



ADATH ISRAEL NEWS

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50 Years...How It All Began

Recognizing that *The Heritage of Our Fathers is The Inheritance of Our Children*, Samuel Levin and Sol Phillips-Perlman organized a committee of eighteen men to establish a Conservative synagogue in the City of Trenton, especially to serve the growing Jewish community in the western part of the city. Working closely with the United Synagogue of America and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, this committee sent out a call for a meeting which was held at the Republican Club on November 15, 1920, and was attended by more than one hundred people. Dr. Raphael Melamed spoke on the Conservative Movement in Judaism, and the result was that fifty two people indicated an interest in forming a new Conservative Congregation.

effort to become established. During the three-year interim, the first fifty two interested people had grown to almost one hundred members. A name had to be selected and a Constitution was written. Fifteen Trustees were chosen in order to incorporate the congregation in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey. The Certificate of Incorporation is dated October 15, 1923, recognized now as the birthday of Adath Israel Congregation.

tional Bank of Trenton in the sum of \$50,000. Now Adath Israel was in existence with a building, a Rabbi, and a large debt.

A Finance Committee had been named to devise ways of raising much needed money. "The Social Event of The Trenton Jewry" was the first Ball held on November 17, 1926. This proved such a social and financial success that it was repeated for several years.

The highlight of the first year in the new building was the concert given by Cantor Joseph Rosenblatt, father of our Rabbi. This event added not only prestige but was a financial success as well. But more money was needed, and at a dinner in 1927, a bond issue was floated that raised \$11,700 in one evening. Throughout the years, most of these bonds were returned by the holders as voluntary contributions.

Rabbi Rosenblatt left our congregation in 1927 and Rabbi Leon Liebreich was elected as our spiritual leader and assumed the pulpit in the Fall of that year. Three years later in 1930, the great depression began. Our congregation suffered during this time. Debts accumulated, salaries were not paid, members were in arrears in their dues, but still the congregation weathered the storm. During the years of World War II, our faithful leaders were ever mindful of the duties of the congregation. All courtesies were extended to men in the Armed Forces stationed in the area. This included special provisions for men and their families to attend all Religious Services. The facilities



Dr. Gerald Green
Rabbi



Dr. S. Joshua Kohn
Rabbi Emeritus

Sol Phillips Perlman is the sole surviving member of the original committee, and has remained an active and devoted member of our Board of Trustees, and at one time, rose to the office of First Vice-President.

Although the first meeting was successful, the men found the path long and difficult. The only existing records for the intervening three years are a few receipted bills for meeting rooms, notices of three Friday evening Services, carbon copies of some correspondence and a few dunning letters for bills which were finally paid by a few individuals. Meetings were held wherever a meeting room could be found and a few Sabbath Services were held at the old Ahavath Israel Synagogue.

Through this difficult period, it was Rabbi Samuel M. Cohen, at that time Executive Director of the United Synagogue of America, who provided the help and inspiration that kept up the high hopes of this small group.

The minutes of the first organization meeting of Adath Israel Congregation on September 23, 1923, reveals a determined



Louis Lehman
President



Richard N. Smith
Hazzan

The first officers were elected by the Trustees two weeks after incorporation. On the same evening the committee was authorized to purchase a strip of land on "the southerly side of Bellevue Avenue distant one hundred feet from the southwesterly corner of Hermitage Avenue." The one hundred feet from the corner was acquired two years later in an exchange of a rear portion of land with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Not until 1958 was the remaining land of our synagogue facilities purchased from the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Construction of the first synagogue building was begun during the summer of 1925. Cornerstone ceremonies in October attracted a large audience. Participants in the ceremonies were such notables as Counsellor Alexander Budson, Rabbi Abraham Holtzberg, Mayor Donnely, The Reverend Samuel Steinmetz, Rabbi I. Bunin, Samuel Cohen and Dr. Solomon Grayzel. In order to raise funds, the privilege for participating in the rites were auctioned, a traditional method of fund-raising.

Dedication exercises of the building were combined with Installation ceremonies of Rabbi Samuel Rosenblatt and Cantor Asher Goldenberg in October, 1926. The dual celebration began with Friday evening Services and ended with a dinner on Sunday night. During the same month, the first mortgage was "delivered" to the First Na-



Leon Siskowitz
Ritual Committee
Chairman



Dr. Mark Eisenstein
Membership Committee
Chairman

of the building were also offered to the Trenton Defense Council for whatever purpose deemed wise by this Council. For several

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years a neighborhood honor roll appeared on our property listing all who served their country.

At the same time a concerted effort was made toward paying off the mortgage. This effort was rewarded with a Mortgage Burning Ceremony on January 23, 1944. Prompting this had been the realization that our building had become inadequate. The Congregation had been growing steadily, more families had moved into the area, and our school facilities were taxed to the utmost. School classrooms were located in the basement of the building and they were divided by folding doors, and in addition, it was becoming most difficult to provide all our members with seats for the High Holy Days. With the war almost at an end in April, 1945, preparations for a larger edifice were begun. Sketches of a proposed addition were submitted and discussion was started. At this time, Dr. Liebreich announced that he had accepted a teaching post at Gratz College as of September of that year.

Adath turned once more to the Seminary and Rabbi S. Joshua Kohn was elected as Rabbi as of January 1, 1946. The annual meeting that year was in the form of a farewell dinner to the Liebreich's who had remained until Rabbi Kohn was released from the U.S. Maritime Service.

The first plans had called for remodeling of the building. Then discussion of a new building took place. The Board of Trustees approached the final step with fear and trepidation. Comments appearing in the minutes were "Now is not the time to build," "How much would it cost to remodel what we have?" "The plans submitted are not satisfactory," "We cannot have a drive for funds without interfering with other community drives." And so it continued for more than a year. It was probably a famous speech made by Rabbi Kohn to the Board during the summer of 1947 that formented action. A "Town Hall" meeting of the congregation left no doubt that the popular attitudes pointed toward the new building. By the spring of 1948 the Building Committee was instructed to proceed. Pledges were solicited for the Building Fund, requests were made for voluntary increases in dues, a new large mortgage was placed, and on May 7, 1950, the congregation witnessed ground-breaking ceremonies.

The new building had already been in use for nearly a year when it was formally dedicated on January 6, 1952. Dedication had been delayed in order to complete final decorating touches. These ceremonies began on Friday and ended with a dinner on Sunday. A guest Cantor, Reverend Isaac Wall sang on the Sabbath. USYers held their own celebration on Saturday night. The new auditorium was filled to capacity on Sunday evening. The program included an original cantata, "A Dream Come True," presented by the Sisterhood Choral Group. Rabbis Rosenblatt, Liebreich and Kohn were the main speakers.

The new educational building brought

a large increase in membership. This necessitated a larger school staff. It was also necessary to engage a permanent office staff.

Adath Israel has never hesitated in its service to the community and to "K'lal Israel." The Jewish Community Center was permitted the use of our facilities for their summer camp program. When the Golden Age Club needed a meeting place, our auditorium was available at no charge. No time was lost in adding an appeal to our members to purchase Israel Bonds during Yom Kippur and to this day, Adath Israel members buy more State of Israel Bonds during the High Holy days than any other congregation in the area.

In 1961, Rabbi Paul Teicher joined our congregation as Associate Rabbi and Educational Director, and under his aegis, our Religious School and youth activities flourished. Rabbi Teicher left in 1966 to accept a pulpit of his own, and in 1968, Rabbi S. Joshua Kohn announced his retirement. A gala farewell dinner was tendered to Rabbi and Mrs. Kohn in the summer of that year on the eve of their departure for Israel. The Lewish Auditorium was filled to capacity that evening with the largest dinner gathering of the Jewish Community of Trenton in history.

Once again Adath Israel turned to the Seminary for a spiritual leader, and Rabbi Gerald Green was elected Rabbi. He was introduced to the congregation at the farewell dinner for the Kohn's, and assumed his duties on September 1st.

Our first President, Solomon Urken, was elected in 1923 and served until his death in 1938. He was followed by Harry Levy who led our congregation during the war years. Bernard Alexander took up the reins of the presidency following the war and it was during his regime that our new building was erected. He was followed by Hyman B. Garb during whose term the mortgage on the new building was paid off. Hyman Urken, following in his father's footsteps became our fifth president, Benjamin H. Garb, our sixth president and Isadore Miller was elected our seventh president. Irving H. Lewis, Harry S. Ginsberg, Irving Schwartzman and Louis Lehman, our current president, followed. All of these men have carried on the tradition of our first president to make Adath Israel an outstanding Conservative Congregation, known and respected not only locally, but nationally with close ties to the United Synagogue of America and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

(We extend our thanks and appreciation to Mrs. Louis Lehman who compiled most of this brief history of our congregation.)

Religious Services

Many visitors at our Sabbath Services have told us that our Services are the most beautiful and interesting Services they have attended anywhere. Adath Israel has always been known for its fine Cantors and excellent Rabbis and for the participation of the congregation in singing our lovely melodies which are generally traditional, but some of which were written especially for our Congregation and can be heard nowhere else. We have been blessed with an excellent choir composed of our members which sings on the High Holy Days and occasionally throughout the year. Our Bar and Bat Mitzvah children are well trained, and in addition to being called to the Torah and reading their Haftorah, participate in other portions of the Service and usually lead the Musaf Service on Saturday mornings. During the past few months our Ritual Committee, with the assistance of our Rabbi, has introduced innovations in the Friday evening Services. Rabbi Green has many times replaced his sermon with a dialogue between the congregation and the Rabbi from the pulpit, and in line with our theme "Experiments in Dynamic Judaism for the 70's" we even held a Friday evening Service-in-the-Round in the Lewis Auditorium.

Adath Israel is also known for its daily Minyan, which is the only reliable Minyan in the city. These services take place at 7:00 o'clock every morning and at sunset every evening and provide an opportunity for members who are in mourning or are observing Yahrzeit to recite the Kaddish. The Minyan meets in the Rosenthal Chapel and it is a moving experience to don the Tallis and Tephillin in the morning or to daven Mincha and Maariv in the evening.

Facilities

Adath is proud of its physical plant, which contains the following facilities:

Main Sanctuary — seating over 400 persons.

Lewis Auditorium — One of the largest banquet rooms in the area; can seat 400 for dinner. Combined with main sanctuary for high holidays Adath holds 2,000 persons at prayer at the same time.

Alexander Auditorium — used for small meetings, Bar and Bat Mitzvah kiddush; small luncheons, board meetings, breakfasts.

Rosenthal Chapel — Daily minyan held here; used for small weddings and Junior Congregation.

Classrooms — Ten classrooms, principal's office; some classrooms open up to form larger area for youth functions.

Hyman and Jennie Green Library — Finest synagogue library in area. Used as reference source by school and for full use of congregants.

Spiegel Lobby — containing the Sisterhood Gift Shop and the Sisterhood Book Shop.