

Silver Anniversary



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Temple Judea Silver Anniversary

1930-1955

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in celebration of its
Silver Anniversary

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1955

Preface

IN ITS SHORT but significant life, Temple Judea has played a major role in the development of Reform Judaism within the city of Philadelphia. At the same time, it has maintained for its congregants both an important part in the community in which it is situated, and a rich and satisfying internal spiritual life. As with all histories, it is hoped that with the knowledge of the past, the people will better understand the meaning of their present place in the congregation, and in the overall picture of American Judaism.

This little book is by no means conclusive; it is merely a beginning, and as such, must be set down as accurately as the records and the long arm of memory will allow. Records, especially in the earlier years, were in many cases lost or incomplete. Total recall being well nigh impossible under most circumstances, wherever possible a system of double and triple checking was used. If there are inaccuracies or omissions, they were inadvertent and the author apologizes.

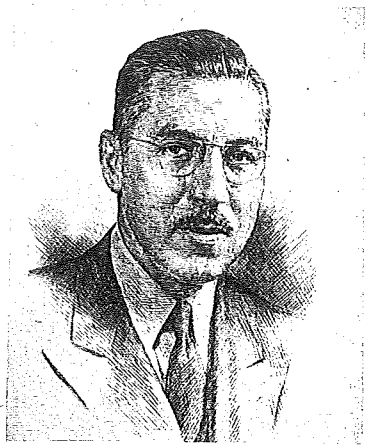
A tremendous debt is owed to Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Oppenheimer, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Goldberg, Mrs. Jack Golden, and others who searched their rich memories and helped bring the early years of Temple Judea into focus. We are grateful to Mr. Maxwell Whiteman for his help, particularly in visualizing the overall picture of the history of the Reform Movement in Philadelphia. To Rabbi Lasker, for his glowing account of the section of this book entitled "The Museum Room," and for his painstaking help in weeding error from fact, we are eternally indebted. Mrs. Norman Bram and Mrs. Isadore Steinberg generously helped in last minute research and Mr. Abram R. Finkel and Mr. Edward Cushman loaned a ready hand whenever and wherever possible in the compilation of this record.

The record of Temple Judea stands on its own considerable merits; it was my honor and privilege to be the instrument for setting it down.

Beatrice Jackson Levin

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DEAR FRIENDS:

When I was requested to write a short message to this Silver Anniversary Booklet, I felt somewhat puzzled. I knew that we had an able historian to tell the tale of our growth. I was fully aware of the fact that the pictures gathered with such assiduous care would portray the phenomenal development of our congregation, and pinpoint for you those devoted and dedicated souls whose loyalty brought about this growth far better than any words of mine. And yet, as your Rabbi and friend, could I permit this important occasion to pass with no word of gratefulness for the past, and hope for the future?

I am sure, as you read this wondrous tale of our Temple, you will feel as I do, that Temple Judea could never have made the progress it did if our pioneers named in this book had not prepared the ground. In the midst of the lean years of the depression, when fear filled the hearts of many, they dared to rise above fear and set their hands and hearts to the constructive task of building a new congregation in the suburban section of North Philadelphia. They realized, even in times when bread was scarce, that man, and especially a self-respecting Jew, does not live on bread alone. Even more impressive was the courage they displayed, at a time when money was scarce, when they refused to bow and kneel to mammon. Thus they voiced the democratic philosophy that governs our Temple to this very day, namely that the factor of wealth must not separate man from man in the Temples of the Lord, nor should one be seated in the fore or rear of the Temple solely because of economic differences. There were to be no pariahs in Temple Judea, for all were to be equal in this democratic House of God.

But not only was there an outward reform instituted by these pioneers — far greater was the inner reform, the reform of the heart, a reform which no longer demanded that the Rabbi be solely a good-will messenger to the gentiles. Rather they asked that the Rabbi be a teacher to them and to their children, a counsellor, and a friend to his people, congregation, and community. It was because I sensed this inner spirit of Temple Judea that I, an outspoken Zionist, did not hesitate to accept a pulpit of a non-Zionistic congregation in the year 1941. It was because I admired the liberal spirit and the open-mindedness of our congregation that I felt here was a field that could be sowed with the seeds of love for "K'lal Israel" — for the whole household of Israel, and for the ideals that our people have lived for.

And after fourteen years of service with you, my friends—years in which we wept together as millions of our people died under Nazi torture; years in which we asked ourselves time and again, why should so many of our brothers become homeless and disenfranchised in this twentieth century of ours; years in which we saw our sons march off to war against brutal enemies and return after victory to an uncertain peace; years in which we saw the very face of our universe change with the historic drama of our people unfolding in a new State of Israel, I am happy to say, in all sincerity, it has been a privilege to serve as your Rabbi. Your kindness to me, and my family, your understanding of my strivings, and your willingness to help in the fulfillment of my dreams, has made my position a most happy one—and for this I thank you all. I can but pray to God that as we have walked hand in hand in the past, planning together for the richer spirit of our Temple, so may we continue to walk together for many years in the future, with our eyes ever focused on the light of God which leads us.

Rabbi Meir Lasker

Foreword



In September of 1654 four mature men, six adult women and thirteen young Jews descended from the small French frigate "Sante Catherine," ringing down the curtain which marked the disappearance of Sephardic culture from medieval Spain and evidencing the founding of the first Jewish Community in New Amsterdam. If one of these immigrants were to return today, would he regret the rigors of the six-month journey on that tiny storm-tossed bark to North America, or the hardships of the struggle to establish the right of the Jews to equality in the New World?

Much would fascinate him in the metropolis which is now New York; the skyscrapers of steel, aluminum and glass which have replaced the humble homes of the Dutch and the wind-torn tents of the Indians; the Cadillacs driven by speed-loving descendants of ancestors who trudged wearily with pack on back; the advances both in design and price in pelts of mink and beaver.

Having known the pangs of hunger and the hurt of discrimination, he would be amazed at the certainty and ease with which our continuous supply of delicacies is provided, the institutions of mercy open to Jew, papist and infidel alike; a philosophy of law which now condemns and holds unconstitutional separate but equal educational facilities.

Coming from the group known as "people of the book," he would be delighted to observe how knowledge of the past is deciphered from old parchments and ancient walls. He would sense the sweep of antiquity and the surge of history.

He would recall the courage with which he and his compatriots, both Sephardim and Ashkenazic Jews from Germany and Italy, had declined the order of the testy, peg-legged Governor: "In a friendly way, depart." They remained, determined to bear witness to the principles of a loving God and to inculcate an understanding of His ways, so that all creeds might live together in peace and dignity.

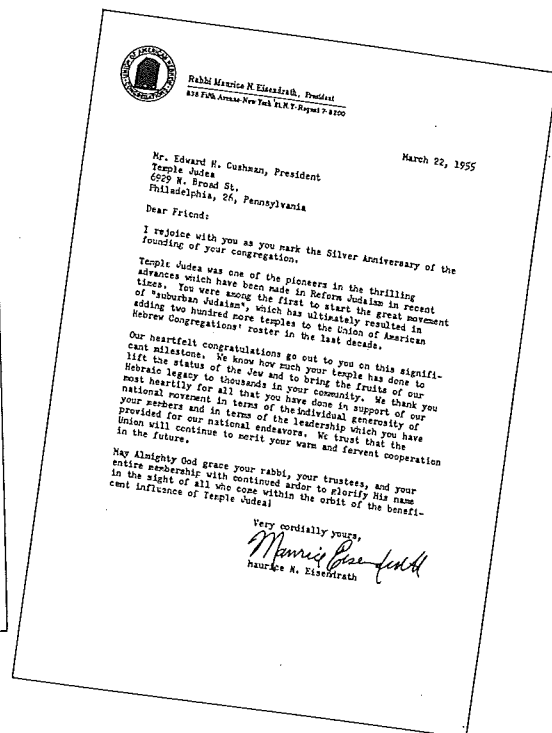
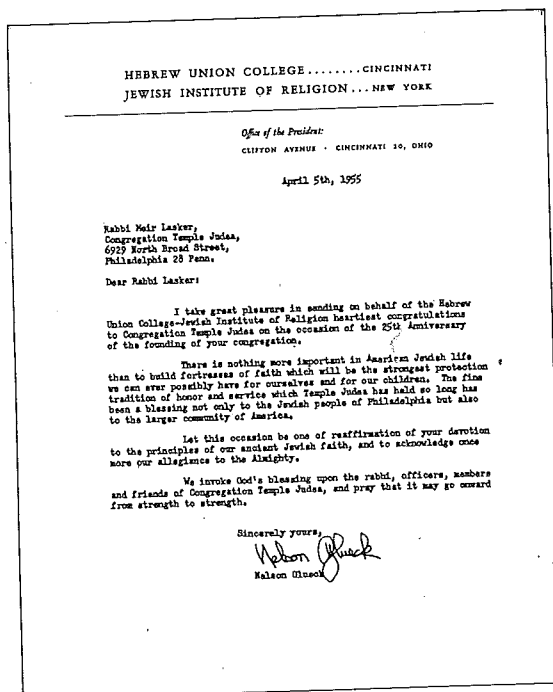
However, when our ancient observed the mad scramble for material things in this atomic age, would not a feeling of disillusionment arise? Were he so to despair, his hopes and his faith would be restored if he would look upon the national and local institutions of Reform Judaism and measure its progress from the day, only 100 years ago, when Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise arrived in Cincinnati, established a Reform movement in America and later founded what is now the oldest surviving rabbinical seminary in the world. He would ascertain that approximately a million American Jews are affiliated with 500 Reform congregations, not the least of which is our own Congregation Temple Judea, whose history, on this Silver Anniversary, has been recorded so ably by Mrs. Benjamin Levin and her assistants, and to Jack A. Cannon, our publisher and to Millard M. Katz, his associate, to whom we record the Congregation's gratitude and thanks.

Perusing this worthwhile volume, it would soon be manifest that Rabbi Meir Lasker is a pastor, a moulder of character, a teacher and a counsellor who as such fulfills the highest traditions of the rabbinate. Likewise our reader would find that throughout its quarter century of achievement, Congregation Temple Judea has had and still includes many dedicated men and women among its lay leadership. They know that it is the devotion of the Jew to the precepts of his religion that explains the miracle of Jewish survival and that Judaism cannot survive without its community house of worship, prayer and study. They realize that man requires companionship for prayer, for ease in the utterance of religious sentiment and also companionship to travel the spiritual turnpike to God.

Our treasured anniversary volume is the first permanent record of the establishment and growth of our Temple. It is believed that the history of Temple Judea's next twenty-five years will demonstrate that our officers and trustees look with sympathy and understanding, but with a proper conservative restraint, upon the needs of the generations to follow us.

Our congregational history is but illustrative of the progress being made by liberal Judaism here and abroad. Thus when the benediction at Carnegie Hall on June first marks the close of the American Jewish Tercentenary, our traveler can return from whence he came, confident that his cherished aspirations have been and will be maintained.

E. H. Cushman



Silver Anniversary

The fall of nineteen-thirty was not an auspicious time to launch a new synagogue. It was an area caught irrevocably between the social forces and spiritual hungers of two world wars. The protean nature of the expansion and growth of the population and the accompanying tensions of a rapidly changing world were reflected in the philosophies of the people.

In the United States, the flood of European immigration had ebbed to a mere trickle; the second generation of Jewish Americans were in the ascendancy and no longer needed the crutch of academic practices for their spiritual security. Polemics and active inquiry were the order of the day. In this year of nineteen-thirty, the country was torn by the greatest economic depression in the history of the world, and the devastation of this financial hurricane inundated every community. It was perhaps this very desolation that made people turn inward to reexamine and redefine their spiritual needs. In the history of the Jews, this pattern is a familiar and timeless litany.

Temple Judea, conceived in this chaotic period, has the distinction of being the first congregation in Philadelphia to be founded on the principles of Reform Judaism. Its two sister congregations, Rodeph Shalom and Keneseth Israel, were originally orthodox in concept, only later evolving into reform congregations as the need arose. The urbanization and industrialization of society which had given impetus to the whole reform movement, had

by now engendered other problems. The metropolitan areas were becoming overcrowded, and an exodus to the suburban sections had begun. With this movement, there developed a desire for a temple to suit the needs of a young and vigorous Jewish community. In Philadelphia, Temple Judea was the avant-garde of this kind of synagogue, for in the twenty-five years of its existence, no less than seven new reform congregations have originated in the various communities of the city.

Born thus of the tensions and forces of the time, and reflecting the continuing growth and mobility of the Jewish population of Philadelphia, Temple Judea evolved from the simple "Little Synagogue" as it was fondly called, to what is now the fourth largest congregation in Pennsylvania. And unlike the history of so many other congregations, Temple Judea arose neither by secession nor by the division of any existing synagogue, but because of a pragmatic necessity for a reform temple in an area where none existed.

Consider for a moment the chiaroscuro quality of autumn in the year nineteen-thirty. Herbert Hoover was still president of the United States. Banks were shutting down all over the country at an alarming rate. The newspapers almost every day reported the suicide of financiers who were unable to stand the shock of their losses. The more stable members of the human race marshalled their inner resources, reorientated their thinking, and reorganized their businesses. The National Socialist Party had just won the elections in Germany, and Jewish leaders all over the world were speculating uneasily about the theory of anti-semitism as set down by its newest exponent, Adolph Hitler. It is ironic to note that when Herr Von Prittwitz, the German Envoy, arrived in New York in October of that year, he said lightly, "Hitler is not the voice of Germany! All this agitation will die down within a few weeks."

Hans Herzl, only son of Theodor Herzl, the founder of Political Zionism, was buried at Bordeaux. In England, the repudiation of the Palestine Mandate set off a storm of protest from Jews and Non-Jews the world over. Dr. Cyrus Adler was chairman of such a protest meeting held at the Metropolitan Opera House on November second in Philadelphia. And England once more made the headlines, but this time more favorably, when Professor Albert Einstein and George Bernard Shaw spoke over the radio to the world at a dinner meeting honoring Dr. Einstein. The sometimes corrosive Shaw reverently included Einstein with Pythagoras, Ptolemy, Aristotle, Copernicus, Keppler, and Galileo as "the handful of men who have created universes."

Gifford Pinchot was running for governor of Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia, Leopold Stokowski formally inaugurated the thirty-first season of the Philadelphia orchestra. At the Strand Movie, "All Quiet on the Western Front," now an all time classic, was playing. Keith's Theater, having recently installed sound equipment (the new development in moving pictures), was featuring the Marx Brothers in "Animal Crackers." The legitimate theater, despite the depression, was in full swing. A girl named Ginger Rogers who had had some little success in films, was starring in "Girl Crazy," with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin. "June Moon," a play by Ring Lardner and George S. Kaufman, was playing to packed houses, and at the Erlanger, Clifton Webb, Fred Allen, and Libby Holman were starring in "Three's a Crowd."

And in Oak Lane, a small but intrepid group of people met to discuss the formation of a new synagogue. The movement to the northern part of the city and the adjacent areas of Melrose and Elkins Park had already manifested itself. There were no reform temples in this area at all, and there had developed a need to eliminate the time and cost of transportation to the two centrally located reform temples. Besides, these people had a dream—a dream of a simple democratic house of worship where a homogeneous group could meet on equal terms, and where their children, in a similar atmosphere of wholesome progressiveness, could attend a Religious School. The little group of inspired people who formed the nucleus of the new temple included Mr. and Mrs. Alex Van Straaten (Mr. Van Straaten was to become the vigorous president of the congregation, an office he held until nineteen thirty-seven), Mr. and Mrs. H. Salus, Mr. and Mrs. A. Levy, Dr. and Mrs. D. Sellers, Mr. and Mrs. H. Somers, Mr. and Mrs. N. Silberman, Mr. and Mrs. H. Markman, Mr. and Mrs. A. Klein, Mr. and Mrs. J. Berensen, Mr. and Mrs. A. Hess, Mr. and Mrs. I. Kotlo, Mr. and Mrs. L. Nevas, Mr. and Mrs. H. Sostman, and Mr. and Mrs. H. Sykes. Almost immediately the dream became a reality, and in spite of the difficulties and obstacles which beset them, it gained momentum.

The High Holidays were looming up, and the little group, amorphous as to official organization, yet cohesive in spirit and determination, decided then and there to find a place and hold services for Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. And in October of 1930, in a room above the Five-and-Ten Cent Store on Ogontz Avenue, led by the late Rabbi Louis Brav, they did in fact hold their first services.

The incongruity of these surroundings did not in the least detract from the dignity of the occasion. Enthusiasm for the new congregation multiplied in the community, and inspired them to an almost febrile activity. The need to rent a suitable place of worship was paramount. And the women got to work! They met at the home of Mrs. Alex. Van Straaten on Tuesday, November the twenty-fifth, thereby establishing Tuesday as the meeting day for the Sisterhood from then on to the present day. By pre-arrangement, each of the ladies was to bring a prospective member. Without preamble, they decided to officially organize a sisterhood. Shortly afterward, on December second to be exact, Mrs. M. Gras was elected president, Mrs. H. Salus, one of the truly dynamic forces in these formative years, vice-president, Mrs. Nevas treasurer, and Mrs. A. Levy secretary.

Fund raising, the bane and glory of any infant organization, became a particular challenge in that depression era, but with a characteristic zest, they waded in. Card and garden parties, Dutch suppers, and rummage sales were planned and executed. "Rainy day" bags were sewn by Mrs. Besser from material donated by Mrs. Salkind, the purpose being that each member would save pennies for rainy days which would be donated to the new Temple. For they were determined to have their own quarters by the time the next High Holidays rolled around.

At a joint meeting of the Sisterhood and the embryonic congregation in February of nineteen-thirty-one, it was decided to tax each couple ten dollars a year in order that they might rent a more permanent place of worship and begin to function as a temple officially. Eighty dollars plus an enormous fervor was collected that night. An official name was needed for the "Little Synagogue" and for a while it was a toss-up between Beth Elohim of Oak Lane, and Temple Judea. The story is told that each member put the name of his choice on a sheet of paper and deposited it in a hat. Each slip of paper was then drawn and the name written thereon read aloud and voted upon. It is interesting to note that Temple Judea was written on the slip of the indefatigable Mrs. Salus. So much of the early history of Temple Judea is inextricably bound up with the names of such dedicated people as the Mr. and Mrs. Salus and the Van Straatens and others of their ilk, that the debt the present Temple owes to them is truly incalculable. In an era that was economically and spiritually bankrupt, they offered positive hope and belief in the future.

In the Court of Common Pleas No. 1
of Philadelphia County
March Term, 1938 No. 4063

It is known that the subterranean colonies of the *Parasitism* of *Brachymeria* having several chambers, together for the purpose of carrying out the development of the pupae and having chambers of bearing numerous eggs, up to the 1st of June, 1933, at the end of the summer, the *Brachymeria* was found as the first stage of development, up to the 1st of July, 1933, at the end of the summer, and the first and early stages of development of the pupae, up to the 1st of August, 1933, at the end of the summer, and the pupae, up to the 1st of September, 1933, at the end of the summer.

Second, the program to purchase of the proposed infrastructure is to be subject and maintain in public place of "ownership" through and according to the public interest, needs, and wants of the "relevant" persons. Reference to maintenance and support is subject to the "wishes of the owner."

Third, that the funds to meet the part of the expenses to be incurred by the Government of Pennsylvania shall be out of the General Fund, State Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Fourth, the Government shall have complete and exclusive right to the same.

[illegible]

Early, 1900

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania }
County of Philadelphia } ss.

Certified Copy
of Charter
Inrolled in the office
for the Recording of
Deeds, etc. in and for the
County of Essex, in
Charter Book, Number
_____ Page 211 etc.
Witness my hand and
seal of office this _____ day
of _____, in the year
of our Lord one thousand
nine hundred and the fifty
seventh (1957).

Edward M. Davis
Recorder of Deeds
Essex County, Mass.



One of the Early Homes of Temple Judea



First Faculty



First Choir

A House

was rented at thirteen-eleven sixty-eighth avenue for the fall of nineteen thirty-one, and Rabbi Gerson Brenner became the spiritual leader of the congregation. The building was far from ideal, but it was their own, at least temporarily, and they set about making it ready for the holidays. It had no electric lights, but Bill Salus and Leslie Hess, sons of two of the members, used the headlights of their car in order to lay a floor on the building at night. The electric wiring was subsequently repaired, and chairs were rented. A temporary pulpit, ark and Torah were loaned by the Hebrew Orphanage, then a neighboring institution. A group of volunteers, including Jack Golden, still a member of the congregation, agreed to sing in the choir. An organ and stool were rented for the munificent sum of twelve dollars, and was played by Samuel Singer, a student, now music critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Mrs. Van Straaten donated two small seven-branch candelabras for the pulpit. Mr. Pitts, a cleaner and dyer from Jenkintown, became infected with the local enthusiasm and cleaned the whole building gratis. No charge was made for attending the service, but a voluntary contribution of silver was taken at the door. On Rosh Hashona evening, the Temple filled to overflowing, and many had to be turned away for lack of space. The evening proved conclusively how much a temple of this genre was needed in the community.

On Succoth, the Sisterhood built and decorated the first Succah, a custom they have continued ever since. A Religious School was established with a staff of volunteer teachers. By the end of the year nineteen thirty-one, Mrs. Salus, who headed the school committee, reported an enrollment of one-hundred and twelve pupils, eight classrooms, and a staff of eight volunteer teachers. In a recent letter, Mrs. Salus said, "Now, looking back over the years and remembering these humble beginnings, it seems almost incredible that Temple Judea has flourished so beautifully."

A library was started with one-hundred books donated by Mrs. Van Straaten, and a piano was given by Mrs. Betty Barcus. Mr. Alex Van Straaten became the first president of the congregation, a post he filled most efficiently for six years. In December of nineteen thirty-one, inspired by the success of the distaff side, a Men's Club was organized. Seymour Karfunkel was elected president, and Columbus Steel was elected secretary.

The new congregation was growing by leaps and bounds. Having barely learned to walk, it began to run forward and outward in many directions. Since it was not tradition bound in the academic sense, it became a vital and plangent force in various communal and philanthropic activities. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops were organized in the Temple. The Sisterhood collected canned goods and clothes for the unemployed, and the Sewing Group added their nimble fingers in an all out effort to help the needy. The Sisterhood joined the Peace and World Relations Movement, worked with the blind, and put on a number of skits and shows to raise money. One of the most outstanding of their earlier efforts along these lines was a Tom Thumb Wedding, which was held above the same Five and Ten Cent Store where the original service was held. The bride and groom and all the guests at this lilliputian ceremony were played by children of the members. Such famous personalities as Eleanor Roosevelt and Chamberlain, famous umbrella and all, were impersonated. All of the costumes, including the tuxedos worn by the little ushers, were sewn by the Sisterhood. A profit of fifty dollars was made, and with this money they proudly purchased carpeting and chairs for the Temple.

Not to be outdone by the women, the men worked diligently on their own projects. On March seventh, nineteen thirty-two, the Men's Club produced their first show at Mercantile Hall. This extravaganza was called "Headaches of Temple Judea," and the music was supplied by an orchestra with the dubious title of "Barney Zeeman's Kentucky Kardinals." The show featured such scenes as Harry Goodfriend singing "Crosby, Columbo and Vallee (for those of you who are too young to remember, these were the three top "crooners" of the time), and a beauty contest scene starring Sidney Lewin as "Miss America" and Sol Silberman as "Miss California." It was a tremendous success and set a precedent for many years.

A community seder was held during the Passover Holiday in the Temple building. It was conducted by Rabbi Brenner and catered by the now defunct Walter's Restaurant at the unbelievable sum of one-dollar-fifty per adult and seventy-five cents per child.

The inadequacies of the building they had leased were becoming more and more apparent. In order to be able to afford a more suitable dwelling, it was decided to raise the annual dues to fifteen dollars per couple. A note, rather touching in retrospect, accompanied each bill saying succinctly, "This covers everything!"



Religious School

The congregation continued to expand in scope as well as numbers. The Sisterhood joined the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and the Religious School, ductile from its inception, had developed at an amazing rate. The enthusiasm of the parents had indeed been transmitted to the children, and the faculty, due to the increasing enrollment, had to be augmented. A parent-teacher group was organized and activated. And in the spring of the year nineteen thirty-three, Rabbi Brenner took his farewell of the congregation, and Rabbi Sidney Unger came to Temple Judea.

With the new leader a fresh surge of vigor swept the congregation. The Sisterhood, with Mrs. Salus as its president, was ever seeking to develop its potential, and its voice was being heard throughout the community. The world was becoming cognizant of the threat of Germany, but hope and reason still prevailed over cynicism and violence. The people of the United States, with the Pyrrhic victory of the first World War still acrid in their mouths, hoped by strength and reason to halt the war clouds that were so ominously gathering. The Rabbi, in his sermons and in the various columns he contributed to the papers spoke out passionately for reason. The Sisterhood, increasingly aware of the disaster hanging over the world, signed a petition for world disarmament and sent it bravely off to President Roosevelt.

Still the little Temple labored to raise the necessary funds for an adequate building. It was almost as if they realized that in the years to come, the world at large, and the individuals of the community in particular, would need spiritual succor more than ever. The Sisterhood put on a show, "Temple

Judea Revue," and raised one thousand dollars. (This show was later parodied by the Men's Club in an hilarious evening.)

On October fifteenth, nineteen thirty-three, the congregation leased the building at 6827 York Road for use as a Temple and a Religious School. So rapid was their expansion, that not too long afterward, it became necessary to lease the house next door for additional space. The "office" in the original building was located in the bay window of the first floor, where one literally froze in winter and roasted in the summer. A sometime winter-summer air conditioner was donated by Mr. I. Oppenheimer in the form of a small electric heater and an electric fan. In another bay window (obviously not an inch of space was wasted) was a small hand organ. The meetings of the congregation were held in the dining room, and the rest of the building served as an office, synagogue, and Religious School.

Almost immediately they became aware that these buildings on York Road would not be sufficient for their needs, for they were soon bulging at the seams. The congregation continued to pursue its varied activities, always branching out further into communal, recreational and cultural areas. It worked as a unit of the United Campaign of the Federation of Jewish Charities. The Sewing Circle continued to sew not only for Temple needs, but for the still onerous number of poor and needy. Puppetry was enjoying a renaissance, and the Rabbi organized a puppet club, to teach the fundamentals and mechanics of puppet making and working. A program of educational films was instituted and were shown to the children of the Religious School every Sunday at three. The "Temple Judeans," a youth group ranging in age from twenty-three to thirty, were organized. This group met on the average of twice a month for discussion on political, social and spiritual topics, varying their diet occasionally with guest speakers and parties. The by-laws of Temple Judea read, "This congregation shall be known as Liberal Congregation Temple Judea," and it is indeed an apt description. For the Temple was democratic and open-minded from its very inception, and never regarded itself as an island of religion remote from the problems of the world. It was and is distinctly of the world and of the community to which it belongs. In addition, it is one of the few synagogues which did not maintain a sliding scale for the payment of membership dues, but held that all congregants be taxed equally. Temple Judea, to this day, is in the true sense of the word, a liberal and democratic house of worship.

The Talmudic saying, "The world is sustained by the breath of the school children" is the keynote to early Judea. The school was filled beyond its capacity, and the congregation began to look seriously about for a site for a permanent building. To this purpose, dues were raised to thirty dollars per couple, and fund raising continued at a steady pace. The third annual show and dance was a joint project of the Men's Club and Sisterhood. For the price of seventy-five cents admission, you could have seen the "trial" scene from the "Merchant of Venice," a Russian tragedy called "Uncle Nema Vanya," and an hilarious skit called uncomprisingly, "If Men Played Cards as Women Do."

In March of nineteen thirty-five, the first congregational dinner was held, and the warmth and cohesiveness of the group was so evident that it was apodictic that this become an annual event. A "Night of Revelry" was put on for several successive years. These affairs were held primarily to raise money for the new Temple, but had the more important by-product of welding the group more closely together. They became increasingly determined to plant their roots in soil which they themselves owned. They were a people possessed—possessed of a dream to build a Temple suitable to their own distinct and particular needs. Arthur Lefco, who was elected president of the congregation in nineteen thirty-eight, brought his many years of experience as head of a large business firm to the job of chairman of the building fund. Three thousand dollars were raised, and the lot at 6929 North Broad Street was purchased.

This was, however, only the beginning. Now that they had the ground, it was necessary to raise additional funds so that they could start to build. So close to the realization of their dream, they could not help but plunge into an almost frenetic activity in order to finance the erecting of the Temple. Through dances, raffles, bond purchases, individual contributions, and the sale of "bricks" to the members, they were finally able to amass enough money to start building. Who can quantitatively analyze the contribution these men and women made toward the establishment of the permanent Temple Judea? Certainly one cannot evaluate it in terms of dollars and cents! Their tangible offerings are a matter of record, but the time, the thought, and the tireless effort that they freely gave is incomputable. If the names of such dedicated people as Joseph Rosenau, Arthur Lefco, Abe Feuchtwanger, Abe Finkel, Herman Goldberg, Isadore Oppenheimer, Mrs. Joseph Grossman, Edwin Weil, Perez Epstein, Harry Goodfriend, Raymond Brunswick, Jack Klein,

and Herman Zimmerman seem but a partial list, it is not due to lack of everlasting gratitude to all the others who worked to get the building under way! Everybody, as the saying goes, got into the act! Some gave more, some gave less—some put forth an almost superhuman effort, some worked less hard—but all together, it was a collective endeavour which could only culminate in success.

The architects for the building were Thalheimer and Weitz, and on June twenty-ninth, nineteen thirty-nine, they awarded a general contract to Samuel H. Levin, for thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars to erect the new Temple. Mr. Levin, a man of vision and integrity, in turn became so imbued with the spirit of the congregation, that he made many personal contributions. He was thus an enthusiastic implement in the history of Temple Judea, and was later sent an honorary card of membership as a token of the esteem of the entire congregation.

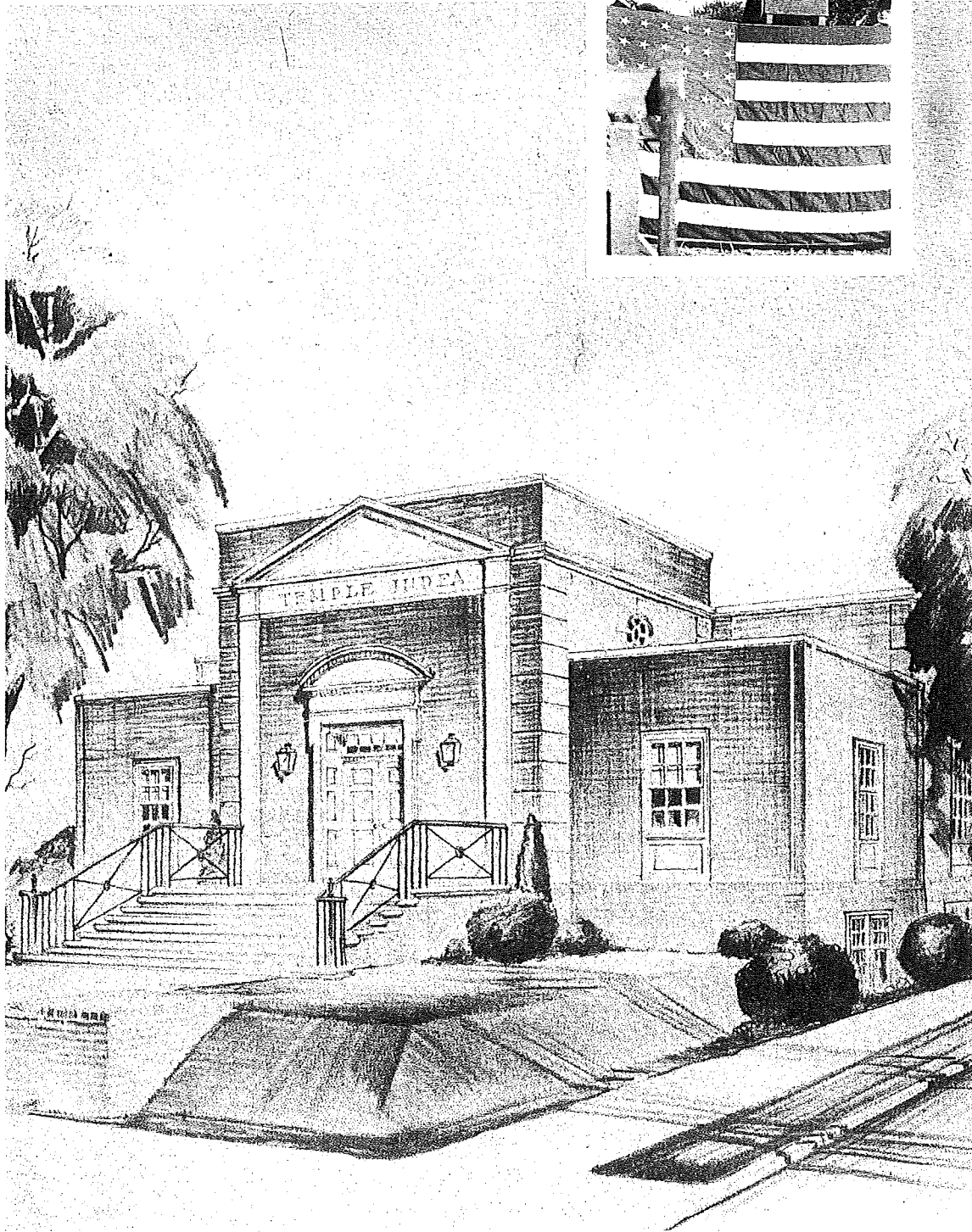
The original building was finished in the fall of nineteen thirty-nine, and it is a point of pride to note that all of the bond holders who had financed the bond issue for the building were paid off before the auditorium was added in 1948.

The first service in the new building was held October twenty-seventh, nineteen thirty-nine. It was an occasion of triumph and rejoicing, marred only by the consciousness of the hazardous state of world affairs. Arthur Lefco, president of the congregation, spoke from the pulpit, as did William Miller, who had worked so diligently as chairman of the building fund. All of the original founders of the congregation were fittingly honored, and the Rabbi spoke glowingly of the past and hopefully of the future.

The Temple now had to be furnished and the Religious School equipped, and with characteristic determination, the Congregation set about to do this. The Midwinter Balls of nineteen thirty-nine and forty were outstanding successes both financially and socially. The Men's Club held a minstrel show and raised additional funds, and slowly the Temple acquired adequate furnishings.

The world was by now submerged in the pernicious combat of World War II, and its oecumenical reverberations reached into every country and every community. Members and sons of members of Temple Judea were entering the armed services of the United States, for it was now inevitable that this country would be drawn into the conflict. In the spring of the year nineteen forty-one, after eight years of devoted service, Rabbi Sidney Unger resigned from the congregation to become a chaplain in the United States Army.

Ground Breaking Ceremony of Present Temple

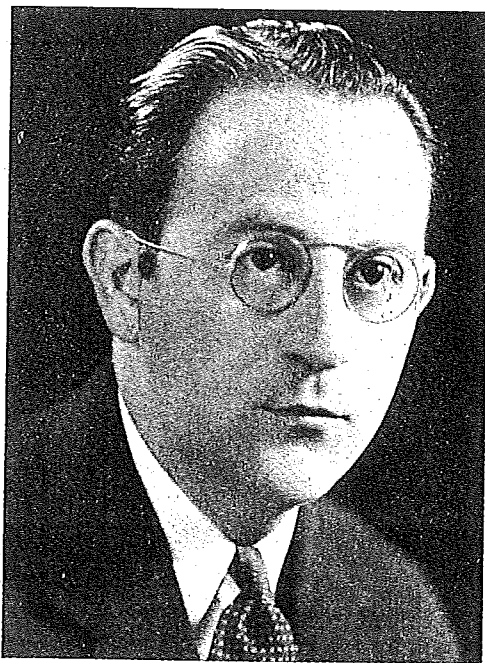


Present Temple Judea

SPIRITUAL
LEADERS
OF
TEMPLE
JUDEA



Rabbi Meir Lasker



Rabbi Sidney Unger



Rabbi Gerson Brenner

Rabbi Lasker's

unique background of integrity as a progressive leader was the determinant in his being chosen by Mr. Lefco, Mr. Goldberg,

Mrs. Joseph Grossman and the board from all the other candidates as being best qualified to assume the post of Rabbi of Temple Judea. A New Englander by birth, he was educated at Tufts College, the University of Cincinnati and the University of Chicago. In 1928 he graduated from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and was granted the Morgenthau Traveling Fellowship in the School of Oriental Research. He had wide experience in World Jewry, and as a representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, organized the Liberal Movement of Reform Jewry in The Hague, Holland. In Havana, Cuba, where he led the Reform Congregation for eight successive years, he was called upon to perform far more difficult tasks than just those of his congregational duties. Many refugees, fleeing the German terror, had found their way to Cuba, where crushed and nearly hopeless, they presented both a spiritual and economic problem to the Cuban community. Rabbi Lasker became Vice President of both the Central Committee of Cuban Jewry, and of the Cuban Friends for Refugee Relief. Among the many services he performed was the organization of a school for refugee children and adults. His ability as a linguist, humanitarian and organizer enabled him to play a major role in the mammoth task of helping these refugees to adjust spiritually, economically and socially to a new and alien environment.

Rabbi Lasker, with his charming wife, Sylvia, and their infant son, Boyman, arrived in Philadelphia in mid-August of 1941, and on September 5, 1941, he was formally installed as Rabbi of Temple Judea. Rabbi Louis Wolsey officiated at the installation, and Arthur Lefco, President, welcomed him in behalf of a congregation a little ragged at the edges due to war-time conditions, but nevertheless filled with new hope at the prospect of its young and vigorous leader.

Temple Judea had made a happy choice, and with characteristic forthrightness and courage, Rabbi Lasker almost immediately made a number of forward-looking changes. Sweeping aside the objections of many who felt that it was not compatible with Reform principles, he introduced Hebrew as an elective to the curriculum. "Nothing," he stated prophetically, "that is in any sense Jewish, is alien to the spirit of Reform!" How correct he was can be proven today, for Hebrew is now being taught in almost every Reform

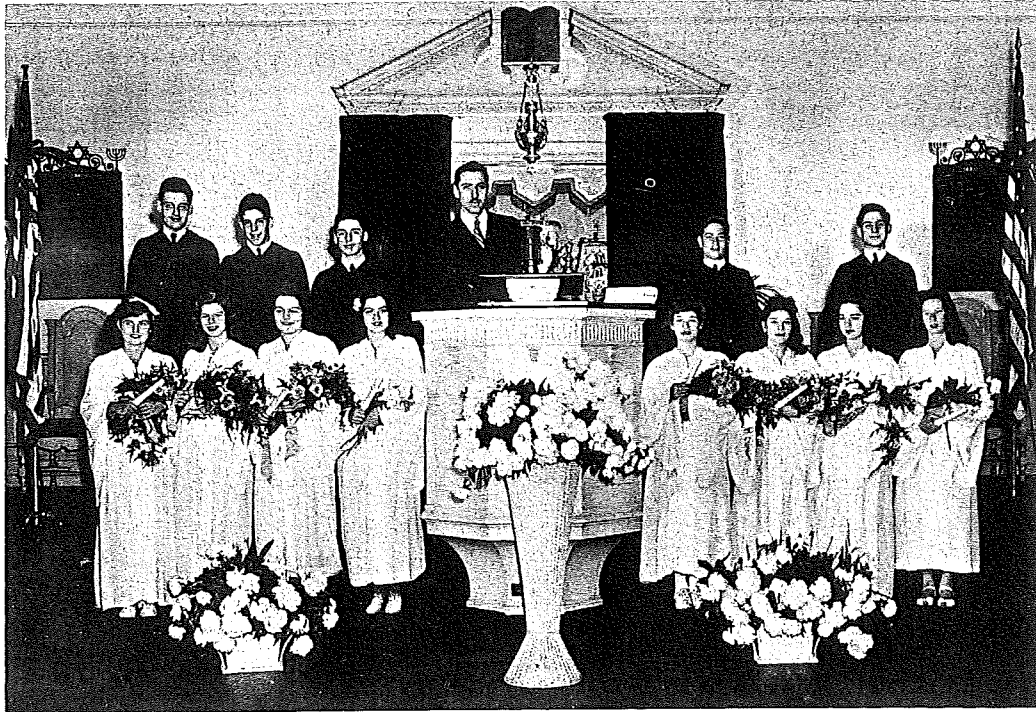
congregation. He reactivated the Bar Mitzvah, a ceremony that had fallen into disrepute or disuse by most of the Reform synagogues. Following his lead, almost all of the Reform congregations have re-incorporated the ceremony into their curriculae and philosophies. Youth study groups were inaugurated to implement the extension of Jewish education beyond the confirmation stage, where it was wont to cease. It has been his cogent belief that the spiritual leadership of a congregation and the religious education of its youth were not two separate entities, but component parts of the same picture. It is this philosophy and pedagogic approach that has in great measure been responsible for the progress of the Congregation.

In addition, Rabbi Lasker was the first Reform Rabbi in the city who was a Zionist. Indeed, he was a Zionist Rabbi in a preponderantly non-Zionist Congregation. This only made him preach more convincingly from the pulpit the need for establishing a homeland in Israel, and stimulated him to relentlessly continue his efforts to combat the Nazi propaganda.

In 1941, when Rabbi Lasker assumed the pulpit, there were 140 members comprising the Congregation. By 1944, this number had grown to 370, with 340 children overflowing the rooms of the Religious School, all this despite wartime restrictions on facilities and incomes. Since so many of the congregants and their sons were now in the active service of the Army and Navy of the United States, a plaque engraved with their names was designed and provided for by Mr. Clarence Thalheimer.

The activities of the religious school, under the chairmanship of Mr. Maurice Fagan, continued to expand. The children of the School were taught the responsibility they owed as individuals to the community at large, and made regular contributions to the Allied Jewish Appeal, the Red Cross, the March of Dimes, and funds for the needy war refugees. The Youth Group now had its own newspaper, volunteered their services to the U.S.O. and to social service agencies—in short, they became an important adjunct in both the religious and communal life of the Congregation.

The Sisterhood, now under the charming and always capable leadership of Mrs. Isadore Oppenheimer, was involved in a myriad of activities, most of them connected with the all-out war effort of the country. They sponsored a first-aid course at the Temple, made surgical dressings for the wounded, collected for the Red Cross Fund, and had regular Blood Donor campaigns. In addition, they sponsored the Kiddush Hour after Friday night services, thus stimulating the Sabbath attendance.



Confirmation Class

In order to create better understanding between Christian and Jew, the Rabbi often exchanged pulpits with ministers of other denominations. In 1943, he served as the representative of the Board of Jewish Ministers to the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In addition, such eminent people as Ludwig Lewisohn, author and Zionist, occupied the pulpit. Friday night services were vital and never mechanical.

In keeping with his ardent desire to make known to the youth of the world the democratic and intellectual integrity of Judaism, Rabbi Lasker went out time and time again on the Jewish Chautauqua speaking circuit to address the students of the various colleges. One of his most memorable lectures was delivered at Glensville State Teachers College on "A World At War." In spite of the complexity of his duties, our Rabbi to this day continues to go out and lecture to the various colleges, for he knows that it is youth that holds the future of the world in its hands.

In the spring of 1943, Joseph Seitchik, member of the Board for many years, and known for his varied communal interests, became President of the Congregation. He brought to this office many years of experience as a business executive and as a member of the Trade Council of the Allied Jewish Appeal.

At present he is titular head of the Sidney Hillman Medical Center and President of the Philadelphia Clothing Manufacturers Association. It was largely through his ability at organization that the post-war building fund was implemented. An auditorium and additional classrooms were desperately needed—but there was a war to be won first. A goal of \$75,000 was set! Arthur Lefco, past president, added his efforts along with Mr. Seitchik's for long range planning for the Temple.

The Religious School continued its unabated growth, and a superintendent of Sunday School was added to the faculty. The library was growing with contributions of money or books from the Congregation, and it included on its shelves not only religious books, but current literature of note. The Sisterhood formed a Book Review group, later re-named Library Group, with Mrs. Jennie Belber as its first chairman, to review the outstanding books of the day. The popularity of this group remains undiminished to this day.

The Temple now boasted a full fledged choir, under the direction of Dr. William Timings, who also instituted a children's choral group. The annual dues were raised to sixty-one dollars, which included membership in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The Rabbi militated against the British policy in Palestine. From the pulpit he made a brilliant plea for the revocation of the Palestine White Paper, a document of appeasement and injustice. He advocated the humanitarian necessity for Palestine to be permitted to open its doors to the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Nazi inhumanities, and urged the government of the United States to implement the Balfour Declaration.

Temple Judea participated actively in all the war bond drives. By June of 1944, Tarawa, The Marshalls, North Africa, Sicily, and Southern Italy were won, and the Allies were pounding on the fortress of Europe's mainland. Spurred on to further the victory, Temple Judea eventually sold \$117,325 worth of U. S. war bonds. Members of the Armed Forces, stationed nearby, were entertained at the Temple. Under the wise and compassionate chairmanship of Abram R. Finkel, membership of the Temple was extended to wives and families of congregants in active service.

The father-son nights of the Men's Club were paralleled by the mother-daughter luncheons of the Sisterhood. One of the outstanding events of that time was a performance by the Sisterhood then led by Mrs. Bernard Salesky of a pageant "Our Common Quest," an interpretation of the different religious philosophies existing throughout history. It was written by Rabbi Lasker,

and dramatically proved the three-dimensionality and basic workability of Judaism. The finger of the Rabbi was on the pulse of the whole congregation, and he not only supervised but took a vital part in all activities.

Temple Judea joined with her sister Reform synagogues to form a Philadelphia Institute for Jewish Studies for adults, where such courses as Hebrew, The Bible, and Post-Biblical Literature were taught.

Activities in the Temple itself were greatly curtailed due to the primary preoccupation with civil defense, and also to the fuel shortage, and it was found necessary to hold Friday night services in the vestry because of the cold. Special services were regularly held for those in the service of the country.

Joseph Seitchik was succeeded by Samuel Klein as President of the Congregation. Mr. Klein, member of the National Board of the Union of Hebrew Congregations, President of the Philadelphia Reform Council and vice president of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, brought his many years of experience as a top business executive to this office.

In May, 1945, thirty-five children were confirmed, the largest confirmation class to date. Ever broadening the scope of interest for the school children, etching classes were introduced, and an etching press was presented. The Sisterhood, under the leadership of Mrs. Arthur Beren, renovated the kitchen and installed a floor in the library room. The P.T.A. was reorganized, and under the leadership of Mrs. A. Simon and Mrs. H. Yusem, a system of room mothers was installed. The Men's Club, led by Herman Zimmerman, was host to 500 wounded service men at the Arena, where the "Skating Vanities of 1945" was held. The affair was a success financially as well as socially, and they were able to contribute seven hundred and thirty-five dollars to the steadily growing building fund. They also had a number of prominent guest speakers, such as Dr. H. H. Chang, Chinese diplomat, who spoke on "China, The United States, and the New Pacific," and Mr. Merrill E. Bush, whose topic was "How to Achieve a Lasting Peace." It is appalling to note that to date no one has hit on the right formula.

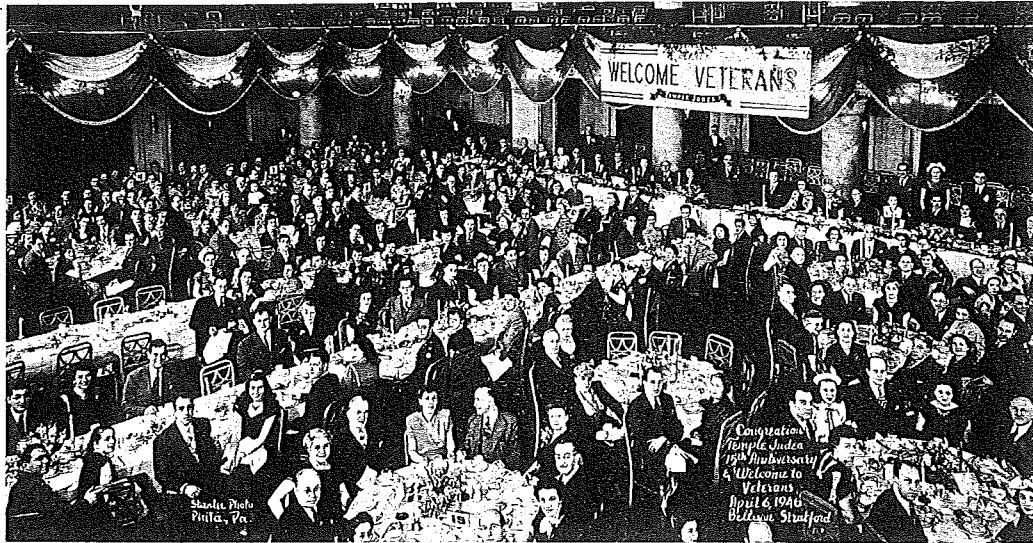
The Rabbi's Friday night sermons became more ambient intellectually. He continued the practice of exchanging pulpits, having as his guests personalities such as the Rev. E. Felix Kroman of historic Christ Church, who spoke glowingly in a sermon called "A Liberal Gentile Looks Upon Jews." The Rabbi analyzed such controversial literature as "Focus" by Arthur Miller, and "Lion in the Streets" by Langley, and the much discussed play on racial prejudice, "Deep Are the Roots." Serving first as secretary, then later as

president of the Philadelphia Board of Rabbis, Rabbi Lasker arranged and participated in a series of Sunday night radio broadcasts on WPEN by the Rabbis of Philadelphia, the purpose of which was to bring the message of Judaism to the community at large. It was while Rabbi Lasker headed this organization that a very important step forward was taken. A much needed code of ethics was prepared to govern the activities of the Mohelim or ritual surgeons of circumcision. They were required to be registered, and to practice their profession under specified conditions of modern surgery and asepsis. This in turn later led to the establishment of an organized Board of Mohelim, under the supervision of the Board of Rabbis and consultant physicians, who must regularly register, and who maintain complete statistical records of their work for the first time in the history of Philadelphia.

At long last, the war was won! Temple Judea joined the world in rejoicing in the end of hostilities, and waited impatiently for her sons and daughters to be mustered out of service, so that the normal life of the Congregation could be resumed. April the sixth, 1946, was a memorable occasion when Temple Judea, at a Victory Dinner Dance at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, welcomed the return of her sons and daughters. Special tributes at this time were paid to Mrs. Belle Salus, as a charter member of the Congregation, and to Herman Goldberg, who had just completed ten dedicated years as secretary of the Congregation.

Because of the increased costs, it was decided to defer the building program for a while. There was no relaxing of activity by such men as Joseph Seitchik, Abram Finkel, Perez Epstein, Martin Sharp, and Samuel Klein, who worked so tirelessly on the building fund committee. There were now 450 children in the Religious School and the need for additional classrooms was urgent. For the High Holy Days, services for children were held at Oak Lane Review Club, while the remaining one-hundred twenty-five younger children had a special service in the vestry.

By 1947, the Congregation had grown to 400, and the Men's Club was the second largest of Reform Congregations in Philadelphia. The Sisterhood bought an organ for the Temple, and pledged its support to the House of Living Judaism in New York. The Sewing Group continued to meet on Tuesdays, and in its quiet and unheralded manner sewed for the Temple, for war veterans, for Palestinian Relief, for refugees and orphans and displaced children. The Judaica Shop, so ably run and administered by Mrs. Raymond Gratzner, for these many years, was started. For the convenience of the Congregation, holiday and ceremonial objects were sold, as well as books and



Victory Dinner Dance, Bellevue-Stratford Hotel

games for children relating to the festivals. The very first year, the shop did a phenomenal business and turned over its profits to the Sisterhood for Congregational needs. At the annual meeting in June, 1947, Maurice Fagan, chairman of the religious school and recipient of the Bok Award, was honored.

In 1948, Abram R. Finkel was elected President of the Congregation. An erstwhile president of Amity Lodge of B'nai Brith, and active in every phase of congregational life, Mr. Finkel brought to the office the rare combination of integrity, humility, and energy which could only result in a highly successful regime. The Congregation had grown to rather remarkable proportions, and plans for the auditorium and additional classrooms were now drawn up by the architectural firm of Thalheimer and Weitz. A contract of \$146,000 was given to S. Yellin and Son for the building. In June of 1948, with Mr. Finkel presiding, and Commander Joshua Goldberg as guest speaker, ground breaking ceremonies took place. The following year, the building was completed. The long range plans of the Rabbi and the inspired efforts of the Congregation had become a concrete reality, and the new building was officially dedicated on December 18, 1949, with Dr. Samuel Goldenson of New York's Temple Emanu-El officiating.

The growing popularity of Reform Judaism was reflected not only in the completion of the building, but in the spread of Reform Judaism throughout the city. Following in Temple Judea's footsteps, and continuing the trend toward locating the synagogue right in the area where it was most needed, Congregations such as Beth David and Old York Road and later Boulevard

and Main Line Temples were organized. The spirit is one of cooperation and unity among the seven Reform Congregations, rather than one of competition. All are dedicated toward the common aim of making a living dynamic form of Judaism a working part of the life of each of its members.

A new Ark was donated by Mr. Jules Yellin. Carpeting and furnishings for the new auditorium and classrooms were needed, as well as equipment for the kitchen, and the Sisterhood, under the leadership of Mrs. Albert Farber, who was subsequently elected to the Executive Committee of the Board of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, undertook this as one of its manifold projects. Toward this end, the play "The Women" by Claire Boothe Luce was produced and enacted entirely by the Sisterhood, running two consecutive nights at Cheltenham High School. The following year they collaborated with the Men's Club in an equally successful revue entitled "Television Time."

Increasing membership made it now impossible for whole families to sit together at High Holy Day services, so a system of seating the children in the auditorium and their parents in the Temple proper was worked out. The Religious School continued to grow in size, now numbering seven hundred and fifty-six, and despite the additional classrooms, still there was not enough room to meet the ever increasing needs. In order to relieve the congestion, the ninth and tenth grades began to meet on Saturdays. Under the competent leadership of Mrs. Norman Bram, later president of the Sisterhood, the P.T.A., which had grown proportionately to the Religious School, now instituted a series of Sunday morning breakfasts, which were so successful that they have become an accepted practice. Model seders for the entire student body were

sponsored, with the Rabbi officiating.

In December of 1950, the Twentieth Anniversary celebration was held in the new auditorium. There was not an inch of extra space in the room, and enthusiasm and rejoicing filled the new auditorium with prophetic music. Mrs. Herman Goldberg, former President of the Sisterhood, was mistress of ceremonies of the occasion, and her charm and grace aided considerably in making this a memorable event.

In 1950, Herman Goldberg was elected President of the Congregation. He was particularly equipped for this job, not only by a long association at the Temple, but by a career rich in social service work. He served as director of



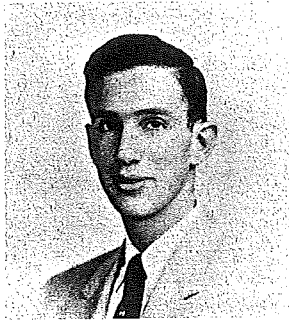
Mrs. Arthur Lefco and Mrs. Bill Stein
at Ground Breaking Ceremony
of Annex to Building

public relations and hospital administrator at the former Northern Liberties Hospital for seventeen years, and as president of B'nai Brith and of the Association of Jewish Agency Executives. Both he and Mrs. Goldberg played a vital part in the development of Temple Judea, and it was altogether fitting that he assume the role of the lay leader of the Congregation.

Within its framework, the Congregation continued to grow and to develop. The Youth Group, having been successfully reactivated under the sponsorship of Samuel Klein, now was given an administrator, Mr. Walter Sichel, and a chairman, Abram R. Finkel.

The High Holy Days presented a problem of overcrowding that was becoming more and more difficult to solve. The Congregation now numbered 464 members. Finally, under the leadership of Edward Cushman, chairman of Divine Services, with the aid of Samuel Klein, Anton Lieberman, and David Solms, a system of dual services was devised, with the membership given the choice of the seven o'clock or the nine o'clock service. It was the only equitable method of dealing with the omnipresent problem of overcrowding that has been both the plague and the pride of Temple Judea throughout its history. At the suggestion of the Rabbi, the practice of reading the names of the departed on Yom Kippur was supplanted by a memorial booklet. Abram Finkel was unanimously designated by the Board as permanent Shofar Blower of the Congregation, an office which he discharges, as everything else, with characteristic force and exuberance.

A Bar Mitzvah service was televised from Temple Judea for the first time in September, 1950. The P.T.A., expanding its activities, sponsored Friday evening services with such distinguished guests as Dr. O. Spurgeon English, noted psychiatrist, and Dr. Louis Hoyer, Superintendent of Philadelphia Schools. The Sisterhood added regular visitation to the Lucien Moss Home, a service which has continued under the chairmanship of Mrs. Max Barofsky. The Sisterhood, under the leadership of dynamic Mrs. Anton Lieberman, bought the lovely baby grand piano which now adorns the stage of the auditorium. An Eternal Light over the Ark, in memory of Charles Rieder, former member of the board, was presented by Abram R. Finkel, Sylvan Drucker, Arthur Grossman, and David Luber. The Judaica, a library fund for building a permanent reference library, was established at the instigation of Maurice Klein, a board member and editor of the monthly Temple Bulletin. The Boy Scout Troop celebrated its 20th anniversary with the Board presenting them with a new troop flag.



Raymond Klein
President of the Youth Group

In the Spring of 1952, Mrs. Norman Bram was elected President of the Sisterhood, and when her husband, Dr. Norman Bram was elected President of the Men's Club the following year, they had the unique distinction of being not the only husband and wife team in the Temple, for the Congregation abounds in these, but of being the only team to share parallel offices at the same time.

The Religious School had by now grown to such proportions that a full time educational director in the person of Mr. Herzl Honor was engaged. Also, Mr. Alexander Ringer became the musical director of the choir and the Congregation, instituting such innovations as the celebration of Jewish Music Month with a series of lectures and demonstrations in conjunction with the Friday night services. A children's choir was also begun.

These years were marked by many significant things. The Rabbi's tenth year as leader of Temple Judea was celebrated at an annual meeting, and a portrait of himself plus a testimonial scroll was tendered him by the Congregation. Monday night adult classes in Hebrew and Jewish History were started. And there was a joyous celebration on Sabbath of Hanukkah of 1952 on the occasion of Rabbi's twenty-fifth year in the Rabbinate, planned by William Cohan, formerly President of Men's Club and official counselor of the Congregation for the past ten years.

Temple Judea has actively supported the Union and the College. The Union is the source of help and inspiration in establishing new Reform congregations, and the College is the intellectual training field for young men who wish to become Reform rabbis. These institutions are the center — the heart and soul so to speak of the whole Reform Movement, having been established some eighty years ago, early in the life of the Reform Movement. At a joint meeting of the five existing Reform Congregations in 1948, Lily H. Montague, the famous lay preacher of London, heralded the establishment of a regional office of the Union in Philadelphia. Together with the other Reform Congregations, Rabbi Lasker sponsored both here and abroad, the two distinguished prophets of Reform Judaism, Dr. Leo Baeck and Dr. Joshua Loth Liebman, author of "Peace of Mind." In 1950, the Pennsylvania Council of the U.A.H.C. was organized, with Edward Cushman enjoying the singular honor of being its first President. In January of 1953, Rabbi Lasker delivered so stirring an appeal for the "Union" in his sermon "Investment in the Future" that it was printed and distributed nationally.

At the annual meeting of the Congregation in June of 1953 a tribute to Herman Goldberg, outgoing President, was led by the Honorable Charles Klein, President Judge of the Orphans Court of Philadelphia County. The mortgage on the addition to the building was paid off in full, with fitting tribute to such men as Abe Finkel, Samuel Klein, and Joseph Seitchik who were instrumental in making it all possible.

Edward Cushman was elected President of the Congregation in June of 1953. A distinguished member of both the Philadelphia Bar and the Bar of the District of Columbia, author of two legal books and numerous legal articles, and a contributor to the Union's 1954 Publication on the American Synagogue, and serving in an executive capacity in almost all phases of Jewish communal life, he brought a wealth of leadership and organizational experience to the office. Essentially a "doer" and a "here and now-er," Mr. Cushman, despite the peripatetic nature of his private practice, was instrumental in effecting a number of changes, some of which had been pending awaiting resolution, and some new. The practice of sending out the weekly news to the Congregation on a mimeographed postcard was now replaced by the more professional Temple Topics, edited by Dr. Ellis Goldberg. Mr. Cushman has been instrumental in making the Congregation aware of the importance of the "Union," and served with the Rabbi on the Commission of Synagogue Activity for the U.A.H.C. Under the leadership of Phineas Wittenberg, former Men's Club president, the purchase of a section of King David Cemetery for the use of members and their families was accomplished. The by-laws, under



Televising Bar Mitzvah from Temple Judea, Sept., 1950

the astute legal guidance of Senator Martin Silvert, Edward Cushman, and William Cohan, were revised to meet current needs.

In 1954, by raising the dues, Temple Judea was able to contribute \$10,000 toward the support of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. The annual dinner dance, always a warm and anticipated affair, was re-established and held in 1954 at Philmont Country Club, and in 1955, as a special Silver Anniversary celebration, under the chairmanship of Abram Finkel, at Ashbourne Country Club. Spurred by the cumulative need, Temple Judea has just acquired the lot adjacent to the building, to be used in such a manner as may become necessary.

The Congregation now had a family membership of 650. The original cohesiveness of the group, however, remained intact, despite the change in shape and size. The Sisterhood continued the practice of presenting each Bar Mitzvah boy with a Union Prayer Book, and regularly sent representatives to the Leadership Training Camp in Wisconsin. In April of 1954, they played hostess to the National Federation of Temple Youths. They were privileged to have such outstanding speakers as the Honorable Joseph S. Clark, Jr., Mayor of Philadelphia, and together with the Men's Club were hosts to a distinguished panel on Juvenile Delinquency. Together, the Men's Club and the Sisterhood produced the "Gay Nineties," a successful night of fun and dancing, followed the next year by an equally successful "Roaring Twenties" evening. The Sisterhood, under the leadership of Mrs. Lewis E. Weiss, actively participated in the American Tercentenary Celebration. The Rabbi, besides infusing everyone with his always dynamic approach to religion, has never relinquished the intimacy of relationship with his congregants, despite the tremendous growth in size and complexity of the Congregation. Like a parent with a growing family, his understanding and love seem to come from a bottomless well, to be distributed equally wherever needed. His spiritual integrity and progressive educational approach have been the sine qua non to the success of the Temple and to its solid establishment as an integral part of the community. In a stirring sermon, later printed in pamphlet form, entitled "The Challenge of Change" he sums up his philosophy of the role of Jewish religion by saying, "One of the greatest delusions of the human mind is that if we stay put, we will be safe. In a changing world, this is ruinous!" The change he believes in so firmly is not the specious "swinging like a weather vane to every breeze" but the kind that comes after "the re-evaluation of the situation, which results from being poured from 'vessel to vessel.'"

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Temple Judea's Twenty-fifth Anniversary falls in the year of the celebration of the Three-Hundredth Anniversary of the arrival of the Jews in America. In the three centuries of growth and transition, Temple Judea, small and young though it is, is a vital part of the development of the Reform Movement in the United States, and of the "reform within the reform!"

For a congregation whose growth has been so phenomenal that it literally has had no time to catch its breath, this seems a suitable time to pause and re-evaluate its purpose and philosophy. To make religion a functioning, purposeful part of the lives of its people has been its primary aim, and in a world which in the twinkling of an eye passed, with the explosion at Hiroshima, from the industrial to the atomic age, this need has never been more urgent. Torn by two successive world wars of increasing destructivity, and stripped of confidence and faith by an impending third, man's only security rests in the strength of his spiritual and ethical beliefs. The youth of the world, in too many instances, has developed a shell of cynicism which views life as a period of treading water, to be gotten over with in the least uncomfortable way possible. It is this lack of faith in the future that religion must combat.

The unique heritage of the Jew has always stressed the importance of the individual in the "here and now," and with its strong moral and ethical precepts, is the only means to arouse people from the pernicious apathy in which they seem to be immersed. Every thinking person alive is aware of the choice the world is faced with today! There must be some form of world law—or there will be total disaster. In an atmosphere clouded with fear and insecurity, where the ethical standards have lagged behind the technological advances, it is the tenuous job of religion to stimulate each person with an active sense of moral and social responsibility.

The "Little Synagogue" of Oak Lane was created out of a need for this type of positive spiritual leadership. It has enriched its Congregation with a wealth of Jewish heritage, made possible by a generous reciprocal relationship between Rabbi and Congregation, and in turn, between the Congregants and the community in which they live.

In the last analysis, it is only the mind and spirit of man which can be ascendant. It was out of the desire to worship in freedom, equality and progressiveness that Temple Judea was created; it is in this same spirit of service, democracy, and integrity as exemplified in the highest traditions of the Jewish faith, that Temple Judea looks forward to the future.

B. J. L.

Presidents of Congregation



Mr. Alexander Van Straaten



Mr. Arthur Lefco



Mr. Joseph B. Seitchik



Mr. Samuel A. Klein



Mr. Abram R. Finkel

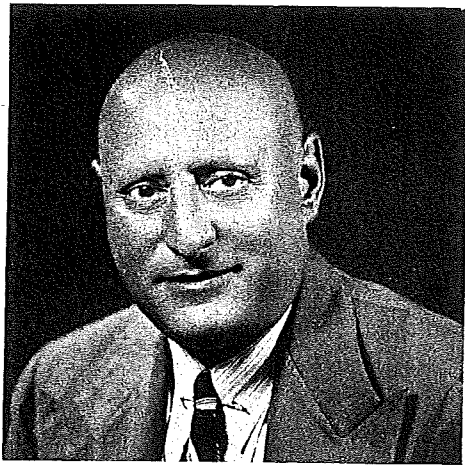


Mr. Herman R. Goldberg

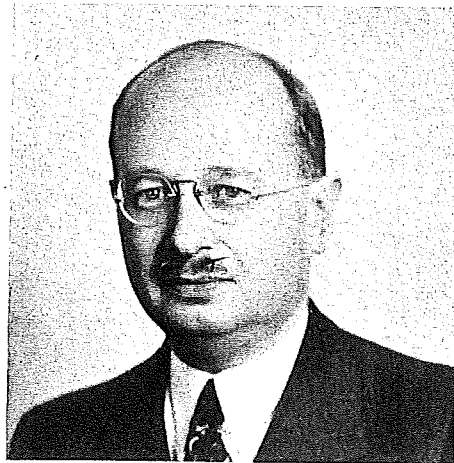


Mr. Edward H. Cushman

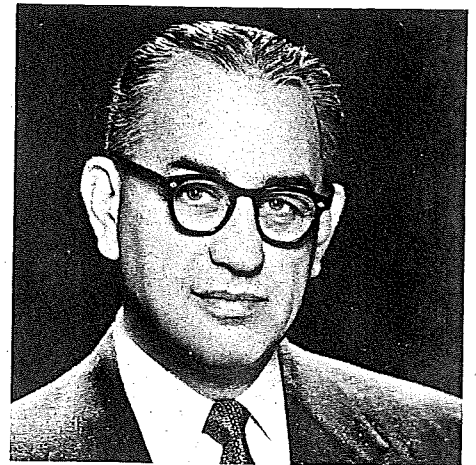
Men's Club Presidents



Mr. Edwin Weil



Mr. Samuel Einhorn



Mr. Abram R. Finkel



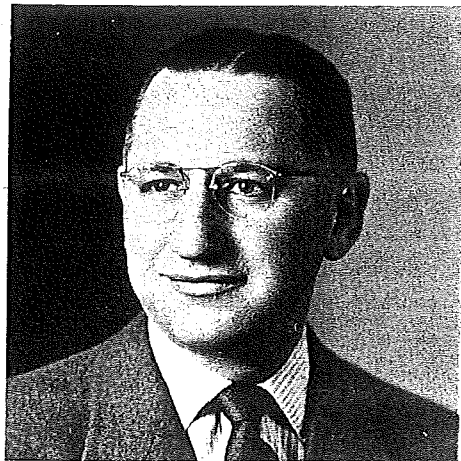
Mr. Harold Rice



Mr. William Cohan



Mr. Herman Zimmerman



Mr. Harold Goldman



Mr. Perez Epstein



Mr. Phineas Wittenberg



Mr. Isadore Jarin



Mr. Sidney Weiss



Dr. Norman Bram

Sisterhood Presidents



Mrs. H. Gras



Mrs. H. Somers



Mrs. H. Salus



Mrs. Herman Goldberg



Mrs. Michael Michaels



Mrs. Isadore Oppenheimer



Mrs. Arthur Beren



Mrs. B. Salesky



Mrs. Albert Farber



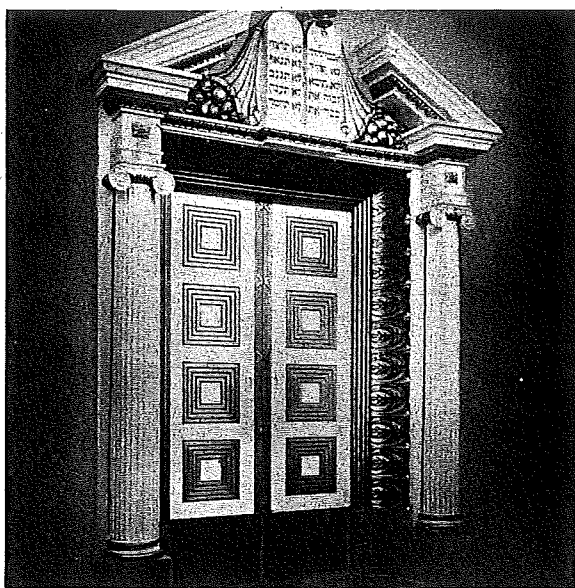
Mrs. Anton Lieberman



Mrs. Norman Bram



Mrs. Lewis E. Weiss

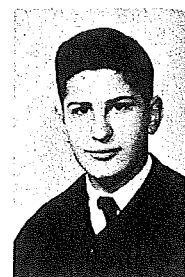


TEMPLE JUDEA

CLASS OF 1954



Joan Parness



John Packel



Phyllis Weiser



Suzanne Fisher



Robin Horowitz



Herbert Fisher



Iris Basche



Elaine Taxin



George Abrams



Ann Myer



Lynn Jaron



Joanne Goldin



Patsy White



Jane Friedman



Sandy Lewis



Janice Pepper



Deanne Federman



Jerry Milgram



Carol Burden



Judith Rech



Robert Korn



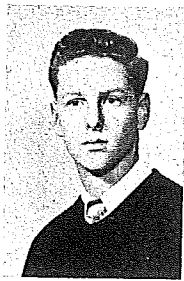
Nancy Sherman



Susan Salesky



Ronnie Neulight



Dickie Seitchik



Judith Felgoise



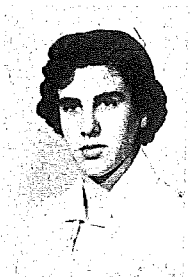
RABBI LASKER



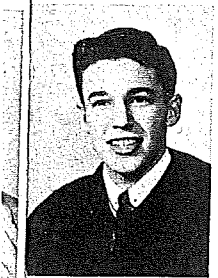
Judy Blumberg



Lynne Levick



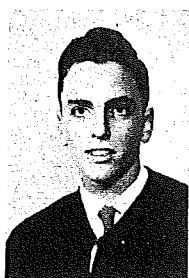
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Richard Cohen



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Carol Abramson



Suzanne Miller



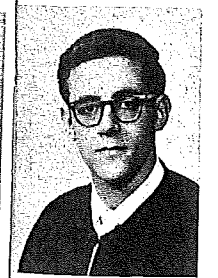
Janet Maleson



Judy Farber



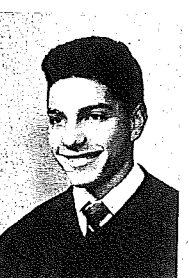
Sandra Hamburg



Robert Brickman



Marcia Abrams



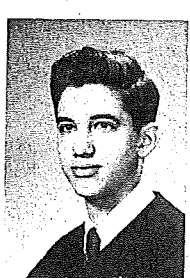
Steven Saltzman



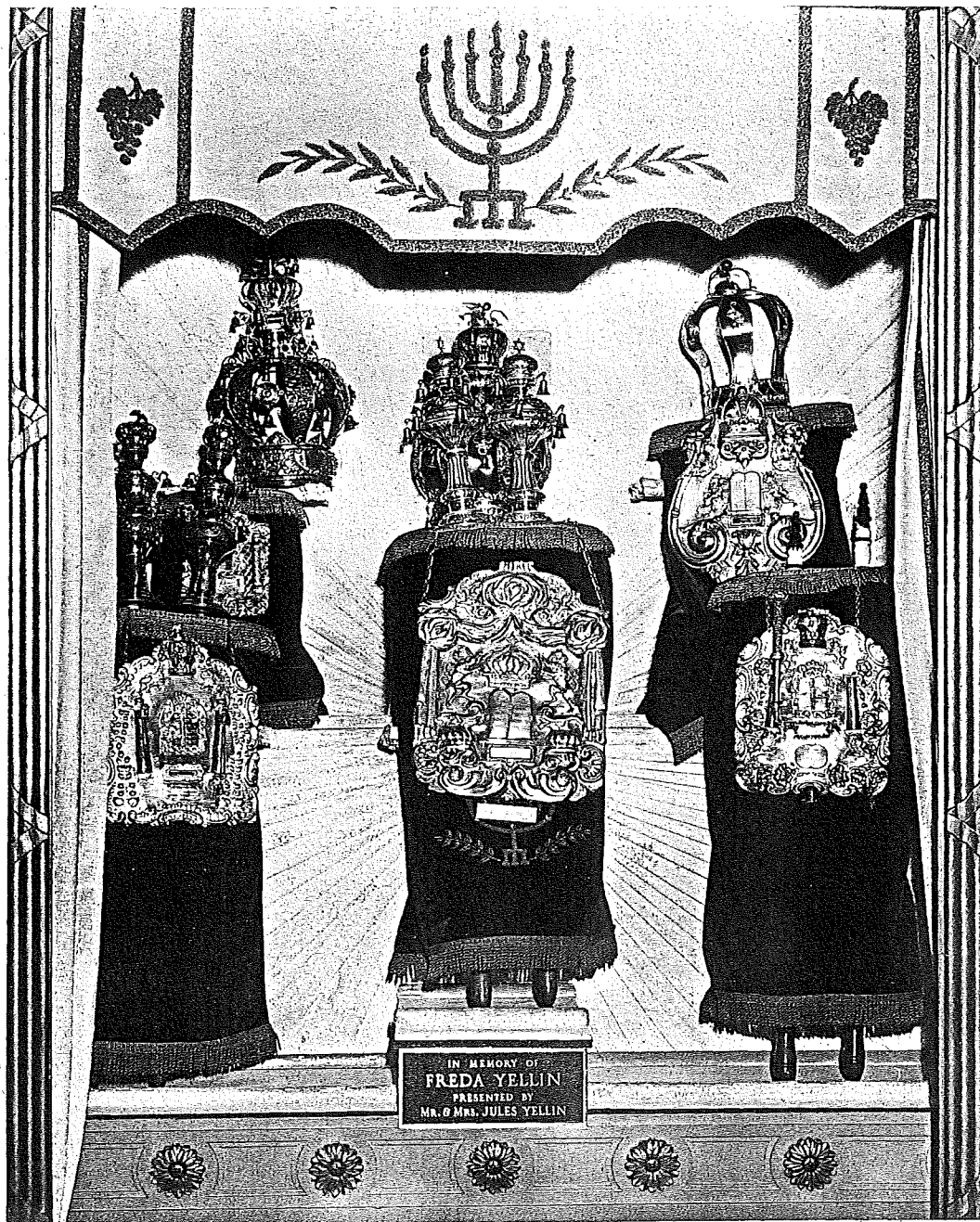
Phyllis Pettler



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Philip Foster



Torah Ark — with ornaments of Temple Judea

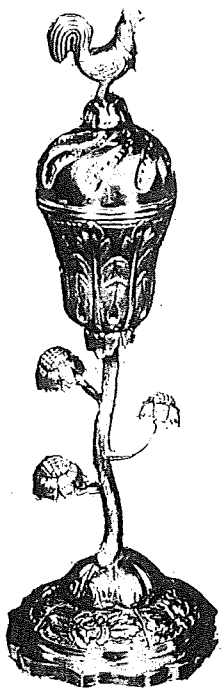
Here we see the Torah dressed in the accepted manner. A beautiful silk-velvet mantle, covered with a silver breastplate and a three-tier silver crown. The three tiers represent (a) The Crown of Torah; (b) The Crown of Priesthood; (c) The Crown of Royalty.

The Museum Room

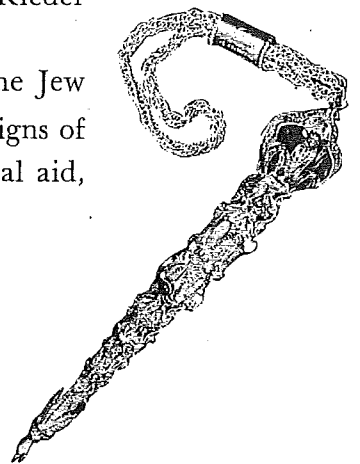
A new Temple, just as a new home, requires many furnishings, and the Sisterhood and Men's Club put their hands to the task of changing a cold room of four walls into a warm Temple. But in the rush and excitement of the essentials—the Ark of the Law was completely forgotten. And there it stood, with three Torahs crowded together, with no ornament, no decoration, no warmth.

It was in this situation that Rabbi Lasker found the Temple on his arrival. And from the very first moment, he claimed: "The Ark is the central point towards which all eyes turn. The Ark must be beautiful, rich in color and design." Pursuing this idea—he requested the first confirmation class to present a set of chased wrought silver finials as their gift to the Temple. With this as a beginning, the Museum, now termed the Rieder Museum Room, was initiated.

It is in this room that one can sense the hunger of the Jew to express himself in the arts. And it is the beautiful designs of this art that the Rabbi employed to teach, through visual aid,



Each holiday in Jewish life has its ritual objects. The Sabbath is concluded with the ceremony of Haddalah, meaning separation. It is the separation of the Holy Sabbath from the toiling week-day. This ceremony calls for wine, spices and a twisted candle. And the spice container appears in all shapes and forms. As towers—indicative of the fact that in former times spices were precious and kept under lock and key in the medieval towers. In East Europe they appear in form of a fruit or a flower.

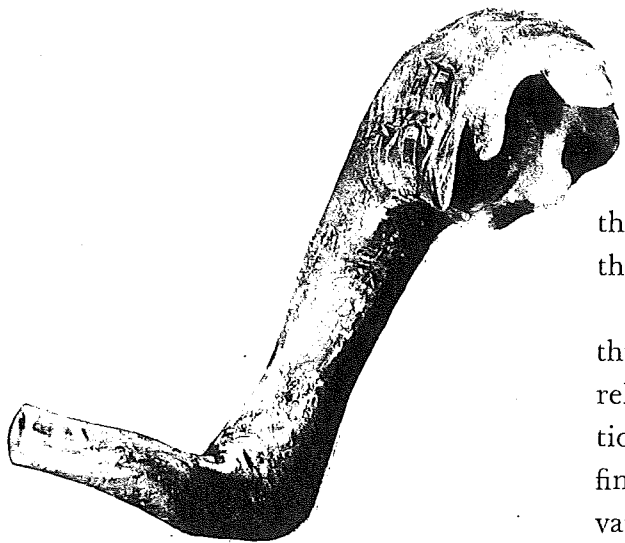
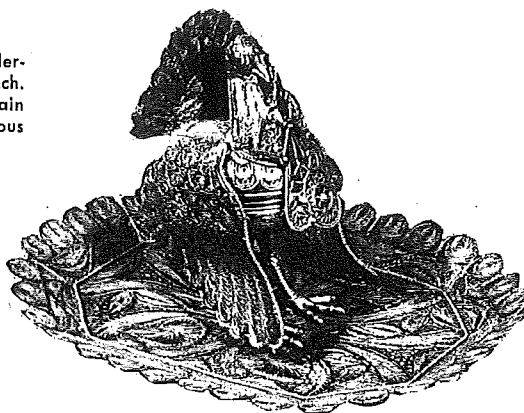


Now since the Torah is a scroll, handwritten on parchment, with no vowels and paragraphs; and since it was considered bad taste to handle it with the hands—a Torah pointer was created. And the Temple Museum has many such pointers. Some are simple in form and design, and some are most ornate with filigree work in which precious stones are imbedded.

A Torah pointer in filigree work, with precious stones and a bell inside (from Turkey).

The Feast of Tabernacles—commemorates Israel's trek through the wilderness. It is on this festival that the Ethrog is joined by the Palm Branch. When not in use, the Ethrog is placed in a box for protection, and again we find the imagination of the Jewish artist expressing himself in various shapes and forms of the Ethrog container.

A silver wire-spun Ethrog box in the form of a peacock (Italy)

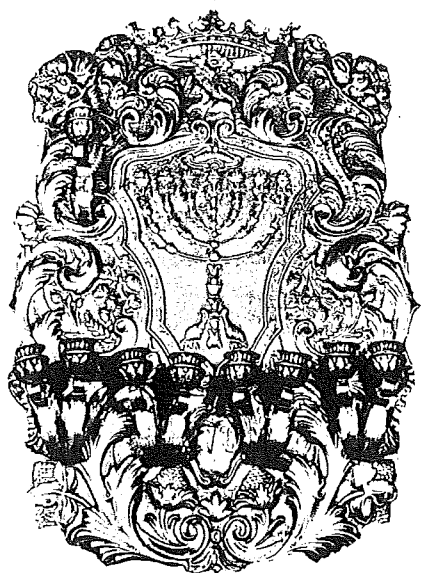


The New Year is made significant by the blowing of the Shofar—a ram's horn that is twisted to the proper shape. Some of the old horns have carving on them.

the significance of the Holidays to the children of the religious school.

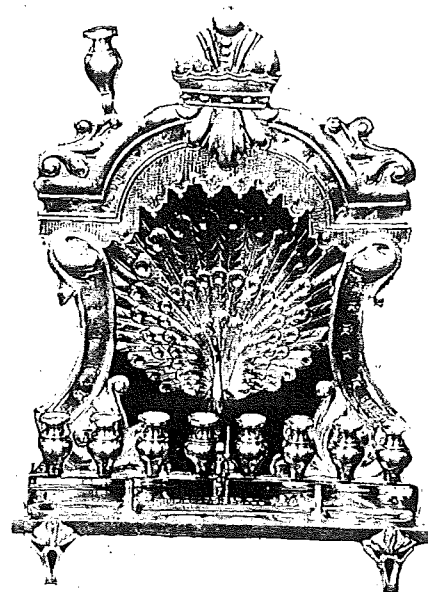
Through class visits to this museum, and through regular exhibitions in the assembly—our religious school is made aware of the rich contribution our people made in the plastic arts. Here we find silver Torah crown, fashioned and wrought in various countries, and silver breast plates, which reveal the influence of the land of the artist. A rich ornamental, filigree gilded breast-plate—whose style is Greek Orthodox side by side with a simple silver breast-plate whose straight columns and floral designs indicate its origin from Hungary.

Through a special Museum Fund, which the Rabbi created, this room was enriched by Esther scrolls of various vintage and origin and innumerable Ethrog boxes. Spice containers of every shape and form—stand side by side with Passover plates, Hanukkah lamps, and many other interesting items gathered throughout the year.



The Feast of Lights, celebrated for eight days, commemorates the victory of the Maccabees in 165 B.C.E. The main feature of this festival is the kindling of the lights, one on the first night and adding one to each successive night. The ninth candle is called the "Shamash."

Hanukkah lamps in various forms.





Silver filigree case with semi-precious stones.

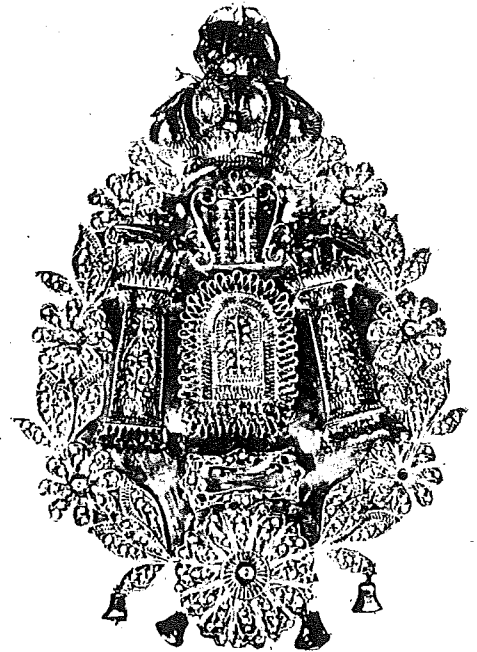
Men and women at all times feared the unknown and sought for ways and means to protect themselves from the unknown forces. Amulets (Komeath) were often worn as a means of protection against misfortune, sickness, or the evil eye. The amulet contained special prayers or magic texts on parchment.

To house all of these wonderful objects, Messrs. Charles and Warwick Rieder, active members of the congregation, built around this room beautiful walnut display cases with proper lighting effects. In appreciation of this generosity, this was then named "The Rieder Museum Room," pictured on the back fly leaf of this book.

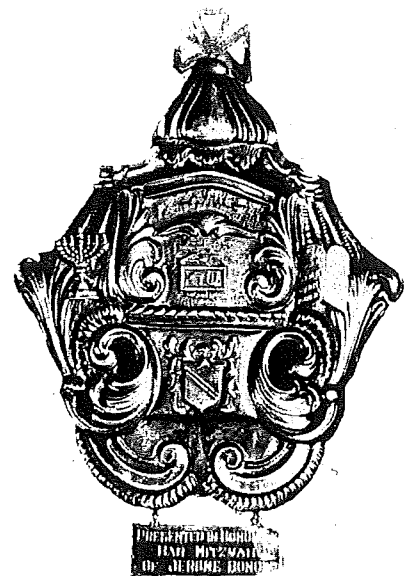
As more and more precious objects were accumulated—they were frequently placed on exhibition for Jews and non-Jews, in the city and outside the city, and we are proud to have some appear in this twenty-fifth anniversary booklet of our Temple.

Even before entering the Museum room, one is immediately made aware of the Congregation's love for beauty. For as one enters the lobby of the Temple, one is at once stirred by the magnificent color and technique of the painting by Lazar Krestin, entitled "The House of Study," which is reproduced on the front fly leaf. This was presented to Temple Judea in memory of Arthur Grossman by a host of his friends.

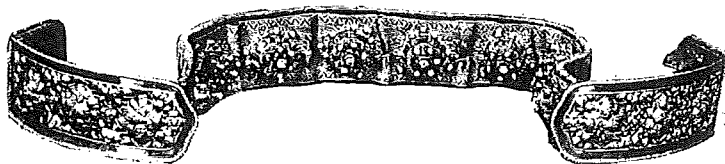
RABBI MEIR LASKER



Torah Shield in filigree work, Russian 18th Century



One of the many silver amulets with decorations. The center panel opens for the insertion of the parchment. The word Shaddei (Almighty God) is engraved in the center panel. One can see the priestly crown, the Tablets of the Law, and the Seven Branched Candlesticks.



Wedding Belt—more than 250 years old used in Germanic countries, 15th and 16th centuries.

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In memory of my beloved wife, Esther Ladenson

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*In memory of our son,
Richard Paul Zaslow*

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A TESTIMONIAL RESOLUTION

TO

Rabbi Meir Lasker

Be it Remembered that:

Whereas, in the year 5701 there came to Temple Judea in the City of Philadelphia a new Spiritual Leader; and

Whereas, in the years of their growth from that day to this the said Congregation has been guided by the learning of this man of God; and

Whereas, he has faithfully served the members of this Congregation as Rabbi, Teacher, Counsellor and Friend; and

Whereas, he has brought to the homes of the members of this Congregation the word of God in time of Joy and solace in the hour of Sorrow; and

Whereas, he has inspired both adult and child to learn Judaism and to practice its Precepts; and

Whereas, the Sincerity, Simplicity and Steadfastness of Purpose of this man have endeared him in the hearts of his Congregation and to all in the Community who have come to know him:

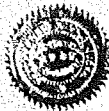
And then, on this Tenth Anniversary of the coming to Temple Judea of Rabbi Meir Lasker, the members of his congregation offer prayers of thanks to God for having chosen him as their Leader;

And beseech the Almighty Father in His Infinite Wisdom to grant a full life to this man, who is their Rabbi, Teacher, Counsellor and Friend, so that together they may go from strength to strength and commemorate many more Anniversaries;

Wherefore be it Resolved that the members of Temple Judea in testimony of their esteem and loving affection for Rabbi Meir Lasker, do present to him a portrait of himself, that this likeness of his features may be a source of Gratification and Pride to his family and his many friends who hold him in high Regard and a continuing source of Inspiration to this Community in Israel which he is so Faithfully serving, and God willing, may he continue to do so for many Decades to come.

In Witness Whereof, pursuant to direction of the Board of Trustees of Temple Judea, in the City of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on this 1st Day of Tammuz, 5711, (June 5, 1951) this testimonial has been duly executed by its President and attested by its Secretary, the Original hereof to be Publicly presented to the said Rabbi Meir Lasker and a copy hereof to be recorded in the permanent Archives of the said Temple Judea.

In the Name of God, Amen.



Temple Judea

by Herman R. Prochberg,

president

attest Maimon J. Kohn

secretary





1930 Silver Anniversary 1955

Rieder Memorial Room
With Some Museum Pieces