn Reiss	1962–1963
Richard and Barbara Wissoker	1963–1964
Lawrence and Barbara Poger	1964–1965
Jack and Sally Fivel	1965–1966
Jerome and Celeste Wieselman	1966–1967
Arnold and Paula Weintrub	1967–1968
Philip and Judy Scissors	1968–1969
Robert and Frances Koshner	1969–1970
Ted and Harriett Fredman	1970–1971
Franklin and Betsy Enger	1971–1973
Steven and Marsha Funk	1973–1975
Milton and Lisa Goldfarb	1975–1977
Richard and Annette Sklar	1977–1979
Stuart and Susan Zimmerman	1979–1981
Joel and Debra Spigel	1981 to present

Wm. Schlichter

From: Jan Baron,
Executive Director
Cong. B'nai Amoona
10 Feb. 1986

From a letter, dated February 10, 1986, from Jan Baron, Executive Director of Congregation B'nai Amoona:

"We have recently moved to a new location and have sold the Mendelsohn Building to a developer who will be using it for various artistic endeavors: Washington University Fine Arts School will be renting some of the space; a new Reform Congregation will be renting space; local artists will be using it for exhibits."



Rosalind Mael Bronsen was born in Boston, Massachusetts. She received a B.A. degree from Brandeis University and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her major field of study was history. In 1969, she taught American history at Chico State College in California. From 1969 to 1979, she was an assistant professor in the Department of History at Washington University in St. Louis, where she taught African history, anthropology and literature. Her previous writings include a manuscript on the Zulu during the 19th century, an adventure novel and articles which have appeared in newspapers, journals and magazines. She is married to Professor David Bronsen.

Jacket design by
Herb Halpern and
Steve Weitz

B'NAI AMOONA
FOR ALL GENERATIONS

"The founders of B'nai Amoona have been identified as immigrants from Cracow. . . . Many other founders originated in Germany. . . . What all these people had in common was their adherence to Orthodox Judaism and the German language."

"The Eastern European immigrants who settled in St. Louis constituted the pool from which B'nai Amoona drew its 'second generation' of congregants. . . . They identified B'nai Amoona's interests as their own; they kept the congregation functioning despite disintegrating forces that were at work and they carried it to new peaks of achievement."

"The registrar of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Israel Davidson, wrote, 'I feel confident that in securing the services of Rabbi Abraham E. Halpern you will get a man who will place your Congregation in the foreground.' (1917)"

"The unique contribution of Conservative Judaism was to bridge the gap between the immigrant parent and the American-born child or in Rabbi Halpern's oft-repeated phrase, to bring together 'Parents and Children in one House of God.'"

"'. . . .your Congregation was the first in our country willing to accept a design for its Synagogue which does not try to imitate the past.' (Eric Mendelsohn, 1950)"

"'Rabbi Lipnick has brought a new spirit into the children.' (*B'nai Amoona Bulletin*, 1951)"

"'There is the tendency in all religious institutions—and we were no exception—to view Social Action as being of no special concern to religion. Judaism, however, as distinguished from Jewish institutions, abhors such a dichotomy.' (Rabbi Bernard Lipnick, 1964)"