



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 5

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NUMBER 1

FRONT COVER

DAVID CHARAK ADELMAN

Founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

See page 3.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

NOVEMBER, 1967



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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

209 ANGELL STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
209 ANGELL STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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DAVID CHARAK ADELMAN 1892 - 1967

Born in Providence June 2, 1892, the son of Isaac S. and Rose B. Adelman. He attended Classical High School in Providence, and Brown University, from which he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1914. During World War I he served as a second lieutenant in the Army.

He attended law school at Northeastern University and was admitted to the Rhode Island Bar in 1919. He was active in the practice of law until the last years of his life.

For many years he was prominent in Republican politics. He served as clerk of the state Senate Finance Committee from 1925 to 1927, clerk of the state House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary from 1927 to 1930; and for four years beginning in 1934, he was recording clerk of the House of Representatives. When the state Board of Elections was created in 1941, he was named as one of its four members, a post he held until 1943.

He was an active Mason, and he served as Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias of Rhode Island. He was also a president and director of the Touro Fraternal Association.

His cultural activities included service as Archivist of Temple Beth-El, and he was one of the first life trustees of the Rhode Island Heritage Foundation. He was also at one time a director of the Providence Hebrew Day School.

He was the prime force behind the organization of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and was recognized as its founder.* He was editor of its publication, the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* from the first issue of June, 1954 through the issue of December, 1960. In that post and as a major contributor to the *Notes*, he bore responsibility for setting a standard in historical research to which the publication continued to adhere. He was the Association's first President, a position he held until 1966, and he continued to serve as its Honorary President until his death. He was largely responsible for the degree of support which the Association received from the Rhode Island community and the recognition which it achieved in academic circles nationally. Among his many contribu-

*See pages 5 and 6.

tions to American Jewish history was a monograph published in 1936 titled "The Life and Times of Judah Touro."

In 1957 he was commended by President Eisenhower for his historical work during the President's stay at Newport.

Mr. Adelman's memberships included the Providence Preservation Society, the Chautauqua Society, Friends of the Touro Synagogue, and the American Jewish Historical Society. He continued to serve as Vice President of the Brown Class of 1914 until his death.

Died in Providence, December 22, 1967.

He is survived by his widow, Louise H. (Zielmann) Adelman. His first wife, Emma (Faegeson) Adelman, died in 1938. He is also survived by a daughter, Rosalie F. Beloff of Orange, Connecticut, and a son, Morris D. Adelman of Providence, Rhode Island.

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations



IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY SESSION, A. D. 1968

S 542

SENATE RESOLUTION

Expressing Deepest Sympathy at the Passing of David C. Adelman, Prominent Lawyer and Historian.

WHEREAS, David C. Adelman, Providence attorney and founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Society, passed away on December 22, 1967; and

WHEREAS, He was long active in Jewish historical affairs serving as the first president of the society he founded and continued to serve as honorary president; and

WHEREAS, His historical writings, as editor of "Historical Notes" the Jewish Historical Society's publication and his monograph "The Life and Times of Judah Touro", are widely filed in most major colleges and public libraries; and

WHEREAS, His excellence as an historian was recognized by the then President Eisenhower during a stay at the Newport summer White House, in 1957, when he commended Mr. Adelman for his historical contributions to Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, He was active for several years in Republican politics; served as clerk of the Senate finance committee from 1925 to 1927; was recording clerk of the House of Representatives for four years beginning in 1934; was a member at large of the Republican State Central Committee from 1935 to 1937 and a Republican election count watcher from 1918 to 1936; and at the creation of the State Board of Elections in 1941, Mr. Adelman was named as one of its four members; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Adelman was clerk of the Soldiers' Bonus Board after World War I, in which he had served as a second lieutenant; and

WHEREAS, Even with his many other commitments he did not neglect his religious and fraternal affiliations. He was past president and director of the Touro Fraternal Association and had been financial advisor to the group, and was archivist of the Temple Beth-el and one of the first life trustees of the Rhode Island Heritage Foundation; an active Mason, he also served as grand chancellor of the Knights of Pythias of Rhode Island, and supreme representative of that organization; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Adelman was a true example of the busy executive or civic leader who could always find time for participation in additional activities that were of importance to him and his community; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in recognition of the great loss to his colleagues and community, expresses its deepest sympathy at the passing of David C. Adelman, prominent lawyer and historian; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the secretary of state be and he hereby is authorized and directed to transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Mrs. Louise Z. Adelman, widow, Mrs. Jerome Beloff, daughter, of the late David C. Adelman, and Mr. Morris D. Adelman, son of the late David C. Adelman.

The American Association for State and Local History
Washington, D. C.

Award of Merit

*The American Association for State and Local History is pleased to
recognize and commend the distinctive contribution of*

DAVID C. ADELMAN

Voted at the annual meeting of the Association in Madison, Wisconsin on
September 10, 1954.

The American Association
for State and Local History 1946

(SEAL)

HOWARD C. PECKHAM
President of the Association

LOUIS S. JONES
Chairman, Committee on Awards

A CATALOGUE OF ALL RHODE ISLAND JEWS MENTIONED
IN MATERIALS RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS
IN RHODE ISLAND LOCATED IN RHODE ISLAND
DEPOSITORIES (1678-1966)

Compiled by FRED A EGNAL

This catalogue of all works which mention Rhode Island Jews is a companion piece to the bibliography published in the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (November, 1966), 305-506 under the title "An Annotated Critical Bibliography Of Materials Relating To The History Of The Jews In Rhode Island Located In Rhode Island Depositories (1678-1966)."¹ In the bibliography, Rhode Island Jews appeared only as authors or in the subject bibliography if there was a significant or sizeable discussion devoted to them in any of the materials indexed. In this catalogue, every Rhode Island Jew mentioned in the extensive materials surveyed has been noted.

The catalogue is arranged alphabetically by individual. Following each name is an alphabetical listing of every work, both primary and secondary and published and unpublished, in which this Jew is mentioned. The full citations for those works frequently listed may be found in the Key to Abbreviations of Titles. A Key to Abbreviations of Journals and Collections Frequently Cited has been supplied. If the work is not located in the Brown University Libraries or in the possession of the organization or institution, its present location is indicated by abbreviations which follow the title and are explained in the Key to Abbreviations of Libraries, Historical Societies and other Rhode Island Repositories. For additional information concerning the works listed in this catalogue and a brief critical discussion, refer to the bibliography cited above.

It is hoped that this catalogue will be of some value to genealogists and historians working in the field of Rhode Island Jewish history and also serve as an incentive for others to pursue research in this fertile area of study.

1. Refer to the Introduction of this article for a discussion of the background and methodology used in the bibliography.

1. KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES

A.J.Y.B. — *The American Jewish Year Book*. ed. Cyrus Adler (I-V), Cyrus Adler and Henrietta Szold (VI-VII), Henrietta Szold (VIII-IX), Herbert Friedenwald (X-XIV), Herbert Friedenwald and H. G. Friedman (XV), Herman Bernstein (XVI), Joseph Jacobs (XVII), Cyrus Adler (XVIII), Samson D. Oppenheim (XIX-XX), Harry Schneiderman (XXI-XLIII), Harry Schneiderman and Morris Fine (XLIV-L), Morris Fine (LI-LIX), Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb (LX-LXIV). Philadelphia, 1899 to present.

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Reports of Genealogical Records Committee of Rhode Island N.S. D.A.R. — *Reports of Genealogical Records Committee of the Rhode Island National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.* R.I.H.S.

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Who's Who in World Jewry.—Schneiderman, Harry and Carmen, Itzhak J., (eds.). *Who's Who in World Jewry: A Biographical Dictionary of Outstanding Jews.* New York, 1955.

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2. KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS OF JOURNALS AND COLLECTIONS FREQUENTLY
CITED:

- A.J.A.* — American Jewish Archives
A.J.H.Q. — American Jewish Historical Quarterly
A.J.Y.B. — American Jewish Year Book
Bul. N.H.S. — Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society
D.A.B. — The Dictionary of American Biography
J.S.S. — Jewish Social Studies
M.A.H. — Magazine of American History
M.H.S. Proc. — Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society
N.E.Q. — New England Quarterly
N.H.M. — Newport Historical Magazine
N.H.R. — Narragansett Historical Register
P.A.J.H.S. — Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society
R.I.H.M. — Rhode Island Historical Magazine
R.I.H.S.C. — Rhode Island Historical Society Collections
R.I.J.H.N. — Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*

3. KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS OF LIBRARIES, HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND
OTHER RHODE ISLAND REPOSITORIES

- BethEl.* — Temple Beth El of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel
and David, 70 Orchard Avenue, Providence
M.H.W.A. — Miriam Hospital Women's Association. Mrs. Daniel
Miller, 315 Blackstone Blvd., Providence
N.C.H. — Newport City Hall
N.Ct.H. — Newport Court House
N.H.S. — Newport Historical Society
N.R.L. — Newport Redwood Library
P.P.L. — Providence Public Library
R.I.A. — Rhode Island Archives, State House, Providence
R.I.J.H.L. — Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Library, 209
Angell Street, Providence
R.I.H.S. — Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Hope Street,
Providence

*The pages in Volume IV, Number 2 of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* were not numbered consecutively. All references to this issue have the corrected page numbers with the page numbers as they appear in the issue given in parentheses.

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Who's Who in World Jewry. (New York, 1955) p. 4.
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Inferior Court of Common Pleas. Bk. D. N.Ct.H.
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Stiles, Rev. Ezra. Bill of Mortality for Newport, R. I. for the Years
1760 to 1764.
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- Abrich, Abraham (1869-)
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Who's Who in World Jewry. (New York, 1965) p. 47.

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Bercovitz, Adolf (1877-)

Eminent Jews in America. p. 16.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

by GERTRUDE NISSON GOLDOWSKY

RECENT ACQUISITIONS IN THE LIBRARY OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONTAINING ITEMS OF RHODE ISLAND INTEREST AND A LISTING OF THESE ITEMS

1. *A Preliminary Survey of the Manuscript Collections Found in the American Jewish Historical Society*. Nathan M. Kaganoff (comp.). Published by the American Jewish Historical Society. New York, 1967. 29pp.

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Levy, Moses (1792). pp. 196-200.

Lopez, Aaron. pp. 146n., 189n.

Myers, Naphtali Hart. p. 96n.

Newport. pp. 38n., 46n., 114n., 189n., 196-200.

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Synagogue, Newport. pp. 96n., 114n., 196n., 197.

Because of the close relationship between the New York and Newport communities in the eighteenth century, it is highly likely that there are other Rhode Island connected references. They are, however, not readily identifiable from the text.

THE PROVIDENCE CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE —
TEMPLE BETH-ISRAEL*

by BENTON ROSEN

"Back in 1913, I had to go South and found myself in Savannah, Georgia, on the first day of the Jewish New Year. I wanted to go to a synagogue so asked the clerk in my hotel to direct me. He asked me whether I desired an Orthodox, Reformed or Conservative Synagogue.

" 'Conservative synagogue?', I asked, 'that's a new one on me. What is it?'

"He then explained to me that a group of the younger people of the Orthodox faith broke away from the congregation and had hired one of the halls in the center of the city. I was curious to see what it was like, and after obtaining directions proceeded there."

In a feature story entitled "South Providence, the Cradle of Conservative Judaism in Rhode Island", published in *The Jewish Herald of Rhode Island* in three parts (November 24, December 1 and 8, 1933) Harry Rosen, as a young man of twenty-five, in 1913, recalls his first experience at a Conservative service. The article provides a fertile, fact-filled outline of events that led to the establishment of Temple Beth-Israel, the pioneer conservative Jewish congregation in Rhode Island.

His glowing enthusiasm for the new idea is readily discernible as he continues his description of the visit: "As I walked up the stairs, I could hear the cantor chanting a beautiful Hebrew hymn. Inside the hall I was amazed to see men and women, sitting side by side. A little later the rabbi delivered his sermon in English. I could hardly believe my ears! It all was new and strange to me, but so beautiful. This is what I hoped to see in 'my South Providence'."

Let us go back to Harry Rosen's early days as a youth, and note conditions generally prevailing in Orthodox synagogues in the Willard Avenue area of Providence. Young people as a rule attended religious services on the two days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur. While older men "prayed earnestly" on these occasions, their

* See back cover.

women folk did likewise in the balcony. But where were most of the boys and girls in their 'teens? They spent hours outside on the sidewalk, telling stories of ball games and happenings of the moment. Because they had little or no training in Hebrew and because the various rituals had never been explained, the services were boring to them. Most of these children would dress in their Holy Day best, congregate all over Willard Avenue, and refrain from entering any synagogues in the district. Harry Rosen noted these practices and indicated that, even though he could read Hebrew, he could not understand the prayers. He strove for something better in Jewish worship.

Other observers of the South Providence Jewish scene of that period recall a game played on the Holy Days. This was called "fingers." In these contests the participants chose either "odd" or "even." If the total of the fingers shown was incorrectly indicated, the loser was the recipient of several whacks on the hand by a knotted handkerchief. Such scenes were quite ludicrous on those Holy Days and made a sorry promise for the future of Judaism in the culture of America.

Harry Rosen had several times visited the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, the reform synagogue on Friendship Street in Providence. He was impressed with the character and sincerity of Doctor Henry Englander, their spiritual leader. However, Reform Judaism was not satisfactory to him. He deplored the absence of a cantor, the sight of men praying with heads uncovered, and the abbreviated Torah Service. The Reform Movement in American Judaism did not provide the answer he and his friends were seeking.

The visit to Savannah seems to have provided a beacon light to Rosen's quest for a system of religious observance which would be adaptable to life in America, but one which would not delete fundamental traditions. After attending services on both days in Savannah, he engaged their young Rabbi in a long conversation. From this discussion he learned of the progress of Conservative Judaism and how to approach the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for help in establishing a similar group in Providence.

Upon his return home a week later he discussed his experience in the South with several men in the South Providence community. A few months thereafter he learned that the Temple Mishkan Tefilah

in Boston was conducting services in the Conservative form. On a cold Friday evening in the winter of 1914 a group of five — David Robinson, Herman Paster, Simon Wolk, Harry Bornside, and Harry Rosen — drove up to attend Sabbath Service there. At the conclusion the men met Rabbi Herman Rabinovitz who suggested that a hall be hired and a young student be obtained on a trial basis from the Seminary. He advised that interest in the establishment of a permanent entity might be aroused this way.

The visit to Boston seemed to have stimulated enthusiasm among this nucleus of leaders. Upon application to the Seminary in New York, a young student, Murray Alsted, was assigned to conduct weekly services.

Friday night services were held for a few months at Fremont's Hall on Willard Avenue. Bazar's Hall was utilized for Passover services. About fifteen men bore the financial burden of the experiment, but additional support was not forthcoming. It was decided to terminate Alsted's weekly visits to Providence after Passover, and it was hoped that High Holy Day services would be held in the Fall. Unfortunately there was insufficient interest. Rosen lamented at this point: "The High Holy Days found us back on Willard Avenue at the old synagogue with the youngsters still outside and the older folks inside doing the praying."

Each year thereafter he would attempt prior to the Holidays to develop enthusiasm for the movement. There was practically no support for the idea. His persistent annual efforts finally gave promise of fruition in the summer of 1921.

A meeting of thirteen men was held at the home of Simon Wolk on an early August evening. All agreed that something should be done to reinforce Judaism in South Providence. It was high time that the children were taught Hebrew, Jewish history and customs, and were inspired to attend religious services with regularity. As a token of good faith somebody suggested that each man present donate the sum of five dollars as his contribution. The sixty-five dollars in hand was placed in the trust of Doctor Ilie Berger.

Later in the month the same thirteen men met again to lay plans for the High Holy Days. They agreed to write to the Seminary to

obtain the services of a student for the occasion. The man assigned was B. Leon Hurwitz, who was always addressed as "Rabbi" even though his studies were not yet completed.

The new Rabbi, a young man in his twenties, arrived at Union Station on the evening of September 8. After being met by a small group, he was brought to the home of Leo Grossman on Reynolds Avenue for a meeting with the thirteen men.

Rabbi Hurwitz talked at length on the progress of Conservative Judaism and the possibility of its establishment in Providence. The group felt that the Rabbi had many of the answers for their questions of long standing. Before the lengthy meeting broke up the young spiritual leader asked that he be allowed two days to "look around" and to have time for laying his plans. He made his headquarters at the Crown Hotel.

Now came the problem of obtaining a suitable meeting place. Fred Schwartz, who was then in the real estate business with Max Wunsch, suggested the old German Club on Niagara Street. This building had been closed since 1917. At the first conference with William Brand, a local attorney in charge of the structure, the group was informed that the building was for sale but not for rent. It was suggested that if the building were rented to the committee they might afterwards consider buying it. They persuaded the attorney to rent out the hall for three days for the sum of \$150.

In an interview with the writer Brand recalled that the rather unattractive German Hall was well covered with "For Sale" signs posted by practically every real estate office in town. He felt that the principal reason for the disposal of the building was the Prohibition Law. Without beer-drinking the German social group had no essential *raison d'être*.

The following Sunday morning Simon Wolk, Leo Grossman, and Harry Rosen inspected the building. They were quite startled by the overpowering odor of beer which pervaded the premises. There was no doubt as to the principal activity of the club during the years of its existence.

Without delay the visitors rolled up their sleeves, opened wide all the windows and doors, and started to sweep and clean. Abraham

White, who lived in the neighborhood, chanced to walk by while this was going on. Upon learning of the purpose of the voluntary project, he asked if he could join in the effort. This was the beginning of a rather substantial role on his part in connection with the establishment of Beth-Israel.

It was agreed by the committee to sell tickets for the three days at a price of five dollars per person. Solicitation of prospects was made on a direct personal basis and through a two page letter which had been prepared by Rabbi Hurwitz. In reply to the Rabbi's request for a \$400 fee for his services, eight of the committeemen underwrote a guarantee for that amount.

Through the kindness of Aaron Cohen, part-owner of Lowell Avenue Greenhouses, a generous quantity of potted palms were placed around the hall. According to Cohen these helped to "give a lift" to a rather drab setting for the religious services about to take place.

A few days before Rosh Hashanah a crisis of rather large dimensions presented itself. Where were Torah Scrolls to be obtained for the three days? Application for the loan of a pair from the Orthodox Robinson Street Synagogue was refused. The inference was that "those goyim" (i.e. gentiles!) should not be allowed the use of the Sacred Scrolls.

We quote Rosen's story of the solution of this dilemma: "Suddenly I remembered that my grandmother, Sarah Saluck, donated one of the scrolls to the Robinson Street Synagogue, and I asked her permission to use this Torah. Although she was a lady of the old school, she was broad-minded enough to understand what our group of workers was trying to accomplish. She used her influence with the officers of the orthodox synagogue, for the loan of her donation and one other scroll, and permission was granted."

The first New Year services were held on the evening of October 2 and on October 3 and 4. Over 400 worshippers were in attendance. In the opinion of all it was a highly successful occasion. There was money enough collected to pay all expenses, including the \$400 guarantee for the Rabbi.

A meeting of the committee with the Rabbi was held in the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. In answer to the question

of the advisability of establishing a congregation without delay, he concurred heartily. He further offered to serve as its spiritual leader. It was decided that the Rabbi would announce to the congregation on the next day that a meeting would be held that afternoon to determine if sufficient families would be interested in supporting the venture.

After the conclusion of services on October 4, the lay leaders and the Rabbi outlined a proposal for the establishment of a Conservative congregation. The response was remarkable. Over two hundred indicated an interest in membership.

The writer was present as a seven-year-old child at a children's service on the second day. I recall nothing of the services, but I do remember vividly the enthusiasm of the worshippers on that occasion. Even a youngster could sense the air of anticipation and the bright hopes of the adults.

Harry Rosen continues his description of the critical moments in the Beth-Israel story: "There was still no organization functioning outside of the original thirteen men, and we had a short space of time available between the New Year and Yom Kippur. We knew that we would have to work fast. If we had a building, we would be sure of our membership. The German Club seemed like the logical place for a Temple because of its location and surroundings. We felt that we could start building our organization once we had purchased it."

On the following day negotiations for the purchase began in the law offices of William Brand. A price of \$18,000 was agreed upon, with a 90-day option covered by a binder of \$500. This amount was provided by Rosen. Then the attorney modified the condition concerning the option because of the ninety day period granted in place of the customary thirty days. It was indicated that one thousand dollars would be required. Abraham White offered his check for five hundred dollars, and the deal was closed.

The files of the Recorder of Deeds, City of Providence, provided the following information: An Agreement, dated October 7, 1921 between the Niagara Club (corporate name of the owners of the realty) and Abraham White, Leo Grossman, Harry Rosen, Joseph

Gartner, and Joshua Bell. The selling price of lot (100 ft. on Niagara Street and 200 ft. on Atlantic Avenue) and building was \$18,000 plus commission to G. L. and H. J. Gross, realtors. Down payment was \$1,000 and balance due on January 15, 1922. The signatures were witnessed by Benjamin N. Kane and Isaac Marinsky.

The following day, *The Providence Journal* reported: "The German Club at Niagara Street and Atlantic Avenue has been purchased by the Providence Conservative Synagogue* according to an announcement made by an officer of the latter organization.

"The synagogue will immediately begin work remodelling the building. About ten thousand dollars will be spent in making needed alterations to fit it as a Jewish Center.

"These changes in the building will include the installation of a modern gymnasium in the basement of the building, the alteration of the first floor to provide school rooms for Jewish children and the special Americanization school for adults, while the large hall on the second floor will be arranged for the holding of religious services as well as social functions under Jewish auspices. One of the big changes in the structure will be the remodelling of the front of the building. The wooden construction will give way to a stucco exterior of special design on which the architects are now working.

"The building, familiarly known as German Hall, was opened February 17, 1890 as Turneverein Hall. It flourished and many of the social gatherings of the Germans were held there. During the past year or so, the club has been more or less dormant. The Jewish Conservative Synagogue a few weeks ago leased the property for its services, and it was during this holiday that the move to purchase the building was inaugurated."

*This is the first time a record shows the official name of the congregation—Providence Conservative Synagogue. While the designation Temple Beth-Israel was used almost from the establishment of the institution, the first given name has always been used in legal matters. (The Providence Conservative Synagogue, however, did not obtain a State Charter until April 5, 1930. The incorporators were Benjamin N. Kane, Dr. Ilie Berger, Max Rosen, Joseph Greene, Louis Torgan, Boris N. Nelson, and Jonas Goldenberg. Purpose of the organization: "To maintain a house of worship and a school for religious instruction, as well as to carry on any other social and religious activities necessary or incidental thereto." Ed.)

Just before Yom Kippur it was announced that Rabbi Hurwitz had accepted the call of the congregation. Another important step in the rapid genesis of a new idea was completed. Things were falling into place more speedily than even the most ardent workers could have hoped for two months previously.

The first congregational meeting took place on Yom Kippur night. About 240 members were in attendance. Minutes were taken by Miss Harriet E. Jacobs, who was to become Harry Rosen's wife two years later. The charter officers elected on this occasion were: Benjamin N. Kane, President; Pincus Silverman, 1st Vice President; Louis J. Bachman, 2nd Vice President; Mayer Levitt, Treasurer; Boris Nelson, Financial Secretary; Joshua Bell, Recording Secretary; Doctor Samuel I. Kennison, School Physician. Elected to the Board of Trustees were: Leo Grossman, Chairman; Harry Rosen, Vice Chairman; Joseph Gartner, Treasurer; David Robinson, Secretary; and Doctor Ilie Berger, James Goldman, Isaac Marinsky, Lues Reuter, Fred M. Schwartz, Abraham White, and Simon Wolk. Silverman soon resigned, and Bachman continued as the sole Vice President.

From the *Providence Journal* of October 17 we learn: "The Providence Conservative Tabernacle (modern orthodox) begins this evening its three day observance of the Succoth or Feast of Tabernacles, with a special service at 6 o'clock. Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz will preach on 'The Succoth Message.'

"One of the picturesque features of this festival will be the great tent erected on the grounds of the temple at Niagara Street and Atlantic Avenue to which members of the congregation will repair before the services have ended to enjoy refreshments and a musical program. This tent is furnished with elaborate decorations, and is hung with all varieties of fruits, boughs, leaves and other foliage. The significance of the feast is two-fold. By it the Jews are reminded of the period when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, with no other shelter than flimsy tents. It also commemorates the gathering in of the fruits from the harvest after the Hebrews were safe in their own land.

"The Succoth feast is under the auspices of the Temple Sisterhood, the President of which is Mrs. Etta Fredberg. A special committee



ABRAHAM WHITE

*Chairman of
Building Committee*



BENJAMIN N. KANE

First President

rigid orthodoxy of the Jewry of Europe. The Jewish spiritual and the Jewish religious life interpreted loyally and literally will make the synagogue in America a blessing to the House of Israel, and a center of beneficent influence on the whole community of American citizenship.'

"Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz, leader of the newest Jewish house of worship in Providence, spoke interestingly on the aims and endeavors of the congregations of the various Conservative synagogues throughout the country. He discussed at some length the problems confronting the American Jew in his daily life and in his spiritual being. Only by keeping in mind the ethics of Judaism and observing always their duties as American citizens, he said, could Jews in the new world justify themselves as good Jews and good citizens.

"Greetings were given the new congregation's leaders and members by Rabbis H. D. Bachrach, Samuel M. Gup, Israel S. Rubinstein, Benjamin Plotkin of Providence, and Pincus Israeli of Woonsocket. At the beginning of the after-dinner program 'The Star-Spangled Banner' was sung under the leadership of Golda Orliansky, who later sang 'Eli Eli.' Cantor Bernard Wolf of the Blue Hill Avenue Synagogue, Boston, sang two Hebrew chants 'Haben Yakiri' and 'Sim Sholom', and later pleased his hearers with several operatic selections. Charles Wagner also sang, and Mrs. J. Fredberg led the diners in singing 'Hatikvah.' Ned Newburger played several piano selections and accompaniments for the singers.

"Members of the new congregation and their guests, to the number of 450, enjoyed the banquet in the upper hall of the new synagogue. The hall was decorated with American flags, and banners with the six-pointed star of Zion were displayed in an unusually well-decorated alcove, symbolical of the temple tabernacle, and back of the speakers table.

"At the head table were Rabbi and Mrs. Israeli, Rabbi Benjamin Plotkin, Rabbi and Mrs. Samuel Gup, Rabbi Jacob Kohn, Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz, Rabbi and Mrs. Israel Rubinstein, Toastmaster Harry R. Rosen and his mother, Mrs. Bessie Rosen, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Wolf, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Friedman, Leo Grossman, chairman of the trustees, dinner chairman, Abraham White, Mrs. Arthur Darman,

Mrs. Archibald Silverman, Cantor Bernard Wolf, President and Mrs. Benjamin N. Kane.

"The occasion marked the beginning of the newest independent religious community in Providence, and served another purpose since it marked the beginning of the congregation's campaign to collect funds needed to complete the transfer of the property."

Financial results of the affair were heartening in that over \$3,000 was raised from the members. In addition the officers' contribution exceeded \$1,500. With these sums the renovation fund was off to a good start.

It was but a short time before the first Bar-Mitzvah took place. On the last Saturday of October Alfred E. Loeber had the honor of being the first young man in the congregation to participate. He was followed two weeks later by Sidney A. Kane, eldest son of Beth-Israel's first president.

From a little folder entitled "Calendar of Activities—1921-22", we learn that Chanukah was observed, that there was a Young Folks' Chanukah Service on December 29, and a Chanukah play was presented on New Year's Day 1922. Unfortunately no newspaper reports regarding any of these events have been discovered.

The start of 1922 brought the officers and trustees a problem in finance that could not be wished away. An answer had to be found before January 15. The only solution seemed to be a loan. Harry Rosen headed a small committee that approached Walter C. Nye, then president of Citizen's Savings Bank. The Bank agreed to grant a loan of \$15,000 to be covered by a mortgage note which would be endorsed by the fifteen organizers.

Through the kind assistance of William B. Heisler, present head of Citizen's, we were able to obtain a copy of the bank's ledger and information card on the Providence Conservative Synagogue mortgage, dated January 10, 1922. Face value of the note was \$15,000, and the interest rate was five or six per cent, depending on "conditions." The building was classified as a "church." Noted thereon was the typically cautious attitude one might expect from a bank: "Building designed for a special purpose; entirely dependent upon organization behind it. Continue reductions because of possible dif-

ficulty in disposing of property if we had to take it." The guarantors of the loan were:

Harry R. Rosen	Isaac Marinsky
James Goldman	Simon Wolk
Abraham Klemer	Joseph Gartner
Max Wunsch	Benamin N. Kane
Mayer Levitt	Ilie Berger
Fred M. Swartz	Max Rosen
Abraham White	Lues Reiter
Leo Grossman	

The Calendar of Activities indicates that the first Torah was presented to the Temple on January 15, 1922. Search of contemporary local newspapers and questioning of several members living at that time failed to shed any further light on the event.

However, there is a more complete story to tell about the presentation of the second Torah. *The Providence Journal* of February 20 related: "Presentation of the Torah, or Holy Scroll, will be made to the Temple Beth-Israel [first time this designation was used in the press] at 6 o'clock this afternoon by Mr. Goldstein [first name not available], a member of the congregation. The gift will be accepted with the celebration of the Torah, one of oldest rites of the Jews.

"With elaborate ceremonies and religious music, the Torah will be carried by the donor and Rabbi Max Zukor, a visiting student from the New York Theological Seminary, to the pulpit. A canopy borne by four honorary bearers will protect it during the procession. Acceptance of the gift at the pulpit will be by Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz, minister of Temple Beth-Israel. After the acceptance the Ten Commandments will be read by the rabbi and an address on 'The Jew and His Religion' will be delivered by Rabbi Zukor. Harry Paltier is the chairman of the reception committee for the occasion."

The Temple was honored by a visit of Rabbi Solomon Goldman, religious leader of the Cleveland Jewish Center, and an outstanding figure in the Conservative Rabbinate. *The Providence Journal* reported (March 4): "Present day problems of Jewry and the manner in which they must be met were considered in an address last night by Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Cleveland, Ohio at Temple Beth-Israel.

"He outlined the history of the Jewish race and urged his hearers

to be true to the traditions of their forefathers. The true Jew is the man who can remain faithful to these traditions and find a solution to the many problems that his race to-day is called upon to face, he said.

"Rabbi Goldman called attention to the fact that during centuries the Jewish faith has still survived and at the present time stronger than it had ever been since mediaeval times. He said that Jews of the present day had greater opportunities and more advantages in their fight to keep alive their faith than their fathers had, and he urged his audience to make full use of these powers."

Beth-Israel's rabbi, leaders, and congregation had worked diligently at the job of establishment and development. Such were the results obtained by the young group that the United Synagogue of America, confederate body of all Conservative congregations in North America, had this to say in its 1922 Report of Activities:

Providence, Rhode Island

In its brief existence of seven months the Providence Conservative Synagogue has achieved a great deal of progress. Starting with a nucleus of about a dozen enthusiastic workers . . . the number of members now totals close to 200. The Congregation is maintaining a flourishing religious school in which about 175 children are receiving instruction three days a week.*

In the Calendar of Activities are noted the following events as Winter passed into Spring:

March 4 Congregational Melvah Malkeh
March 18 Young Folks Purim Dance
March 19 Purim Play
April 13 Congregational Seder

A fund-raising bazaar was held April 24 through April 27. The writer recalls that the portable Ark was removed from the upper hall, the folding chairs were taken up, and members of the Temple and their children helped with the erection of the booths and the decoration of the walls. Our elders indicated that the event was a complete success. It seemed to intensify the enthusiasm already extant, and the financial results were gratifying.

Came Shabuoth, June 2, and the initial Confirmation at Beth-

*A History of the United Synagogue of America 1913-63, Abraham J. Karp. Pub. by the United Synagogue of America, N. Y., 1964.

Israel. According to *The Providence Journal*: "The first confirmation class at the new Temple Beth-Israel was initiated into the impressive service yesterday as a feature of the first day of Shabuoth. The candidates, twelve in number, were conducted into the temple by the officers and trustees, where they were joined by Mrs. J. Fredberg, Mrs. M. Gershman and Mrs. B. Kane as sponsors.

"The members of the first confirmation class were as follows:

Miriam N. Aron	Jack Levitt
Bessie Berman	Milton Pliner
Ethel Deutch	David Uffer
Isadore Friedman	Edmund I. Waldman
Jacob Friedman	Leonard A. White
Sarah Grossman	Anna E. Wunsch

"The program included: Schachanth devotion, Hazan and congregation; Ab-Horachamin, congregation; taking the Torah from the Ark, Milton Pliner; opening prayer, Miriam N. Aron; The Covenant, Jack Levitt; The Book of Books, Anna E. Wunsch; reading the the Torah in the Ark, David Uffer; 'The Ideal Young Woman,' Bessie Berman; 'The Ideal Young Man,' Isadore Friedman; 'What We Have to be Thankful For,' Ethel Deutch; Address to pre-confirmants, Leonard White; Ein Kelohenu, congregation; valedictory, Jacob Friedman; blessing, Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz; closing prayer, Sarah Grossman; Yigdal, congregation; and benediction.

"The exercises closed with a reception in the vestry to the confirmants and their friends."

At a meeting on June 8 the Board of Trustees voted to renovate the building. Abraham White was chosen to head the building committee, and work began on June 26. By the end of August the not inconsiderable project was completed. The structure was painted completely on the outside. A thorough refinishing of floors, walls, and ceilings had been performed in the interior. Gone were the rather precarious front steps, replaced by wide masonry risers. Handsome pews were installed in the sanctuary on the second floor. The ark, lecterns, and altar were fabricated from mahogany, nicely finished. On the first floor, the rabbi's study, classrooms, and vestry were suitably furnished and decorated. In the basement area, the bowling alleys of the German Club were torn out. This became a general purpose room.

On Sunday, September 10, 1922 the most glorious event in the history of the young congregation took place. *The Providence Journal* of the next morning gave considerable space to the memorable occasion:

"With elaborate and impressive exercises the new conservative Jewish synagogue, Temple Beth-Israel at Atlantic Avenue and Niagara Street, was dedicated yesterday afternoon in the presence of many Jewish and non-Jewish residents of this city and out-of-town guests. The speakers included not only members of the Jewish Clergy and laity but also representatives of the other religious denominations and of the State.

"Gathering outside the church at about three o'clock guests and members of the congregation marched into the edifice in a procession led by Rabbis Hurwitz and Rubinstein, spiritual leader of the Orms Street Synagogue, who bore Torahs. The exercises in the synagogue commenced with the singing by the choir of 'Rezeh' (Accept O God, Israel's Prayers) which was followed by the depositing of the scrolls, and introductory remarks by Benjamin N. Kane, president of Temple Beth-Israel. The key to the new building was presented by Abraham White, chairman of the building committee, to Leo Grossman, chairman of the board of trustees, the latter making a short speech of acceptance. Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein delivered the invocation and Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz of the new temple led in the dedication prayer.

"After singing of the dedication psalm by Cantor Joseph Schlossberg and another hymn by the choir, Governor San Souci was introduced as the first speaker. In his address, the Governor urged the necessity for the united effort of all denominations in these 'troublesome and turbulent' times to preserve the ideals upon which the country was founded. He was followed by Rabbi Israeli of Woonsocket and Arthur I. Darman, a prominent Jewish resident of that city. Dr. Marion E. Bratcher of Calvary Baptist Church expressed the felicitations and good wishes of his congregation and of Christian denominations in general throughout the city.

"The principal speaker of the occasion was Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Cleveland, Ohio, who is known as the leading conservative,

semi-reform rabbi of the country. Rabbi Goldman spoke at some length of the racial and religious prejudice and of the persecution and ignominy to which the Jewish people were subjected in almost every part of the new world. But he urged his people to be of good cheer and carry on the ideals of Israel which have survived 2,800 years of opposition and oppression.

"In speaking of anti-Semitic propaganda in the educational institutions of this country, Rabbi Goldman's challenge was: 'Is it the hand of prejudice and bigotry that rocks the cradle of learning in this country and laid the cornerstones of our colleges and universities? When I speak of prejudice, I do not speak entirely from the standpoint of the persecuted. Prejudice is a two-edged sword and while it may not injure those against whom it is directed it is sure to mortally wound the soul of those who would use it. The spirit of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln cannot function in a land where prejudice rankles.

" 'When you ask me what we can do to perpetuate and uphold the ideals of Judaism, there is but one answer. Build synagogues and more synagogues and more synagogues. You may take my home and my country. You may renationalize me and scatter my people to all quarters of the globe, but leave me my synagogues, and I will continue to be a living, vital and growing force in the social life of the community and of the country in which I live.

" 'You are to be congratulated, my friends, on the splendid work you have done here, raising the funds and renovating this building, but your work has just begun. This dedication does not conclude your labors. You merely have built the place in which to carry on your work and to which to come to receive the inspiration for that work. In the words of the great Italian, General Garibaldi—*I can offer you only hunger and rags and forced marches but whoever loves his country will follow me!* This is the burden Israel must carry, but for nearly thirty centuries we have demonstrated that the light of Judaism can never, will never be extinguished.'

"Rabbi Hurwitz, in commenting upon the visits of the Jewish and non-Jewish clergymen referred to them as spiritual physicians who come not to give care to a sick congregation, but to give encouragement and approval to the labors and aims of a healthy spiritual body.

"Messages of congratulations and good wishes were read from Lt. Governor Gross, Mayor Gainer, U. S. Senator Gerry, and Judge John R. Higgins, who was unable to be present to give his scheduled address.

"Messages from the following were read: Rabbi Samuel Gup of Temple Beth-El of this city, Col. Joseph Samuels, Leon Samuels, Joseph Finkle, formerly president of the young people's organization of the congregation, the parents of Rabbi Hurwitz, and from Montefiore Congregation of Philadelphia where Rabbi Hurwitz occupied the pulpit before coming here.

"The singing of Yigdal by the congregation and choir, a closing prayer by Rabbi Benjamin Plotkin of this city, and a postlude by the orchestra concluded the services. Leo Grossman, chairman of the board of trustees of the Temple, presided at the exercises."

Within a period of one year and two days after the arrival of young Rabbi Hurwitz in Providence, Temple Beth-Israel was organized, developed, and dedicated to Jewish service in a nicely renovated edifice. Because of an idea whose time had come there was now in being a Jewish institution adapted to the realities of American living. In essence, the dedicated founders, practically all naturalized citizens in their thirties and forties, had realized the goal of that particular group of 19th Century American rabbis of the so-called Historical School.

This school urged the development of liturgy in which the vernacular would be used to a considerable degree. They agreed on certain fundamental changes in the Synagogue without sacrificing basic traditions.

We view with a degree of irony the fact that a former German beer hall was converted into a permanent entity in American Judaism. In Germany, at about the same time, at another beer hall, were planted the seeds of hate that were to bring bitterness to untold millions of our brethren in Europe. The glorious opportunity for salvation of world Judaism was indeed exemplified and personified by America. The Conservative movement can well be considered as a vital factor in the body of American Judaism.



SOPHIA and HYMAN B. LASKER

HYMAN B. LASKER (1868 - 1938)

I. AN APPRECIATION*

by BERYL SEGAL

Reb Haim Dov (Hyman B.) Lasker came to America from Russia with his family in 1905. In that year, according to the American Jewish Year Book, the Jewish population in Providence was about 3,000. They were largely recent immigrants. Most lived in the North End of the city, around Orms Street and Chalkstone and Douglas Avenues. They kept their shops on North Main Street and in the neighborhoods in which they lived. Most of the Jews living in the North End were members of the Bnai Zion (Sons of Zion) Shul (Synagogue) on Orms Street.

The Bnai Zion Shul had the largest and the most influential congregation in the city at that time. From their midst came most of the directors of the Hebrew Free Loan Association of Providence. Their women were among the founders of the Jewish Home for the Aged and the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. They were the men and women who built and maintained the Providence Hebrew Sheltering Society. And they organized the Chased Schel Amess, the Jewish Burial Society.

Many other organizations that have since disappeared were originated by Bnai Zion members. But the two most flourishing institutions were the Talmud Torah and the Hevrah Shas. The Talmud Torah existed for the benefit of the children of the North End, and the Hevrah Shas for the adults of the community. In the Hevrah Shas (Talmud Society) men of all walks of life would come to study a daily page of the Talmud with the Rabbi of the congregation or with one of the many among its members who were capable of sitting at the head of the table and leading them in study.

Four men of distinction were at the helm of the spiritual life of Bnai Zion at the beginning of the present century. They were: Rabbi Yisroel Zisl Rubinstein, the Rav Hakolel, the Chief Rabbi, of Rhode Island; Reverend Meyer Smith, the Cantor of the Shul and the Mohel to the community unto this day; Reb Haim Dov Lasker, the director

*For glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms, see page 115. For biographical note, see page 114.

of the Talmud Torah and teacher par excellence; and Reb Meyer Gereboff, his assistant.

To this group we must add Reb David Orliansky, who though not a member of the Congregation, was a constant companion to these men of great learning and came to Bnai Zion every Sabbath for prayer and study. He was the Shohet and Mohel of the community.

All of these men were scholars in the traditions of Eastern Europe from which they came. Each one contributed to the greatness of Bnai Zion. They were all pious men who had perfect faith and walked their paths with firm steps.

Reb Haim Lasker was a professional teacher, not a teacher plus something else, as were so many in the city. Teaching was his only occupation and to it devoted all his life. He spoke and wrote about learning and about Jewish scholarship at every opportunity.

The Talmud Torah at Bnai Zion was unique in Providence. While it was located in the halls of the Shul, it was really a community Talmud Torah. Children of members and non-members alike came to learn from the excellent staff of teachers. It was the only community school for Jewish learning in Providence.

Reb Lasker's pupils in Providence were countless. Of these two were selected to evaluate the man Lasker and his method of teaching. They were selected because both were faithful students all of their Talmud Torah years and because their present professions give them special insight.

Israel I. Kapstein, professor of English at Brown University, and his wife, Stella, teacher in the Providence Public School System (Stella, in fact, was the only girl in the group of advanced students), have both vivid memories of Reb Lasker their teacher and speak of him and of his teaching with nostalgia.

Israel and Stella Kapstein remember Reb Lasker as a tall, tidy man. He was distinctive looking and walked with authority. Not at all like the traditional Hebrew Teacher, they said. He commanded respect. In his classes he was a stern disciplinarian, but he could be as gentle as a child when he spoke to a pupil who "desired to learn."

The Kapsteins recall the Sabbath afternoons with Reb Lasker. These were "Story Hours", during which Reb Lasker told stories of

Jewish heroes, legends from the Talmud and Midrash, and tales of martyrdom in the Middle Ages, with frequent excursions to present-day American life. At these times Reb Lasker spoke in a soothing voice, but his eyes burned with a strange fire. These were "voluntary" hours, and the students the select of the Talmud Torah. Reb Lasker was at his best with these students.

Israel Kapstein related to me that when in later years he read *The Midrash on Psalms* as translated by Rabbi William G. Braude¹ he recalled hearing many of the tales from the lips of Reb Lasker during those Sabbath hours. All were in the Midrash.

What was the curriculum of the Talmud Torah? Which studies did Reb Lasker stress?

First let us discuss the things Reb Lasker did not stress. The Talmud Torah did not stress "Prayer Reading." The children stood beside their fathers and mothers in the Shul on Sabbath for prayer. The Talmud Torah had only to teach them the rudiments of reading. The Talmud Torah was not overly concerned with "preparing" for Bar Mitzvah. By the time a boy reached his thirteenth birthday he already knew not only all of the prayers but also the cantillations of the Torah and the Haftarah. The teacher merely refreshed his memory and rehearsed the particular Sidrah and the Haftarah of his Bar Mitzvah day. The observance of Bar Mitzvah was not the "production" that it is today. Bar Mitzvah was never heard of in traditional Jewish homes.

But Reb Lasker and his associates stressed the study of Humosh, the Five Books of Moses, and the commentary of Rashi. The Humosh in the original, not tailor-made for children, was the text-book used in the Talmud Torah. The older children studied the Prophets and Talmud, also in the original. They used the translation method. A passage of the Hebrew would be read and then translated into Yiddish. Thus the children learned Hebrew, the Holy Tongue, and Yiddish, the mother Tongue of the home. One complemented the other.

The Shulhan Arukh, the Set Table, was studied so the children might know the customs and traditions of the Jewish people. This book, composed in the fifteenth century by Reb Yoseph Karu, in

1. *The Midrash on Psalms*, Yale University Press, 1958.

Safed, Israel, was a household volume in most of the homes in the North End in an abridged form, called Kitazur Shulhan Arukh. The Shulhan Arukh, too, was translated into Yiddish.

Jewish history *per se* was not in the curriculum of the Talmud Torah. The Biblical period was well known to the children from the study of the Bible. The period after the destruction of the Temple was told to them, in very attractive ways, as the festivals of Hanukkah and Purim, the Fifteenth Day of Shvat (Tu BiShvat), *the Ninth Day of Ab* (Tishah Be'Ab), and all of the minor holidays and fast days came around. Reb Lasker had a wealth of stories of martyrs and biographies of Great Men in Israel from the earliest days to the present. He told the children of the heartbreaking tales of pogroms and immigrations, and comforted them with the hopes of a Zion rebuilt, he himself being a Misrahi Zionist. He imbued the children with the idealism and the romanticism of Zion, while at the same time imparting to them the richness of Jewish learning and the beauty of living a Jewish life.

Israel and Stella Kapstein both agreed that Reb Lasker had a most modern approach to learning. Pupils were not promoted simply by age. Rather their promotion was dependent upon their ability, but most of all on their willingness to learn. A pupil who showed a desire to learn was the delight of Reb Lasker, and he encouraged such a pupil with all the means at his disposal.

Every lesson, according to the Kapsteins, was an experience, a challenge. Reb Lasker in his Sabbath afternoon sessions would employ such legitimate devices as suspense. He never, for instance, finished a story. Just at the right moment he would tell the pupils that he would finish it the next week. There was always a tomorrow, always a next week. The alert pupil would not miss the message. He would come again and again.

Let us remember that the Sabbath afternoon sessions were in addition to the five-day week of the Talmud Torah. The pupils came voluntarily, and they came out of interest.

To understand the ideals and philosophy of Hyman B. Lasker, let us examine samples of his writings which are preserved by his son, Rabbi Meir Lasker. Reb Lasker left a notebook filled with essays,

songs, and hymns. Written by hand, they unfortunately are not of a quality suitable for reproduction. We shall translate two of them from the original Yiddish. They will suffice to show the world of ideas and thoughts in which Reb Lasker was involved and which he tried to impart to his pupils.

There are essays on all the Jewish Holidays. There are dissertations on the meaning of the Ten Commandments, taking up each Commandment separately and pointing up its significance for us today. There are articles on the Foundations of our Faith, and Principles of the Jewish Religion. There are addresses which Reb Lasker delivered before the men and women of Bnai Zion on the importance of teaching children the faith of their fathers. And there are urgings to strengthen the Talmud Torah, which he considered the foundation stone of Jewishness.

The following are translations of two of his Yiddish essays:

FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR FAITH

There were times when people believed in the power of the Heavenly Bodies and the Forces of Nature to bring them Good and Evil, Life and Death. Fire and Water and Animals were all believed to be gods. People believed in many gods and worshipped them. They carved idols of stone and wood, and served them. They even sacrificed their children to these gods. In this way they hoped to appease the gods.

But the Jewish people were different. From the earliest days of our appearance as a nation we proclaimed to the world our credo: God is One. God is invisible. He has no image. He is the First and the Last. He created Heaven and Earth and all that is on them. He gives life to all His Creatures and He rules the world with Justice. It is He who governs the Forces of Nature, and the Heavenly Bodies do His bidding. He had no helper in the creation of the world. He has no partner to his creation, and in His hands are the destinies of all the world.

The first to proclaim the Unity of God was our Father Abraham. Wherever he went he called in the Name of the Lord. Whomsoever he met he taught the belief in One God, the Ruler of the World. This belief was later fortified in the First Commandment: I am the Lord Your God. The Second Commandment further stressed it: Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that

is in the earth below, or that is in the waters under the earth. Moses our Teacher taught us to say: Shma Yisroel, O Israel, the Lord our God, He is God.

This belief in One God is the Foundation of our Faith. To this belief we owe the mystery of our existence through the long years of our dispersion. This flag we carry to the peoples of the earth. We teach them that God is the Father of all men. We are all His children.

* * *

I AM A JEW

When someone asks you: "Who are you, and what is your faith?" answer him: "I am a Jew. I am known by the name of Ivri Yehudi, Son of Israel, and I believe in the God who created the Heaven and the Earth. I also believe in the Torah and its teachings. This is my Religion. I am a man who believes in One God, the Creator."

Who is ashamed of a title like this? Who is ashamed to say "I am a Jew?" He who is ashamed of his Jewishness shows that he does not understand the true meaning of the words: I am a Jew, an Ivri, a Son of Israel.

Three main themes are woven into the essays of Reb Lasker. They were his fervent beliefs. They were the lights that illuminated his path in life. And they were the credos which he wanted to implant in the consciousness of his pupils:

1. God is One. He is the Father of all mankind. The Brotherhood of Men is implicit in the belief in One God.
2. The Torah is the source of all knowledge. It is the greatest book the Jews gave to the world. We must hand this book down to our children and to the world. Torah is life. Study of Torah is life. Study of Torah is the greatest joy in life. It is the Light of the World.
3. The mystery of the survival of the Jewish people in exile lies in their holding fast to the teachings of their fathers, to the ethics and the morals of the Wise Men in Israel. We must see to it that these teachings are not forgotten and are not neglected by the coming generations.

These themes are stated again and again in the essays of Reb Lasker. He returns again and again to these themes in all of his written essays, songs, and hymns.

II. MEMOIR

by RABBI MEIR LASKER*

It must be apparent that it is extremely difficult for a son to appraise and evaluate the life and work of his father. For me this is particularly difficult, for as a youngster I not only lived in the shadow of my father, but I worshipped him and idolized him as few sons do. As he was tall (about five feet, ten inches) and powerfully built, I admired his strength, his ability to outrun me. Spiritually he was in my eyes the "perfect man."

My earliest recollections begin naturally at home. Each morning at 6 A.M. he would appear at my bedside, shake my shoulder and cry out: "Kum Otzel", come on, lazy one, time to get up!

Quickly I washed my hands "negel wasser", recited the appropriate blessings, and dressed. About 6:15 A.M. we sat down to study. Usually we would cover the Sedra of the week with Rashi, and then would come a lesson in Hebrew grammar. Hebrew grammar was my father's forte. Again and time again I was assigned verbs to conjugate, and every once so often as we read, he would stop and ask, "What is the root of this verb? How would you use it in the Piel, Hophal or Hith-pael?"

It was this very close association with my father each morning that probably developed that extraordinary love and respect for him. And when he pinched my cheek and with a smile said "gut gesogt" I was the happiest of children. And so in the process of time we covered all of the Tanach, ain Yaacob, a few portions of the Talmud, and many delightful stories in the Hebrew literature.

I particularly recall the writings of Abraham Mapu: "Ahabat Zion", "Ayit Tzovua" and "Ashmot Shomron." Then came a few novels of Mendele Mocher Seforim, and of course the poetry of Haim Nachman Bialik, much of which I memorized. After an hour of study, both of us would put on "talit and tefilin" and recite the morning prayers. Sometimes, when time was pressing, I skipped portions, only to hear the remark "epes a bisel zu gich heint!" Breakfast followed and then off to secular school.

*Rabbi of Temple Judea, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Every Sabbath afternoon, about 5 P.M. came the period of "far heren." The homework assigned, the Hebrew essays I was asked to write, the memorization of the poetic portions of the Bible were then checked.

At the age of nine, I became a "Bahelpher." In the basement of the Orms Street Synagogue were five rooms. One was for everyday services, a sort of chapel. A large table was at one end, where after services particularly between "Mincha and Maariv" there was a group called "Hevra Tehilim", and after Maariv, Rabbi Israel Rubinstein or Cantor Meyer E. Smith, and on occasion the Mohel Orliansky would conduct a group in Talmud.

In the back was another large room for assemblies and then on the side were three classrooms, one fairly large that ran off the assembly room and the other two smaller ones. In the room assigned as a chapel, the religious school committee would sit each Sunday morning and collect the dues from the children, each of whom had to pay 25 cents each Sunday. (I believe Mr. Samuel Rosen, the candy man of North Main Street, was one of this committee and also a Mr. Jersky, who was the tough man.) If two weeks elapsed without payment the child was sent home. Yet there were a number of charity cases.

In the largest of classrooms, father taught the older children. The text was the "Humash" with Rashi, translated into Yiddish. There were also courses in Yiddish and essays to be written by the children in Yiddish. I seem to recall that one of the Hebrew texts was by Scharfstein.

Numbers meant little in a tutorial class. Father often had from 40 - 50 children in his class. Some came from 4-6 P.M., others from 6-8 P.M., five days a week. Since some children were slower than others, the class was divided into two sections; the slow ones were turned over to me for tutorial purposes. Since the room was not separated by any dividers, merely by a narrow center aisle, it was not uncommon to hear two voices reciting, one in my father's class, the other in mine. When I was bold enough to suggest that we use the adjoining room for the class which I tutored, it was considered a radical step. It had to be passed on by the School committee and the Budget committee, for it would require the use of more lights.

But after several weeks, this request was granted. I had a room of my own.

As the school continued to grow in prestige and numbers, I was finally given the intermediate grade. I was then all of twelve years of age. I was now a full-fledged teacher, without salary. This was the group who had already learned to read Hebrew, but were still slow. It was my task to increase the tempo of their reading. I recall how I invented games — three or four children would read the same portion from the prayerbook; we counted the mistakes, we timed the reading, and the best received the privilege of standing before the class and checking the others.

Many in this class were also approaching Bar Mitzvah, and it was my responsibility to see that they knew the blessings by rote, and that they made no mistakes in the Haftorah. Coaching of the Yiddish Bar Mitzvah speeches, which were written by my father and given to them to memorize (a few exceptional children delivered speeches in Hebrew), I was not considered competent enough to handle. So my father helped them dramatize these talks, and many were highly dramatic.

An older sister of mine (Rose) became the teacher for a time in the younger grades. Her discipline was poor, and I at twelve frequently came in to quiet her class. We finally arrived at a secret compact, for there were complaints about the noise in her class. She would send to me her disciplinary students; I in turn would send the "impossible ones" to my father. I recall that when Meyer Gereboff took over the lower classes, he used the same stratagem. He would send them on to me, and I in turn to my father.

There was something magnetic in the personality of my father as a teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian. I often heard the children say, "He has an eagle's eye; he can spot anything anywhere." At the Saturday afternoon assemblies, when several hundred children gathered voluntarily to listen to his discourse, it was amazing to realize the deep interest. At first we would cover sections of the "Pirke Ovot", the Ethics of the Fathers. It could have been dull, but it was here that we received some smattering of history and ethics. My father would build up the background of the Rabbis who were mentioned, of the time they lived and the political conditions, and then empha-

size the moral of their teaching. But for all of us this was merely the entrée; we were waiting for the cake. And the cake dealt with the wonderful stories he told from the Midrash and particularly from the volume "Zichronoth L'Bait Dovid." To this day, I recall those wonderful moments.

It was the custom in those days for movies to run serials — "to be continued next week." Father used the same technique. He would never complete the session with a complete story; it was always to be continued "next week", and eagerly we waited for that next week. And when he spoke to these children there was a hush, a quietness that was amazing. We were all spell-bound. Strict he was, but the children not only respected him, but loved him.

The technique of instruction was without question old-fashioned. "Iberzetz." Each word was translated into Yiddish. But it served the purpose. The beginners' class was taught the Alef Beth and how to put the letters together. As they learned to read, the tempo of the reading was increased. Day after day the child read the Prayerbook, and the faster he could read the more he was advanced. A test of his ability was given each month, when some new page was opened and the student was required to sight-read. Through this technique of repetition the child often learned the prayers through memory.

In the older children's class Humash and the Prophets were taught and translated into Yiddish. Since most of the children came from East European families, where Yiddish was the common tongue at home, this created little difficulty. In these classes a complete passage was read in the Hebrew, and then one paused to explain the passage. Frequently the comments of Rashi were added.

Here too examinations were given. The religious school committee consisting of Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein, Lazarus Lipschitz, and a few others would usually arrive at Hol Hamoed Pesach for these tests. Some children read from the text and translated and some from Rashi. Then there would be brief speeches by the children in Yiddish or in Hebrew (usually prepared by my father and memorized by the children).

At the various festivals, the discipline relaxed. I recall playing with dreidlach and nuts on Hanukkah, as well as other games. At Hamisha

Osor B'Shvat, the Women's Auxiliary handed out "Bokser"—St. John's bread and figs. And at Lag B'Omer the significance of the festival was explained as the New Year of the trees, and a collection was made for trees in Israel. Lag B'Omer always brought a story of Rabbi Akibah Bar Cochba, the heroism of the soldiers, and the use of the bow and arrow.

In those days, parents knew nothing about camp or summer places. During vacation time the school continued in the morning from 9 to 1 P.M. Only the rich took a two-week vacation. The thought of a vacation for teacher or principal was a thing unheard of. When I was about 14 years of age, I came one day to my father and proclaimed: "I want to be paid for teaching and I want a vacation of a week." I recall that my father looked upon me as "meshugah", a radical. The payment of a salary he understood, and eventually I received the munificent sum of \$5.00 a week for 4 hours a day of teaching! But a vacation — what would I do with it? However, I fought for it, and at long last each teacher and even my father learned to take a vacation.

By this time a group of about nine boys had advanced far beyond the Heder's work. We were ready for special instruction in Talmud. Rev. Orliansky, the Mohel, volunteered his services and taught us Baba Metzia and parts of Baba Kama. Amongst this group was Paul Chernov, Israel Kapstein, Orliansky's son and a few others, whose names escape me.

The school had grown, the classes were overcrowded. A new building was required. For over a year the subject was discussed. Time and again, Rabbi Rubinstein brought up the subject of the importance of "Hinuch." At various Board Meetings of the Congregation, the matter was fought out and always the cry "we have no funds."

I seem to recall that the Ladies' Auxiliary entered into the fray. At long last, with some money given by them, by the Hevra Kaddisha, and by the Congregation, plus a drive for funds, enough was gathered to buy the lot next door and erect a small school building. This was real modernity. There were separate classrooms, chairs and desks for the children, and windows where light could stream in. What a

celebration it was when the building was dedicated, and what a number of speeches, in English, Yiddish, Hebrew!

The cost of living was rising. My father, instigated by the younger teachers in other schools and particularly in Boston and New York, asked for a modest increase in salary. There were now some 500-600 children in the school. The reputation of the school had grown, and all through the city it was known that "father was the best teacher." But the Board refused a salary increase.

A new school had been opened in South Providence, in the Willard Avenue Shul. Father was invited to head that school, and so he and the family changed positions. For two years he was at the head of that school, but he was not happy. First, was the distance he had to travel, secondly the "Baalebatim" were "Am Aratzim" and lastly roots were in Orms Street Synagogue.

With his departure from Orms Street the school started on the downgrade. Several families left and joined the Howell Street Synagogue; others took their children out and had private teachers. A young Bostonian, who was now studying at Brown University and had a rich Hebrew background, attempted to introduce the Ivrit-B'Ivrit System. To the Orthodox members of the Congregation this was heresy. And since the young man was "Frei", not religious, did not attend the synagogue, and rode on the Shabbat, his attempts were doomed to failure.

I recall an interesting meeting at which a small group of so-called "Hebrew speakers" discussed the matter of Hebrew. When did Hebrew cease to be the language of the people? Could Hebrew be revived as a spoken language? My father wrote a paper on this matter. At the end of two years a committee from Orms Street Synagogue visited father and invited him back as principal of the school at an increased salary. I believe he then received the munificent sum of \$45.00 per week.

It is interesting to note that this same man who could charm children and hold them spellbound was petrified when he addressed adults. At some of the festivals he was asked to speak and he was so frightened that he read each word. But he wrote playlets for the children and these were at that time dramatic and highly emotional.

I recall a Hanukkah playlet in Yiddish. It depicted the dramatic scene of the Greek soldiers stationed at the erected altar in the little town of Modin. The traitorous Jew, with knife raised, was about to sacrifice the pig and eat of its flesh. Suddenly Mattathias, dressed in a long gown (over which he stumbled) and a white swaying beard (which later came loose much to the amusement of all), suddenly leaped forward, grasped the knife from the hands of the traitor, plunged it into his back, with the cry "Shtarb Du Nedertrectiker Mensch." To us and to the audience of parents this was an electrifying moment.

It is true that history as such was not part of the curriculum, but each holiday was introduced by a lecture on the historical background and the important figures of that particular holiday. In this manner we learned many facets of history, although we never had a sequential picture of Jewish history.

Father was a dedicated American. Time and again he would in his talks describe life in Russia, the fear, the oppression, the difficulty of living as a Jew, and contrast it with the freedom of American life. Slowly, unwittingly these remarks made us feel proud of this country. At the same time being a "Mizrachi Zionist", he constantly emphasized Jewish hopes for a return to a homeland. Although he was no virtuoso, he had a pleasant voice and would lead us in singing "Bimkom Shom Arozm", "Tzion Tamati", "Zion Hemdoti"; and every child had to know the "Hatikvah."

One of my tenderest recollections of my father was his liberal attitude toward youth. Our group of nine were already in the second year of high school. It was the era when evolution was being discussed; when young people became skeptics, ready to reject the Bible in its entirety. We questioned the creation story; we questioned the mosaic origin of the Bible; and ridiculed many of the miracles. Father often came in when we radicals were arguing and sat and listened and smiled. Then he would say: "Perhaps you are right — you are not the first to question." And he would pull out a Talmud and indicate that its authors too questioned whether man wrote the entire Torah; or he would mention some passages from the sages of the Middle Ages, who questioned statements. And often he would say to us: "Judaism believes in study, in questioning; learn, but never

be 'Am Aratzim' ignoramuses, for that is a greater sin than skepticism."

My father was indeed a man beloved and respected by all. At his death, he was brought into the Synagogue at Orms Street. The synagogue was filled to capacity, a large group was outside. Several Rabbis eulogized him and his work. But I recall that what made the greatest impression upon me was the sight of the many young lawyers, doctors, and businessmen who had been his pupils sitting quietly in the synagogue — and the hundreds of children that followed his bier.

I've often looked at the Talmud he left me, his comments and notes on the side. I've shown them to my son, who never knew his grandfather, and I have always felt, "He is not dead — he has just gone away."

EDITOR'S NOTE

Haim Dov Lasker was anglicized to Hyman Bernard Lasker. Dov is Hebrew for "bear", consequently the B. for his middle name. He was known by some intimates as Charles, an approximation of Haim. He was the son of Jehuda S. and Bessie Lasker.

During his 33 years in Providence he lived at various times at 46 Staniford Street, 537 North Main Street, 12 Mallett Street, and 107 Fourth Street. He was listed as Teacher and Hebrew Teacher.

He died on October 18, 1938. According to his death return, he was 70 years old. According to an obituary in *The Providence Journal* of October 19, he was aged 74. His death followed a retirement of four years. He was survived by his wife Sophia, five daughters, and four sons, one of whom is Rabbi Meir Lasker.

For more on the Congregation Sons of Zion, see *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 4: 239, (No. 4, November, 1965).

GLOSSARY

Words and phrases are listed approximately in the order in which they appear in the text. Transliterations from the Hebrew (H) and Yiddish (Y) vary greatly. Some are given in several forms. (Ed.)

Reb (H): Title of respect.

Bnai Zion (H): Sons of Zion.

Shul (Y): Synagogue.

Chased Shel Amess (H): Corporate name of the Jewish Burial Society. Also rendered *Hesed Shel Emes* and *Chesed Shel Emeth*. Translation: "Deeds of Mercy in Truth."

Talmud Torah (H): Study of the Torah, i.e. a school for that purpose. The Torah is the five books of Moses.

Hevrah (or *Chevrah*) *Shas* (H): Society for the study of the Talmud. The Talmud consists of three major divisions: 1. The Mishnah, the code of Oral Laws; 2. The Gemara, the commentary and elaboration of the Mishnah text; and 3. The Midrash, the sermonic exposition and popular interpretation of the Bible. The contents of the Mishnah are popularly called *Shas*, the Hebrew acronym for *Shishah Sedarim* (literally the "Six Orders"), indicating its six divisions.

Bar Mitzvah (H): Ceremony of initiation into manhood.

Bas Mitzvah (H): Analogous ceremony for girls.

Haftarah (*Haftorah*) (H): Portion from the prophetic writings prescribed as supplementary reading to the Torah.

Sidrah (*Sedra*) (H): Weekly portion of the Pentateuch.

Humosh (*Humash* or *Chumas*) (H): The Pentateuch.

Rashi (H): Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (1040-1105 C.E.), interpreter of the Pentateuch. Name is acronym for Rabbi Shelomoh Yitzhaki, the Hebrew form of his name.

Shulhan Arukh (H): The Set Tables, a collection of laws governing the life of Jews from birth to death.

Kitazur Shulhan Arukh (H): Abridged Set Table.

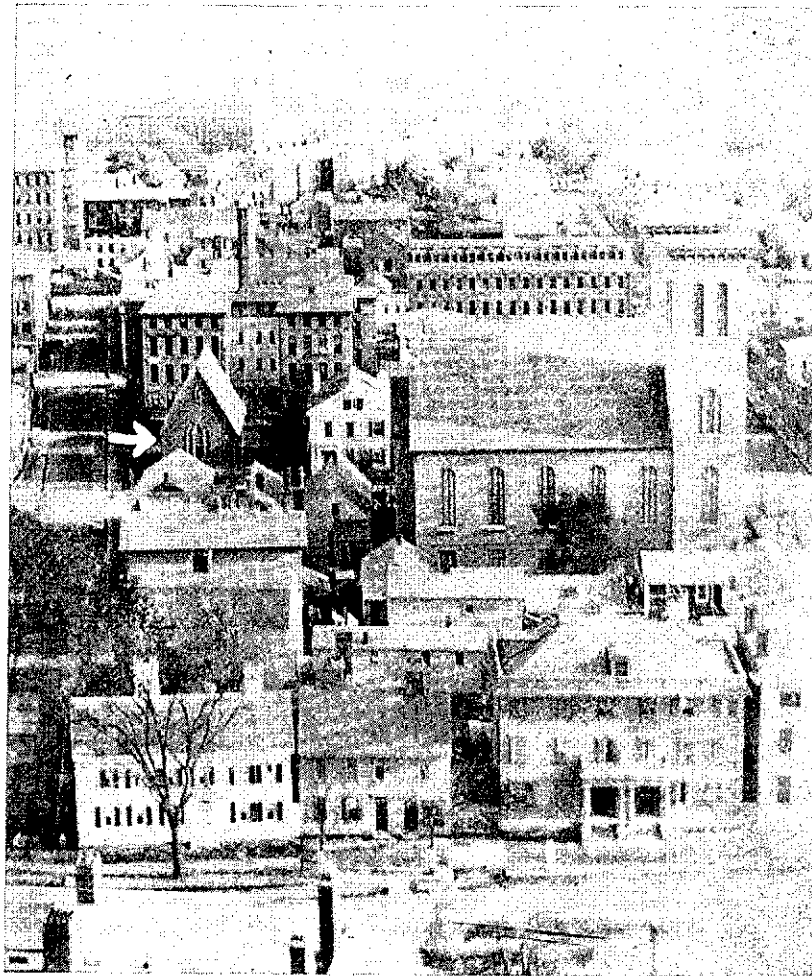
Hanukkah (H): Festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple.

Purim (H): Festival commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from Persia.

Tu Bi Shvat (H): Fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shvat (or Shebat). Tree planting festival.

- Tishah Be'Ab* (H) : Ninth day of the Hebrew month of Ab (or Av). Day of mourning.
- Misrahi* (*Misrachi*) *Zionist* (H) : Religious Zionist.
- Ivri* (H) : Hebrew.
- Yehudi* (H) : Also Hebrew.
- Kum Otzel* (Y) : Come, lazy one.
- Negel wasser* (Y) : Finger nail water, referring to the washing of the finger nails, a morning ritual.
- Sedra* (*Sidrah*) (H) : Weekly portion of the Pentateuch.
- Piel*, *Hophal*, or *Hithpael* (H) : Hebrew verb forms.
- Gut gesogt* (Y) : Well said.
- Tanach* (H) : Scriptures.
- Ain Yaacob* (H) : Daily assignment for study.
- Ahabat Zion* (H) : Love of Zion.
- Ayit Tzovua* (H) : Sanctimonious hypocrite (literally a bird of prey that changes its color).
- Ashmot Shomron* (H) : The sin of Shomron.
- Talit and Tefilin* (H) : Prayer shawl and phylacteries.
- Epes a bisel zu gich heint* (Y) : A little too fast today.
- Far heren* (Y) : The audition.
- Bahelpher* (Y) : Assistant.
- Mincha and Maariv* (H) : Afternoon and Evening prayers.
- Hevra Tehilim* (H) : Psalm reading group.
- Mohel* (H) : Ritual Circumcizer.
- Pirke Ovot* (H) : Sayings of the Fathers.
- Zichronoth L'Bait Dovid* (H) : Chronicles of the House of David.
- Ibersetz* (Y) : Translate.
- Alef Beth* (H) : Alphabet.
- Hol Hamoed Pesach* (H) : Half-holiday.
- Dreidlach* (Y) : Small tops used in game resembling put-and-take.
- Hamisha Osor B'Shvat* (H) : Fifteenth day of Hebrew month of Shvat. New Year Day for Trees, used for dating their age.
- Bokser* (Y) : St. John's bread.
- Lag B'Omer* (H) : Thirty-third day after the second day of Passover. End of period of semi-mourning.
- Meshugah* (H) : Insane.
- Heder* (H) : Elementary religious school.

Baba Metzia (H) }
Baba Kama (H) } : Tractates of the Talmud.
Hinuch (H) : Education.
Hevra Kaddisha (H) : Burial Society.
Baalebatim (H) : Substantial citizens.
Am Aratzim (H) : Ignorant.
Ivrit — B'Ivrit (H) : Hebrew taught in Hebrew.
Frei (Y) : Liberal.
Shabbat (H) : Sabbath (Saturday).
Shtarb du nedertrectiker mensch (Y) : Die, you scoundrel.
Bimkom Shom Arozim (H) : Where the cypress trees grow.
Tzion Tamati (H) : Zion, Oh Zion!
Zion Hemdoti (H) : Zion, My Heart's Desire!
Hatikvah (H) : Jewish National Anthem.



HOME OF CONGREGATION OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL
AND DAVID, 1877-1883

The small church indicated by the white arrow, located on Pine Street corner of Page Street in Providence, was occupied by the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (now also Temple Beth-El) from 1877 to 1883. A rental not to exceed three hundred dollars was authorized. The rental actually paid appears to have been \$225. The Congregation had recently been organized by the union of the Congregation Sons of David and the Congregation Sons of Israel. In the year 1877 it adhered to the Moderate Reform movement. Funds were appropriated for the necessary alterations and the purchase of an organ. (See *R. I. Jewish Historical Notes* 4:208-222, May, 1962) The property during this period was owned by the A. and W. Sprague Manufacturing Company (Land parcel No. 6316). The building was 30 by 40 feet in dimensions. The Rabbis during the period of occupancy were Abraham N. Coleman, Jacob Voorsanger, and Marx Moses. Prior to 1887 the two congregations had met in various halls in the downtown area.

The Chapel was built about 1842 by the New Church or the New Jerusalem Temple (Swedenborgian), which occupied it until about 1853. About 1875 it had been occupied by St. Paul's Evangelical (German) Lutheran Church. The larger church to the right was the Richmond Street Congregational Church.

The photograph was taken by Manchester Brothers (photographers) on October 20, 1860. It was brought to our attention by Mrs. James Murphy and is published with the permission of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

WE LOOK BACK*

By RABBI WILLIAM G. BRAUDE

In the last seventy-seven years—a number corresponding to the numerical value of *Oz*, the Hebrew for “strength”—our Congregation built three structures: one on Friendship and Foster Streets in 1890, one on Broad Street at Glenham in 1910, and one on Orchard and Butler Avenues in 1954. Tonight by using Congregational minutes I will attempt to set forth in both social and religious terms the meaning of these three Congregational ventures in building. I shall begin with a minute recorded on June 19, 5647-1887. On that day President Alexander Strauss reported to the Congregation “the purchase of an estate on Friendship Street corner of Foster Street . . . for the future building of a Synagogue.” On March 30, 5650-1890 (Incidentally those minutes almost invariably give the year in the Hebrew as well as in the secular calendar) a general meeting of the Congregation had to be held in order to remove an extraordinary obstacle which prevented or delayed the Congregation’s intent to build its new Synagogue. Here is how President Alexander Strauss put the matter: “The building committee could [not] get the money on the mortgage on the new Synagogue owing to the records of incorporation of this Congregation being lost, and he therefore would like the Congregation to take legal steps to enable the building committee to procure said money on mortgage. Motion passed that the building committee get every member of this Congregation to sign their names to the document made out by their (presumably the Congregation’s) lawyer to overcome the technical point of law, and that the Congregation take steps as soon as possible to apply to the State *Leligator* (That’s what the minute seems to say, but I suppose the word intended is ‘Legislature’) for a new charter.”

Two months later on June 1, 1890, the new charter was read and accepted by “twenty-nine members voting;” and the building committee was authorized to purchase the site on Friendship and Foster Streets for the sum of \$889.

Three months later on August 24, 1890, the budget for the ensuing

*Thirteenth Anniversary (*Bar Mitzvah*) Celebration of the completion of the Orchard Avenue edifice of Temple Beth-El (Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David), Providence, Rhode Island, Friday, May 5, 1967.

year was discussed. Some people apparently unhappy with Rabbi Morris Sessler sought to express their dissatisfaction by cutting his salary to \$1000 per year. They did not prevail. The budget adopted was as follows:

Salary of Rabbi	\$1500
Organist	250
Choir	250
Janitor	150
Gas and Fuel	250
Interest on Mortgage	440

(The mortgage, I suppose, was on the Synagogue then being built, or it may have represented interest on money owed for the cemetery.)

Sundries	\$100
Water Tax and Insurance	35
Secretary's Salary	50
Total	\$3025.

The interest, it seems to me, took a considerable chunk out of the Congregation's income.

Two weeks later on September 7, the Congregation met again in part at least to satisfy the demands of the members unhappy with the Rabbi. A compromise concerning his salary was arrived at: Neither \$1500 nor \$1000 but \$1200 it was to be. The question of assessments to pay for the new building was gone into. Certain members who, at least according to reports I received in subsequent years, were not exactly at poverty's door protested that they could not afford such assessments. Terms were worked out with the protesters. Finally, the budget of expenses and the list of assessments "was accepted as a whole."

In November, 1890 a special meeting of the Congregation was held "at the request of the committee of arrangements for celebrating the dedication of the new Synagogue." The committee reported that "they visited a Mr. Narris or Harris of Boston and presented a bill of fare at two dollars per plate also a bill of fare from Gelb and Moss (?) at \$1.25 per plate." Both caterers were Kosher.

We now move on to the minutes of the early 1900's. At a meeting April 7, 1908, a letter was reported as having been sent by "Bnai

Brith Jacob of Savannah, Ga. asking for contribution toward erection of their new Temple. Sec'y instructed to answer same informing them that as we are about to build a new Temple of our own, it is impossible for us to give them any aid." At the same meeting the property committee was empowered to close the sale of our Temple [at Foster and Friendship] with the First Swedish [Baptist] Congregation at the [sum] offered by them \$14,750.

By September 20, 1908 the Swedish Baptist Congregation had taken possession of the Synagogue on Friendship and Foster and so it was voted that the "Hall at the corner of Weybosset and Eddy Street be hired at the rate of six hundred and fifty dollars payment (650.00) for one year with the privilege for longer time if necessary commencing November 1, 1908."

On November 4, 1908 "the President reports having made arrangements with the janitor of the Outlet building to have the elevator run on Friday evenings during services for 50 cents per evening."

On April 7, 1909 the purchase "of lots for our new Temple corner Broad and Glenham Sts." for \$10,300 was reported. There was not enough money to carry through the purchase. So on June 1, 1909 ten members lent the Congregation a sum of \$2500 to make up the deficiency "with the understanding that the amount is to be returned to each of these members at the earliest opportune time." Three of the people on that list were still alive when I came to Providence in 1932. Since these three did not complain I assume that in due time the debt was repaid.

On May 10, 1910 we have the following reported by S. Lederer, chairman of the building committee: "The architect brought in sealed bids for the erection of the new Temple from several contractors which were opened before the building committee . . . and after the lowest bids were selected the committee empowered the chairman of the building committee to award the contract for the building, steam heating, plumbing and lighting at his discretion (sic) limiting the amount to \$51,000."

On August 9, 1910 the Board of Trustees recommended to the Congregation "naming the new Temple Beth-El without changing the corporate name of the Congregation."

On Sunday, September 11, 1910 the cornerstone for the new structure was laid.

On December 7, 1910 we read the following: "Communication received from Mr. J. J. Rosenfeld in reference to establishing a perpetual care fund." I read this minute to you because the same John J. Rosenfeld through his bequest made it possible for the Congregation to take the first step to building the structure we now occupy.

On April 4, 1911 the Trustees recommended "to the Congregation that the price of the memorial windows in our new Temple shall be \$750 each . . . and that no one is eligible to the purchase of memorial windows who has not subscribed at least \$500 to the erection of Temple or purchase of a pew."

On June 6, 1911 the Finance Committee presented the Budget for 1911-1912:

Rabbi	\$2200
Choir	1000
Janitors	900
Interest on Mortgage and loan	1750
Total	\$7355.

At this same meeting the Congregation's social conscience found expression in voting five dollars for the Society for Suppression of Tuberculosis and fifteen dollars for Organized Charity.

At the Board's first meeting in the new Temple on June 18, 1911, it was voted that: "The records of our cemetery title be spread on the minutes of Congregation Book." Several members requested a reduction in assessments they were required to pay for the new building.

We come now to our Congregation's most recent venture in building. The cost of the land on Orchard Ave. was five times the cost of the site on Broad Street. The cost of erecting the building was some twenty-five times the cost of the building on Broad Street. The event is too recent for us to view matters in perspective. Still a few items recorded in the minutes may be noted. On April 12, 1954 Norman Fain the chairman of the Building Committee reported a request from the Museum of Modern Art of New York City that one of Ibram Lassaw's columns flanking the ark be loaned for exhibit

at the Biennale (the Biennial exhibition) in Venice. The cost of shipping and insurance was to be paid by the Rockefeller Institute. Never before in our history so far as I can discover has any artifact in a Synagogue we occupied aroused the interest of men in the field of art.

On May 10, 1954 the Board met for the first time in the new Temple. The minutes record concerns other than the cemetery and reduction in assessments which were the principal business of the first meeting of the Board in the Temple on Broad Street. There is talk of a "Retreat" for men, a project in fact later realized by a group of women. A bequest for a scholarship fund "for children whose parents cannot afford to send them to the religious school" is reported. The need for additional Torah Scrolls is noted. The business of the meeting engrossed the men and women so greatly that it lasted till midnight.

Before going on to a summary statement of the overall meaning of the three structures our Congregation has built in the last seventy-seven years, I wish to point to two empty chairs on the dais. The Committee on Arrangements planned to have these two chairs empty by way of tribute to John Jacob Rosenfeld and Alphonse Joseph Lederer who in large measure through their bequests made possible the building of the Beth-El whose Bar Mitzvah we are gathered to celebrate tonight.

Now to the overall meaning of the three Congregational ventures in building. The first structure was erected in 1890, the year 5650 in the Jewish calendar, a year which in Hebrew letters spells the word "*Toron*", You are to sing. The era was one of great optimism. Isaac M. Wise who in the 1890's spoke from the pulpit of our Congregation exuberantly voiced this spirit. "He was certain that all mankind was on the verge of accepting Reform Judaism. He was convinced that in America [within twenty-five years] the progress of culture, science, and art would . . . proselytize all people to Reform Judaism."¹ The year 1890 was indeed a year of *Toron*—in which the command was "You are to sing—sing of glory and triumph in the years ahead."

1. Walter Jacob: "I. M. Wise on Christianity" *Judaism* 15, 4, p. 449; and J. R. Marcus: "Isaac Mayer Wise and the College He Built", p. 9.

The year 1910 in which the Congregation was getting ready to move to Broad Street corresponds in the Jewish calendar to 5670 a number which in the Hebrew letters spells *Tora*, meaning "You are to remove the accumulated debris of the ages, you are to break the hold of the past." The era 1910-1980 was one of radical reform. It was an era which relied heavily on the capacity of man's reason to remake the world in his own image. In political terms the era of reason found expression in the Soviet revolution; in psychological terms the era of reason sought expression in Freud's analysis of man's inner being. Both revolutions were counterparts of the determination to rebuild man's religious life solely by the dictates of reason. Much of tradition, much of the past, and many of the sacred symbols of the present were characterized from the pulpit of Temple Beth-El on Broad Street by at least one Rabbi as "junk"; and with regard to "junk" the bid is *Tora*—"reject, remove, demolish"—slogans and mottoes of 1910, 5670 in the Jewish calendar.

Significantly our present structure was dedicated in 1954, a year which in the Jewish calendar corresponds to 5714, *Tasid*. The word *Tasid* means: "You are to build, to make whole." In reverence you are to approach all of Jewish tradition singling out from it to be sure, elements which inspire you, but not rejecting with disdain elements which do not. The very name Bar Mitzvah we have given to our celebration is no happenstance. *Mitzvah* means command—God's command which may supersede man's reason. And the word "bar" easily spelled "bear" may mean that as a Congregation we are less inclined to lean solely on man's reason and more inclined to bear, to shoulder the *mitzvos*, the commands of God; that as a Congregation we are less inclined to look upon intelligence and upon reason's behests as the whole of man, and more prone to regard man as a mysterious, subtle and wondrous being capable of responding supremely with *Hinenu*, "Here I am" in depth, only to *mitzvos*, only to commands from Him who is above.

Over a span of seventy-seven years, a number expressed in Hebrew by *Oz*, "strength", our Congregation built three structures. Each of the three represented a mood in religious life which I sought to capture in three Hebrew words: the first, the one on Friendship and Foster in the word *Toron*—You are to sing; the second on Broad at

Glenham in the word *Tora*—You are to remove; and the third, the one we occupy in the word *Tasid*—You are to build. Who knows, perhaps the three impulses—the capacity for joyous song, the will to remove underbrush, the determination to build again on ground thus cleared—who knows, perhaps all three impulses were needful to endow our Congregation with the *Oz*, the strength which under God is ours.

In a spirit of gratitude let us then as a Congregation rise to recite the *Shehechyanu* blessing.

Baw-rooch ah-taw Ah-doh-noy El-lo-hay-noo mel-ech hah-oh-lawm
sheh-he-cheh-yaw-noo v'kee-yee-maw-noo v'hig-ee-yaw-noo lah-z'mahn
hah-zeh.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hast kept us alive, firmed in us the faith of our fathers, and permitted us to celebrate this joyous day.

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

The thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday, June 4, 1967 at the John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence. The meeting was called to order by the President, Bernard Segal, at 8:20 P.M. and in introductory remarks, he pointed out the invaluableity of the Bibliography now gone to press and very soon to be distributed as Volume 4, Number 4 of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. He noted that other works are now in the process of being written.

Mrs. Seebert Goldowsky read the Annual Secretary's Report, and Mrs. Louis Sweet gave the Annual Treasurer's Report. Mr. Sweet, Finance Chairman, reported a deficit of \$290.00 in the budget for 1967-68; it was accepted as presented.

Mr. Melvin Zurier announced the initiation of an Essay Contest to be open to anyone on a subject of Rhode Island Jewish history. Notices will be sent to heads of the history departments of all the colleges and universities in the state, and all synagogues. Offering a prize of \$250.00, the Contest is for the purpose of stimulating interest in the Association and for acquiring new material for publication in the Association's *Notes*. The Essay Contest Committee was comprised of Mr. Zurier, chairman, and Dr. Goldowsky and Dr. Sidney Goldstein. Mr. Zurier made a motion that this contest be carried through and that a resolution to this effect be sent to Mr. David C. Adelman. It is to be called "The David C. Adelman Essay Prize."

The purposes of the Association are four-fold, stated Dr. Goldowsky, Editor of the *Notes*.: (1) It stimulates interest in local Jewish history. (2) It serves as a repository for material and in this connection, he urged people to give theirs to the Association lest it be lost completely. (3) It encourages research and (4) it publishes the *Notes*. Rabbi Braude suggested that a letter be sent to all congregations and organizations in the state asking them to publicize that people leave their materials on death to the Association. Further, Mr. Segal can write editorially about this in his column in the Jewish Herald.

The slate of officers for the year 1967-68 as read by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Mr. Zurier, was elected, and the officers

were installed by Rabbi Braude. They are President, Mr. Bernard Segal; Vice President, Mr. Jerome B. Spunt; Secretary, Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky; and Treasurer, Mrs. Louis I. Sweet. Mr. Segal introduced the members new to the Executive Committee for 1966-67. Mrs. Sweet read the names of the twenty-five new members of the Association.

The speaker of the evening, introduced by Rabbi Abraham Chill, was Dr. Eugene Markovitz, Rabbi of the Clifton Jewish Center of Clifton, New Jersey and Adjunct Professor at Seton Hall University, who spoke on "The Socio-economic Condition of the Jews on New York's East Side at the Turn of the Century." A coffee hour followed with Mesdames Goldowsky, Segal and Sweet serving as hostesses.

Respectfully submitted,

Gertrude N. Goldowsky
(Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky)
Secretary

NECROLOGY

GROSSMAN, BENJAMIN W., born March 17, 1882 in Buffalo, New York the son of Samuel and Hannah Grossman. Auctioneer and antique dealer. A founder and member of the original Board of Directors of Temple Emanu-El; a founder of the Jewish Community Center; active in Jewish Orphanage affairs and at one time on its Board of Directors. Died in Providence on August 16, 1967.

GROSSMAN, LEO, born June 14, 1888 in Pokratz, Hungary. Emigrated from Europe to Providence with his family at the age of 17 where he worked as a watchmaker's apprentice and in the jewelry business. In 1927 he founded the Hope Knitting Mills, which ten years later merged with Lebanon Mills, manufacturers of yarn and cloth.

One of the founders and a former president of Temple Beth-Israel; a member of the Board of Directors of the General Jewish Committee of Providence, and the Jewish Home for the Aged. In 1960 he participated in establishing a fund at Brown University for a visiting professorship in Judaic studies. Died in Providence on June 10, 1967.

SOPKIN, ALVIN A., born in Bayonne, New Jersey, March 17, 1901. He spent the early years of his life in Chicago until 1934, when he moved to the southern New England area. In that year the main plant of the Wentworth Manufacturing Company, a producer of women's dresses which had been founded by his father, was established in Fall River, Massachusetts. He was president of the company for many years, while a resident of Providence, and he continued to live in Rhode Island until the late 1950's, when the company's main plant was relocated to Lake City, South Carolina. At the time of his death he was Chairman of the Board of the Wentworth Company.

He was one of the founders and prime movers in the formation in 1945 of the General Jewish Committee of Providence. He served five years as campaign manager and was president from 1950 to 1955. He was a vice president for many years of The Miriam Hospital. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Home for the Aged, the Jewish Family and Children's Service, and the Roger Williams Lodge of B'nai B'rith. In 1952 he was named to the first Board of Fellows of Brandeis University.

His public service included membership on a committee appointed by Governor Dennis J. Roberts to revise the State Election Laws. Died December 11, 1967 at Palm Beach, Florida.

BACK COVER

HOW NEW PROVIDENCE CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE ON NIAGARA STREET WILL LOOK WHEN FINISHED

The New Hebrew Congregation of Which Rabbi B. Leon Hurwitz is the Spiritual Head Has Purchased the Building Formerly Known as the German Club at Niagara Street and Atlantic Avenue in Elmwood.—Harry Marshak, Architect, Has Completed Plans for Its Remodeling to Synagogue Uses, and the Work Will Start in a Short Time.—Bowling Alleys, Gymnasium, Class Rooms and Auditorium Will be Among the Features.—The Property Will be Dedicated to Its New Uses at a Banquet Tomorrow Evening.—*The Evening Bulletin, Providence, R. I., Saturday, November 25, 1921.*

(Published courtesy *The Evening Bulletin* and Harry Marshak, Architect)

