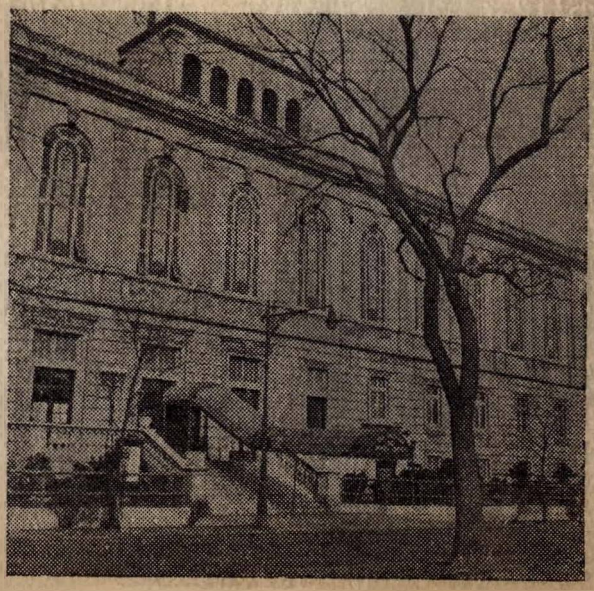
Jubilee Book of the Brooklyn Jewish Center

PUBLISHED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING



Jubilee Book
of the
Brooklyn Jewish Center

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OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNI-
VERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING

667–691 EASTERN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN · · · NEW YORK
APRIL, 1946

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THE ACTUAL DATE OF THE CENTER'S TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY IS JANUARY, 1944, BUT THE CELEBRATION OF THE EVENT WAS POSTPONED BECAUSE OF THE WAR.

Foreword

By Louis J. Gribetz

THE Brooklyn Jewish Center is celebrating a threefold happy anniversary. Two years ago (because of the war the celebration was deferred) marked the completion of twenty-five years of the Center's existence, twenty-five years of consecrated service to it by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal, as its Rabbi, and twenty-five years of faithful service by Mr. Joseph Goldberg, as its Administrative Director. The occasion has evoked an outpouring of tribute by men of good will everywhere. Congratulatory messages from leaders in all walks of life have come from throughout the land — and even from overseas — expressing their high esteem of the Center and its distinguished servants.

It is fitting that we pay our respects to the men who were the original group of founders of this institution. Practical men though they were, absorbed in industry and commerce, they also were socially- and communally-minded. They sought to make more beautiful the land in which they lived by making better the men with whom they lived. This they attempted to achieve through the establishment of a Center which should be the pride and admiration of the growing Jewish community in Brooklyn. The consummation of this desire became their problem and their task.

Theirs was an original and daring undertaking at that time, for the idea of a synagogue center was novel and not in keeping with the current conception of a Synagogue. Some persons derided the project as a rash adventure. Others were cold and cynical.

But this small group of men, the "remnant" in the community, were steadfast in their idealism and unflinching in their endeavor. Opposition kindled in them a deeper fervor, and rendered them more vigilant and solicitous for the progress of their plan. True faith and conviction radiate courage and give strength and serenity to arduous labor. The knowledge that they were dedicated to a noble cause inspired these founders with that tenacity and interpidity which ensure success. Vexatious delays and irritating obstacles only made them more zealous builders and more liberal givers of their self and substance. After prodigious industry and self-sacrificing labors, they finally brought the Center into being.

Alas, that some of this noted group departed from the scene of earth too soon to take part in the present festive celebration. We take pleasure in recording our deep sense of their worth. We shall ever gratefully cher-

ish the remembrance of their service. It must be a great satisfaction to the survivors of this group to find the tree which they planted bearing good fruit; to hear the mighty and joyous chorus of voices approving of the work they started a quarter of a century ago; to see the Center an object of affection and reverence by the community. We offer to them the homage of our grateful hearts.

What is most gratifying is the hearty popular appreciation of the significance of our celebration. Throughout the Center there is gladness of heart. The air is alive with a sweet holiday mood. Everyone is vocal with praise of the achievements of his beloved institution. Eager interest is displayed in the history of the Center and the deeds of the founders. The atmosphere is redolent with fraternal sentiment and mutual good feeling. Everyone readily gives himself up to the influence of general jubilation. The twenty-fifth anniversary is being celebrated with thanksgiving as well as festivity.

It is appropriate that we signalize the occasion and even indulge in self-congratulation. For twenty-five years the Center has smiled and shone on its members, steadily and radiantly, with the light of life and happiness. Here, body and mind felt its gladdening influence. In a maimed and mangled world, thick with debasing selfishness and evil, the Center has been a shield and a shelter against unrighteousness. Here, many of us were awakened to a consciousness of moral duty. Here, many of us were made fit for service to God and man. The Center, indeed, to thousands has been a life-giving influence enabling them to enjoy and revere the rich fruits of religion and the culture of their people. Again and again, the Center has served as a prophylactic against decay and ignorant optimism, as an exemplar of mankind's noblest ideals, and as teacher of the sovereignty of God and intelligence. We have reason to believe that the growing generation will have an even more vital contact with the Center, and with the riper maturity that comes with time, it will see in it ampler and more fruitful opportunities for personal enrichment.

In what manner shall we manifest our feelings of pride and gratitude, and what shall we do to evoke an echoing sentiment in our children twenty-five years hence? Let us build the Educational Institute. This will be our testimony that we want not only to preserve our inheritance, but to improve it. Let the Institute be the Historian of the Jubilee and a prophecy of progressive good.

Let us give the community the influence of a new experience from which will flow a fresh and continuing vitality.

Dedication

By Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

"THIS is the day which the Lord hath made, *Nogiloh V'nismechoh Bo,* we will rejoice and be glad in it." These words of the Psalmist come to our minds as we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of our beloved Brooklyn Jewish Center.

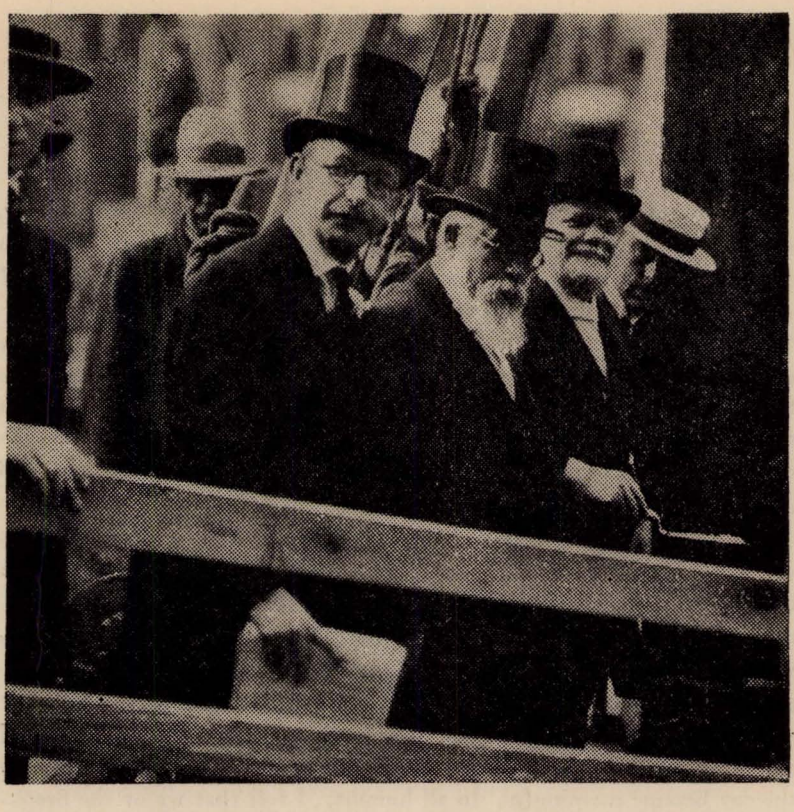
Our ancient Rabbis, however, find in these words a grave warning as well as a joyous exhortation. They ask, what does the word *Bo* — in the Psalmist's statement — refer to? Shall we rejoice merely "in it," in the day, or "*in Him,*" in what the day should symbolize — God? And then they add: Solomon gives us the answer, for he says: "We will rejoice and be glad *in Thee* — in God."

It has become quite customary to celebrate in elaborate fashion anniversaries of institutions or organizations. Every milestone — whether it be the tenth, the twenty-fifth or fiftieth year of existence, is commemorated as if the days alone were cause for glorification. In so many cases, these anniversary celebrations are the only signs of life which the institutions evidence. They recall an event which occurred many years ago, but which has lost its significance for the present and which holds no hope of active life for the future. They merely celebrate *the day,* but forget why the day became meaningful. In all humility, I feel that we of the Brooklyn Jewish Center may, in all sincerity, say with King Solomon: "*Nogiloh V'nismechoh Boch,*" "We will rejoice and be glad *in Thee* — in God!"

A spirit of jubilation permeates our hearts not merely because twenty-five years have passed since our Center was founded, but because the Center, in all these years of its existence, radiated *Godliness* in the life of our community; because the Center, in this quarter of a century, was effective in planting Godly ideals in the hearts and minds of all who came under its beneficent influence.

And if this day is to be yet more meaningful to us, we must resolve to make the Center ever increasingly effective in moulding our lives as Jews, in directing our thoughts so that we may better understand and appreciate Jewish values, in inspiring us with greater love and devotion to our faith, to our people, and to our people's lofty ideals.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made!" Let us re-translate the words to mean: "This is the day which *maketh Godliness,*" and then we shall have a right to rejoice and be glad in it.



RABBI BERNARD L. LEVINTHAL LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF THE CENTER ON JUNE 13, 1920. RABBI SIMON FINKELSTEIN AND DR. ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL, RABBI OF THE CENTER, ARE AT HIS RIGHT

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Twenty-Five Years of Brooklyn Jewish Center History

By JOSEPH GOLDBERG
Administrative Director

PROPERLY to evaluate the first twenty-five years of the existence of the Brooklyn Jewish Center one would have to combine the history of the entire Synagogue-Center movement in this country with the history of the Eastern Parkway Jewish community, of which the Center is an integral part.

The Brooklyn Jewish Center was the second Synagogue-Center to be organized in this country, and is one of the largest institutions of its kind. It has also played an important role in the growth and development of the Eastern Parkway community.

● *THE BEGINNING* In 1918 there appeared on the American horizon a new movement, the Jewish Center. It was launched by Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan in his attempt to find a solution to the problem of the survival of Judaism in this country. The Synagogue of old, he felt, was not only a place of worship; it was also a place of study and a place of fellowship. To restore the ancient function of the Synagogue in an atmosphere of modernity that would be particularly attractive to the American youth, he suggested the organization of the Jewish Center. Together with a group of supporters and followers he organized the first "Jewish Center" in this country on West 86th Street, in New York. The President of this Center was the late Joseph H. Cohen. His brother, Louis Cohen, also deceased, was then a recent arrival in the newly developed Jewish community of Eastern Parkway. He, together with Moses Ginsberg and Samuel Rottenberg, sponsored the organization of the Brooklyn Jewish Center. The first meeting was held at the home of Mr. Cohen. A tentative slate of officers, headed by Mr. Louis Cohen, was elected. The organization was incorporated in January, 1919, and from then on rapid progress was made: land was purchased on Eastern Parkway, between Brooklyn and New York Avenues; a Building Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Charles Goell, and an architect, Louis Allen Abramson (who

had supervised the erection of the New York Jewish Center), was engaged to make plans for the new structure.

It will be interesting to consider the unique scheme devised to finance the proposed building. Generally, institutions are financed through donations obtained from those interested in a project with subsequent successive appeals on appropriate occasions during the progress of building and dedication. The leaders of the Center were opposed to donations, and suggested, instead, the floating of a bond issue among the members which should be a second mortgage on the building and bear interest at the rate of 6% per annum. They believed it undemocratic for one member to contribute more than another to an institution from which everyone derived the same benefits. However, members who could afford larger sums were expected to subscribe in proportion to their means. It was expected that the building would cost $250,000. Upon its completion, it was planned to redeem the bonds through the sale of life pews to members. The interest payments, in the meantime, would be met from membership dues. Subscriptions were obtained from those who joined the membership, and by October of that year amounted to $175,000.

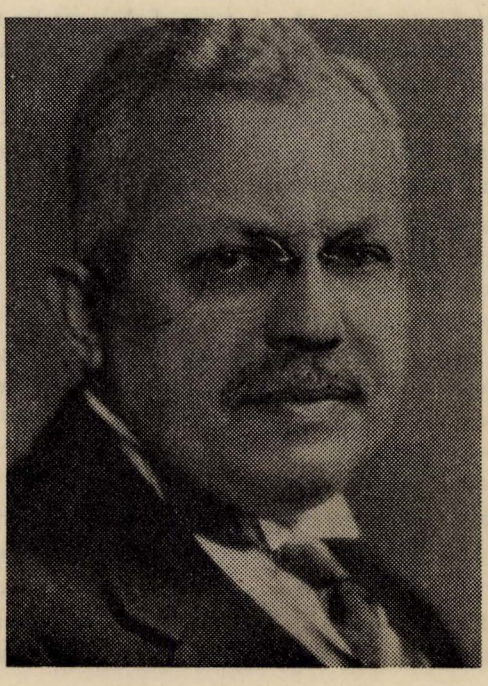
During that month permanent officers were elected. Mr. Samuel



LOUIS COHEN, TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER, 1919

Rottenberg became the President of the Center and continued in that office for a period of ten years. On October 17th (Chol Hamoed Succoth) a Committee called on Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal, the spiritual leader of Temple Petach Tikvah, and extended to him a call to become the rabbi of the newly formed Center. A number of the leaders of the Center were at that time members of the Temple. They knew the young, promising Rabbi of the Temple intimately and they admired his qualities of leadership, his zeal, enthusiasm and oratorical ability. Rabbi Levinthal accepted the call and thus began a happy union that has meant so much to the Brooklyn Jewish Center and the community. Temporary offices were opened at 881 Eastern Parkway, and placed in charge of the newly elected Executive Secretary, Joseph Goldberg. In December, the Brooklyn Jewish community was given an opportunity to honor the new spiritual leader of the Center at a dinner held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The speakers included Rabbi Bernard L. Levinthal, father of the guest of honor, Dr. Judah L. Magnes, Justice Edward Lazansky, Rev. Z. Hirsch Masliansky, Samuel Rottenberg and others.

The membership rose to one hundred, a real achievement in those years. The Membership Committee was hard at work in the difficult



SAMUEL ROTTENBERG, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER, 1919-1928

task of enrolling new members. Too frequently it met with the stereotyped answer: "I will join you when the building will be completed." The financial burden, in the meantime, had to be borne by those who had organized the Center and those whom they succeeded in bringing into it. The membership dues were set at $100.00 per family, and $50.00 for unmarried members. Though this charge was not exorbitant, considering the financial standing of a large number of men in the community, many of them were reluctant to invest in a project yet to be realized.

● *THE CORNERSTONE IS REACHED* Impressive ceremonies marked the laying of the cornerstone on June 13, 1920. It was followed by a gathering at the temporary office, the main purpose of which was to secure additional subscriptions to the bond issue.

In planning the cornerstone ceremonies, the members had to designate the person who was to have the honor of laying the stone. Some felt that the distinction should go to the President of the institution. Mr. Rottenberg declined. It was customary, he said, that such honors be sold to the person making the largest contribution, but this should not be the method used by the Brooklyn Jewish Center. The distinction should be conferred upon those who, because of their service to our people and our faith, deserved to be honored. He then suggested that the honor go to Rabbi Bernard L. Levinthal, chief rabbi of Philadelphia, and that he be assisted by Rabbi Simon Finkelstein, Dean of the Brooklyn Orthodox Rabbinate, and Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal. This suggestion met with the unanimous approval of the members.

Within the next few months the membership grew to two hundred, and with this growth came the desire for the organization of some activities even before the building was completed. As soon as the basement (now the gymnasium) was finished, a temporary roof was built over it and High Holy Day services were conducted there in September 1920. Don Fuchs, former chief Cantor of the Vienna Kultus-Gemeinde, was the cantor. The Sisterhood was then organized, and several young folks clubs were formed. The Hebrew School was opened on November 15th, with a registration of seventy-one children for the afternoon sessions, and fifteen adolescents for the evening classes. The temporary office was closed and the administrative offices were opened in the new building. The use of portions of the building while it was in the process of construction slowed the completion of the structure but there was compensation in the fact that we were able to meet the demands of an ever-

growing Jewish community for a place of worship, and to satisfy the need of the children for Jewish education. In addition, it helped to maintain the interest of the membership and facilitated the enrollment of new members. In January 1921, the first late Friday evening services were established, and the Hebrew School was supplemented by classes for adults which, in later years, developed into the present Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults.

In April of the same year a historic Jewish event occurred. The first Zionist delegation from abroad arrived in this country to organize the Keren Hayesod. It consisted of Prof. Chaim Weizmann, Prof. Albert Einstein and the late Menachem M. Ussishkin. They received a tremendous ovation from New York Jewry, culminating in a great demonstration at the Metropolitan Opera House. The Hebrew Schools of Greater New York decided to arrange a parade and reception in honor of the guests and the Brooklyn Jewish Center, even in its unfinished state, was chosen for the demonstration. This was the first time that our Borough was selected as a place for a city-wide Jewish function. Theretofore, all such events had been held in Manhattan. Two thousand pupils, representing all Hebrew schools in the city, paraded on Eastern Parkway with their school banners and were reviewed by Dr. Weizmann, Mr. Ussishkin and Dr. Schmaryah Levin from a stand erected in front of the Center building. The review was followed by a mass demonstration in the temporary auditorium, located in the basement.

● *FIRST SYNAGOGUE SERVICES* In September 1921, we were able to make use of the Synagogue for the High Holy Days. The departments were moved from one portion of the building to another, and in this way we managed to keep the activities going without interruption. The religious activities, the Hebrew School, classes for adults, and the clubs were functioning successfully.

We now wished to expand our Jewish activities into the field of general education. Plans were formulated for the organization of weekly Forum Lectures and Discussions, to be held on Monday evenings throughout the season. The Forum was to be devoted to the discussion of general problems by men and women prominent in various fields of human endeavor. It was opened on January 16, 1922, and has continued uninterruptedly to this day. At first, these lectures were held in the partially boarded-up dining room, but when the auditorium was finished, they were transferred there. The Forum broadened its pro-

gram. Arrangements were made with Columbia University to conduct an Extension Department at the Center. Classes were established under professors designated by the University, and the students received credit for courses taken. The Yiddish lectures arranged at the conclusion of the Forum seasons were added features to the educational activities. They were addressed by some of the leading figures in the Yiddish writing field, among them Dr. Chaim Zitlowsky, David Pinsky, Sholom Asch, Abraham Reisin, Zalman Schneour, Chaim Greenberg and S. Niger.

The completion of the building was now in sight, and plans had to be made for the purchase of equipment. The Center began the sale among its members of a $100,000 "Equipment Note" issue in denominations of $100 and $200. These notes were non-interest bearing, payable in ten annual installments.

Applications for membership rapidly increased and, by November 1922, we had five hundred members. The Physical Training Department was opened and immediately became a most popular addition to Center activities.

The seating arrangements in the new Synagogue created a question that aroused a great deal of controversy. Should the men and women be seated together or should the strict orthodox rule of separating the sexes be enforced? The membership, then as now, consisted of men and women of various religious inclinations. A great many came from Synagogues where the orthodox ritual prevailed, while some belonged to temples where mixed pews and even mixed choirs were permitted. Still others had in mind a Center for the new generation of American-born, and felt that the Synagogue should adopt a more modern outlook in such matters. The committee wrestled with the problem at numerous meetings, where both sides of the question were argued. The majority recommendation was in favor of permitting men and women to sit together in the two center aisles, and of reserving the extreme left section for men who preferred their own section and the extreme right section for women who wanted to sit alone. This arrangement was adopted and is still followed at the Saturday morning and holiday services.

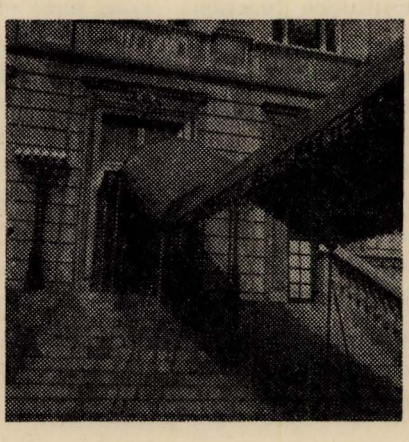
The need for funds continually hampered the completion of the building. It should be remembered that the Center started without one cent of its own capital. The income from membership dues was hardly sufficient to cover the cost of administration, building maintenance, educational and religious activities and the tremendous payments of interest on bonds, mortgage and on sums borrowed from members and banks. This was the well known system of "borrowing from Peter to pay Paul"

but it was the only way by which we were enabled to finance the construction and maintenance of the institution.

This condition was somewhat relieved by the sale of Synagogue pews, the income from which gave us our first capital. Life pews were sold to the highest bidders, the price depending on the location of seats. Almost $140,000 was thus realized. Purchasers were permitted to pay for the seats with Center bonds, thus helping to reduce the bonded indebtedness.

In the search for additional capital, a suggestion was made for the sale of space for memorials on the stained glass windows in the Synagogue. This custom was and is a common practice in many Synagogues throughout the country. A number of substantial offers were made. In June 1922, the plan was discussed by the members of the Board and rejected on the ground that it was undignified for the Center to raise income through such means. In fact, there was a strong objection to any tablets being placed in any part of the building that would point to anyone who either rendered service or gave substantial donations to the Center. This was somewhat modified in later years, as we shall point out subsequently.

With the membership continually growing, some thought had to be given to the organizational structure of the Center. Theretofore, the administration was in the hands of the officers and departmental committees, each committee being headed by a chairman. The committees functioned separately when their particular problems were discussed, and as a Committee of Committees when decisions of general policy were to be adopted. It was therefore agreed to elect a Board of Directors of thirty, with an Assistant Board of equal size. These two bodies were



CENTER ENTRANCE

later replaced by a Board of Governors of one hundred, which is still in existence. In addition, a Board of Trustees was created in 1923, consisting of eighteen members, to meet the requirements of the Religious Corporations Law, which vested the legal responsibility for the functioning of a religious institution in a body of that size.

● *DEDICATION* December 31, 1922, was set aside for the dedication of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, and plans were prepared for the great event. The late Henry Seinfel was appointed Chairman of the Dedication Committee. The project called for a special service on Friday evening, December 29th, with Dr. Elias Solomon, President of the United Synagogue of America, as the guest speaker. On Saturday morning, December 30th, the special services were addressed by Dr. Julius H. Greenstone, of Graetz College, Philadelphia.

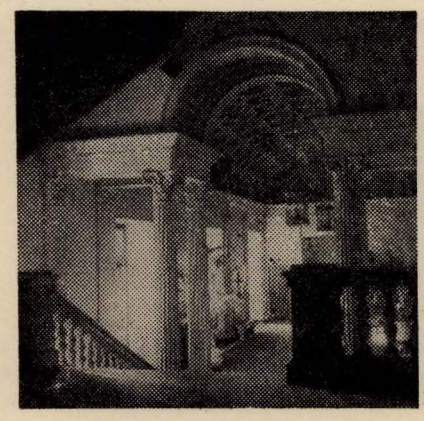
The official dedication services were held on Sunday morning, December 31, 1922, with the following participating: Louis Marshall, President of the American Jewish Committee; Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University; Dr. Cyrus Adler, President of Dropsie College; Aaron W. Levy, President of the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities; and Rabbis Jacob Kohn, Israel Goldfarb and Alexander Basel. Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal delivered the dedication sermon.

A special dedication issue of the *Center Bulletin* was published in honor of the celebration. It contained interesting material in connection with the new institution, the men behind it and the activities in which it hoped to engage. It also published a chronological history of the important events leading to the dedication.

The celebration period was over, and now came the everyday problems of making the institution function. True, some of the departments wisely began their activities long before the actual completion of the building. We had a Hebrew School, classes for adults, a weekly Forum, clubs for boys and girls, a Physical Training Department, an active Sisterhood, a Junior Congregation, the late Friday evening services and the regular services on the Sabbath and on Holidays. We had to integrate and expand these activities now that all the facilities of the building were available to the membership and the community. Our activities were on a community-wide scale, and we had little to be guided by. We were pioneers. Our prime motive was to create more and more activities, and to interest every member of the Center family. We wanted the Center to be a bee-hive of Jewish and general activities, and in this we believe we succeeded.

The dedication of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and its subsequent activities brought forth a great deal of publicity in New York and out-of-town publications. Jews all over the country came to know of the existence of a new type of institution, aiming to promote the religious, cultural, recreational and social well-being of the community. The idea of "Synagogue Center" — as it was later called — spread far and wide, and other communities began to plan institutions of a similar nature. Much of the Executive Secretary's time was consumed by interviews with committees from all over the country, wanting to know all about the new institution, how it operated, how it was financed and how it was built. Our floor plans were widely in demand, and so was our literature dealing with all aspects of our activities. The Brooklyn Jewish Center served as a model for other institutions and was instrumental in encouraging the construction of many of the Centers now functioning. The Synagogue Center movement, it has often been stated, was a major creation of American Jewry, and we justly claim that the Brooklyn Jewish Center played a leading role in helping to develop it.

● *GROWTH* By this time several changes had been made in the administrative department of the Center. Originally, the writer held the position of Executive Secretary. Before the dedication of the building a new position was created, with Herman Brickman as the Executive Director. The Executive Secretary was in charge of the administrative and financial functions of the institution, while the Executive Director was given supervision of the activities conducted by the Center and the physical supervision of the building. Mr. Brickman's tenure lasted but a few months and he was succeeded by Mr. Jacob



CENTER LOBBY

Salzman, who held the position of Administrative Director. By the end of 1923 the two positions, that of Executive Secretary and Administrative Director, were combined and the writer was appointed as the Administrative Director, a position he still holds.

One of the most successful of Center activities was the weekly public Forum. Most of the lectures were held in the Auditorium. There were times, however, when the demand for seats was so great that the lectures had to be held in the Main Synagogue. This obliged the speakers as well as the male listeners to wear hats. A keen controversy followed. In the discussions at meetings of the Forum Committee and the Board, some thought a dispensation might be obtained at least for the Gentile speakers, while others felt that the Synagogue should be reserved for religious services only. We had no difficulty with some male speakers. William Jennings Bryan gladly consented to wear the traditional skull cap. Heywood Broun rather enjoyed the experience of speaking under a hat and duly recorded it in his *New York World* column, "It Seems to Me", on October 19, 1927.

In later years, the hat question came up again when the agnostic, Clarence Darrow, debated "Capital Punishment." He, too, consented to appear with his head covered. When Senator William Borah was to address the Forum, the Committee decided to hold the lecture in the auditorium, but to have it amplified in the Synagogue to accommodate the overflow. The Committee did not want to embarrass Mr. Borah by asking him whether he would object to wearing a hat. When he concluded his lecture and was informed that there was an added audience in the Synagogue, he readily agreed to deliver a brief address to them while wearing his hat. It remained for Aaron Sapiro, a Jew, to refuse to speak in the Synagogue with a hat on his head. Mr. Sapiro was tremendously popular in those days because his lawsuit against Henry Ford, publisher of the *Dearborn Independent* and other anti-Semitic publications, resulted in the



CENTER
LECTURE
AUDIENCE

automobile manufacturer's apology for "the wrong done to the Jews, as fellow men and brothers, by asking their forgiveness for the harm that I have unintentionally committed. . . ." Thousands of people wanted to see and hear the successful attorney. The Committee pleaded with him to agree to the wearing of a hat or skull cap so that the lecture might be transferred to the Synagogue. He held that it was against his principles to wear a hat in a place of worship, but he did solve the problem by offering to come again at a later date and repeat the lecture for the benefit of those who could not get in to hear the original address.

Alexander Kerensky, the head of the first revolutionary government in Russia, presented a more difficult problem. Jewish friends of his pleaded with us to make an exception in his case and to let him speak without wearing a hat. "He never wears a hat" they said, "and would feel quite uncomfortable in one". We arranged for an appointment with Mr. Kerensky at his home and took with us a sample skull cap. He tried it on and agreed to wear one with the understanding that if it fell off his head while speaking, he would be permitted to continue his address bare-headed. Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, too, had his difficulties with skull caps while addressing the Synagogue audience. In the course of his lecture it fell off his head. He picked it up, replaced it and continued to speak. When it fell off the second time, he picked it up and addressed it thus: "I gave you two chances. If you fall off again, you are going to lie there." It fell off, and he kept his word.

The reputation of the Brooklyn Jewish Center spread far and wide, and articles on the institution and its activities appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. The building itself became the center of nearly all important activities in the Borough. Banquets of leading Jewish institutions, mass meetings and similar events were held there. Fund-raising drives for local and overseas needs were sponsored and encouraged by the Center. The Keren Hayesod, Federation of Jewish Charities, United Jewish Appeal and many other campaigns received powerful support from the Center leadership and the membership. Zionism has always occupied an important place in the activities of the Center. The Eastern Parkway Zionist District became synonymous with the Brooklyn Jewish Center district. From the pulpit, through its publications, and at meetings, the Zionist cause received whole-hearted cooperation. This culminated some years ago in the resolution adopted by the Brooklyn Jewish Center affiliating itself officially with the Zionist movement and pledging itself to enroll the members of the institution in the Zionist organization.

In its desire to help develop Jewish art the Center arranged a number

of exhibits from time to time. A few might be cited: The exhibit of Russian Jewish Artists; the Palestine exhibit of Bezalel art objects, under the direction of its founder, the late Prof. Boris Schatz; the Leopold Pilichowski exhibit of the historic painting of the dedication of the Hebrew University in Palestine; a display of clay models submitted by leading artists for the Haym Salomon statue; the works of Saul Raskin. The Bezalel Exhibition of Palestine Arts and Crafts was closed with a meeting addressed by the great Hebrew poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, and by David Yellin, the renowned Palestinian pedagogue. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the Sisterhood purchased and presented to the Center the beautiful "Chair of Prophet Elijah," which adorns the Synagogue pulpit.

● *1,000 MEMBERS IN TWO YEARS* By the end of 1923 the membership passed the thousand mark, the realization of a goal hardly believed possible only two years before. There was the problem of assimilating such a large membership and of promoting sociability among them.

The members were in the young, middle age and older groups. Some



ISIDOR FINE, SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER, 1929-1932

had either been born in the United States or came here at an early age and became thoroughly Americanized; others were recent arrivals and still clung to their former ways of life, and unlike the average Synagogue membership, the Center did not draw its followers entirely from among people with religious leanings. It attracted many of the younger generation who would never think of joining a Synagogue as such.

How to integrate such diversified classes, and how to make them function as a unit, was a matter of deep concern to the Center leadership. There was a feeling that the problem could be solved through a paid social director who would plan social activities and provide the members with opportunities to mix freely and form friendships. An opposing opinion held that sociability in an organization like the Center could not be created by a professional social director. It was finally decided, however, to test the theory of professional entertainment guidance.

● *PROMOTING SOCIABILITY — AND MOSS HART* The first man to receive the appointment as Social Director was Abraham Wiener. His successor was the late Samuel (Schlomo) Grossman, a former General Manager of the Yiddish Art Theatre, founded by Maurice Schwartz. Besides his



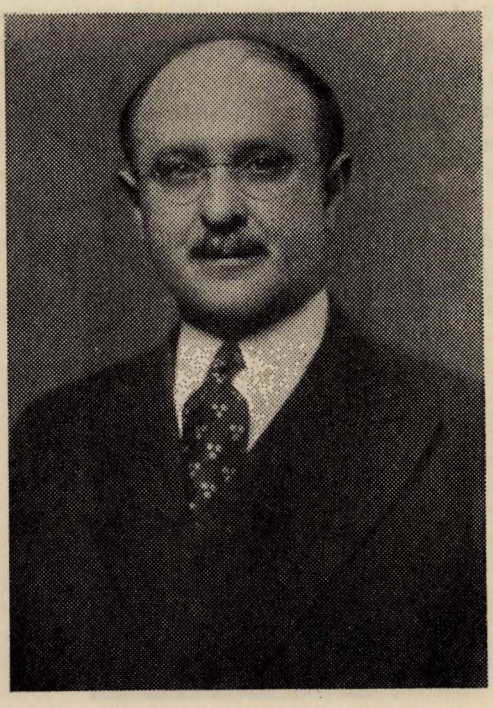
JOSEPH M. SCHWARTZ, THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER, 1933-1942

many endearing qualities, he was a talented author of Jewish one-act plays and a writer of lyrics for some well-known songs. He directed the dramatic activities at the Center, planned the Forum lectures and arranged social events. Following his resignation, the post was filled by the late Meyer Cogin, who was formerly connected with the Educational Alliance, on East Broadway. Cogin took charge of the club activities and the planning of social programs.

Hopes for the improvement of sociability in the Center ran high with the selection in 1927 of Moss Hart, now the celebrated playwright, as the new Social Director to succeed Meyer Cogin. Hart was recommended by Rabbi Levinthal, who had watched his activities at a summer camp in Vermont. He was young, talented, full of fun and a splendid mixer. The writer interviewed him at length and discussed with him our problem of sociability. He readily agreed to tackle the job and plunged into the arrangements of his first assignment, the Simchas Torah Dinner, which then marked the opening of the year's social events. In introducing himself to the readers of the *Bulletin*, he wrote: "Mr. Hart comes to us with a new fund of ideas and a fixed purpose to create the magical something that spells a 'social spirit' and, incidentally, successful affairs and good times." When a few years later he was acclaimed on Broadway as the successful co-author of "Once in a Lifetime," he wrote: "But for the Grace of God I might now be busily engaged in preparing another Simchas Torah Dinner at the Brooklyn Jewish Center." He planned to move around from table to table to see that the diners enjoyed themselves and that they had the opportunity to be introduced to each other. It was part of his plan to "promote sociability," but he felt too timid to carry it out. While not too successful as a director of the Center's social destinies, he was to meet with greater success as the coach of the Center Dramatic Group. The young amateurs took a great deal of delight in being the victims of his verbal lashings during rehearsals. When he could not find a suitable person to appear in the leading role of "Emperor Jones" he took the part himself. He improvised humorous skits, which included references to some of the leading personalities in the Center. This led to complaints on the part of the offended parties and a suggestion that, in the future, the skits be censored. Later Hart was to satirize in Broadway revues some of the world's great figures — Herbert Hoover, Mrs. Roosevelt, the King of England, and many others. Hart's meteoric rise as one of the most successful of Broadway's playwrights brought to an end the period of professional social directing at the Center.

It is probably known to very few that the Brooklyn Jewish Center

was among the first to conceive the idea of broadcasting Jewish music. Before the building was actually completed we had planned to install a broadcasting station, the purpose of which would be to send through the air lectures, musical programs, and events of Jewish interest. In the November, 1922, issue of *The Jewish Center Bulletin,* we find this announcement: ". . . we soon expect to establish a broadcasting station from which will be sent out within a radius of a hundred miles — concerts, forum talks, debates, yes, even sermons." The project was abandoned when the required appropriation of what now appears as an insignificant sum was not forthcoming. Some time later the Center broadcast a most successful concert of the Cantors Association, with some of the greatest cantors in this country as soloists — among them Josef Rosenblatt, Mordecai Herschman, Zavel Quartin, David Roitman and Berele Chagy. This concert was among the first Jewish musical events to be sent through the air. The response was most gratifying. We received hundreds of messages of thanks from listeners, many of whom were shut-ins.



JUDGE EMANUEL GREENBERG, FOURTH AND PRESENT PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER. IN OFFICE SINCE 1943

● *FINANCIAL PROBLEMS*

We mentioned early in this report the fact that the Center was built without any capital of its own. The first capital was created through the sale of synagogue pews. The income from membership dues, Holy Day seats, catering department, and other sources, was hardly enough to pay our running expenses, and we incurred an annual deficit. What contributed to this situation was, primarily, the enormous payment of interest on mortgage, bonds and notes to banks and members, amounting, in the early days of the Center, from $40,000 to $50,000 annually — a sum which almost equalled the amount of dues collected. One can judge what a crushing burden this interest payment was to the Center by the fact that more than $500,000 was paid out in interest from 1920 to the end of 1941.

The solving of the financial problems taxed the ingenuity of the Center leadership for years. Various committees were appointed and recommendations considered, discussed and put into practice. One of the first plans was the levying of a Building Fund Assessment on all members — $200 for married members and $100 for single members. Those who could not or would not pay the entire amount at one time were permitted to pay it in yearly installments. The assessment brought in close to $100,000, but it also created a great deal of confusion and dissatisfaction. The resignation of many members could be attributed directly to resentment at the levy. To stem the loss in membership it was decided to establish an "associate membership" consisting of members who did not pay the assessment. These members were entitled to all the Center privileges except the right to vote or hold office. In later years the membership was unified through the abandonment of the "associate membership" and the unpaid assessment charges were cancelled.

In 1924 the first large fund-raising drive was inaugurated through the launching of a Building Fund Campaign. The previous system, which



CENTER ADULT EDUCATION CLASS IN TALMUD

required every member to contribute the same amount, was abandoned. Members were appealed to for contributions in accordance with their means, and substantial sums were received.

This was followed by a number of annual fund-raising dinners, and then another large campaign on the occasion of the Center's Tenth Anniversary. A tablet was erected bearing the names of those who contributed considerable amounts. It was a departure from the previous rulings against the placing of the tablets in the building. Because of this precedent it was easy to agree several years later to the erection of a memorial tablet in the Synagogue bearing plates for deceased members or relatives of members.

In 1925 it was decided to purchase burial plots in the Montefiore Cemetery at Springfield, L. I. This was considered a sound investment and a future source of income. We soon discovered, however, that we acquired a larger tract of land than we had purchasers for. The proceeds realized from the sales of plots were insufficient to cover the installments of principal and interest. What we hoped would help relieve the Center's financial burden turned out to be an additional responsibility. This problem, too, was eventually solved. A portion of the ground was returned to the Cemetery Corporation, for which the Center received full credit for all costs and expenses, and the remaining plots were then free and clear of all debts. The Center cemetery now is and will be an income-producing source.

The Sisterhood was originally organized for the purpose of promoting the social and educational needs of the women of the Center. Under our rules the wives and children of Center members are automatically included in the membership privileges without additional fees. The Sisterhood was not called upon to help in the financing of the Center. But in 1929 when we suffered the national financial crisis and money was desperately needed, the aid of the Sisterhood was solicited. It assumed the responsibility to arrange an Annual Bazaar. Through the means of a Journal, Book of Life, and the usual Bazaar methods, the first venture was quite successful. In the following years the income from these events was much reduced and the Bazaar idea was abandoned. In its place the men of the Center, in cooperation with the Sisterhood, embarked on a new fund-raising project, an annual concert at the Metropolitan Opera House. When the financial condition improved, this project, too, was abandoned.

In most Synagogues it is customary to make an appeal at the Kol Nidre services. The Center leadership was opposed to this means of fund-raising on the theory that it would mar the solemnity of the eve-

ning. Here, too, practical necessity compelled the adoption of a new policy, and Kol Nidre Appeals were inaugurated. In the first few years the appeal was made by Rabbi Levinthal. Cards were placed on the seats occupied by the congregants who bent in the tab indicating the amount they wished to contribute. The President of the Center, or some other officer, read the names of donors and the amounts pledged. It is needless to say that this procedure took away a great deal from the decorum that is expected at a service on the holiest night of the year. This method of obtaining contributions to the Kol Nidre Appeal was subsequently modified. Pledges were obtained in advance, the names of contributors announced at the services and later published in the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review.*

● *PUBLICATIONS* The need for a publication that would be a medium of contact between the Brooklyn Jewish Center and its membership was realized early in the history of the institution. In February, 1920, the first issue of the *Jewish Center Bulletin* made its appearance. It was a monthly publication, size 9" x 12", consisting of four pages, at times eight pages.

This monthly continued to the end of 1922, when it was converted into a weekly.

In September, 1932, the Center embarked on an ambitious program in the publication of a monthly literary magazine in addition to the weekly *Bulletin,* which limited itself to notices of Center events. In March, 1933, it was greatly enlarged and became a twenty-four page, large-size magazine called the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review* and edited by a committee headed by Louis J. Gribetz. It instantly met with an enthusiastic reception. The *Review* added a great deal to the reputation and the fame of the Center. It occupies an important position in the field of Anglo-Jewish journalism, and is the only publication of this type issued by any Jewish institution in the country. An interesting episode occurred some years ago at the convention of the Jewish Welfare Board. The Board announced a contest among the organizations affiliated with it to determine which institution was deserving of an award for the best publication. We submitted copies of the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review* and the *Bulletin,* but the *Review* was eliminated from the contest because the judges held that no other Jewish institution published so comprehensive a magazine.

In addition to a department devoted to Brooklyn Jewish Center news, the *Review* contains editorials, a column by Rabbi Levinthal, "Just

Between Ourselves," articles of general Jewish interest, short stories and Jewish news of the month.

In discussing Center publications, we might mention the excellent "Annual" published by the Center in 1925, to which Rabbi Leon Spitz refers in his article appearing elsewhere in this book.

The Center also issues a yearly Diary, containing a brief history of the organization, items of interest to the membership as well as other useful information.

● *PROF. EINSTEIN DEDICATES NAZI-BANNED LIBRARY*

On May 10, 1933, an event occurred in the new Nazi Germany that shocked and outraged the whole civilized world. Libraries, public and private, were purged of all books created by the leading minds of all nations, and tossed into flames in a literary "auto-da-fe." Included in this purge were books by the greatest masters of all times. In England and in France committees of prominent writers and scientists were organized to preserve the cultural heritage which the Nazi Government sought to destroy by establishing libraries of "Nazi-banned" books in their countries.

In a leading editorial published in the April, 1934, issue of the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*, a project was launched for the establishment of such a library in the United States, to be housed in our building.

"The purposes of such libraries of the banned," the editorial stated, "are obvious. They are to preserve, in readily accessible collections, all books



OPENING OF THE CENTER NAZI-BANNED LIBRARY. LEFT TO RIGHT: LOUIS PARNES, Z. H. RUBINSTEIN, LATE CITY EDITOR OF *THE DAY*, FORMER BOROUGH PRESIDENT RAYMOND INGERSOLL, PROF. WILL DURANT, SAMUEL ROTTENBERG, JOSEPH M. SCHWARTZ, EDWIN MARKHAM, PROF. ALBERT EINSTEIN, HEINZ LIEPMANN, RABBI ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL, PINCUS GLICKMAN AND JOSEPH GOLDBERG

which the Nazis outlawed in Germany. They are to preserve these cultural contributions to the world, and at the same time remain monuments both to the men and women who created them and to the barbarity of those who, with medieval fanaticism, burned them.

"The books that were destroyed were mainly by Jewish authors. Partly for this reason, it is fitting that a Jewish publication, sponsored by a Jewish institution of the standing of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, should initiate such an undertaking."

The project received wide and enthusiastic support. An Advisory Board was organized which included Sholom Asch, Prof. Franz Boaz, Prof. Morris R. Cohen, Theodore Dreiser, Dr. Will Durant, Prof. Albert Einstein, James W. Gerard, Rev. John Haynes Holmes, Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, Upton Sinclair, Oswald Garrison Villard, Lillian Wald and Dr. Stephen S. Wise.

During the following months a fund was raised and books by authors banned by Nazis were purchased and installed in a special section of the Center Library.

The task of obtaining a complete list of the authors included in the purge was not an easy one. We obtained the lists published by the *Yiddishe Rundschau* and the "Library of Nazi Banned Books" in Paris. The list thus compiled by the Center was the only one available in this country and has been in wide demand by libraries, students and writers. Plans were discussed for the opening of the Library of Nazi Banned Books in the fall of 1934. By a sheer coincidence, the writer learned that a committee had been organized to tender a dinner to Heinz Liepmann, a German Jewish writer whose books too had been purged by the Nazis. Liepmann had escaped to New York from a concentration camp, where he had been mistreated by the Germans. Prof. Albert Einstein, an intimate friend of Liepmann, promised to attend the dinner.

We suggested to the committee that the dinner should be given in honor of both Prof. Einstein and Herr Liepmann and that it take place at the Center. Prof. Einstein consented to be the guest of honor and to inaugurate the new Library. The dinner was held in our auditorium on Saturday evening, December 22, 1934, and attracted one of the greatest gatherings in the history of the city. Newspapers in New York and elsewhere published accounts of this historic event. *The Jewish Daily Bulletin* of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency issued a special edition devoted to the dinner and to the Library. Messages of greetings came from prominent men and women, here and abroad, among them Bertrand Russell, Andre Gide and Lion Feuchtwanger. The speakers included Prof. Albert Einstein, Heinz Liepmann, Edwin Markham, Dr. Stephen

S. Wise, Dr. Will Durant, the late Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, Borough President Raymond Ingersoll, Dr. Samuel Margoshes and Rabbi Levinthal.

On the foundation of the Nazi Banned Library, we built one of the largest and finest collections of general Judaica in the Hebrew, Yiddish and English languages. Dr. Elias N. Rabinowitz, a noted scholar, has been the director of the Library since its opening.

● *HEBREW EDUCATION*

1. THE AFTERNOON HEBREW SCHOOL

The afternoon Hebrew School was the first educational activity of the Center. At the beginning the pupils met in improvised temporary class rooms on the first floor of the incomplete building. When the third floor was finished, the classes were moved to their permanent place. The rooms were not too spacious, but sufficed for the registration in the early days of the Center. There were two sessions, the younger children attending classes from 4:00 to 5:15 P.M. and the older groups from 5:15 to 6:30. The children met on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons and on Sunday mornings.

During the first few years the school showed a small financial profit. Later it incurred a yearly deficit. During the years of depression, when the Center was forced to resort to economies in every department, the Hebrew School, too, was obliged to undergo a change. The school was turned over to the members of the teaching staff, who conducted it on a cooperative basis, and the institution absorbed the overhead expenses. This situation was changed after a few years. The Center fortunately was again able to take over the responsibility for the maintenance of the school, even though annual deficits still were incurred.

The registration fluctuated from year to year. There were times when the school maintained its full strength and there were years when reg-



PUPILS OF CENTER'S SCHOOLS

istration fell down considerably. What were the causes for this decrease? Economic conditions played an important part; lack of parents' interest in the Jewish educational welfare of their children, may have been another reason. The organization of a Center Academy was responsible for the fact that some children who would have registered in the Hebrew School became pupils of the new school. Moreover, many parents found the daily attendance at Hebrew School, following a strenuous day at public school, too trying for the child. The Hebrew School consisted of two groups. One group attended the five-day-a-week school and another group (originally intended primarily for girls) met three times a week, each session lasting one hour and fifteen minutes.

It was decided to convert the entire Hebrew School into a single three-day-a-week School. The children now meet on alternate days (either Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays) and on Sunday mornings. Each daily session lasts two hours instead of one and a quarter hours. The child receives five and three-quarters hours of instruction per week instead of six and one-quarter hours, a loss of approximately thirty minutes per week. On the other hand, for those who attended the former three-day-a-week session, it means a gain of two hours in instruction time. The change resulted in a larger registration of pupils, now numbering 260, the highest in our history.

In 1936 the Center instituted its first Shevuoth Consecration Service for girls. This ceremony has continued ever since with marked success.

We have placed growing emphasis on secondary Hebrew education. Graduates of our Hebrew School and Center Academy continue their Hebrew studies in the Florence Marshall Hebrew High School, a branch of which meets in our building. Other students continue in the Post Bar Mitzvah class, which meets on Sunday mornings for services, religious studies and discussion of current Jewish problems.

● 2. *SUNDAY SCHOOL* When it was proposed to establish a Sunday School at the Center the idea met with considerable opposition. The reason for this was that a Sunday School might discourage attendance at the Hebrew School. Parents might deem the Sunday School sufficient for their children. The demands for a Sunday School were persistent and eventually such a school was opened. It was limited, however, to Jewish History and Religion. This school has grown in size from its modest beginning to a registration of upwards of 300 children and constitutes a reservoir for Hebrew School students. Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes is the principal of the Sunday School and the afternoon Hebrew School.

● 3. *CENTER ACADEMY*

The Center Academy, a progressive day school for Hebrew and secular instruction, was opened in February 1928 and marked a milestone in the Center's educational history. The suggestion that an elementary school be established was considered almost at the inception of the institution, when the advice of a number of Jewish leaders and educators — among them Louis Marshall and Prof. Mordecai M. Kaplan — was sought. The plan was dropped and not revived until March 1927.

At a conference held at the home of Dr. Emanuel Neumann, who at that time resided in our neighborhood, and attended by Dr. David Tannenbaum and the writer, in addition to Dr. and Mrs. Neumann, we discussed the educational problems confronting the Jewish children in the community. We all agreed that there was a need for a modern, progressive school that would provide the benefits of combined instruction in Hebrew and secular subjects. The idea was suggested to the Hebrew School Committee and it sponsored the organization of the Center Academy.

It was difficult to convince a sufficient number of parents to entrust the education of their children to a new and experimental school. Many parents wanted to wait and see how the school would develop. In order to instill confidence in the parents, it was decided to engage a leading educator as Educational Adviser. We first approached Prof. Paul Klapper, then Dean of City College, who, because of other commitments, declined and suggested that we secure an educator from Teachers College of Columbia University. Several years ago, at the invitation of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, Prof. Klapper made a survey of the educational system in the Center Academy and presented a favorable report. The school profited greatly by the recommendations made by him. Prof. Rollo G. Reynolds, Provost of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Principal of Horace Mann School, was selected as the Educational Adviser. He helped to organize the school, selected the teaching



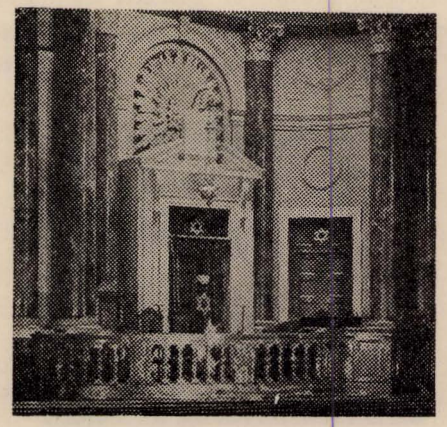
IN A CENTER CLASSROOM

staff and planned the curriculum. The school was organized with a kindergarten and early grades. Other classes were added year after year until the full eight grades functioned. From the very beginning we found ourselves cramped for space to house the new addition to our Educational Department. There was talk of erecting a special building for the new school, but the necessary finances were not available. The problem was partly solved through the acquisition of a building on Lincoln Place, which now serves as an Annex.

When authorization was given to organize the Academy, it was understood that the school would meet its own obligations. Despite its heavy budget and recurrent deficits it has overcome all its financial crises. In 1932 the Academy was chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. It was the first school in this country to use the progressive method of instruction, not only in the secular department but also in the Hebrew Studies. Since then several schools having a similar program have been organized.

● *4. INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES FOR ADULTS*

Adult Study groups were organized as far back as 1921. Courses were given by the members of the Hebrew School faculty. In October of 1933, a more ambitious program was developed through the organization of the Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, under the direction of Rabbi Levinthal. The Institute received the official recognition of the University of the State of New York, and the Board of Education recognized it for alertness credit for teachers taking its courses. Instruction is now given in elementary, intermediate and advanced Hebrew, Jewish History, Religion,



ALTAR OF CENTER SYNAGOGUE

Talmud and Yiddish. Our Institute is officially connected with and is one of the leading affiliates of the National Academy for Adult Education, organized by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

● *RELIGIOUS SERVICES* Ever since the organization of the Center we had the good fortune to minister to large congregations on the Sabbath, on Holidays and at the late Friday evening services. It has been gratifying to see the great number of men and women coming not only from the vicinity but also from neighboring communities to participate in the inspiring services conducted at the Center. At most services the sermons are preached by Rabbi Levinthal. Occasionally, guest preachers are invited by the Rabbi. Rabbi Levinthal's sermons have been masterpieces of religious learning, inspiration and eloquence, and have had a national influence. They have been published in several volumes. Rev. Samuel Kantor occupied the office of Cantor from 1921 to 1943. He was succeeded by Cantor Rubin Tucker, who served for two years and then resigned to become one of the leading tenors of the Metropolitan Opera House. Cantor William Sauler succeeded him in 1945. Students of our religious schools and alumni maintain their own Junior Congregation, which conducts services each Sabbath and holiday morning. Recently, special Junior services for the High Holidays were conducted with great success. An annual prize in honor of the late Benjamin Hirsh, former member of the Hebrew School faculty, is awarded to the boy or girl who has rendered outstanding service to the Junior Congregation.

● *SISTERHOOD* The primary purpose in organizing the Sisterhood was to promote activities designed to interest the wives of Center members. The meetings of the organization are devoted to cultural and social programs. In addition to serving the interests of the Center, the Sisterhood participates in fund-raising campaigns for communal and other causes. The presidents of the Sisterhood since its formation were Mrs. Charles Goell (deceased), Mrs. Max N. Koven, Mrs. Albert A. Weinstein, Mrs. Joseph Horowitz, Mrs. Phillip Brenner, Mrs. Albert Witty, and Mrs. Isador Lowenfeld. Mrs. Maurice Bernhardt is the present head of the organization.

● *PHYSICAL TRAINING DEPARTMENT* The popularity of the Physical Training Department was manifest from its inception. It attracted a large number of members, particularly of the younger generation, who enjoyed the

excellent facilities provided. The Center participated in various sport tournaments. It took particular interest in basketball contests, sponsored by the Jewish Welfare Board and Amateur Athletic Union. On several occasions the Center team received championship awards.

● *MORTGAGE* If it is true that history repeats itself, Jewish institutional life will soon go through the same process it did following World War I. Paralleling the housing building boom at the conclusion of the last war, there was a wave of building projects undertaken by Jewish charitable, religious and educational institutions. Most of these structures now being used were erected in those years, and almost all of them were built without a solid financial foundation. Today there are numerous plans for new buildings — expansions to be embarked upon as soon as conditions in the building trade make such construction work possible. It is to be hoped that we may learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid the heartaches and headaches of the past generation. A review of the financial difficulties through which the Brooklyn Jewish Center has passed should provide some guidance.

We have already mentioned the fact that over a period of twenty years the payment of interest reached the colossal sum of $500,000, half the cost of building the Center; that the best part of the income from membership dues over a period of years had to be diverted to interest, instead of using it for the purpose intended — the maintenance of the institution. This tremendous burden retarded the progress of the Center. It continually occupied the minds of the leaders, and prevented them from





IN THE CENTER GYM

giving full attention to the more important problems connected with the activities of the Center. This condition is directly traceable to the mistaken belief that a million-dollar institution could be established and maintained exclusively on borrowed money.

The sequel was the usual progression of fund-raising efforts like dinners, bazaars, concerts and appeals for outright donations.

Isidor Fine succeeded Samuel Rottenberg as President and held that office from 1929 to 1932, a most trying period in Center history.

In 1930, and the years following the depression, we found ourselves in a critical position. We were unable to meet the interest payments on the first mortgage of $400,000 and on bank loans, and we were threatened with foreclosure. There were times when we feared that the Brooklyn Jewish Center, so gloriously dedicated to the service of our people, would have to close its doors. A desperate appeal was sent to the membership, and to graphically portray our danger we used two drawings. One was of the Center as it was and could continue to be — doors wide open to receive the many people wishing to avail themselves of its facilities; and the other showed the Center as it might be — doors shut, lights out and, at the entrance the sign, "CLOSED". It was a gloomy picture, indeed. But the people did not take the warning seriously. They could not believe such a catastrophe possible.

Measures of a drastic nature had to be taken. All expenses were cut considerably, and salaries of employees, from the highest to the lowest, were reduced again and again. New methods of raising money were evolved, and the membership dues were lowered to about half. Interest payments and installments on the second mortgage bonds were dropped, and negotiations to reduce the rate of interest to other creditors were successfully concluded.

At this point the Center undertook a task that was truly stupendous as well as daring. This was nothing less than the removal of the crushing burden of the mortgage. The President of the Center then was Joseph M. Schwartz, who succeeded Mr. Fine, and served from 1933 to 1942.

The plans for this enterprise were formulated by Samuel Lemberg. A Mortgage Redemption Appeal was launched and headed by Max Herzfeld. It was a campaign that was to last for two years, two years filled with zealous effort such as has rarely been known in an organization of the scope of the Center. The vision was that of an institution free from the financial slavery of a mortgage, and the bright light of this dream guided all who took part in the campaign.

The prodigious effort began with a dinner held at the home of Moses Ginsberg. Here was obtained the initial strength to carry the fight to

the final goal. A substantial portion of the amount needed was subscribed then, and this generosity served as an inspiration to others.

From then on one member after another responded loyally, and eventually, after a long ordeal, the complete sum was raised. No one had truly thought that we could be successful; but there was the money, all of it. We had done the impossible.

Now that we are celebrating the belated twenty-fifth anniversary of the Center's founding, we have every reason to be thankful to the Almighty for having been permitted to witness the day when the Brooklyn Jewish Center would be free and clear of all indebtedness.

● *WAR YEARS* The war placed upon the Jewish Centers the responsibility of helping the country mobilize the civilian population for a total war effort. A committee on Civilian War Activities was formed under the chairmanship of Maurice Bernhardt, with sub-committees in charge of different departments. First Aid classes were organized with volunteer physicians and laymen as instructors. More than 1,500 men and women obtained instruction in first aid, advanced first aid and nutrition. "Blood Donor Days" were arranged from time to time, with hundreds of people registering as donors. Campaigns were conducted for enlistment of air raid wardens, for collection of salvage, and for obtaining books for service men. Lectures were held for instruction in emergency protection. A Red Cross Production Department was established, headed by Mrs. Maurice Bernhardt, which met in the Auditorium four days each week. More than one thousand women



SELLING WAR BONDS IN THE CENTER

prepared bandages. To help in the tremendous work assigned to the Draft Boards, a large group of clerical workers was assembled, and the task of mailing thousands of draft questionnaires assigned to them. The Center was selected as the Red Cross Primary Rest Center for the neighborhood, where victims of disaster might be temporarily housed, clothed and fed. Similarly, the building was chosen by the Mayor's Office as an official casualty station and as a fingerprinting depot. The sale of War Bonds and Stamps was prosecuted vigorously, and millions of dollars worth were sold at the Center from the first to the final drive.

Nearly 450 Center children served in the war, and their names were recorded on an Honor Roll placed in the lobby of the building. Contact was maintained with them through the mailing of the *Center Review* and Holiday Greetings. The Sisterhood did an excellent job in forwarding packages to our men and women in service on appropriate occasions.

● *HIGHEST MEMBERSHIP ON RECORD* At the present writing the membership of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, which was 45 in 1919 and 640 at the Dedication in 1922, has grown to over 2,000. Including wives and unmarried children, it is safe to estimate the actual membership at between 6,000 and 6,500. Lacking detailed statistical information regarding other Synagogue Centers, we feel reasonably certain that no other institution has achieved such a membership.



RED CROSS SESSION AT THE CENTER

● *MARCHING ON — THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE*

An exceptionally large membership and greatly expanded activities have heavily taxed the facilities of the Center. These are still the same as when the building was opened.

It should be recorded that the building has been excellently maintained throughout these years. For this credit is due mainly to the fatherly care given it by the House Committee chairman, Hyman Aaron. He has literally prolonged the life of the building. But this has not been sufficient to help solve the crying need for more and more space.

The overcrowded condition has particularly affected our schools. Originally, the Center housed only one school — the afternoon Hebrew School, with a registration of from 150 to 200 children. At present nearly 800 pupils are receiving their Jewish training in the main building and in the Academy Annex. The youth club activities, too, are suffering from this lack of suitable accommodations. Judge Emanuel Greenberg, who succeeded Mr. Schwartz as President in 1943, called the attention of the membership to this condition and urged strongly the erection of an Educational Institute adjoining the present structure, which was planned to include about eighteen class-rooms, an auditorium, children's gymnasium, club rooms, and other facilities, as well as to accommodate the Center library. A Building Fund Campaign has recently been launched to raise the full sum of $250,000 necessary for the building of the Institute. The leaders of the Center are definitely resolved not to permit any mortgages on the new building, and thus avoid the mistakes of the past.

● *COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES*

Aside from its own institutional activities, the Center has always been in the vanguard of movements aimed to promote the welfare of our people and the community.

In the days of the Keren Hayesod Campaigns, and, in later years, the continuous drives for the United Jewish Appeal, the Center organized committees to canvass the membership. Similarly, fund-raising efforts were undertaken for the Federation of Jewish Charities, the Ort, the Hias, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and other worthy causes. As a result, millions of dollars were subscribed by our members.

The Brooklyn Jewish Center was officially represented at the dedication of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which took place in 1925. Dr. Levinthal attended this historic event as the representative of the Center and other institutions. The Center took an active part in build-

ing the Synagogue Center in Jerusalem, sponsored by the United Synagogue of America. Our Rabbi was the National Chairman of the campaign to finance the undertaking, and delivered one of the principal addresses at the laying of the cornerstone.

The Brooklyn Jewish Community Council owes its inception to the initiative taken by the Center. It was the first attempt to unify the Jews of the largest Jewish community in the world, and to bring about an organization that would properly represent them in all matters involving Jewish interests. It came about in the following manner: setting aside the problems facing its own institution, the Center Board of Trustees discussed the increased menace of racial and religious discrimination in Brooklyn and the lack of a centralized authority to deal with this and other problems concerning the Jews of Brooklyn. The Board promptly appointed a Committee, headed by Dr. Moses Spatt, who initiated the discussion. A call was issued for a conference of Jewish organizations, which was held on November 16, 1939, at the Center. The call was signed by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal, the late Joseph M. Schwartz, President of the Center, and Dr. Moses Spatt, Chairman of the Conference Committee. The conference was attended by delegates representing fifty-five synagogues, temples and Centers — orthodox, conservative and reform. It authorized the formation of an organization that would be representative of all elements of Brooklyn Jewry, democratically chosen. At a subsequent conference, held at the Center on January 11, 1940, the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council was formed "to speak and to act as a collective body in all matters pertaining to and affecting the welfare of the Jewish population in Brooklyn." Rabbi Levinthal was chosen as the first President of the Council, the delegates regarding him as the one commanding the esteem, admiration and confidence of all groups in the community. For a period of a year, the Center placed its executive and clerical staff at the disposal of the new organization, and provided financial assistance until it was in a position to establish and maintain its own headquarters.

● *CONCLUSION* The history of the Brooklyn Jewish Center cannot be complete without due credit to all the men and women who worked so zealously for its welfare. The listing of so many names is obviously an impossible task. May their reward be the satisfaction of knowing that their labors and sacrifices built and maintained an institution that has greatly influenced Jewish life in our own Borough

and has been a model for many communities throughout the country.

May the next quarter of a century in the history of the Center be worthy of the accomplishments of the first twenty-five years.

Building Committee

December 31, 1922

These members supervised the construction of the beautiful home of the Brooklyn Jewish Center

Charles Goell, *Chairman*

Louis Cohen
Moses Ginsberg
Samuel Greenblatt
Jacob Goell
J. M. Hoffman
Samuel Horowitz
Abraham Kaplan
Morris Katlovitz
Samuel Kellner
Max N. Koven
Jacob Levy
Leib Lurie
A. H. Rosenthal
Solomon Schwartz

Membership Progress
1919 - 1946

Year	*No. of Members*	*Year*	*No. of Members*	*Year*	*No. of Members*
1919	45	1928	1003	1937	1046
1920	293	1929	981	1938	985
1921	353	1930	864	1939	973
1922	640	1931	794	1940	944
1923	1017	1932	834	1941	1001
1924	854	1933	867	1942	1014
1925	1043	1934	852	1943	1146
1926	1060	1935	805	1944	1398
1927	1008	1936	976	1945	1805
				April 1946	2000



Rabbi Levinthal and the Community

By Rabbi Abraham M. Heller
President, New York Board of Jewish Ministers

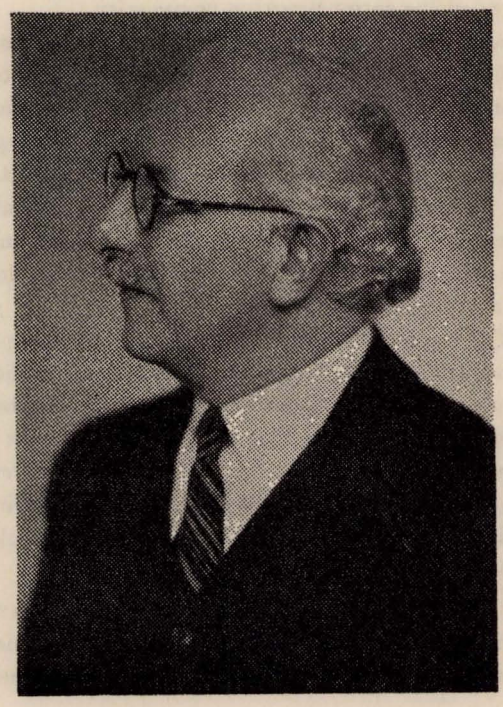
THE topic assigned to me was for "Rabbi Levinthal *in* the Community." But on maturer consideration, the coordinating and binding word *and* was found more correctly descriptive of Dr. Levinthal's intimate association with Brooklyn Jewry, than the localizing preposition "in." After three and a half decades of service and leadership, Israel Herbert Levinthal has become the fact and symbol of a vital unifying force in the largest Jewish community in the long and varied history of our people.

Members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center know and revere him as their beloved rabbi, but to all others, he is Brooklyn's outstanding spiritual leader, without regard to section, party or ideology. He is a true *Ohev Yisroel*—a lover of his people, not of one group or segment, but of all of Israel, and therefore, the response is in kind. He has become one of the most beloved Jews in the entire Brooklyn community.

The truest judges of a rabbi are his own colleagues. They know his real worth. The Brooklyn rabbinate has long ago come to recognize Dr. Levinthal as outstanding, not only in talent, but in character and scholarly attainments as well. When some eighteen years ago the need for a Brooklyn Jewish Ministers Association became evident, Rabbi Levinthal was called by his colleagues to become the first president of the newly formed rabbinic body. Only a wise, gentle and understanding person like Dr. Levinthal could have given the new organization, so essential to the community, the firm start it vitally needed for growth and development. The membership of the Association, consisting as it did of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis, represented conflicting points of view in theology, ritual and practice. However, Rabbi Levinthal, with his emphasis on the elements that unite Jewry, brought cohesion in place of division in the rabbinic ranks. Today we have a well organized Brooklyn rabbinate, thanks to the wisdom, tact and guiding hand of Israel Herbert Levinthal in the founding days of the Brooklyn Jewish Ministers Association.

The historian of Conservative Judaism in America will have to devote an important chapter to Dr. Levinthal's place in the movement for two reasons: one, because of his leadership in the Brooklyn community and,

two, because of his presidency of the Rabbinical Assembly of America. Both the former and the latter are not really separate and distinct from each other; one represents the broader philosophy of a movement, and the other, its practical application. Dr. Levinthal's life and thought were deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. The home of his illustrious father has been a citadel for the preservation of Judaism as developed through the generations. There the principle of *Kelal Yisroel,* the universality of Judaism and of Israel, has impressed itself upon him throughout his formative years, a principle of vertical and horizontal dimensions. His acceptance of the universality of Israel implied historic continuity, plus a conscious relationship with the whole of the Jewish people of his time, irrespective of geographic location, economic position or ideologic differences. But as he grew into manhood, he recognized the need for a "Catholic Israel," for a living and not stagnating Jewish tradition, capable of growth and adaptation to new environmental conditions. Just as in his economic, social and political thinking, he refused to become an adherent of revolutionary measures, so in his philosophy of Judaism he could not be drawn to any extreme movement for the reformation of Jewish theology and practice. It was natural for him to become the ad-



DR. ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL

vocate of evolutionary, orderly processes for the preservation and growth of Jewish life in America. During his incumbency as president of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, he guided the Conservative movement toward the middle course, away from the revolutionary, destructive fire of one extreme, and from the frozen path of unyielding *status quo* of the other.

This philosophy, coupled with a genial personality and a truly great talent for preaching the word of God, brought large numbers of adherents to the Conservative movement in Brooklyn. Since Dr. Levinthal's coming to our Borough, most of the influential congregations have elected as their spiritual leaders graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, from which rabbinic school Israel Herbert Levinthal received the degrees of Rabbi, D.H.L. and D.D. Is it mere eloquence that brought multitudes to Temple Petach Tikvah, and for the past quarter of a century to the Brooklyn Jewish Center to listen to Dr. Levinthal's sermons? Talent played its part, but above all, his audiences were inspired by the Jewishness of his messages, both in content and form, his sound analysis of Jewish problems, the courage he gave to his listeners to bear the suffering of a persecuted people, and the hope he engendered for the revitalization of Jewish life in the Diaspora and for the rebirth of the Jewish nationhood in Palestine.

One who had the privilege of reading his books, "Steering or Drifting, Which?" "Judaism" and "A New World Is Born," or one who has followed his sermon topics as announced in the press, will fail to find any attempt at sensationalism, or efforts to attract an audience through reviews of the modern novel or a play of the hour. Dr. Levinthal is the old and new Jewish preacher, discussing the problems of the day but drawing his inspiration from the great stores of Jewish knowledge and wisdom. The good Jewish traditional sermon, with its strong appeal to the American Jew, has found its best expression in Brooklyn through Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal. With his soulful personality, pulpit eloquence, and the persuasive power of his philosophy, he advanced the cause of Conservative Judaism in Brooklyn. Now that the movement is well established and has become a vital force in our community, all must of necessity recognize his leadership in its direction.

•

It is characteristic of Dr. Levinthal that even in party matters he is not strictly partisan. For one who accepts in full faith the principle of *Kelal Yisroel,* cannot be divisive in spirit or policy. This instinctive attitude to the wholeness of Jew and Judaism, motivated Dr. Levinthal's

entire life. He made friends for the Conservative movement without antagonizing the ranks of the Orthodox or Reform. For, though differing from them, he respected their point of view. Because of his love for Jewish unity without regard to conformity, he has gained strength for another great Jewish cause—the rebirth of the Jew in the ancient and sacred Land of his Fathers. While still a student in the secondary schools of his native city, Philadelphia, he was already a convinced and inspired Zionist. When Dr. Levinthal came to Brooklyn, Zionism was a mere sentiment, the possession of the chosen few. It was not fashionable then to believe in and work for a Jewish Palestine. Organized Zionists were few in numbers. Some called the movement a Utopian dream; others accused it of reactionary tendencies, retarding the ideal of international brotherhood; still others opposed it because of the implications of Jewish nationhood, while vast numbers of Jewry were essentially lethargic concerning the problem of Jewish Renaissance. Their major interests were in themselves—the improvement of their individual, economic and cultural interests. In the face of such an unfriendly, and often inimical atmosphere, Rabbi Levinthal from the pulpit and platform, advanced the cause of political Zionism, without ever becoming a Zionist politician. It is correct to state, that if Brooklyn never boasted of rabid anti-Zionists, it was mainly because of Dr. Levinthal's persuasiveness and genial personality. Even the opponents of Zion respected his sincerity, and eventually gave a sympathetic ear to the cause. When the Brooklyn Zionist Region was organized, he was one of its first founders and presidents. He gave of himself unstintingly to the movement; he gave it strength and dignity.

The movement being political in character, it was natural to invite antagonism from without and occasional strife from within because of differences in views and clashes in personalities. Dr. Levinthal, though a member of the National Zionist Administration for many years, has never become identified with any of its factionalism. Siding with the Brandeis group in 1921, he nevertheless, like a true democrat, accepted the will of the majority in his undivided support of the *Keren Hayesod*. When about seven years ago the Brooklyn Zionist Region advanced his candidacy for the presidency of the Zionist Organization of America, many will recall his high-minded and eloquent appeal for peace in the Zionist ranks and leadership. For the sake of Zion, he never remained silent, seeking the good of the cause with no quest for personal glory and honor. The Brooklyn Zionist leadership for the past few years has done much to enhance and strengthen the cause, but to Dr. Levinthal goes

the credit for helping to lay the foundation, and for creating a friendly atmosphere in our Borough for the ideal of Zion reborn.

The universality of Rabbi Levinthal's interest goes much beyond his leadership in Conservative Judaism, finding expression through the Seminary, Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue. Not even the all-consuming cause of recreating the Jewish nationhood in *Eretz Yisroel* circumscribes the essence of his Jewish being. Brooklyn found in him a source of inspiration for its organized philanthropy. To the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, now merged with the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, he lent encouragement and support. He was one of its honored directors, officially representing the local Jewish Ministers Association.

•

Dr. Levinthal was always a staunch believer in Diaspora Judaism. He gave himself freely and generously to the rebuilding of a Jewish Palestine, not alone because of the saving of Jewish lives inherent in the success of the movement, and the great spiritual values destined to be created within the friendly environment of a Jewish Homeland, but also because through the fulfillment of the Zionist ideal, Jewish life everywhere would be enhanced. Palestine and the Diaspora are in need of each other; the success and enrichment of one would inevitably strengthen the other.

The first prerequisite for normal growth and development of the Jewish community life in America is some semblance of Jewish organization and an authoritative voice on matters of vital importance. Jewish tradition insists upon the principle of unity, maintaining that when the Jews are bound together in a bond of union, even if their shortcomings be grievous in other respects, no power can for long subdue them. Unfortunately, however, until recent years our American Jewish communities were demoralized by divisive influences. Competitive and antagonistic interests of party and sect reigned supreme everywhere. Jewish communities, large and small, grew up with many parts that could not or would not be fitted into one whole. The Jewish lay leadership of Brooklyn finally was won over to the principle of Jewish unity. They came to recognize that despite our many groupings there was a common denominator basic to all, namely, the problems of Jewish survival: from without, the howling of our bitter enemies, and from within, the danger of disintegration.

For the dual purpose of Jewish defense and the promotion of Jewish spiritual value, the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council came into being

with Dr. Israel H. Levinthal as its head. Brooklyn, the largest Jewish community in America, possesses many laymen capable of leadership, and yet by unanimous consent, Rabbi Levinthal was called to the helm of this new overall organization because, through his person, philosophy and past performance, he became the symbol of Jewish unity. The Conservatives claim him as their own; the Orthodox know him as their friend; the Reform appreciate his broad sympathies and deep understanding; the Zionists acknowledge him as their leader; the few non-Zionists in the community respect and admire his sincerity and gentility. He, therefore, became the natural choice to head the newly formed Brooklyn Jewish Community Council because of his unifying and binding force in the life of Brooklyn Jewry.

The Hebraists of our great metropolis think that Dr. Levinthal belongs to them first and foremost. In a sense they are right. He would be the first to admit that his greatest inspiration for his public career as rabbi and leader, he derived from the Hebrew literature, ancient and modern. The great wisdom of our past and beauty of form for its expression has had the strongest influence on his thought processes. He loves Hebrew as a language, but even more so the rich human experiences revealed in the Hebrew literature through the ages. Today the Histadruth Ivrith, the organization for the advancement of the Hebrew language and culture in America, with its manifold projects, is a movement of wide dimension, but when Dr. Levinthal was first attracted to the small group of pioneers devoted to the spread of Hebrew in this country, his aid and support meant much to the promotion of the cause.

There are a number of leading rabbis in this country whose claim to prominence rests primarily on their popularity in the Gentile world. Their major interests are Inter-faith, Good-Will, Rotary and similar activities. While Rabbi Levinthal makes no fetish of such goals, he nevertheless has become one of the very outstanding spokesmen of the Jewish people before the Gentile community. Seldom is there an event of Borough-wide interest to which Dr. Levinthal is not invited as the representative voice of his co-religionists. He is particularly devoted to the Red Cross, and is a member of its Board of Directors. As an American, he neither belongs to the conservatives nor radicals. He is a liberal and a democrat with a small "d," possessing the faith and confidence that our major economic, political and social problems can be solved within the framework of our democratic institutions. He has little patience with those who think that their choice lies between the two extreme economic-political philosophies. He argues in favor of democracy as our way of life, and from this chosen path, he will move

neither to the right nor to the left. This philosophy which he valiantly champions as an American plus his Jewish self-respect and modesty of approach helped add dignity to the Jewish name among our Gentile neighbors in the Brooklyn community.

●

So abundantly has Dr. Levinthal rendered service and leadership to the entire community, that his greatest contribution, the Brooklyn Jewish Center, is all too often taken for granted. In the American rabbinate there are many spiritual leaders who are so community-minded that their own Congregations are at times left leaderless. But Rabbi Levinthal managed to fuse his community interests with that of his beloved and most influential Congregation. Under his guidance, the Brooklyn Jewish Center has become a mighty spiritual force and an example for other Congregations to emulate. The beautiful and decorous services, the well conducted educational department with the afternoon school, the daily Academy, the Sunday Religious School, the successful courses for adults, Public Forums, study groups, cultural and recreational activities, participation in the various appeals for funds for overseas relief for Pales-



RABBI LEVINTHAL DELIVERS ADDRESS AT LAYING OF CORNERSTONE OF SYNAGOGUE CENTER IN JERUSALEM IN THE PRESENCE OF CHIEF RABBI KOOK, NAHUM SOKOLOV, M. M. USSISHKIN AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED PALESTINE JEWISH LEADERS

tine, Federation, Seminary, Yeshivohs, etc.—all this and more, make the Brooklyn Jewish Center the fortress of Jewish life in our Borough. Rabbi Levinthal, with all his efforts for the entire community, found time and energy to build a glorious Jewish institution devoted to the wholeness of Jewish life.

Dr. Levinthal and the Brooklyn Jewish Center, both marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of service and leadership, symbolize the best of the Brooklyn Jewish Community. May he and his co-workers in the quarter of a century to follow see the fulfillment of their noblest aspirations in behalf of Israel and America.

To Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal

Something of fire there is in men who lead;
They purge our hearts of dross; they leap the bars
Of time and space; their lives in every deed
Are quests that travel upward toward the stars.

Thus while the earth along its orbit goes,
Your voice lifts us to seek the Holy Name;
It burns away the weight of human woes;
It finds our care-bound souls with tongues of flame.

— Elias Lieberman

The Center's Administrator— Joseph Goldberg

By Louis J. Gribetz

MOST fortunate for the Center has been Joseph Goldberg's continuous association with it for twenty-seven years — from November, 1919 to date — as its Administrative Director. If the following characterization of the man and his work in the institution sounds like an extravagant panegyric rather than a judgment of his merits, the writer has no apologies to make. The color of the picture is as clear and fine as the fact. Mr. Goldberg's attainments fully warrant this appreciation.

Mr. Goldberg combines those qualities which constitute sterling merit and highest excellence. Few other men in the Center have enjoyed more respect and personal esteem from the membership. No other man's mind and heart are more aptly attuned to the pursuit of the Center's welfare and interests. The Center's growth in usefulness and efficiency may in large part be ascribed to Mr. Goldberg. For twenty-seven years he has dedicated himself to its advancement. His calm temperament, his courteous manners, his unusual tolerance, his precise and ready information, his thorough knowledge of every detail relating to the work of the institution, have aided and facilitated everyone's work in the Center.

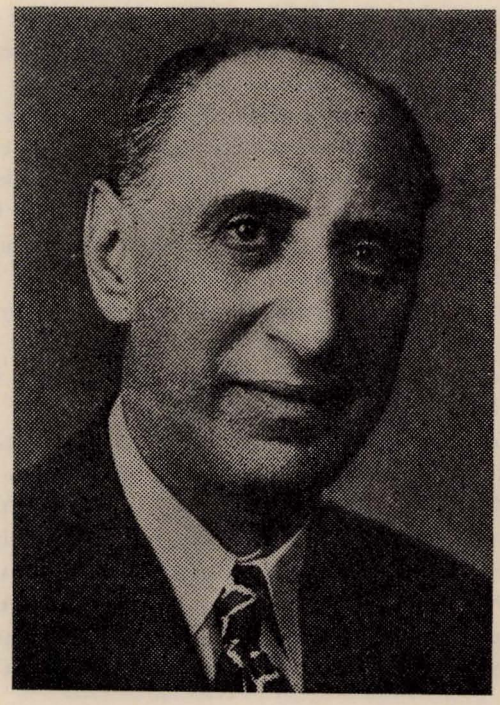
That we are describing the man as he is, is amply evidenced by the judgment and conduct of the officers and members of the Center at its annual meetings. It is customary for the officers and chairmen of the various committees of the institution to render reports of their departments. On those occasions everyone who takes the floor rejoices in the opportunity to bear testimony to Mr. Goldberg's services. All without exception, gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness to him for the assistance and invaluable counsel they have received from him.

To gain an idea of the prodigious labor, the multitudinous responsibilities, that devolve upon the Administrative Director, let us take a hasty glance at the Center's activities. The Center conducts fifteen different departments: two synagogues, four schools, a forum, a library, twelve clubs, a gymnasium, and a catering establishment. It has a membership of two thousand, an annual budget of $100,000, and forty employees. Weekly, throughout the year, five thousand people come to the Center for one purpose or another. Thus, a great variety of persons seek and use

the Center's facilities for their moral, social, cultural and religious improvement. The different facilities offered by the Center are adapted to suit the needs of the community and are intended to enable the members to express themselves creatively. Here, Jewish and American life is being recreated. In the vast amount of human intercourse that takes place here, the work is not only important but difficult and delicate. Rash, unskilled handling may easily bring about aggrieved feelings and serious misunderstandings.

Mr. Goldberg is in charge of the direction and administration of all the Center's affairs. Almost everyone coming to the Center must directly or indirectly come in contact with Mr. Goldberg, and as the coordinating authority he sees to it that the different departments and activities function in furtherance of a unified communal endeavor. He is present at all meetings of the Board of Trustees, of the Governing Board and of the fifteen different departments. He makes accurate, exhaustive studies and analyses of the pertinent data. Literally, every detail is thought out and attended to by him in advance with care and minuteness.

It has been said: "Men in great places are thrice servants." This, especially, is true of Mr. Goldberg. Whatever is of interest to the Center



JOSEPH GOLDBERG, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

interests him. Apart from his multifarious duties in the Center proper, he is called upon to perform other functions and fulfill other responsibilities. The Center's great name and facilities attract outside activities — charitable, social, educational, national. All come to him for aid and guidance in respect to these matters and receive his courteous and efficient assistance.

Mr. Goldberg's energy, patience and industry are inexhaustible. The most vexatious and disconcerting incidents that would gall and discourage any other person always find him kindly, affable and accessible. He is never provoked to petulance or harshness. In twenty-seven years no one has ever heard an unkind word or intemperate language from him. "Every man who comes to the Center is making an effort to improve himself," is his invariable reply to those who suggest that he postpone or decline an audience. "When men understand one another they easily act together," is his answer to intimations that he allows too many demands on him.

How frequently do members ask him why he stays so late and long at his work. Why does he have to attend this wedding, that basketball game, such an outside meeting or this function? "Perhaps I can help," he says, "something may go wrong."

Let it not be imagined that Mr. Goldberg's extreme modesty and considerateness sway him from proper judgment. He has an independent character, a strong sense of justice, and moral courage. He is too conscientious to conceal his own opinions when the occasion calls for their expression. He rises in opposition when there are things to be opposed and he acts as sponsor when the need exists. Mr. Goldberg possesses an active and busy mind and he is fruitful in useful ideas. He originated and sponsored many of the basic plans and policies of the institution. He is a man of scrupulous veracity, and is spirited in the highest degree. All who know him have the fullest confidence in his judgment and integrity. He lives quietly and unostentatiously and is blessed with a charming and always understanding wife who has contributed amply to the realization of his cherished ideas. In the language of Israel Zangwill, Joseph Goldberg is of "the simple brotherhood of souls that seek the highest good."

One of the best witnesses of Mr. Goldberg's service to the Center, Mr. Samuel Rottenberg, has sent me a note about him which provides a succinct and realistic snapshot of our Administrative Director. It follows:

"Joseph Goldberg — who among us does not esteem him for his extraordinary loyalty to our institution, for the zeal with which he has administered it, for the imaginativeness with which he has endowed so many of our projects? He came to us as a young man, at the very inception of the Center, and now, twenty-seven years later, he is still our devoted

collaborator, still carrying on his manifold labors with the same zeal, still one of the reasons for our progress.

"Goldberg has worked under four presidents, and has made each one's success easier to achieve. In fact, many of the credits the presidents have received should have been in the Goldberg column of the ledger. His position among us was unique: he was surrounded by Zionists and non-Zionists; by conservatives and the orthodox; by pros and antis of all types. But he was able to steer our ship of state through stormy and through muddy waters. His patience and fortitude had no limits.

"Had Goldberg wished to be as practical as most of us, and given the same efforts he gave to the Center to other undertakings his financial remuneration would have been far, far greater. But to him his labors were labors of love, and he was content to devote to us the best years of his life.

"So, when the complete annals of the Center are recorded, he will deserve a much finer page in it than I am providing him with here."

Happy the institution that has such a servant. Fortunate the servant in whose achievements the institution can have such pride. We wish both continued years of association filled with happiness and honor.

I have debated twice before your audiences at the Center. I have never had a better or more intelligent audience anywhere. I think your section of Brooklyn is very fortunate to have such an organization.

— Clarence Darrow

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The Synagogue Center Marches On

THE HISTORY OF THE SYNAGOGUE CENTER MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

By Rabbi Leon Spitz

UNDER various guises and several nomenclatures, and pursuing an expanding program, the Jewish Center movement has passed its jubilee. Its history may be accurately identified with the earlier half of the twentieth century in American Jewish life. And yet it is correct to speak of it as one of the most recent and, at the same time, most powerful religious-social-educational movements in American Jewry.

"Jewish Center" is the latest in its series of names. The Center form of organization also represents the latest stage in the evolution of the institution. There are many who still know it more familiarly as the Young Men's or Young Women's Hebrew Association. There are others who reminisce about the Jewish Settlement House, and the Hebrew Institute, and kindred agencies. These institutions, in reality, represent the germ from which the Center movement developed.

● *THE "Y"* As a matter of historical record, the earliest institution of this nature had its inception in the City of Baltimore, for which we have the testimony of Henrietta Szold, who was the daughter of a Baltimore Rabbi. She wrote in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* in 1902 concerning the situation in her city as follows:

> "At three different times short-lived attempts have been made to maintain Young Men's Hebrew Associations, the first of which existed from 1854 to 1860."

The Jewish Encyclopedia continues as our source book for establishing the dates and places of the several other earlier "Y's." We learn that at Philadelphia the YMHA was an outgrowth of an earlier institution, which went under the name, "The Hebrew Association," and was organized on May 12, 1875, with Judge Mayer Sulzberger (the founder and first President of The American Jewish Committee) as its first president. Its purpose was announced rather significantly as being "to promote a higher culture among young men." The word "Jewish" was omitted. A. S. Rosenbach, famous Biblio-phile and local historian, contributes the information that the young women soon found it advisable to form a Young

Women's Union as an auxiliary. The organization apparently proved to be very popular, since it rolled up fully a thousand members within a comparatively short time.

Fully a quarter of a century elapsed before New York City reorganized its YMHA. In 1900 Jacob H. Schiff donated funds for a new building, which was erected on its present site at 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue.

With the exception of these three YMHA's, the country at large was still virgin soil for the "Y" Movement. The opening of the century brought with it the East-European mass-immigration. The German Jewish element was deeply concerned with the Americanization program and founded Settlement houses with that end in view. The "greenhorns" themselves lost no time in organizing *shuhlen,* mutual loan *chevras, landmanschaften, vereinen* and fraternal lodges. In this they followed the example of the earlier German Jewish settlers, who had established Bnai Brith lodges, Temples and branches of the Council of Jewish Women. The Yearbooks of "The Jewish Publication Society" of America make note of new Synagogues being dedicated, of Talmud Torahs and Hebrew Institutes and Trade Schools being established and endowed by philanthropists in various parts of New York City, in Hartford, Detroit, Albany, Chicago —indeed throughout the country; but hardly ever is a "Y" mentioned except in one section of the country, New England. In Boston the "Y" was founded in 1903, and we read of "Y's" springing up in various parts of New England. But in the majority of instances these were merely young men's or young women's social clubs, and were not taken seriously by the community.

● *THE NATIONAL COUNCIL* It became gradually evident that there was need of coordinating the various "Y's" into some sort of a Federation, both on a sectional and on a national level.

This writer discounts somewhat a statement made recently by a "Y" official to the effect that from 1874 to 1880 about fifty associations were formed, and that by 1890 fully a hundred associations were in existence. It is out of dream stuff such as this that fanciful history has been written time and again.

Fact is that the Council of Young Men's Hebrew and Kindred Associations was officially organized in November, 1913, with offices on Union Square (currently the heart of the city's radicalism) and with a respectable roster of several hundred organizations. An impressive list of officers

headed the national body, a list which comprised American Jewry's most distinguished leadership. Judge Julian W. Mack became the president. Irving Lehman accepted the treasurership, and Felix M. Warburg, the secretaryship. The Board of Trustees boasted names such as Cyrus Adler, Adolph Lewisohn, Jacob H. Schiff, and Herbert N. Straus. The Advisory Board consisted of the leading American Jewish educators: Dr. Samson Benderly, Dr. J. L. Magnes (now President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Prof. Mordecai M. Kaplan.

The purpose or platform of this National Council is quoted verbatim in The 1917–1918 (5678) American Jewish Year Book:

> "To promote the religious, intellectual, physical and social well being and development of Jewish young men and women, and to that end to stimulate the organization in the several states and Territories of the United States and in the Dominion of Canada, of Young Men's Hebrew Associations."

● *THE JEWISH WELFARE BOARD* And then the first World War came. The Jewish Welfare Board leaped into the Jewish public scene. The Council of YMHA's promptly affiliated itself with the Board and rendered patriotic service through that agency.

After the war was over, the inevitable happened. Geared as it was for social, educational, recreational and religious activities among Jewish young men in time of war, with a professional staff on its hands, and burdened with a round million of dollars surplus (the harvest of the generosity of American Jewry to the call for funds to make the military life of our Jewish soldier-boys happier in the crisis of warfare), the Jewish Welfare Board was amenable to the thought of turning its machinery towards the promotion of a peacetime program for Jewish young people. After it wound up its war-time business, the Jewish Welfare Board effected a complete merger with the Council of YMHA's, on July 1st, 1921. Justice Irving Lehman assumed the presidency, a post which he continued to hold for fully a score of years. The original organization was broadened to include the "Y's," the recently organized so-called Jewish Centers, Community Centers and Synagogue Centers, and the platform was reformulated in a more positive Jewish spirit. Also, the military angle was preserved despite the assumption of the so-to-speak larger civilian burden.

The following fact assumed historic significance: A *new* institutional form had now emerged into the American Jewish scene, and a *new name*

had been coined to give it articulation, *The Jewish Center.* Hitherto, it usually was the "Y," or it might have been The Hebrew Institute, or The Jewish Alliance, or even just The Synagogue. Now the new name suddenly achieved phenomenal popularity, so that throughout the country it is safe to assume that at least 90% of the affiliated institutions have capitulated to the spell of The Name.

Undeniably, an important contributing cause was a growing feeling on the part of American Jewish leaders and thinkers, both Rabbinical and those engaged in Jewish Social Service, of the need of organizing and maintaining Jewish institutions, whether these were Synagogues, or "Y's" or Talmud Torahs, with a greater responsibility for the Jewish community in general. The name "Center" gave expression to that feeling. Mr. Benjamin Rabinowitz, Director of The Jewish Center Division of the National Jewish Welfare Board, is our authority for the statement that as late as January 31st, 1946, the Board had 286 constituent societies, of which 105 are listed as Synagogue Centers. The Reform Temples are credited with 33 Temple Centers; the orthodox movement with perhaps a dozen, which should leave the bulk to the Conservative United Synagogue of America.

● *THE SYNAGOGUE CENTER* Who was the father of the Jewish Center? "Who Is Who In American Jewry" credits Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan with promulgating the idea, inventing the name, "The Jewish Center," and with the building and heading the first Jewish Center in American life. He "promulgated reconstruction of the Synagogue into a Jewish Center, helped establish and headed the first institution in America by that name (on the West Side) from 1916 to 1922."

We offer the testimony of Harry L. Glucksman, the late Executive Director of the Jewish Welfare Board, in an address which he delivered on May 12th, 1932, at the 32nd Annual Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, on the subject: "Community Center in its Relation to the Synagogue Center." About twenty years before that, to be specific, approximately the year 1912, Prof. Kaplan conceived the idea of a Synagogue Center as the modern and American edition of the Rabbinic conception of the Synagogue as the House of Prayer, House of Study, and House of Fellowship. We quote Glucksman:

> "Combining in himself the capacity for profound thought and the capacity for energized action, Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan was able to assemble within a brief span a group of supporters and fol-

lowers, organizing them under the name of the 'Jewish Center,' the first time that this denomination was employed. It was in 1916, when public announcement was made that the enterprise had so far progressed that plans had been drawn for a structure that would in its physical aspects reflect the underlying purposes of this institution. Two years thereafter, in the midst of the world-wide cataclysm of war in which America also was by that time engulfed, the Center was formally dedicated."

Glucksman continues a brief survey of the Jewish Center's predecessors:

"To be sure, there were approximations of that Synagogue Center in existence for some years prior to that time, particularly in connection with Reform Temples. When named at all, they were invariably known as Temple or Synagogue Houses. They were usually houses separated from the Temple proper, such as the Parish houses of churches. But none of these was in theory or fact an attempt towards the integration of a program of religion, education and recreation."

Glucksman described the Jewish Center (or as he prefers to speak of it as the Synagogue Center) in glowing words: "It represents a new approach to the problem of Jewish life and religion."

Professor Kaplan himself stated in *The American Hebrew,* March 22, 1918, in an article titled "The Jewish Center":

"We state frankly that we are establishing the Jewish Center for the purpose of deriving from it for ourselves pleasures of a social, intellectual and spiritual character."

It is clear that what Professor Kaplan organized was a Synagogue Center, not a Jewish Community Center, even though his was the opportunity to patent the name, "Jewish Center," and even though many YMHA's assumed the name, "Jewish Center," which he created. The Synagogue Center differed from the Community Center in several respects; and these differences must be understood in order to appreciate the true role of the Synagogue Center in Jewish life.

First, the Community Center takes its religious activities (if it has any) as one of the many activities in its program. Just as it has plays, dances, etc., it may also have religious services or even a Hebrew School. The Synagogue Center, however, is based on the theory that the synagogue and religion are the essential factors in the institution—the focal point around which all other activities revolve. The gym, the dance and any other activity, is a sideline. The synagogue and the religious school are all important. That is why the Synagogue Center is organized as a

congregation while a Community Center is organized as a philanthropic or cultural endeavor on the part of the entire community.

There is another vital distinction that must be mentioned. The Synagogue Center, as far as I know without any exception, because it is founded as a congregation, stands for a certain religious platform in our Jewish religious life. It is either an Orthodox Center, a Conservative Jewish Center, or a Center House of a Reform Temple with the Reform philosophy in view. That is important because all other activities are motivated by this philosophy and guided by these principles. For instance, in a congregational center that stands on the Conservative or Orthodox platform, the gym will never, of course, be open on the Sabbath or on any holiday. In the Reform Temple Center, it may be open on the Sabbath. They may have other affairs in the community house which their Reform principles permit. The Community Center, however, founded on the principle that it is a community institution, will keep shy of any philosophy in religious life and will not do anything that might touch the susceptibilities of any group. That is why most of the community centers do not care to have any religious services or even a religious school. They know that on the cultural, physical and social aspects, all the Jews may be united.

Lastly, there is of course this distinction to be noted. The Congregational Center limits many of its activities—especially its social and physical culture activities—to its congregational membership, whereas the Community Center, being supported by the entire community, offers all its activities to all in the community.

● *THE BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER* There is no gainsaying the phenomenal rapidity with which the Synagogue Center movement spread far and wide. The Brooklyn Jewish Center, under the leadership of Dr. Israel H. Levinthal, was established in 1918, only a few years after Kaplan's Jewish Center had been founded on the West Side in Manhattan. The Brooklyn Jewish Center's 5706 Diary sheds some interesting light on its beginnings. In an article entitled, "What Does the Center Stand For?" published in The Jewish Center Annual, of June 1925, Rabbi Levinthal first offered an apologia for the new step, on the indictment that "we turned our Synagogue into Houses of Prayer alone, and we divorced the life of the Synagogue from the life outside of its walls."

Levinthal explained his program in simple and frank terms:

"We do have a gymnasium because we recognize that the perfection of our physique is also part of our religion. We do encourage a

public forum, because we believe that to develop an intelligent interest in all the living problems . . . is part of religion. We even boast of our socials and dances . . . because we should encourage to dance before the Lord rather than to dance before the devil."

In many respects the Brooklyn Jewish Center may be regarded as the "foster mother" of Synagogue Centers.

Dr. Levinthal, enamoured of the idea, even undertook and successfully carried through on behalf of the United Synagogue of America, the organization and the construction of The Jeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem, the first and only Synagogue Center in Eretz Yisroel.

At about the same time, 1921–1922, The Cleveland Jewish Center was founded, and for a considerable period it housed the Cleveland "Y" as one of its autonomous tenant organizations, a "Y" with 2,000 members. This is really a significant feature in the early development of the Synagogue Center movement, which so completely overshadowed for the time being the "Y" or Community Center Institution.

In 1926, as a direct inspiration by The Brooklyn Jewish Center, The West Philadelphia Jewish Center was established. After twenty years of progress it is about to pay off the last installment on its mortgage as the culmination of a long financial struggle. There is a unique feature associated with this Synagogue Center in that it affords the use of its athletic facilities to the neighborhood, both Jewish and Christian, and even to the Board of Education for summer extension activities in physical education for the clientele of the neighborhood public high school. Rabbi C. David Matt is quite justified in regarding this exercise of Jewish hospitality to the Christian community as a demonstration of good will in action.

The Bnai Abraham Synagogue Center at Newark also emerged at about that time as an institution of magnitude which featured the Synagogue both actually and architecturally and, at the same time, by no means neglected the more secular or center activities within its scope.

● *IN THE METROPOLITAN NEW YORK AREA* Still, it was in the Metropolitan New York area that the Synagogue Center institution reigned supreme in Jewish spiritual, cultural, and social and even recreational community life. Glucksman exhibited a commendable generosity by calling significant attention to the phenomenon that it was practically a daily occurrence to read in the Jewish press of a projected Synagogue Center. He ascribed this largely to the post-war prosperity which Amer-

ican Jewry enjoyed then. But one may rightly inquire: "Why was not this bounty showered upon Community Centers instead of on Synagogue Centers?" The answer is obviously that Kaplan's and Levinthal's "idea" appealed to the American Jew who had already Americanized himself and who had grown affluent. Glucksman was correct in his conclusion that "The Synagogue, especially the Conservative Synagogue, was reorganizing itself in the terms of the Center concept."

Yes, Glucksman was right on both counts: The Synagogue Center was "a conservative patent," and it has to this day remained so.

The West Side Jewish Center went over into orthodox hands, and true it is, furthermore, that a handful of Synagogue Centers were formed specifically in Metropolitan New York under orthodox auspices, but only a few of these institutions play a significant role in the Jewish life of the city. Likewise, it is correct to appraise the situation within the scope of Reform Judaism: Temple Emanuel, Union Temple, Rodeph Sholom, and several other prominent reform temples, may be included under the heading of "Synagogue Center" (with or without gymnasiums and swimming pools) but their number is as a matter of record relatively small. The great bulk of Synagogue Centers were and are still to be found within the orbit of Conservative Judaism and within the jurisdiction of the United Synagogue of America.

Secondly, Mr. Glucksman was correct in marvelling at the multiplicity of the Synagogue Centers if he had the Metropolitan area in mind. With very few exceptions, every Jewish Center of any importance in Greater New York was definitely a Synagogue Center in the full meaning of the term. Such Centers include The Jamaica Jewish Center, established in 1926; The East Midwood Jewish Center, The Ocean Parkway Jewish Center, The Flatbush Jewish Center—all in Brooklyn; The Jacob H. Schiff Jewish Center in the Bronx, and a number of others. The New York area was definitely, one must conclude, center-minded, and it was determined to integrate every phase of organized Jewish life, religious, educational, social, recreational, within the Synagogue institution.

It is to be noted that there are many Synagogues in all parts of America calling themselves Jewish Centers and organized as Jewish Centers, but which function only as the usual congregation—for prayer services alone and perhaps offering school facilities. The reason, however, that they adopted the name of Center was because they recognized the value of the Center philosophy and hoped later on—when means would be provided—to expand into Center activities. Many of the smaller Jewish Centers are of this type.

On the other hand, there are a number of outstanding congregations,

not calling themselves Centers at all, yet functioning in the truest sense as active Centers. A notable example of this type is the Congregation Anshe Emet, of Chicago, ministered by Dr. Solomon Goldman. It offers a full Center program of activities yet does not bear the name of Jewish Center. Bnai Abraham, of Newark, is another example of this type. The reason why they have not adopted the name Jewish Center is quite simple. These are old congregations, organized decades before the Jewish Center was established, and organized originally as the usual Synagogue Congregation. It was only when they built new structures that they adopted the Center program of activities, but retained their original chartered names.

● *THE REACTION* In 1929 the financial depression came and there was a heavy mortgage bill to pay. Also, several of the Synagogue Centers over-emphasized the recreational activities and commercialized the Synagogue Center building in their anxiety to meet their budgets. The reaction appeared soon enough, and perhaps too sharply. But, even prior to that, among the first to lead the anti-Synagogue Center crusade was the late Rabbi Joel Blau in an article in the 1925 *Jewish Center Annual* (published by the Brooklyn Jewish Center) entitled, "The Prospect of the Center Movement":

> "The Center movement has decidedly had its birth in what I called above, 'the whistling of God's word through the keyhole.' The argument had been that since the young . . . want athletics, swimming pools, dances, lectures on not too difficult subjects, we will give it to them, and incidentally we will lure them to a little bit of a religious service with a little bit of a sermon, preferably on the topics of the day; so that little by little they might become used to going to the Synagogue and imbibing what is called Jewishness."

As a direct answer to this challenge we encounter in the same volume Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal's leading article, "What Does the Center Stand For?" from which we had already previously cited:

> "The fact that the Center possesses the facilities for all these manifold activities does not mean that we neglect the Synagogue or that we have minimized the importance of the Religious School. Nay, the very reverse is the truth."

Rabbi Israel Goldstein, whose congregation, Bnai Jeshurun, had a center, in a paper presented to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1929, put his strictures in a mood of temporary disappointment:

> "No doubt there is much still to be said in its favor, but it is true—that whereas the hope of the Synagogue Center was to Syna-

gogize the tone of the secular activities of the family, the effect has been the secularization of the Synagogue. If the Synagogue Center had the effect of erasing the distinction between the sacred and the secular, it has been at the expense of the sacred."

It is believed that Rabbi Goldstein's stricture had a purifying effect on the movement, but Synagogue Centers continued to flourish.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, after seven years of experience with a Center attached to his Synagogue, recommended its discontinuance. In a formal report to his congregation, quoted in *The American Hebrew,* he announced:

"Jewish community life has reached a point where it should be departmentalized. . . . The Synagogue ought to concentrate upon those basic community needs which, from its inception, have been its particular province—religious inspiration and religious education."

It is necessary to point out however that the Cleveland Jewish Center and the Euclid Avenue Temple continued to operate successfully as Synagogue Centers to this day. In *The Jewish Guardian,* Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, of the Institutional Synagogue, took issue with Dr. Silver.

Professor Kaplan conceded that "opportunity has brought to the Rabbi the institution of the Jewish Center. If he had only known how to utilize it, he could have made of it the means to a Jewish spiritual and cultural renaissance." Kaplan, however, stuck fast to the urgency of the Synagogue Center even while he pleaded for a better understanding of its objectives and for more expert management.

In this basic attitude Glucksman himself seemed to concur, even though he chose to ignore the fact that many successful Synagogue Centers persisted. He pointed out deficiencies in the architecture of the Synagogue Center where he thought insufficient provision had been made for the center's secular activities; he spoke of the need for expert training of the staff; he enlarged upon the heavy budgetary obligations which fell upon the shoulders of congregational groups, but he had no real quarrel with either the theory or the technique of the Synagogue Center. In fact, he encouraged the formation of Synagogue Centers in the small communities which have only one Synagogue.

In this last recommendation he was joined some thirteen years later by his successor in office, Mr. Louis Kraft, the Executive Director of the Jewish Welfare Board, who in an informal address at the 1945 session of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, claimed the credit of having assisted in the organization of a large number of Synagogue Centers throughout the country.

● *A BROADER DEFINITION* At this point it is necessary to define the term Synagogue Center more broadly. Perhaps it is best to *classify* the variations of the term. If one is to narrow down the definition of The Synagogue Center, it is an institution which fronts the Synagogue, and also provides a gymnasium and a swimming pool in addition to its program of education and recreation—such, for example, as The Brooklyn Jewish Center. This writer, after having searched the files of the United Synagogue of America, feels justified in stating that metropolitan New York approximates a total of about fifty such institutions, and the rest of the country contributes another two dozen to the grand total of from seventy to eighty affiliated with it. It must, however, be borne in mind that this list represents the most important and the largest Synagogue institutions in the United States. Their primary affiliation is with the United Synagogue of America, even though a fair proportion also maintains what, for all practical purposes, is a courtesy allegiance to The Jewish Welfare Board, with due consideration to the recreational phase of their programs. Compare the Jewish Welfare Board list of 105, which includes conservative, orthodox and reform Synagogue Centers.

But what is much more important is to realize and to appraise adequately the following fact, which has been brought out by Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz, the Director of Field Activities of the United Synagogue of America, in an interview with this writer only several weeks ago, namely, that out of 450 Synagogues which are today affiliated with the United Synagogue, at least 350 may be regarded as Synagogue Centers if we agree that a Synagogue can be called a Center even if it does not have a gymnasium and a swimming pool. These 350 Synagogues, scattered throughout the breadth of this land, pursue a program which, in addition to its religious services and its Hebrew and Sunday schools, parallels the activity programs of both the Synagogue Centers and the Community Centers; the Adult Institute, the Forums, the dance, the club system, the holiday celebrations, etc., and the contacts with the community, both Jewish and general, local and national, with this emphasis, however, that all these activities are conducted under the roof of a Synagogue and have a more intense Jewish significance.

The following abbreviated recapitulation may be considered as authoritative because it is based on a recent "tentative statement prepared by the Joint Consultative Committee of the Jewish Welfare Board and the Synagogue Council of America."

After going into lengthy definitions and a cursory history of the move-

ment, the following facts are brought out for the purposes of the present survey:

1. That the Synagogue Center definitely embraces recreational as well as religious and cultural activities within its scope. Specifically: game rooms, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, dances, etc., are mentioned. Both Professor Kaplan and Rabbi Levinthal did not dodge this assertion. Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, of the orthodox Institutional Synagogue, concurred with them in principle. Dr. Israel Goldstein, in *The Jewish Center,* March, 1928, wrote approvingly of its role in solving the problem of The Synagogue and the Youth.

2. "It is generally considered that the conception of the Synagogue as being more than merely a place of religious worship is the basis for the Synagogue Center movement." To which conclusion one may say, Amen. Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein is quite correct in maintaining that: "The Synagogue has become more socialized. . . . The Synagogue must open its doors and plan its activities so as to reach the largest number for the greatest good."

3. The statement makes it abundantly clear that "most Rabbis look with favor on the development of the Synagogue Centers."

● *SYNAGOGUE CENTER vs. COMMUNITY CENTER* As was to be expected for quite some time a competitive process went on between the Synagogue Center and the Jewish Community Center, a process which cannot be ignored. The Synagogue Center has successfully weathered its crisis. Not a single Synagogue Center anywhere has closed its doors. And, in a number of the larger communities, "Y's" (in New York City, the 92nd St. "Y," the Bronx "Y," the Washington Heights "Y") have existed side by side with these Synagogue Centers. As has already been mentioned, quite a few of these institutions maintain a double allegiance, to the United Synagogue and to the Jewish Welfare Board, a situation which in itself is not fatal, but may be described as rather itchy at times.

Furthermore, Rabbis and Congregational leaders are not willing to turn over their extra-religious-service activities to the Community Center. They are even reluctant to turn over their youth programs to Community Centers. They prefer to keep youth and social activities within the Synagogue atmosphere and under its wings.

On the other hand, Community Center directors have been inviting all the young people in the community on a community level, regardless of congregational affiliation, to participate in their program. Not a few

Community Centers also house Community Hebrew Schools and even provide Sabbath and High Holiday services on a community level. Rabbis in fair-sized communities have often felt that the Community Center was encroaching upon their prerogatives in this field, and that the Community Center afforded a direct competition with their religious and educational program.

At the most recent session of the Rabbinical Assembly of America this competitive process stirred a prolonged debate which revealed the existence of a deep-set resentment of the Synagogue against what it regards as the Jewish Community Center's invasion of its jurisdiction.

The issue is clear cut. The Synagogue Center is based on the theory that the totality of Jewish life revolves about the Synagogue; the Jewish Community Center insists on drawing that totality within its orbit. The Synagogue condemns this as a secularizing manifestation in Jewish life; the Community Center defends the thesis that the Jewish Community rather than the Synagogue represents the basis of organized Jewish living in America.

This competition is wasteful in money, in the terms of duplication of effort, in a division of interest, and in the mutual resentment between two worthy and useful types of Jewish institutions. It is necessary that "jurisdiction" should be defined and a basis of cooperation be established and maintained. The Joint Consultative Committee of the Jewish Welfare Board and the Synagogue Council of America is a step in the right direction. Especially so, because the Synagogue Center has again launched forth into a new spurt of progress.

● *A NEW SPURT* In the summer, 1944, issue of *The Synagogue Center,* Mr. Saul Ellenbogen, of Brooklyn, is cited in a report which he rendered as Chairman of the Board of Editors to the 30th Annual Convention of The United Synagogue of America:

> "The increasing importance of the Synagogue Center in Jewish life definitely necessitated paying attention to the problems connected with administration. As the functions of the Synagogue Center multiplied and took on new significance, the necessity for adequate organizational machinery effectively conducted, became more and more vital. Officers and leaders of Congregations were giving more thought to the art and science of administration. They were beginning to realize that, since the religious, educational and social activities constituted the soul and mind of the Synagogal

organism, the administrative machinery constituted its heart and circulatory system."

Here you have the Synagogue Center with a vengeance. You also have a serious recognition of its administrative deficiencies and simultaneously the resolve to correct these. The result was the founding of *The Synagogue Center* some five years ago as the most important periodic journal published by the United Synagogue of America. It had an editorial staff that included the late Rabbi Samuel M. Cohen and Mr. Joseph Goldberg, among others.

Additional testimony of the rebirth of the Synagogue Center movement—due perhaps largely to the wartime financial prosperity—is offered by executives of the United Synagogue of America, who have told this writer that quite a large number of wealthy congregations which have consulted The United Synagogue Department on Architecture Consultation have definitely and specifically included in their building plans provisions for gymnasiums, and even for swimming pools.

* * *

And so it goes. The Synagogue Center era is back with us. Concerning its magnitude, and how long a time it will endure, it is not the part of wisdom to speculate The nature of the post-war general situation will certainly be a determining factor. But this is clear: the Synagogue Center movement has become embedded in the soil of American Jewish community life, and it represents a unique American contribution to the evolving structure of modern Jewish history.

Here, in Goluth, where the surroundings are created not by us, and where our youth is destined to be under strange influences, no time must be lost in stressing the importance and necessity of an institution such as the Brooklyn Jewish Center, which can be regarded as the salvation station for our Jewish youth.

—Schmarya Levin

ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS

We regret that because of lack of space we are unable to publish all the congratulatory messages received by the Center from its friends.

● ***HARRY S. TRUMAN, President of U. S. A.***

DEAR RABBI LEVINTHAL: Hearty congratulations on the dual twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and your ministry in that Center.

I trust that the sphere of the usefulness of the Center in the spiritual life of the community will ever widen and that you may long be spared in health and strength to continue your devoted leadership.

● ***THOMAS E. DEWEY, Governor of New York***

The celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center is a signal event in the life of the community. Under the wise and beneficent ministrations of its distinguished spiritual leader, Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal, your institution has been a most potent force for religious advancement. Your high aims and meritorious accomplishments have earned the admiration of persons of all faiths. Your institution brought to fruition a noteworthy idea in communal affairs — the Center movement — which has since been emulated in many communities throughout the land.

I am happy to join with our many friends and neighbors in paying tribute to you in this festive hour. I wish you renewed success in your noble undertakings and hope that your splendid achievements will ever continue for the welfare and inspiration of the community.

● ***WILLIAM O'DWYER, Mayor of New York***

DEAR JUDGE GREENBERG: I have learned that the Brooklyn Jewish Center is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding, and I desire to offer you my heartiest congratulations for work excellently done.

The Brooklyn Jewish Center has truly been a most outstanding institution in our City and has distinguished itself by a career of manifold services. In so zealously attending to the religious needs and the welfare of the Jewish people, the Center members have displayed the finest qualities of true Americanism.

The City of New York is justly proud of your accomplishments and is, indeed, fortunate to have the Brooklyn Jewish Center in our midst.

I hope you continue to flourish and bring forth fruits of brotherhood and spiritual strength in the years to come.

● ***CHAIM WEIZMANN (By Cable)*** Delighted hear Center celebrating twenty-fifth anniversary together with that of its distinguished founder stop Would have given me great pleasure be able join personally in many and wellmerited tributes paid to Rabbi Levinthal on this happy occasion stop His great work has made Center powerful inspiring force in American Jewry maintaining radiating best traditions our people and our faith stop With all my heart I wish him very many more years of fruitful endeavour in the task he loves

● ***RABBI B. L. LEVINTHAL*** To the Officers and Members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center: My dear and honored friends, may God shower His blessings upon you. I greatly regret that because of my many duties in connection with the approaching Passover holidays, I shall be unable to be present at the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, to extend in person my best wishes and the blessings of a "descendant of Aaron." It is indeed a very pleasant duty for me to congratulate you on this occasion, especially since I know how much you have achieved since your far-seeing founders first laid the foundations for your institution a quarter of a century ago. Since then you have grown in both "quantity and quality," so that now thousands of our people receive spiritual and cultural guidance from the Brooklyn Jewish Center and young and old alike may take advantage of your wonderful facilities.

I am well aware of the many problems that confronted you, but despite all obstacles you worked on, with the aid of God, to improve your beloved Center. It is my sincerest wish that you may go from strength to strength so that you may achieve even greater things in the future.

May God bless your great spiritual leader, my illustrious son, who has so endeared himself to his thousands of admirers through his wisdom, his devoted ministry and his brilliant preaching. God grant him health and long life so that he may be enabled to continue his service to our Torah and our people.

● ***RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER*** May I join your host of friends throughout the nation in extending to the Brooklyn Jewish Center my heartiest felicitations on the occasion of the celebration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of its founding. Your Institution has been a center of light and leading and Jewish inspiration not alone in your community but throughout the country. It has pioneered in many fields and has demonstrated how our people can integrate their rich spiritual and cultural heritage harmoniously with American life.

May I also extend my warm greetings and congratulations to your spiritual leader, Dr. Israel H. Levinthal, upon the completion of a quarter of a century of rare and distinguished service as your leader. The Brooklyn Jewish Center and Rabbi Levinthal are, in a way, synonymous terms, for it is his spirit and philosophy which permeate your Institution. Rabbi Levinthal has been a great teacher and a great preacher. He has also been the courageous champion of all that is noble and constructive in American Jewish life.

● ***HERBERT H. LEHMAN*** I have, of course, long been familiar with the excellent work that has been carried on at the Center under the leadership of Rabbi Levinthal. The Center has served the community well for a quarter of a century and has played an important part in advancing the cause of our faith, of our country, and of democracy. I had the privilege of speaking at the Center a number of years ago. I was deeply impressed with the manner in which its purposes were being carried out under wise, spiritual, and lay leadership. I hope the Center will go on to even greater work and achievement.

May I ask you to convey my heartiest good wishes to your devoted leader, Dr. Levinthal, and to the officers and members of the Center.

● ***DR. STEPHEN S. WISE*** It gives me no little joy to send greetings to the Center upon the 25th Anniversary of its founding, which anniversary happily coincides with the completion of twenty-five years of ministry in the Center of my beloved friend, Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal. I can think of few Synagogues in America — indeed, of Jewish organizations of any kind — which have had a better influence upon the American Jewish community than the Brooklyn Jewish Center under the leadership of Dr. Levinthal. I consider it the model Jewish Center of American Jewish life and this,

of course, is due to the inspiring Jewish vision and loyalty of its great leader, Dr. Levinthal.

I rejoice to send Dr. Levinthal the assurance, though he need no assurance, of my deep and reverent affection for one of the finest figures in the American rabbinate. May the Center and he together celebrate their Golden Jubilee, and long after that continue to remain a vitalizing Center within the whole of American Jewish life.

● ***DR. J. L. MAGNES*** DEAR DR. LEVINTHAL: I was happy to hear about the celebration in honor of your completion of twenty-five years of service at the Brooklyn Jewish Center.

May I extend to you my best wishes for many, many more years of strength and good health, so that you may be enabled to continue your distinguished work on behalf of our people, our Torah and our land.

Heartiest congratulations.

With greetings from Zion,

● ***DR. ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN*** The twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and the completion of twenty-five years of Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal's ministry in the Center, provide a twin milestone in the progress of American Judaism and a twofold occasion for significant celebration.

Rarely has marriage between Rabbi and Congregation proved so richly fruitful. Rabbi Levinthal's gentleness of spirit, peacefulness of disposition, breadth of learning, forwardness of vision, firmness of purpose, clarity of thought, skill of exposition, and fervor of Jewish passion, is the closest approximation to the type of Hillel that I can identify among my colleagues in the American Rabbinate. He has impressed his fine spirit upon the institution which he has helped to found and which he has guided with distinction.

The lay leadership of the Brooklyn Jewish Center is likewise worthy of tribute. They have not only chosen their spiritual leader wisely, but they have followed his leadership wisely. The Brooklyn Jewish Center is unique among its contemporaries as the fountainhead whence spring life-giving waters of Jewish culture, Zionist idealism and philanthropic service, that fructify the largest and the greatest field of Judaism in the world, Brooklyn Jewry.

May your collective strength not wane and your Rabbi's powers not

diminish. You and he have earned the gratitude of American Israel.

On behalf of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun and for myself, may I extend hearty congratulations on a record of fine achievement.

● ***PROF. LOUIS FINKELSTEIN, President, Jewish Theological Seminary***

The founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center marked the beginning of a new era in Jewish religious life in this country. It was not the first synagogue-center; but it was the first of such magnitude, and was the first to be situated in a section with so large and profoundly devout a Jewish population. It was clear from the beginning that the Brooklyn Jewish Center was destined to become a significant part of the life of its community; and under the inspired leadership of Doctor Israel H. Levinthal, it has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, the hopes of its founders and well-wishers. It has been a great influence for good as a synagogue; as a cultural center; as an educational center; and as social center. Beyond its achievements in its immediate influence on the men and women who frequent it, there is the less tangible, but no less real, influence it has exerted on Judaism throughout the country, as an example, as a model of what a Jewish communal institution can become.

One of the most significant contributions of the Center to America, to Judaism, and to religious thought, has come from its service as the forum from which Doctor Israel H. Levinthal has been able to address the whole community. The twenty-five years of service by Doctor Levinthal to the Center constitute more than a magnificent ministry to a great congregation; they constitute a contribution of enduring importance for Jewish religious history in this country. The books Doctor Levinthal has published, his leadership in various communal undertakings, the inspiring example he has offered to his colleagues have all enriched American Jewish life.

I have no doubt that thousands of young men and women have remained loyal to our faith because of the influences exerted on them by Doctor Levinthal and the Center; and tens of thousands of others owe their spiritual serenity and well-being to the fact that other institutions have been modeled after it.

It must be a source of the deepest possible gratification to Doctor Levinthal and the group of fine lay leaders of the Center to know how much they have been able to contribute toward the strengthening and perpetuation of our faith.

The history of Judaism as a spiritual force in civilization is by no means complete. The ideals for which the synagogue stands—the ideals of human brotherhood, and the Fatherhood of God, the ideals of man's spirituality and nobility, the ideals of the search after the truth, and loving-kindness and mercy—are what the world today needs more than ever before. The age of the atomic bomb must become the age of united humanity, or we shall perish. But if our age is to be one united and noble humanity, the tradition which produced the Prophets and the Sages of Israel must be preserved, and made meaningful in the lives of its people.

Doctor Levinthal and the Brooklyn Jewish Center are contributing greatly toward the realization of this need. For this reason, all those who love our people and our faith, and indeed all those who love the cause of humanity, must—on this its anniversary—arise and call the Center, its distinguished Rabbi, and all those associated with them, blessed.

● ***WILL DURANT*** I wish I could overleap the continent and join in celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and of Dr. Levinthal's ministry as its rabbi. I remember with something of the nostalgia of youth the many audiences you brought together for me there, the thriving intellectual and spiritual life of your community, and the inspiration of Dr. Levinthal's scholarship and character. I have made many Jewish friends here, but I keenly miss those that I had in the East — and particularly Joseph Goldberg and Max Herzfeld and other familiar faces at the Center.

My sincerest congratulations on a quarter century of patient, devoted, and successful work. Institutions like yours are the most vital element in our American life.

● ***FRANK L. WEIL, President, The National Jewish Welfare Board*** The National Jewish Welfare Board joins with you in celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brooklyn Jewish Center. During this past quarter century some 300 Jewish Centers affiliated with the National Jewish Welfare Board have been making an historic contribution to the development of American Jewish community life. The Brooklyn Jewish Center, under the leadership of Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal, has been an important part of this great effort.

American Jewry is today one of the leading forces in the rehabilitation of Jewish life all over the world. This means that the American Jewish community has a tremendous responsibility to fulfill. Sound leadership

will be necessary as never before. In the Jewish Centers, we have been building leadership for tomorrow.

During twenty-five years of service, Rabbi Levinthal guided and developed a program of community service which has been a strengthening force in Jewish life in this city.

● ***SAMUEL ROTHSTEIN, President, The United Synagogue of America***

It is with great pleasure that I extend to you and the members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center our heartfelt felicitations on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of your Center and upon the completion of 25 years of its spiritual leadership by Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal.

The men who founded your institution were the pioneers in the Jewish Center movement, and brought about, by their courageous innovation, an expansion of the influence of the Synagogue in the American Jewish community. Their vision and leadership has been attested by the growth of the Center movement in our Country. The spiritual leadership of your beloved and esteemed Rabbi has influenced not only your community but has extended to Jewish life everywhere.

The United Synagogue of America rejoices in your achievements, takes pride in your progress and magnificent contribution to Jewry, and feels honored to count you in its fold.

We pray that God will grant your Rabbi, your members, and you, many years of fruitful and devoted service to the cause of Israel. We are certain that your Center will continue to make its magnificent contribution to Judaism in America.

● ***DR. ROBERT GORDIS, President, The Rabbinical Assembly of America***

It was with great joy that I heard that the Brooklyn Jewish Center will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its founding as well as the Jubilee of Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal's distinguished and consecrated service as rabbi in your great congregation.

Ever since the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center by a devoted group of Jewish leaders working under Dr. Levinthal's inspiration, it was clear to all that the "marriage" was made in Heaven. The Center has provided Dr. Levinthal with a great pulpit, a platform from which he was able to speak to American Israel and the world. He has thus been enabled to enrich Jewish literature and life in all its creative phases: Zionism, Jewish education, Hebrew culture, and the evolution of a modern traditional Judaism in America.

He, in turn, has been able to make the Brooklyn Jewish Center a tower of strength and a beacon of hope to all who labor for the meaningful survival of Judaism and the Jewish people in our generation.

God grant that this union of leadership and scholarship, piety and loyalty, may long endure, and that the next quarter-century will prove even more glorious and fruitful than the one now drawing to a close. My own personal affection for your distinguished and beloved rabbi is a precious treasure to which I shall make no further reference here. May he and his dear wife enjoy many years of continued love and comradeship and mutual inspiration.

● ***HARRY ZEITZ,***
President, The Brooklyn Jewish Community Council

It is a very real pleasure for me as President of the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council to join with the rest of Brooklyn in extending felicitations to the Brooklyn Jewish Center on the 25th Anniversary of its founding, and to congratulate Dr. Israel H. Levinthal upon the completion of twenty-five years of service to Brooklyn through his ministry in the Center. This occasion gives me an opportunity to acknowledge publicly the debt which the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council owes to both Dr. Levinthal and the Brooklyn Jewish Center.

The first organizations conference was held at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, and the call issued to the Jewish organizations in Brooklyn was signed by Dr. Israel H. Levinthal and the late Joseph M. Schwartz, who was President of the Center. Dr. Moses Spatt, also of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, was Chairman of that first meeting from which developed the Council movement in Brooklyn. It was easy for the Brooklyn Council, and later its affiliated Local Councils, to earn their proper place in the Brooklyn community. That we were able to attain the measure of success already achieved is due first to the wise and inspired leadership of Dr. Levinthal, who for four years was President of the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council and who is now our Honorary President.

One man however could not have done the job by himself and the magnificent cooperation of many of the officers and trustees of the Center too numerous to mention, who served and still serve on our Board of Directors and on our Committees were the real source of strength from which the rest of us drew the courage to continue with the organization of Brooklyn Jewry into a single cohesive, well integrated and unified group.

The Brooklyn Jewish Center and Dr. Israel H. Levinthal have won world renown for the contribution they have made to their people and

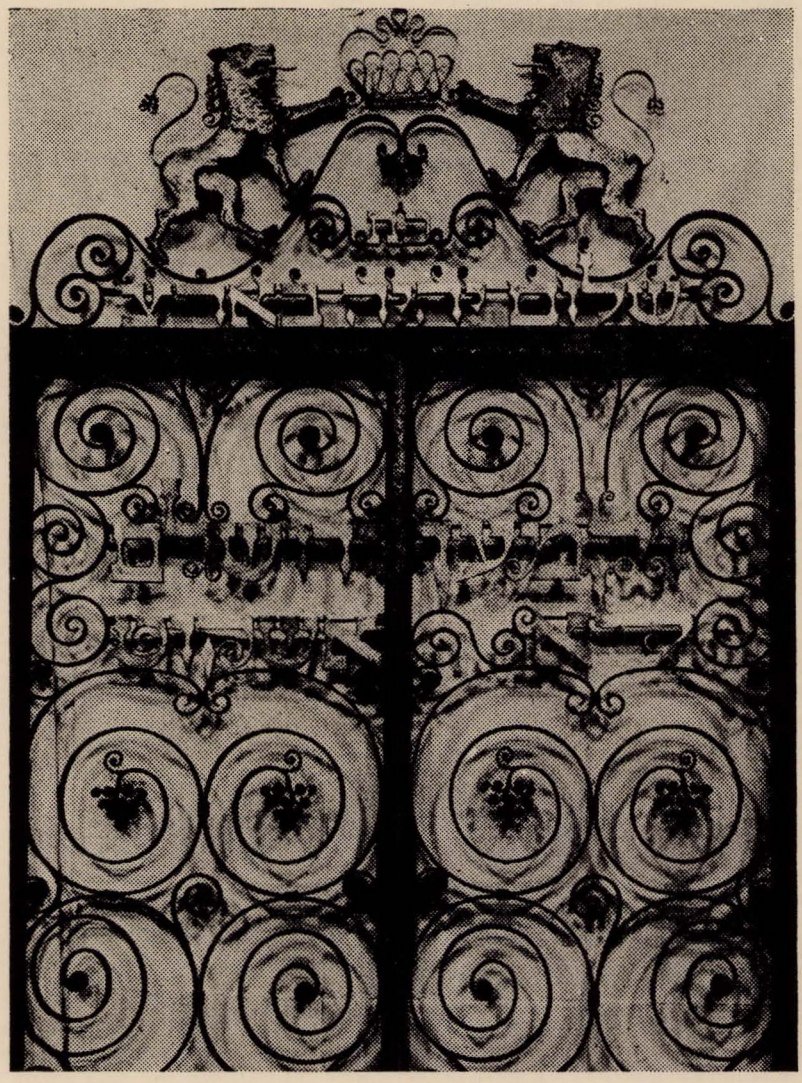
their community in the last quarter century. It is not for me to recount the numerous and outstanding achievements which have earned for the Center its well-deserved reputation as a Center of Jewish culture and learning. However, if the Brooklyn Jewish Center and Dr. Levinthal had done nothing more than what they did to initiate the movement which resulted in the organization of the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council, and thereafter their continued support of the new movement in manpower, finances and leadership, both the institution and the man have earned the timeless gratitude of the entire Jewish community of Brooklyn.

In behalf of our one million Jewish Brooklynites, I express our gratitude and extend to the Center and to Dr. Levinthal our deep and sincerest best wishes for continued success, so that our people and our community may continue to benefit from their future contributions as we have benefited by their contributions in the past.

I am most happy to record my impression of the great dignity and wide usefulness of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, which I had the honor of visiting at the time of its formal dedication.

It is undertakings such as this, springing out of the generosity, the devotion and idealism of our American citizens, which contribute year by year such powerful influences to the upbuilding of true civilization among us.

— Nicholas Murray Butler



AMONG THE ART TREASURES POSSESSED BY THE CENTER IS THIS ARK GATE WHICH WAS EXHIBITED IN THE PALESTINE PAVILION AT THE WORLD'S FAIR. IT CONSISTS OF TWO WROUGHT-IRON SANCTUARY DOORS DESIGNED BY THE EMINENT PALESTINIAN CRAFTSMAN, ISAAC MEYER. ACROSS THE GATES ARE FASHIONED LETTERS OF SOLID SILVER, READING: "THERE SHALL BE PEACE IN THE LAND," AND "FOR THE SAKE OF JERUSALEM I SHALL NOT REST."

The Jubilee Services and Dinner

THE completion of 25 years since the founding of the Brooklyn Jewish Center was marked by a three-day celebration, beginning Friday evening, April 5, 1946. Special Anniversary services were conducted by Rabbi Levinthal, with Cantor William Sauler officiating. The main Synagogue was filled to its maximum capacity. Through the public-address system, hundreds of worshippers who gathered in the Auditorium were enabled to participate. Many had to be turned away for lack of space. The services were most impressive and inspiring. Rabbi Levinthal led the congregation in the reading of specially prepared prayers for the occasion. He then introduced the guest speaker, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.

The celebration continued on Sabbath morning, April 6th, when the guest preacher was Rabbi Abraham M. Heller.

A dinner at the Hotel St. George, attended by more than 1,200 members and their families, was the culmination of the festivities. It was a happy reunion of Center members, new and old. There was an abundance of representatives of the younger generation, and a large number of those who for 25 years shared in the tribulations as well as the joyous occasions of the first quarter of a century of Center history.

SAMUEL ROTTENBERG, TOASTMASTER

Mr. Samuel Rottenberg, Chairman of the 25th Anniversary Celebration Committee, founder and Honorary President of the Center, was the toastmaster. He reviewed briefly the Center's contribution to Jewish life in America and the work that is still ahead. "I am particularly proud," he said, "that we are still young and creative. We have undertaken in honor of this celebration to build an Educational Institute which will cost $250,000. This is certainly a sign that we are still active and that we are continuing our leadership in the Jewish community of this city."

Mr. Rottenberg paid tribute to Mr. Moses Ginsberg, one of the founders of the institution, and to the Administrative Director, Joseph Goldberg, whose association with the Center began at its inception. "He has served this institution," he said, "with love, devotion and faithfulness as

no other man has done, and he is responsible for the success of many a president in office." Continuing, Mr. Rottenberg said: "At the end of the first World War, Jewry in Europe was uprooted, and Judaism was in upheaval. We realized that our dependence upon the reservoir of European Jewry was no longer practical, but must create our own resources for a Jewish life in America. The Jewish Center idea seemed to provide an answer."

TRIBUTE FROM ISIDOR FINE

Mr. Isidor Fine, former president of the Center, delivered a brief address appealing for the continued cooperation of the membership in all the institution's endeavors. The audience received enthusiastically Mr. Fine's remarks, especially his reference to the prosecution of the task of building the Educational Institute, the Campaign Committee of which he heads. His sincere and happily chosen words were undoubtedly intended by him to give the campaign a fresh and vigorous impulse. After expressing his gratitude to the Almighty that he was permitted to witness the memorable and joyous occasion of the Jubilee, he said: "It is immaterial, Mr. Rottenberg, how old you and I are. What is important is that the strength which is still ours in the evening of our lives be devoted to the further progress of our beloved Brooklyn Jewish Center."

SISTERHOOD GREETINGS FROM MRS. MAURICE BERNHARDT

A message of greeting was extended by Mrs. Maurice Bernhardt, president of the Sisterhood. Paying tribute to her predecessors in office, she stated that "through the efforts and leadership of these women, the Sisterhood has maintained the reputation of the Brooklyn Jewish Center in Jewish life, not only in the metropolitan area, but throughout the United States—indeed, throughout the world over."

FILM DEPICTING CENTER HISTORY

One of the attractions of the festive occasion was the showing of motion picture films covering the history of the Center since its inception. The unique scenes, which included the dedication and appearances at the Center of such noted personalities as Louis Marshall and Nicholas Murray Butler, brought back fond memories to all the pioneers of the institution and served as an inspiration to the newer members of the Center family.

The main addresses of the evening were delivered by Judge Emanuel Greenberg, Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal and Rabbi Robert Gordis. A condensation of all speeches delivered at the synagogue services and dinner will be found following this report.

ANNIVERSARY SPEECHES

The Ideal Synagogue

By Dr. Stephen S. Wise

At the Service on Friday, April 5, 1946

No member of the household of American Israel rejoices more heartily than I do in this joyous celebration of your Center, this silver jubilee. With all my heart I pray that when your golden jubilee comes, which after all is only 22 or 23 years off, you may have the joy and benediction of Dr. Levinthal's continuing leadership.

Dr. Levinthal knows that irrespective of my personal feelings, my own deepest sympathy is with such a Jewish institution as this. Even though I may shock some of my Reform colleagues, the synagogue of America will be this synagogue, or there will be very little synagogue in American Israel. Here, in the traditionalism, in the deep-seated loyalty and in the high vitality, in the Jewish passionateness of your Jewish Center here, is the pattern, and the standard of the future of the synagogue. The temple is not the synagogue and I want you to know that I never use the word "temple." Of course "synagogue" isn't a Hebrew word, but at least it is a translation of Bet Hakneset, the house of assembly, the Greek "synagogue." But "temple"—well, the "temple" is as goyish and as heathenish as many reform temples have become. They are well-named "temples."

Now why do I say that here lies the essence of Jewish tradition? It is not because of this service alone, with all its beauty of song, and its eloquence of preaching when Dr. Levinthal stands in this place; but it is the multiplicity, or rather the totality, of Jewish activities which make this place, first of all, a *Bet Ha-Tefillah,* a house of prayer.

I was opposed to Jewish Centers, 10, 20 years ago when Jewish Centers threatened to become Jewish clubs with gymnasiums, and billiard tables, and a little pinochle—or much pinochle—and a minimum of synagogue, a minimum of prayerfulness, a minimum of religious worship, and little deference paid to the more or less regrettable necessity of having a service of worship on the New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement.

I thank God for the example and the inspiration which, under Dr.

Levinthal's noble leadership, you have given the Jewish Centers of America. Yours is not only the greatest Jewish Center in size but you have kept in it all that Jewish tradition has demanded of you. First, a *Bet Ha-Tefillah,* a house of reverent divine worship; second, a *Bet Ha-Medrash,* a house of learning, a place wherein young, middle-aged, and old can come in order to study our glorious history and tradition.

Do you reealize that the term "Jewish Center" is almost the translation of *Bet Am,* a house of the people, a place wherein the Jewish people assemble in order to learn and reverently worship, to assemble for the great purposes of Jewish life?

If I felt that you, of this Brooklyn Jewish Center, poured a great fortune into this building, into the surrounding buildings, and into the schoolhouse which within a few years you are to erect, and you had done nothing more, and by that vast expenditure had made it impossible for you to bear your full share of the burdens of cloudiness and travail, I wouldn't be here tonight. I wouldn't dream of coming to you. I am not interested in Jewish mausoleums, whether they are Orthodox or Reform. I am interested in places wherein the Jewish spirit lives, wherein Torah is practised, wherein Jewish learning is cherished, wherein the great traditions of the Jewish people and the glories of Jewish history are brought to the knowledge, and the comprehension, and the loving loyalty of those who gather within these sacred walls.

Dear friends, we are celebrating joyously tonight, but do you realize these 26 or 27 years of your life as a community have been the most significant in all the 4,000 years of Jewish history?

I find the very genius of the Passover to be in those beloved words: "Speak ye unto the children of Israel that they go forward." But I would add, and emphasize, that they go forward as *B'ne Yisrael,* as the children of Israel, glorying in their heritage.

Dear friends, while I rejoice in your jubilee, in your spiritual and moral triumph, I make one reservation: Don't think your work is done. So much to do; so little done! This Jewish Center, with all its vitality and Jewish passionateness, must be no more than the starting point of your Jewish life: you must have increasing assemblies, schools, Jewish learning, Jewish loyalty, and above all, identification with every need, with every hope, with every vision, with every dream of Israel.

Dr. Levinthal and I, friends and comrades, may seem far apart with respect to the minutia of observance, but we are one in our changeless loyalty as Jews, and above all, one in our resolve and in our striving to effectuate the rebuilding of the Jewish national home.

The Pattern for Synagogue Centers

By Rabbi Abraham M. Heller

At the Service on Saturday, April 6, 1946

WHEN your beloved institution was first conceived, the world celebrated the victory of right over might. Great were the hopes of man that the days of rule by force, were to end forever. And now, after a second world catastrophe, we still long for the fulfillment of the prophetic promise that the weak shall live side by side with the strong, "and none shall make him afraid." In this world of brutal struggle for the survival of the fittest, the Jewish people must find a *modus vivendi*—a way of life, or perish from the face of the earth.

Our ancients recognized the tragic problem facing the Jew in an inimical world. They wondered how to forge the Jewish destiny at a time when even our friends failed us. We get a glimpse into the question, as we examine a rabbinic comment on a Biblical verse of our Torah reading of this morning: "He is a leprous man, he is unclean, the priest shall surely pronounce him unclean—his plague is in his head." From the general Torah reading, we have the right to infer that if the signs of leprosy appear elsewhere on the body, the priest must make a full diagnosis of the case before he can declare a Jew impure; but once the disease has touched the head, there is no choice left for the examiner—"He shall surely pronounce him unclean."

In the words of one of our sages, the priestly finding of impurity points conclusively to two serious defects. Because of mortal wounds, the Jewish body suffers deterioration, while the plagues of the head bring disorder and confusion to Jewish intelligence. This has been the costly price we had to pay for nigh 2,000 years in a world of rule by force, robbing us of the natural right to self-determination.

In times like these when our very existence is challenged, it behooves us to take counsel with one another. What road shall we choose leading to creative Jewish living? We are familiar with two answers: one primarily conceived with the saving of the Jewish soul; the other, with the elimination of injuries to the Jewish body.

Unfortunately, the view that the solution of the Jewish problem lies in the dissolution of Israel, has emanated in the main throughout the past century and half from those enjoying higher economic, political, social and often intellectual attainments. They suffer from mental confusion. They never learn from Jewish experience, that Jewish escapism cannot protect us from body blows; instead it produces tortured souls.

To what forces may we credit our achievement despite the plagues resulting in body blows and mental confusion? I select two major reasons: one is the simple concept of faith. The bird sits on the telegraph wire, unaware of the messages of import being transmitted under its very feet. We humans with our finite minds are equally unaware of God's will in the world. We see evil and we are confounded; when danger touches our lives we become despondent. But not so with people of faith. They grow strong as they cling to God; they gain immortality as they cleave to the Almighty. The second cause is the more tangible—the Center idea, the foundation stone of a living Judaism throughout Jewish history which you have helped to develop in America, first as an institution in Brooklyn, and second as an example and model for hundreds of Jewish communities throughout the land.

Most people conceive of the Center in terms of geographic location, a department store with all merchandise under one roof to save the customer expenditure of energy, and to provide the management greater economic efficiency. No, my friends, the Center, the saving institution of Jewish life in America, is much more than that. It has set for itself two major goals: One, to bring back under the influence of the House of God those elements in Jewish life, spiritual in origin, but which have been secularized in an age of specialization. For a long time, the Synagogue was isolated from the stream of Jewish life. Public worship became its primary and almost exclusive function. It was bereft of its legitimate children — education, philanthropy, self-defense, and social living. Each department of Jewish life went its own way, claiming to be the whole Judaism, competing with the other elements for supremacy in the Jewish community. This resulted in philanthropic Jews, anti-defamation Jews, culture Jews, nationalist Jews—each claiming the birthright of Judaism.

With the Center idea, American Israel began to develop Jewish Jews who became concerned with the wholeness of the Jewish people and Judaism. This phase of the Center ideology was first developed in another institution, but it never became the prototype of the Synagogue Center in America. Why? The Center's second major goal is the answer to the question.

For a long time Jewish religious life was dominated, to employ a familiar phrase current in national politics, by a two-party system: the extreme right, insisting on the *status quo* as the essence of Judaism, and the extreme left, playing with strange fires. One rejected the need for growth and development in the process of a living religion, and the other

forcibly cut itself off from the living waters of Jewish tradition. One overlooked differences in time and circumstances in the interpretation of principle and method, and the other willingly succumbed to the environmental condition of the day.

The Brooklyn Jewish Center, and the hundreds of institutions emulating your goal and program, because the backbone of the "Center" Jewish life, avoiding the strange fires on the left, and the frozen path on the right. Your beloved institution made possible the fulfillment of the promise of the synthetic integration of a worldly life with Jewish loyalties—Judaism within an atmosphere of freedom. You have always maintained genuine identity with the people of Israel. You have not permitted the severe physical blows inflicted upon us to bring you confusion of mind. You have sincerely labored in the cause of Zion rebuilt. You have been loyal to the concept of Torah, integrating it with the best of the world's culture. You have shown that Judaism can thrive in a free country, that adversity is not a prerequisite for creative Jewish living.

You, my dear Dr. Levinthal, and honored lay leaders of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, you have shown the way from party to people; from dogma to religious expression; from the worship of the past to the building of a future.

Our New Responsibilities

By Judge Emanuel Greenberg

At the Dinner on Sunday, April 7, 1946

SOME 26 years ago, a small group of men of vision and religion organized the Center. From the very beginning we were possessed of valuable assets, which, although intangible, were the very things that enabled us to arrive at this hour in our history. Those men who conceived the idea of the Center, and promulgated the plans for its realization, were possessed, not only of vision and religious fervor, but of an indomitable spirit and an intense loyalty to this institution. These were assets of even greater value than those that appear in our financial reports. With these to start with, our early membership was imbued with the same spirit, the same loyalty and the same devotion to the work ahead of it.

Our beautiful edifice was soon constructed and dedicated as a house of worship and as a center of Jewish culture, education, and welfare for the betterment of Jewry. It was not without difficulty that our aims

were carried through. During most of that initial quarter of a century, we struggled to maintain our institution, but nevertheless it functioned in accordance with the plans devised by our leaders, and with the guidance of our beloved Rabbi, Dr. Levinthal, and the painstaking efforts of our Administrative Director, Mr. Joseph Goldberg. We maintained our Hebrew School, Sunday School, Center Academy and Institute for Adult Studies; we established a splendid library, conducted forums and many other activities, and so efficiently as to bring us praise from the Jewish as well as the non-Jewish community.

Much credit for our accomplishments is due to the women of our Sisterhood. They stood loyally by us, aided us in all our work, and rightfully share in our glory.

I also wish to recall the contributions of one who is no longer with us, my predecessor, Mr. Joseph M. Schwartz, who was one of the founders of the Center. In addition to the many great sacrifices he made for us, he gave up ten full years of his life to the Center Presidency, laboring night and day so that the Brooklyn Jewish Center could survive the most difficult years of its existence. The memory of Joseph M. Schwartz will always be with us.

As for my other two predecessors, Mr. Samuel Rottenberg and Mr. Isidor Fine, who, thank God, are with us at this celebration, need I say anything more than, "Look at our institution!" That is the monument of their labor.

Yes, we have done much of which we can be proud. We have led the Jewish community of Brooklyn in every worthwhile movement, setting high standards in all, whether for charity, Jewish education, the synagogue or service to our beloved country. We have developed a solid and dynamic institution, and today, as a result of our efforts, we are the greatest and largest, and, I dare say, the most important institution of its kind in the world. This I can say honestly, without seeming boastful. For such an accomplishment we surely have reason to be thankful, and to exult and celebrate.

At such a time as this, some of us are inclined to reminisce about all that has transpired since the founding of our institution. While that may afford us pleasure, it is my humble belief that we have not, as yet, grown so old as to indulge in such a pastime. We can derive much greater satisfaction and joy from looking toward our future, rather than recalling the past. A quarter of a century is but a brief period in the history of an institution such as ours. We have but begun to make history in Jewish life.

Now that we have set our house in order—that we are on a firm and solid financial basis, with all our departments functioning at their fullest capacity, and with our Jewish community grown in such numbers, with our people, particularly the returning veterans of the World War, more religion conscious than ever before, we have had the vision to plan for the problems of the coming years.

Possessed of the spirit forged during our most difficult years, with abiding confidence in our plans as we face the unknown future, we have undertaken to provide additional facilities for our schools and our youth activities. We are now raising funds for the Educational Institute. This, as I have repeatedly stated, is vitally necessary to the future well-being and proper functioning of the Center, in accordance with the plans originally conceived, and our present needs. With the cooperation of all our members, we shall be successful in this undertaking, and at future anniversaries of the Center we shall have cause to be proud of new accomplishments.

The realization of our immediate plans is but the beginning of the work ahead of us. We cannot, and dare not become static, for that is the most certain evidence of retrogression. We shall move on, we shall go forward at all times, increasing and broadening our sphere of activities; we shall always be a very positive and determining influence in shaping and guiding the religious and spiritual development of American Jewry. It is our solemn duty to make our full contribution towards assuring the survival of Judaism throughout the world.

Let us, therefore, continue to stand by and strengthen our institution, to the end that we shall fulfill our debt to our God, our Country and our People.

The Spiritual and Physical Sanctuary

By Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

At the Dinner on Sunday, April 7, 1946

I THINK that you can very well appreciate what this night means to me. Together with those who fashioned this building, I, too, can offer the prayer to our Father in Heaven, *She-he-che-yanu*, that He has granted us life; that He has preserved us; that He has permitted us to celebrate this day.

Almost one-half of my life has been spent with the Brooklyn Jewish Center. Mr. Rottenberg and Judge Greenberg were kind enough to say

that I, too, could have celebrated the silver anniversary of my association with the Center. But I followed a good Jewish tradition in asking my friends not to think of my anniversary, but rather to concentrate on and emphasize the anniversary of our institution.

One of the Rabbis in the Midrash asks a pertinent question about the opening words of our Bible, *Bereshis Boro Elohim.* Would it not have been more fitting that God's name should have been mentioned first, that the Bible should have started with the words—*Elohim Boro Bereshis?* And he answers: "In the case of ordinary man it would be so. First *Mazkir Shemo,* he mentions his own name, and then speaks of what he fashioned. Not so the Holy One, blessed be He. First He mentions what He created for the needs of the world, and is satisfied to have His name recorded later."

In all humility, I want to say that I tried to follow this sacred example. *Bereshis Boro*—after all, what is important, what must be commemorated, is the institution we have fashioned. As for my name, my own role in this process of creation, and as for the names of others who helped in this fashioning, there will be, let us hope, other opportunities for mentioning us.

Now, dear friends, it has already been pointed out, again and again, that this is in reality a delayed celebration. The actual anniversary should have been commemorated at the end of 1943; but then we were in the midst of the bloody war. Our sons were on the battlefields, fighting for a sacred ideal, and we could not think of celebrating at such a time. In postponing the event, and in celebrating it now, after victory has come, we are again following a good Jewish precedent; and I think it is necessary to emphasize this, because it goes to the heart of the message that I want to bring to you tonight.

Just a few weeks ago we read in the portion of the Torah the story of the completion of the Mishkan, the first synagogue in Jewish life. And there we found this passage: "And it was in the first month (Nissan, the present month), on the first day of the month, that the sanctuary was erected. According to the rabbis, the sanctuary was finished long before. One rabbi said it was completed a month before, in *Adar;* while another rabbi said it was completed three months before. And so the sages ask: 'Why didn't Moses erect the sanctuary immediately upon its completion? Why didn't the people celebrate its erection at once?' And this is the answer which the rabbis give: 'God asked for the postponement. He planned that the celebration of the sanctuary should be joined with the joy of the day that commemorated the

birth of Isaac.' " What a significant message we find in this rabbinic comment in connection with our own postponed celebration! God wanted to join *Simchah Be'simchah,* the joy of the completed *Mishkan* with the joy that recalled the birth of that young son of Abraham who willingly went to the mountain of Moriah, ready to sacrifice his life for his faith, for his ideal, for his God.

Men and women, tonight we are uniting these two joys—the joy of the anniversary of our sanctuary with the joy of the rebirth of our Isaacs, our sons who were also led to a mountain of Moriah, who were ready to offer their lives for a holy ideal and for a sacred faith. Our sons have been re-born to us. And we could not possibly express the joy of our hearts at their rebirth in a better fashion than by joining that *Simchah* with the *Simchah* of the anniversary of our own sanctuary.

But this rebirth of our Isaacs of today is not only a cause for joy, but it also marks a challenge—a challenge to you and to me. Our sons, who have returned from the fields of battle, are born anew. They are the symbols of a new generation that we face today. All of them, whether they were on the battlefields or in the camps in this country—or not in the armed forces at all—all of them have been reborn, as it were. The war did something to them. Something has happened to their minds. They are beginning to question, to doubt, to challenge. They cannot understand a civilization that has permitted this human slaughter to occur, and they cannot understand a religion that has failed, in their estimation, to keep the world at peace.

I say it is a challenge to us, and we must accept that challenge. We must answer their doubts. We must clear their minds, and we must prove to them that it is not the fault of religion at all. We must prove to them that religion was never tried; that they do not understand and the world does not understand, the true meaning and the true function of religion; and certainly, the world does not understand the true meaning of Judaism and the Jewish philosophy of life.

Now, in order to meet that challenge, we must adopt new techniques, new methods and new approaches. That was in the minds of the founders of our institution. Then, too, they wanted to meet a challenge of their day, and the Center was the result. Today, the challenge is even stronger, and our determination to answer it must also be stronger.

My dear friends, we speak of the success of our institution. I do not want to belittle that success, nor do I want to withhold the credit for it from those to whom credit is due. I am not so modest as to belittle my own contribution to this institution, and we all know the splendid

contributions made by our own Mr. Joseph Goldberg, and by all the leading officers and workers. But our achievement was due to another factor, and please try to understand what that factor was. Again I turn to the inspiration of our ancient rabbis. Speaking of that first synagogue in Jewish life, one rabbi says—immediately after the bible tells us that "Moses erected the Mishkan," giving all the credit to Moses—that *Hakol Mesaiyin Oso, Habriyos V'horuchos,* "Everybody helped him when he fashioned the sanctuary. Everyone, all his fellow-Jews. But also *Horuchos,* the spirits, helped him."

Men and women, the rabbis didn't believe in spirits or in ghosts. The word *Ruchos* there has a different meaning, a deeper meaning. It was the spirit of the time that helped him. The spirit of his day called for such institutions as the "Mishkan," and because Moses was wise enough, and his fellow-Jews were wise enough to hear the voices of these *Ruchos,* these spirits, and to respond to them, they achieved success.

We were successful in building the Center because 25, 26 and 27 years ago, we heard the call of the spirit of that day, the *Ruchos* that kept demanding that Judaism needed a transformation in its conception of the synagogue, and because we heard that call, and we answered that call, success was ours.

Today, new *Ruchos,* new spirits are calling to us, the spirit of a new day and of a new age. These *Ruchos* call to us for a revaluation of our understanding of Judaism. They call to us for a re-interpretation of our religious life, a reinterpretation that shall keep itself true to its own spirit, the spirit of the past. But just because it will be true to its own spirit, it will also be in harmony with the philosophy and understanding of our new age.

Alas, dear friends, the truth must be told. These 25 years were spent, in a large measure, by all of us, not only by the officers, but by your rabbi as well, in trying to meet the actual physical needs of our Center. We had to work for the *Hechal Shel Matoh,* "for the lower sanctuary," for the physical sanctuary. For 25 years, all that we heard were mortgages, and debts and notes and—money, money, money; and much of the time that we should have spent answering the *Ruchos* of the day, alas, we had to spend preserving the physical foundations of the building, the *Hechal Shel Matoh.*

But the rabbis long ago warned us that we dare not be satisfied just with a building. This *Hechal Shel Matoh,* this lower sanctuary, the physical building, must aspire towards the *Hechal Shel Maaloh,* "towards the higher sanctuary," the sanctuary of ideals, the sanctuary developing a philosophy of Jewish life. And I want to plead with you now: Let us

dedicate ourselves from tonight on, now that the physical *Hechal* is assured, to the *Hechal Shel Maaloh.* Let us begin to think as well as to work. Let us begin to understand the inner needs and the deeper needs of the Jewish soul, and let us strive to meet these needs.

Men and women, this day marks a turning point in the history of our beloved institution. We are turning, as it were, a corner on our life's road. And I am reminded of a beautiful phrase that was used by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Magnificent Yankee," as he is called. When he was 80 years old, Sir Frederick Pollack congratulated him, and asked him how he felt on this birthday. Justice Holmes replied that it was like turning a corner. "The moment you turn a corner, you see another straight stretch ahead, and there comes some further challenge to your ambition."

We are turning a corner, that is all; and now that we are turning a corner, we see "another straight stretch ahead" of us, and there comes another challenge, not to our ambition, but to our willingness to be of service to our faith and to our people.

We often hear the words spoken: "All beginnings are difficult." We have that saying in the Hebrew language: *Kol Hascholos Koshos,* "All beginnings are hard." Our great genius, Chaim Nachman Bialik, took these words and offered a beautiful commentary in one of the addresses that he delivered in Palestine: "They say that all beginnings are difficult. But I think that we cannot say that *L'ag'be Ha-ye-zioh,* with reference to matters of creation. In that case it is just the reverse—not the beginning is what is difficult, *Elo Ha-hemshach, Ha-hasmodah,* but the continuation, the prolongation of the enthusiasm, *V'al Kulom Hatachlis, V'hagmar Hatov,* and above all, to keep in mind the goal, and to achieve the good and happy conclusion of your task!"

We speak of the difficulties we had to overcome in the early beginnings of our institution. But the real difficulties—as Bialik pointed out—face us now. It isn't difficult to start a movement or to found an organization. Pick up your newspaper and every day you read of a new enterprise, a new institution, a new organization. It is easy to start one. The difficult thing to achieve in all these matters of creation is the continuation of the zeal, the enthusiasm, the will to achieve the goal. And I want to plead for that *Hemshach,* for that continuation of effort that we displayed so beautifully in the first quarter of a century of the life of our Center. I want to plead for the continuation of that *Hasmodah,* that spirit of devotion and loyalty which we have shown in the past; and above all, I plead with you tonight, to keep in mind—and never to forget—the sacred function, the true purpose for which our Center was created, and to rededicate ourselves to *Hagmar Hatov,* to the successful and glorious realization of all our dreams, of all our hopes, of all our prayers.

A Living Present

By Rabbi Robert Gordis

At the Dinner on Sunday, April 7, 1946

I HAVE the dual privilege of extending felicitations, Mr. Chairman, to you and to the other officers and leaders of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, first on behalf of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, among whose most distinguished sons your eminent rabbi holds a place second to none; and also on behalf of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, which will never forget that your beloved rabbi was our president, and that he has remained a guiding spirit in the work of this national organization of the Conservative rabbinate to this moment.

If time permitted, I should have found no greater privilege—despite the injunction of the Chairman—than converting this evening into a tribute to your rabbi. I will only remind you that it was Ralph Waldo Emerson who said: "An institution is the length and shadow of a man." Emerson never knew how truly he spoke, because he did not know the Brooklyn Jewish Center. Your Center is the length and shadow of a great man, and that great man is our beloved rabbi, Israel Herbert Levinthal.

My dear friends, no Jewish gathering, however well justified and joyous in character, is conceivable today without hearing the echo of the world-wide Jewish tragedy to which the Chairman and other speakers have made reference; and I am sure that there must have gone through your minds, as it did theirs and through mine, the question of whether we have the right, however justifiable it may seem, to engage in any celebration as magnificent as this. You and I have a doubtful privilege of living in the cruelest period of Jewish history, a period compared to which the burning of the Temple was scarcely more than a three-alarm fire, and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain a kind of excursion up the Hudson River. You and I are living in a time when fully one-third of our people—and let's be honest about it and admit it: not merely one-third in quantity, but qualitatively speaking, the very finest, the richest, the noblest, the most useful segments of our people—have been cruelly done to death; and the million and a half who still wander across the face of Europe homeless and storm-tossed, find that the war is far from being over and that Hitler is unfortunately all too alive and very often sits in the council of the UNRRA and the Security Council.

So we may well ask ourselves: By what right do we engage in a celebration, however intense our personal joy, and however rich our own

individual happiness? How can we rejoice at a time like this? The answer, my dear friends, as I see it, goes far deeper than we possibly realize. The answer is really the clue to the secret of Jewish survival. It was said of the Jewish people long ago that they were a stubborn and a stiff-necked people. That was not said precisely as a compliment, but it has been true through the ages that our people somehow have known how to swim against the tide and not to yield to conditions, and if necessary, strike out against all the probabilities around us.

You will recall that at the time the Prophets emerged upon the stage of history, the Jewish people seemed to be prosperous, living in its own country, with many military victories and many diplomatic triumphs and with economic prosperity. But the Prophets looked beneath the surface, and they weren't fooled by the superficial surfaces of the time. They penetrated to the truth, and they saw that beneath the prosperity there was corruption, and lurking behind the victory there was disaster; and some of the Prophets said to their own generation: *Shalom, Shalom, V'en Shalom,* "You think there is peace and welfare? There is really no true peace within you." In other words, the Prophets juxtaposed their own certainty against the probabilities of the time; and you know that the Prophets were right, and the ruin they foresaw for a sinful and corrupt people came to pass, and Israel went into exile. And once again the Prophets looked at the tide of the time and decided to swim against it. Everything was lost. The Temple was burnt, the royal house killed, the people sent into slavery, and many of them killed. The people at that time all said, "There is no hope," but the Prophets insisted, quite against the probabilities, out of the inner rectitude of their spirits, "There is hope for thy latter end."

For the second time, the Prophets spoke against all the realists of the time, and for the second time they were right; and it was this quality, my dear friends, of opposing the trends of the time, and fighting them if needs be, which was responsible for the survival of Israel, though time and time again the funeral eulogies were recited, the curtain rung down, and the last chapter written by some over-zealous historian.

Therefore if we engage in celebration tonight it is not, Heaven forbid, because we are callous or forgetful, or because we have permitted the sweet strains of the music to drown out the groans of our brothers, but rather because we realize that for all our unworthiness, they have placed a challenge upon us to take up where they have left off, so that they may not be victims but martyrs, so that they may not have died for a cause that died with them but rather to have borne witness to a cause that will live on in our children, for their glory and the eternity

of Israel. That is why, my dear friends, this celebration is much more than a very elaborate party. It is really not a celebration but a consecration. It is a service of rededication to that second and more difficult stage, as Dr. Levinthal put it—which is the continuity of the spirit of Israel.

It is not enough, however, to swim against the tide. You know that that is a very dangerous enterprise. He who attempts to swim against the tide and does not know how is quite likely to be swept away into the waters; and here again I know no better example to bring to you, who are the children of the Prophets, than the example and the spirit of the greatest of the Prophets, Moses himself, of whom the Bible says: "His eye did not grow dim, nor did his vigor abate." The secret of Jewish survival has lain in those two qualities: the prophetic eye and the vigor of tradition. Moses and the children of Israel, in every generation, knew how to draw upon the resources of yesterday, but they did not fall in love with the past so as to be petrified, like Lot's wife, who, when she turned around, became a pillar of salt. Moses and the Prophets and the sages of Israel, through the generations, had that vigor that came out of Jewish tradition, but they also had the eye, the far-seeing eye, the eye that was responsive to the needs of the time, and because they were able to unite the vigor of the past and the hope for the future, they were able to build a living present. That is the secret of that great movement in American Israel to which your institution stands dedicated, the secret of that great institution which you have built, which stands four-square upon Jewish tradition, which draws from the vigor of yesterday, that is responsive to the needs of tomorrow, as it has been during this quarter of a century past, and will be in the days to come, with the blessing of God, and through the guidance of your rabbi and distinguished lay leadership.

My dear friends, Dr. Levinthal has indicated full well that a new great crisis faces us today. The name of that crisis is our youth—our youth who today demand a reckoning, our youth who today wish to know the truth about life and death, the meaning of human existence and the place of God and Israel in the world; and we shall not be able to put them off with old and shop-worn excuses. We must face that challenge, and we can do so in only one way, by leading them into the very Temple of Israel, to the very heart and essence of our tradition, so that they may have the vigor of tradition and the far-seeing eye of the Prophets.

There is a beautiful and heart-rending legend, the importance of which

and the full purport of which has generally been overlooked. The Talmud tell us that when the Temple in Jerusalem was burnt, the young priests assembled and they stood before the flaming building and they said: "O, Master of the World, we were not worthy to be true and loyal custodians before Thee, and therefore we return to You the key of the Temple," and they threw the key upwards and a heavenly hand removed it, and then they leaped into the flames and were destroyed.

The purpose of your Center, the purpose of all our strivings, is to prevent such a great tragedy. The legend is often told, but notice, it was not the priests, not the old priests, who felt themselves guilty of dereliction; it was the young priests, the younger generation, who somehow had failed in that challenge; and it was they, therefore, who sloughed off the responsibilities of Jewish life; and in so doing, committed themselves to the flames. Our great task is to prevent that tragedy from overtaking us. Our sacred cause is to see to it that our sons and our daughters, and our grandsons and our granddaughters, all unbroken generations of Israel, may not come into that error of proving faithless custodians of the divine word, but on the contrary, that they may take the key to the Temple, and, opening the doors, walk into the house of God and Israel and the Torah and discover the vigor of the Jewish religion, the wisdom of the Jewish tradition and the warmth of Jewish brotherhood.

When the Brooklyn Jewish Center was organized it took for itself, if I may presume to say so, an ancient phrase of the scripture as its motto: "Thou shalt be *Tamim*-whole with the Lord thy God." We have had too many specialists in Jewish life. We have had too many competitive agencies, and the great contribution of the Center movement, of the Synagogue Center movement, was the principle that Jewish life was a unit as surely as God Himself is One; and so it took the gymnasium Jew and the Synagogue Jew and the Yizkor Jew and the Yahrzeit Jew, and it took the Hebrew School, the Academy and the Sunday School, and it made of all a unit in which the whole is far greater than the sum of all its parts. That spirit of unity, unity in Judaism, unity in the Jewish people, unity in the American community, has made of the Brooklyn Jewish Center a tower of strength for our people, a source of pride for Israel, a true Sanctuary of God. God grant that in the quarter century which lies ahead it will be given you to continue to enrich our life and make of American Israel not a Center of young Jews who fall away from their people, but of a loyal leadership progressing in the intensity of their knowledge and in the warmth of their conviction and in

the strength of their pride, so that the ancient call of freedom of Moses may once again resound: "Let us go forward with our youth and with our elders and as young and old join together."

Like any man who has eyes to see and ears to hear, I believe the Center is a delight to the senses and an encouragement to the soul. I often think of the personal sacrifices that must have been required to make such a structure possible, and I marvel at the generosity of the greatest givers in the world.

But more valuable still, to the stranger at the gate, is the spirit of liberality that has ruled the management of the hundred-and-one activities of the Center. Certain heretics like the present writer, much harassed elsewhere, have found here such freedom as he had come to expect only in Utopia; and indeed the patience with which these heresies have been met have led him sometimes to doubt his certitudes and to entertain a secret admiration for the age-tried and mellowed faith that can look with such confident toleration on the intellectual fashions of the day.

The Center is a symbol of American liberty and Jewish genius.

— Will Durant

PRESENT MEMBERS OF THE CENTER WHO WERE MEMBERS AT THE TIME OF ITS DEDICATION, DECEMBER 1922

Abrams, Hyman
Albert, Louis
Asher, Philip

Barnett, Mrs. Samuel
Bellin, Charles H.
Bergman, Morris
Bernstein, Alex
Bernstein, Mrs. Elias
Blankstein, Louis
Booth, Mrs. J. D.
Brenner, Louis

Cooper, Harry

Diamond, Mrs. Michael
Dlugasch, Mrs. Morris
Duberstein, Mrs. Morris
Dvorkin, Nathan

Ellis, Jacob G.
Elowsky, S. M.

Fabrikant, Max
Feinberg, Philip F.
Fine, Charles
Fine, Isidor
Finkelstein, Dr. Reuben
Fleischer, Philip
Fortunoff, Jacob A.

Gellis, Mrs. Harry
Gingold, Dr. David
Ginsberg, Moses
Ginsburg, Abraham
Glickman, Pincus
Goell, Charles
Goell, Mrs. Jacob
Goell, Mark J.
Goldman, Abraham L.
Goldman, Herman I.
Goldsmith, Abraham
Goody, Harris
Gordon, Louis
Gottlieb, Aaron
Gray, Isidor
Greenblatt, Alfred
Greenblatt, Mrs. Hannah
Greenblatt, Samuel
Groden, Morris
Gross, Henry H.

Haft, Morris W.
Halperin, Mrs. Minnie
Halperin, Nathan
Halpern, David
Hirsch, Mrs. Leo
Hoffman, Nathan
Hoffman, Samuel L.
Holtzmann, Jacob L.
Horwitz, Samuel

Jablow, George
Joseph, Arthur

Kaminsky, David B.
Kaplan, Abraham
Kaplan, Louis
Katlowitz, Harry S.
Katz, Samuel
Kirsch, H.
Kirschman, Milton J.
Kline, Benjamin J.
Koppel, Jacob
Koven, Max N.
Koven, Dr. Morris T.
Kovner, Louis
Kramer, Israel
Kramer, Morris
Krinsky, Mrs. Louis
Kurshan, Oscar
Kurshan, Samuel L.

Lazarowitz, Mrs. I.
Leavitt, Marcus
Leibowitz, Mrs. Solomon
Levey, Frank
Levin, Morris
Levin, Philip A.
Levin, Samuel
Levinson, Mrs. Louis J.
Levy, Jacob
Levy, Jeremiah
Levy, Nathan
Lewis, Mrs. Aaron
Lieb, Mrs. Henry
Lieberman, A.
Londner, Mrs. Samuel
Lovett, Max
Lowenfeld, Isador
Lubell, Morris M.
Lurie, Leib
Luxenberg, Jonas

Marcus, Samuel
Martz, Benjamin
Miller, Morris
Miller, Piritz
Mormar, Jacob
Moskowitz, Mrs. Max

Neinken, Morris
Ostow, Kalman I.
Palevsky, Philip
Parnes, Louis
Perman, Charles
Posner, Mrs. Jacob D.
Prince, Mrs. Abraham

Raabin, Herman
Rachmil, Hyman
Ratner, Abraham E.
Reibstein, Barnet
Reich, Samuel
Robbins, Meyer
Robbins, Morris
Robbins, Samuel
Rosen, Jacob
Rosen, Meyer A.
Rosenberg, David
Rosenbluth, Irving
Rosenheim, Adolf M.
Rosenman, Jacob
Rosenman, Mrs. Louis
Rosenson, Ira L.
Rothkopf, Hyman
Rothkopf, Samuel
Rottenberg, Samuel
Rudin, Ephraim

Schorr, Joseph
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Schlusselberg, Abraham
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Schrier, Hyman
Schrier, Isaac
Schrier, Mrs. Joseph
Schwartz, Nathan T.
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Shapiro, Nathan D.
Shapiro, Thomas
Shorin, Morris
Shorin, Philip
Siegmeister, Isaac
Silberberg, Isidor
Sklar, Mrs. John
Spiegel, Simon
Stark, Isidor
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Stark, Samuel
Stelzer, Abraham J.
Stoloff, Dr. Benjamin
Stulman, Mrs. Joseph
Sweedler, Nathan

Tanenbaum, Barnet
Walder, Abraham
Waxman, Mrs. B.
Weingold, Mrs. Harris
Weinstein, Albert A.
Werbelovsky, Benjamin
Witty, Albert
Wohl, Mrs. Frederick
Wolff, Louis
Zankel, Mrs. Louis
Zirinsky, Harry
Zirinsky, Mrs. Jacob
Zirn, Abraham H.
Zirn, Samuel

The Brooklyn Jewish Center is a Seven-Day Synagogue, not a One-Day Synagogue. From early morning until late at night its doors are open, and men, women and children by the hundreds flock there almost every hour to take part in some activity or program that is offered them. It is true, many of them come for other purposes than to meet God. True, many of them are attracted by other reasons or motives. But they had to assemble at the door of the Tabernacle, and we are glad to say that a large percentage of these were won from outside the door into the portals of our Synagogue and are today some of our most eager and most enthusiastic of Synagogue attendants.

This, then, has been our task. This, too, has been our achievement.

— Dr. Israel H. Levinthal

THE DESIGN ON THE BACK COVER OF THIS BOOK IS A REPRODUCTION OF THE BEAUTIFUL ARK CURTAIN ACQUIRED BY THE CENTER FROM THE PALESTINE EXHIBIT AT THE WORLD'S FAIR. IT IS EMBROIDERED WITH GOLD AND SILVER THREAD, AND WAS MADE BY THE WELL-KNOWN PALESTINIAN FIRM, SHANI.

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