

## CHAPTER 4

# WORLD WAR II AND POSTWAR GROWTH

*By Stanley Schwartz and Lawrence Krause*



### EVEN BEFORE THE JAPANESE ATTACK

On Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, which drew the United States into World War II, San Diego was heavily affected by the hostilities in Europe and Asia. President Roosevelt was determined to make the United States the arsenal of democracy with the lend-lease program to England. Because airplanes were central to the program, the aircraft industry of San Diego – which included Consolidated Aircraft, and to a lesser extent, Ryan, Solar and Rohr – expanded at breakneck speed. San Diego became a boom town again.

After Pearl Harbor, the city was cloaked in blackouts for a few weeks. Friday night services were held in the council room of the temple center, which was equipped for blackouts. The congregation did its part for Jewish servicemen and women on duty here. Two hundred servicemen and women attended the first seder conducted in the temple after the United States became involved in the war. Saturday night dances were held regularly in the temple center. Gentile servicemen often asked their Jewish comrades to take them along to these social events. High Holy Days services in 1944 were held at the San Diego Women's Club, across the street from the temple, to accommodate the large number of servicemen and women who desired to attend.

Rabbi Moise Bergman served as a civilian chaplain, performing volunteer duties in local military camps. Many people were asked to serve the congregation. Harry Tennebaum, at the tender age of 13 and just one year past confirmation, was one of the volunteers who taught Sunday school. Tennebaum recalls teaching on Sunday, December 7, 1941, when war broke out at 10:00 a.m. Pacific time. Since San Diego was considered a war zone, everyone was ordered off the streets and went home to turn on their radios.

By the time of the congregation's annual meeting in January 1944, sufficient funds had been raised to pay off the mortgage and all other indebtedness. In addition, funds were available to repaint the temple and improve

its acoustics. A gala event to celebrate the burning of the mortgage was held on December 12, 1944, in the temple. This event also celebrated Rabbi Bergman's 10 years of service to the congregation. The two earliest members of the congregation, Eleanora (Mrs. Adolph) Levi and Cecilia Schiller (daughter of Marcus and Hannah Schiller), performed the ceremonial burning of the mortgage during Chanukah.

The year before, in 1943, Adolph Levi, beloved pioneer and past president of the congregation, died. In January 1946, Henry Weinberger resigned after having served seven years as president. Nathan F. Baranov succeeded him. The first issue of the *Temple Bulletin*, now known as *Tidings*, was published in June 1946, and Rabbi Bergman retired from the pulpit on July 24, 1946, due to illness.



*Harry Tennebaum, confirmed in June 1941, recalled teaching Sunday school the day Pearl Harbor was attacked and everyone in San Diego was ordered off the streets.*

### RABBI MORTON J. COHN

That same month, July 1946, Rabbi Morton J. Cohn came to San Diego as a guest preacher. Soon after, he was elected the next rabbi of Beth Israel. For the first time in its history, the congregation acquired a residence, at 1844 Sheridan Avenue, as a parish house for the use of its rabbi.



*Rabbi Morton Cohn served as a Navy chaplain for three years during World War II and then became a chaplain in the Navy Reserve.*

Rabbi Cohn had served as a Navy chaplain for three years during World War II and had seen duty in the South Pacific and at Pearl Harbor. In 1945, after active duty, he became a chaplain in the Navy Reserve. He held a Navy commission in the Reserve and served as Jewish chaplain in the San Diego area until 1962.

Beth Israel's Sisterhood remained particularly active during this period. It was instrumental, through its many activities and fundraisers, in sustaining and growing the congregation.

After 23 years of dormancy, a Men's Club was restarted in the fall of 1946, and a Youth League was established. Temple membership grew during 1947 to 314 member families. Two more groups were formed: a Parent-Teachers Association to aid the religious school, and a Temple Senior League for young adults in their 20s and early 30s. By the start of the new term in the fall of 1948, religious school enrollment had soared to 215 pupils.

During this same period, the congregation initiated physical improvements to the temple, including the installation of opera-type seats to replace the old-fashioned pews in the sanctuary. For the first time, seats were not "sold" at Beth Israel (a practice that traditionally raised funds for congregations). Extensive alterations improved the religious school facilities and added five classrooms. Carnivals held by the Temple Sisterhood raised a large portion of the costs of these improvements.

## "Rebbitzin" Sally Cohn and the Sisterhood

*By Ben Weinbaum*

SALLY COHN ARRIVED in San Diego with her husband, Rabbi Morton Cohn, and their two children, Jane and Morton, Jr., from Niagara Falls, New York, in the summer of 1946. When Rabbi Cohn became Beth Israel's rabbi, Sally joined her husband in cultivating and expanding the congregation's activities. She became active in the social life of the congregation, in Sisterhood and in Hadassah. She wrote scripts for temple theatrical productions for both adults and youngsters.

Sally Cohn was a strong advocate for interfaith cooperation between Beth Israel and San Diego churches and religious institutions, which has been a hallmark of the congregation for many years. She was a key organizer and co-chair of the Beth Israel Sisterhood's Women of Valour program, which recognized prominent San Diego women for their accomplishments in service to the greater community. Maggie Silverman, who was one of those named a Woman of Valour, recalls this as a great honor. The Women of Valour program elicited support and participation from throughout the city's cultural and business establishments. Sally Cohn was also instrumental in establishing the Salk Institute's Women's Auxiliary.

A key participant in Beth Israel's Sisterhood Shabbats, Sally Cohn made two noteworthy presentations: *What is a Rebbitzin?* and *What is Sisterhood?* She was an active fundraiser for the Beth Israel Sisterhood, and served as chair of the Finance Committee for the 1955 Biennial Convention of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

Sally Cohn promoted social life within the congregation, particularly among young adults and those newly married. She also helped organize a series of annual Country Fairs with food and knickknacks. Highly involved in the congregation, Sally Cohn, with her strong personality and emphatic style, left an indelible stamp on Temple Beth Israel.

Interfaith and community projects were very important to Rabbi Cohn. He frequently spoke to Christian youth groups who came to the temple. During the summer, he gave a series of lectures at an Episcopalian youth camp. In 1947, Beth Israel hosted the Christian ministers of the city at a one-day Institute on Judaism. Dr. Israel Bettan from Hebrew Union College conducted two sessions, and Beth Israel's Sisterhood served dinner to

the clergy. The Institute was warmly and enthusiastically acclaimed by the ministers who attended.

In May 1948, Beth Israel and the entire Jewish community of San Diego celebrated the creation of the State of Israel. Third Avenue was blocked off and a joyous rally was held just outside the temple. A special religious service marked the United Nations' proclamation.

## *Reform Judaism, Beth Israel and the State of Israel*

by Liz Levine

**B**EFORE HITLER'S RISE to power in Germany in the 1930s, the Reform Movement was generally anti-Zionist. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in its *Pittsburgh Platform* of 1885 declared: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and, therefore, expect neither a return to Palestine...nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."

Two major reasons existed for this position. First, the founders of Reform Judaism were idealists: they believed that the mission of the Jewish people was to bring about the dawn of the Messianic time. Zionism, to them, was narrow and parochial, and they understood the dispersal of Jews throughout the nations to be essential because people of all races and religions needed to work together for the betterment of humanity. Second – and less ideological but nonetheless understandable – American Jews in the early 20th century worried that the establishment of a Jewish state would subject them to charges of dual loyalty. This was not an unfounded fear: antisemitism in America was prevalent and, for the most part, socially acceptable.

However, by 1937, with the rise of Nazism, the CCAR had reversed its position. In its *Columbus Platform*, the Reform rabbis stated that: "We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its [Palestine's] up-building as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life." They also reaffirmed Reform Judaism's universal message: "We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God,

of universal brotherhood, justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal."

In its *Centenary Perspective* in 1976, the CCAR again took up the question of Zionism, stating: "We are bound to...the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties....We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security and defining its Jewish character." The *Centenary Perspective* also reaffirmed the historic universalism of Reform Judaism: "The State of Israel and the diaspora, in fruitful dialogue, can show how a people transcends nationalism even as it affirms it, thereby setting an example for humanity, which remains largely concerned with dangerously parochial goals."

Recently, in 1997, the CCAR devoted an entire platform, the *Miami Platform*, to the relationship between Reform Judaism and Zionism. Included was a section entitled "Our Obligations to Israel," which includes the perhaps surprising encouragement of *aliyah*, immigration, to Israel: "While affirming the authenticity and necessity of a creative and vibrant Diaspora Jewry, we encourage *aliyah* to Israel in pursuance of the precept of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* [settling the Land of Israel]. While Jews can live Torah-centered lives in the Diaspora, only in *Medinat Yisrael* [the country of Israel] do they bear the primary responsibility for the governance of society, and thus may realize the full potential of their individual and communal religious strivings."

Little is known of Beth Israel's position on Zionism before the *Columbus Platform* of 1937. We do know that by 1948, Beth Israel members were ecstatic over the founding of the state of Israel. An exuberant rally was held outside Beth Israel on May 14, 1948, when the United Nations declared Israel's statehood. Longtime member Carol Fox recalls her aunt telling  
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her about the occasion: it was her aunt's most memorable birthday, she said, her 21st, and she went to temple with a group of her friends and danced in the street.

Today all Reform rabbis and cantors spend one year of their studies in Israel. There is a growing Reform Movement in Israel, The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform seminary, has a campus in Jerusalem. It is common now for Beth Israel's clergy to study in Israel during the summer or on sabbatical and to take groups from the congregation to Israel. In 2008, Cantor Bernstein led the teen and youth choirs, with their families, on a trip to Israel, where they toured and performed, and Rabbi Berk led a group of adults in 2011.

Beth Israel has an Israel Committee that educates and advocates for Israel. The committee, known originally as the Stand with Israel Committee, was started in 2002, a time when Israel was frequently attacked by terrorists. Linda Platt and Phyllis Cohn were its founders, and Carol Fox soon joined as a third chair. Its goal was to educate the congregation about

the State of Israel and its importance, and to inspire passion and support for Israel.

The committee sponsored speakers and programs, wrote columns for *Tidings*, and was responsible for each May issue of *Tidings* bearing an Israel-related cover and articles about Israel, a tradition that continues to this day. The committee also was responsible for the “CBI Stands with Israel” banner in the temple courtyard. Beth Israel, through Stand with Israel, supported OneFamily, an organization that helps victims of terrorism and their families. Dr. Roger Acheatel was instrumental in forging this relationship between the congregation and OneFamily.

Several significant pro-Israel activities in San Diego had their beginnings with the Stand with Israel Committee. J. J. Surbeck, one of the early chairs, went on to create (with Rita Heller) T.E.A.M., Training and Education about the Middle East, which in turn spurred others in the community to pro-Israel activities. The Stand with Israel Committee also brought the concept of a coalition of Israel-related organizations to the Jewish Federation of San Diego County, a coalition that exists today, known informally as “the Forum.”



*Beth Israel's Stand with Israel Committee was started in 2002 by Phyllis Cohn (shown here), Linda Platt and Carol Fox. Its goal was to inform, educate, and inspire support for Israel.*

# Beth Israel Members in the San Diego Business Community

By George Wise

THE 1940s AND 1950s in San Diego brought Jews to prominence in a number of fields, particularly business. To mention a few, the Solof brothers were prominent men's clothiers, with a store in the U.S. Grant building. Isaac Ratner, a cap manufacturer, moved his wife and family of six children from New York City and re-established his cap manufacturing business in San Diego in the 1920s. Two of his sons, Abe and Nate, joined him in the business as salesmen and grew the Ratner clothing business into one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the world, with brands such as Hang Ten (in the early 1970s). Abe and Nate's cousins, Woodrow and Seymour, owned Ratner Electric. Sol Price became a partner in Fed Mart, a chain of discount stores that eventually would stretch to and include Texas.

Furniture was an important area for Jews as well. Herman Haimsohn opened Modern Furniture, which he handed down later to his sons, Herb and Ed. Frank Winicki opened United Furniture, which became a major chain. Max Weinstock opened Union Furniture, which also became a chain and included stores in Tijuana, Mexico. Alex Wise owned furniture stores in Tijuana and Ensenada. He later sold his Tijuana store, Muebleria Universal, to the Ilkovics family (who later changed their name to Ilko). The family also opened a manufacturing plant. In the '50s Alex Wise opened Wise Furniture.

The Burnett family, the Schulman family, and the Mallen family each opened furniture stores early in San Diego's history. Victor Schulman's father, Irvine Schulman, owned Globe Furniture at Twelfth and Broadway. Victor Schulman founded V. J. Lloyd's House of Fine Furniture and Interior Design on El Cajon Boulevard, along with his brother, Norman Schulman, and his sister, Avalon Shannon. Lloyd's Furniture Store specialized in high-end furniture, and for many years sold more high-end furniture than any single store in all of Southern California. Victor Schulman, with his wife, Ruth Levi Schulman, later owned a unique antique furniture store, called the House of Heirlooms.

Prior to the formation of Fed Mart, Victor Schulman founded Serv Mart, one of the earliest discount-type stores in Southern California. He opened one store near Rosecrans and Sports Arena Boulevard and the other in Pico Rivera in Los Angeles County. He and Bill Starr, along with others, were also part owners in the 1950s of the then-minor league San Diego Padres.

Nate and Sylvan Baranov and Max Zeman were jewelers in San Diego. Henry Price was in the insurance business. Henry Weinberger, who served as a president of Beth Israel, was in the mortgage business. Shearn Platt's parents, Anne and Raymond Platt, who joined Beth Israel in 1945, were Dr. Pepper and Hires Root Beer bottlers.

Another prominent Jewish San Diegan of this era was Murray Goodrich, who was in the war surplus business. Goodrich raised large sums for the Jewish community of San Diego as well as for the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). He later launched an unsuccessful campaign for mayor.

Maury Novak owned the Bohemian Bakery at Twelfth and Market streets, which became the principal bakery and deli in San Diego. It was also the place to meet for the Jews in the downtown area, as was Blumers in the College area. Morrie Douglas owned Douglas Tires, and across the street the Cantor brothers owned Cantor Tires.

Also, in the 1940s and 1950s, the Strahl family owned a chain of shoe stores spread throughout the area, named Shelby's Shoes. The business was started by Mac and Blanch Strahl, whose children Mel and Irma went on to work in the business. Mel and Irma's younger sister, Helene, became a prominent member of Beth Israel, married to Bob Baum.

Edward Schwartz joined Sol Price's law firm and later was named to the Federal bench and had a Federal building named in his honor. Jacob Weinberger became one of San Diego's more prominent attorneys; he, too, later served on the Federal bench and was so highly regarded that the Federal Bankruptcy Court Building downtown was *(continued on page 52)*

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named in his honor. Past President Bob Berton was a partner with Sol Price and Edward Schwartz in the law firm of Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves and Savitch, and as an attorney, he represented Ratner Clothing Company, the Haimsohns and Modern Furniture (now Lawrance Furniture), Alex and Elizabeth Wise, and the Burnett family, including Burnett Furniture Stores.

Locker clubs were popular places with Navy sailors who were granted liberty in San Diego. Because they were required to wear their uniforms when going off ship, sailors joined locker clubs where they could rent a locker and change into civilian clothes. The Samuels family was a partner in the Columbia Locker Club. The 101 Locker Club was owned in part by Bill “Whitey” Colt, and the Kitean family owned the Seven Seas Locker Club, all in the downtown area.

Eli Witt owned and operated the only kosher butcher shop in town, and Morris Breitbard operated

the California Laundry, which was taken over later by his son Bob. Bob Breitbard later opened the Hall of Champions in Balboa Park. Ben Carnot opened a dry cleaners and laundry in La Jolla. He was the first Jewish merchant in that area.

Descendants from many of these families continue to remain active in San Diego’s Jewish community. Pauline Foster and the late Sandy Ratner are descendants of the Ratner family, as were Pauline and Stanley Foster’s daughters, Lisa Foster, Marcia Hazan and Karen Silberman. The grandfather of Jeff Silberman, a former president of the congregation, was Isadore Silberman, esteemed for his warmth in greeting newcomers to Beth Israel services. Jeff Silberman’s father, Richard (Dick) Silberman, was a business partner of the founder of the Jack in the Box fast-food hamburger chain. These families and many others have been loyal and generous contributors to Congregation Beth Israel.

## BETH ISRAEL GROWS

By the end of 1948, a concerted campaign for new members raised the rolls of Beth Israel to 364 families. That year also brought a great loss to the Jewish community with the death of Beth Israel’s beloved former rabbi Moise Bergman in July 1948.

Also in 1948, a magnificent Wurlitzer organ was presented to the congregation by Selma Getz and Estelle Levi, daughter and daughter-in-law, respectively, of Adolph Levi. The congregation’s old organ was donated to the Logan Chapel, AME Zion Church, in Logan Heights, in a beautiful ceremony.

The Temple Sisterhood’s major project in 1949 was improving the temple center’s stage. In 1950, the congregation completed and dedicated the beautiful Bergman Memorial Altar. Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood, partly through its “super fundraising affair of the year, the Country Fair,”<sup>lxxxiii</sup> helped raise funds for the altar as well as for improvements in the temple and in the religious school.

Beth Israel entered into organized youth programming in 1946 with the formation of Temple Youth League (TYL). The first president of TYL was Fred

Weitzen, who later served as president of the congregation during Rabbi Goor’s tenure.

For the first time in Beth Israel’s history, a cantorial soloist/choir director was retained on a year-round basis. Julian K. Miller came to Beth Israel on September 1, 1949. He organized a volunteer choir and introduced a popular Open Forum and Songfest held after Friday night services.



*Music in worship services has evolved through the decades, but since the beginning, choirs have included both women’s and men’s voices.*

## Youth Programming at Beth Israel

**I**N ADDITION TO RELIGIOUS school education, Beth Israel offers numerous activities that engage and challenge its young people, providing opportunities to serve, lead and contribute to their community. Programming at Beth Israel has developed over the years to encourage and keep young people meaningfully involved in the congregation and with their peers.

With the formation in 1946 of Temple Youth League, with Fred Weitzen Jr. as its first president, Beth Israel joined a national movement to provide organized youth programming. NFTY – North American Federation of Temple Youth – began in 1939 under the auspices of the UAHC, now URJ (Union for Reform Judaism).

Longtime member Carol Fox recalls that during the 1960s Beth Israel's Temple Youth League "was the center of Jewish life for San Diego Jewish teens. Between meetings, weekend conclaves with other Reform youth groups from our region, social action events and parties, we drew teens from all over the county. A TYL event was the place to be." These TYL events included youth from the Conservative and Orthodox synagogues: "There were so few Jewish kids in San Diego at that time," Fox said, "that the parents were just happy their kids socialized with other Jews."

For Carol Fox, involvement in TYL led to her sense of Beth Israel as a second home. "I believe that my involvement in Temple Youth League and the friendships I made through it, played a huge part in shaping my Jewish identity and instilling the Jewish values that have guided me throughout my life," she said.

Youth programming continued to develop

over the years with clergy and religious school teachers serving as advisors until 2006, when Michelle Berkowitz added youth programming to her religious school responsibilities. Berkowitz, a part-time youth director, was followed by the first full-time youth director, Jeremy Gimbel, who grew up at Beth Israel, participated in the congregation's youth groups, and returned to Beth Israel after he graduated from college. When Gimbel entered rabbinical school in 2011, Beth Israel leadership appointed Joellyn Zollman and Gary Hirschfeld to lead a youth task force under the guidance of Rabbi Michael Satz to envision new ways that Beth Israel could reach out to its youth. The board of directors placed youth engagement as one of its top priorities in strategic goals. The task force studied youth programs at synagogues around the country and held focus groups with many of the congregation's teens. At the end of the process Rabbi Satz held a nationwide search for a new director of youth programs and hired Daniel Brenner.

Brenner oversees Beth Israel's three youth groups: BITY (Beth Israel Temple Youth) for students in grades nine through 12, NOAR (meaning *youth* in Hebrew) for 6th to 8th graders, and J2 (J squared, or junior-junior) for 4th and 5th graders. He is also developing a Jewish outdoors club and a teen social action committee.

Other opportunities that Beth Israel offers for its youth to engage with one another and the congregation are through the madrichim (assistant teacher) program and through a youth choir, teen choir and teen band, under the direction of Rabbi/Cantor Arlene Bernstein.

Sisterhood hosted the Western Federation of Temple Sisterhoods Convention in 1950, and delegates from 33 sisterhoods attended.

The religious school expanded instruction in Hebrew to Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The Bergman Library Fund was started to provide books for the temple library, which was the only Jewish library in the city.

It is now known that when the congregation celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1952, it used the wrong date for its founding. Since the congregation dates back to 1861, the 75th was actually celebrated on Beth Israel's 91st anniversary. A beautiful brochure, *The Anniversary Story*, edited by Myron Lustig with the help of Nathan Schiller and Harold Keen, was created to mark



## Music in Worship Through the Decades

by Rabbi/Cantor Arlene Bernstein  
and Sandy Feldman

PRIOR TO 1979, WHEN Cantor Sheldon Merel established a stable cantorate at Beth Israel, the congregation was served by cantors and cantorial soloists Julian K. Miller, Henri Goldberg, H. Richard Brown, and David Ben-Veniste. Julian Miller was a composer/choir director and physicist; Cantor Goldberg joined the congregation for two years after Temple Solel and Beth Israel merged; Cantor Brown served as cantor-educator for six months; and soloist David Ben-Veniste alternated his service to Beth Israel with business in Los Angeles. The classical style of organ, choir director and professional choir set the tone for music in the synagogue.

During the tenure of Cantor Merel, a graduate of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion’s School of Sacred Music, cantor, organ and quartet or octet provided the liturgical music of Congregation Beth Israel. Cantor Merel served alongside Rabbi Michael Sternfield and retired in 1991. He was followed by the congregation’s first female cantor, Deborah Bard, in July 1992. Cantor Bard served the congregation until 1994, and when she left, Cantor Merel was persuaded to come out of retirement three weeks each month until Cantor Arlene Bernstein was engaged in July 1997. Guitarist/singer-songwriter Cara Freedman led the congregation’s family services alongside Rabbi Jonathan Stein. Freedman also led High Holy Days family services, arranged a talented teen choir for the High Holy Days and taught music in Beth Israel’s day school.

During the time Rabbi Jonathan Stein served as rabbi of the congregation, there was a cultural shift in music. Music from the Reform Movement’s camps swept its way into Reform services throughout the country. The highly participatory music of Debbie Friedman and other young composers began to infuse the liturgical music of the Reform Movement with *ruach*, spirit.

It was at this time that controversy arose between those who preferred organ music over guitar or piano to accompany the liturgy of worship services. Organ music, once a mainstay of Reform congregational life, had been important to many congregants because it allowed Jewish services to feel more “American,” with the organ blending in with the dominant Christian culture



*Worship services frequently fuse traditional cantorial music with the works of modern Jewish composers. Congregant and composer Andy Mayer is at the keyboard in a Kabbalat Shabbat courtyard service.*

of sacred music. At Beth Israel, Rabbi Stein and Cantor Bernstein added piano to worship services, and when the congregation moved to University City, a Steinway piano was purchased with funds contributed by Sid and Maggie Silverman in memory of Gregg Paul Silverman. The piano became the almost exclusive accompanying instrument for a few years.

Congregants who miss the sound of the organ and professional choirs during Shabbat services are predominantly those who grew up in the Classical Reform tradition. High Holy Days services continue to make use of the organ as well as a professional choir conducted and accompanied by Robert MacLeod. Since 2009, the Shabbat and Festival Choir, composed of volunteers from the congregation, has added its voice during Rosh Hashanah services in the Civic Theatre. The Shabbat and Festival Choir also sings monthly at Erev Shabbat services and special musical services, including Shabbat Shirah: the Sabbath of Song, Chanukah, Passover, Holocaust Remembrance services, and special services celebrating Jerusalem and the State of Israel. For many years, Tracy Hirschfeld, Cynthia Schraier, Susan Elden, Debbie Mishek, Bela Goodman, Sharon Russakoff, Don Greenberg, Herb Hein, Russ Gold and Robert Ziering have devoted their time and talent to the volunteer choir, rehearsed by Nancy Jones Johnson.

Other changes to the synagogue’s musical life include the addition of a musical ensemble, the Chai Band, composed of congregants Andy Mayer, Buddy Voit, Myla Wingard, Jeff Myers, Lou Rosen, Yvonne MacNeely and Heidi Gantwerk. Rabbi/Cantor Bernstein’s hope to revive the tradition of instrumental music once integral to



ancient Temple worship has been furthered as well by an adult-teen ensemble composed of piano, guitar, violins, viola, cello, oboe, flute, clarinet, trumpet and hand drums, which joins a more than 50-member Teen and Youth Choir for monthly family worship services. A spiritual late-night Soul Food Shabbat service, held monthly, is entirely musical. These innovations, along with the continuation of the monthly Tot Shabbat service, accompanied by guitar and sometimes by preschool guitarists, provide the congregation with new venues and styles of highly participatory worship.

Worship services at present may include a combination of *hazzanut*, or traditional cantorial music, and modal *nusach*, the melody, sound or mood of the service depending on when it is conducted, intertwined and fused with the works of modern Jewish composers such as Debbie Friedman, Danny Maseng, Craig Taubman, congregant Andy Mayer, and others. Sefardi, Yemenite, Yiddish and Chassidic music, both traditional and contemporary, also are now infused and ingrained in the music of the synagogue. Holidays particularly fill the sanctuary with world Jewish music.

Retaining our ancient tradition while providing the 21st-century Jew with new modalities for prayer, the past decades have abounded with change.



*The Chai Band, playing in 2011 at Beth Israel's Shabbabeque, is one of many musical innovations that provide Beth Israel members with new styles for participatory worship.*

the two-day celebration. While the brochure contained some factual errors, it nevertheless provided the early history of the congregation, and on its "Diamond Scroll," it recorded the names of many longtime members of Beth Israel and several business supporters.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

After serving the congregation for five years, Rabbi Cohn was elected to a new five-year term. This was the first time in its history that the congregation elected or re-elected a rabbi for longer than a two-year term. Beth Israel gained even greater community recognition in 1951, with the start of broadcasts by radio station KCBQ of Friday night services and sermons by Rabbi Cohn.

In 1949, Rabbi Cohn, together with Rabbi Baruch Stern of Beth Jacob and Rabbi Monroe Levens of Tifereth Israel, started the College of Jewish Studies, which became the Institute of Jewish Studies in the early 1950s and offered adult classes with sponsorship from all three local synagogues. For the first time, all three synagogues also joined together for a Thanksgiving worship service.

The decade of the 1950s saw a significant increase in temple activities. Worship services were evolving from Classical Reform to more traditional practices. The bar mitzvah service was introduced sometime before 1950. (Confirmation services had been held at Beth Israel since the late 1800s.) Since Hebrew was not yet studied intensively in Sunday and afternoon classes, bar mitzvah

students simply memorized their portions. This was the experience of Herb Solomon, who later became a leader in San Diego's Jewish community. Subsequently, every boy had to be enrolled in religious school by his 11th birthday to be prepared for bar mitzvah. Compared to Reform congregations in the east, Beth Israel was slow to (re)introduce the bar mitzvah ceremony. One Beth Israel member, Alan Sapowith, celebrated becoming bar mitzvah in 1938 at Reform Temple Beth Emeth in Wilmington, Delaware.



*Beth Israel celebrated its 75th anniversary for two event-filled days. Later it was discovered that the wrong date had been used for the congregation's founding, and 1952 was actually the congregation's 91st anniversary.*

Perhaps the most glaring lack of programming up until this time had been the absence of any educational program for the adolescent post-confirmation group. In 1946, Rabbi Cohn established a junior congregation

for teenagers. In 1947, he organized the Temple Senior League for young adults in their 20s and early 30s. Within two months this social and cultural group attracted a membership of more than 60.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE-CYCLE EVENTS AT BETH ISRAEL

By Anna Newton

**Y**OUNG PEOPLE'S life-cycle events in Reform Judaism are considered to be consecration, bar/bat mitzvah and confirmation. These events for the children of Beth Israel over the years have reflected the practices that were common to Reform Judaism in the United States. Sometimes we were a little behind the times, sometimes we were in front.

Consecration, as an initiation into Jewish religious education, was an ancient practice, but at Beth Israel, the first recorded consecration ceremony took place in 1970, near Simchat Torah. It was held during a Shabbat evening service for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children enrolled in the religious school. The practice of consecration has continued to the present.

Bar mitzvah in the early years of Reform Judaism was offered as an optional ceremony for boys who were children of congregation members. Beth Israel's first bar mitzvah was held in the mid-1940s.

Bar mitzvah classes at Beth Israel began during the 1950s, and two years of study was required. Bat mitzvah ceremonies came along later, both in the United States and at Beth Israel. The first American bat mitzvah ceremony occurred in 1922 and was celebrated by Judith Kaplan, daughter of Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism. Reform Judaism equivocated between bar/bat mitzvah rituals and confirmation for a number of decades in the early to mid 1900s. The first bat mitzvah at Beth Israel was likely in the 1960s.

Confirmation was considered the major life-cycle event related to Jewish religious education in many Reform American synagogues and was first



*Beth Israel children in the 1970s celebrate consecration as they begin their religious studies.*

conducted in the United States in 1847. The first confirmation service at Beth Israel was held in 1895 and included four boys; the second confirmation service, in 1899, included three boys and four girls. Confirmation ceremonies appear to have continued without interruption at Beth Israel since around 1910.

Becoming bar and bat mitzvah isn't only for children. In the United States, the first adult bar mitzvah was held in 1971. This ceremony has become a rite of passage for many Jewish adults who, for various reasons, never became bar or bat mitzvah as young people. Rabbi Michael Sternfield and Nadine Finkel, the congregation's first program director, brought the adult b'nai mitzvah program to Beth Israel between 1979 and 1982. Adult b'nai mitzvah classes have been held every few years since that time, and the one- to two-year program, along with the special group ceremony, has led to significant and meaningful engagement of adult participants.

The Sisterhood opened a gift shop in the temple center lobby. The religious school, with its largest enrollment to date, 231 children, had a teaching staff of 15, led by Robert Imberman, principal. Nursery school opened in September 1951. Bar mitzvah services were changed from Friday night to Saturday morning.

In 1958, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Rubin donated the *ner tamid*, eternal light, for the sanctuary. (Heretofore, the *ner tamid* used was the one from the Second and Beech temple.) The pulpit and kitchen were remodeled. Temple membership was 570 families, and religious school enrollment was over 400. These increases were due, most likely, to Rabbi Cohn's outreach to the community. By the next year, membership had increased to 622 families, with annual dues of \$125. In May 1959, Sarah Regina Harrow was hired to serve as director of education and youth activities.

With an eye toward future growth, the congregation purchased the property at 2542 Third Avenue for \$35,000 to build a school. The architect of the school was a well-known modernist, William Krisel. Among the other buildings he designed were the Coronado Shores, Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, and Camp Ramah. Harriet Dickman, a member of Beth Israel, created the relief sculpture in the atrium.

On Friday evening, March 27, 1959, a special service was held honoring the 25th anniversary of Rabbi Cohn in the rabbinate. Many spiritual leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities attended.



*Generations of families celebrated life-cycle events at Third and Laurel. Sandy (Schissel) Levinson, shown with her mother, Sally Schissel, was confirmed in May 1948.*

## UCSD AND THE END OF A COVENANT

*By Lawrence Krause*

**I**N THE 1950S, THE REGENTS of the University of California were planning a new research campus in Southern California, and principally in San Diego. They were considering locating it in La Jolla near the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, which had been in the UC system since 1912. However, there was a problem in that La Jolla was a restricted area, barring Jews and certain other minorities through restrictive covenants enforced by real estate agents. In a well-attended speech to the Real Estate Brokers Association, Professor Roger Revelle informed the real estate interests that there would be no campus in their midst unless they ended the anti-Semitic covenant. They agreed to do away with the restrictive covenants immediately.

UCSD was established in 1960 and has been an important resource for Beth Israel. Jewish professors and students have become involved at Beth Israel. The Men's Club Forum and other auxiliaries and committees have often called upon UCSD professors as speakers, and Jewish students at UCSD teach in Beth Israel's religious school.





## SCHISM AND REUNIFICATION

In 1960, as Beth Israel expanded, 68 members who sought a smaller, more intimate community split off to form a new congregation, which they named Temple Solel. Included in this group were some prominent members of Beth Israel. The new congregation met in a Unitarian church in Hillcrest. Beth Israel lent Temple Solel a Torah scroll and prayer books, and the new congregation engaged Navy chaplain Rabbi Daniel Litt for one year, and then Rabbi Joel S. Goor and Cantor Henri Goldberg.

Temple Solel purchased land in Heritage Park near Old Town, on the site where the first Temple Beth Israel now sits. Elaborate plans were created for a new campus, and a fundraising campaign was designed to implement the plans.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

This was a year of change. Beth Israel's by-laws were changed to increase the size of the board to 19 directors, with at least two women. The synagogue was becoming a complex institution that required established, current procedures for governance.

In 1960, Howard Slayen became the first bar mitzvah boy at Beth Israel to wear a *tallit*, or prayer shawl. Heretofore, wearing a *tallit* or *kippah*, head covering, had been considered too traditional for the Reform congregation.

Under the leadership of President Alfred (Al) Brooks, the congregation built its religious school building, which opened in September 1961. William Starr chaired the building committee. Sisterhood pledged \$15,000 over a three-year period for furnishings. Tuition was \$8.00 per child.

On March 19, 1961, a time capsule including the following items was dedicated for the Beth Israel Religious School: a copy of the temple's constitution, membership roster, a copy of *Tidings*, photo of the board of directors, a list of contributors to the new building, a prayer book, *The Anniversary Story* of 1952, school rosters, a confirmation program and certificates, a prize-winning essay, a campaign book, and a dedication program. The capsule was buried at the entrance to what became known as the Youth Lounge. On October 21, 2001, prior to the congregation's move from Third and Laurel to Towne Centre Drive, a crowd gathered for a festive opening of the time capsule. At this moving ceremony, the capsule was opened by Al Brooks, who had been president when it was buried, with assistance from Bob Epstein, who succeeded Brooks as president in 1962.

In 1962, Rabbi Cohn left the congregation and two years later formed Temple Emanu-El in the College area of San Diego, where he remained until his retirement in 1978. During his 15 years at Beth Israel, the congregation had grown from 160 to more than 600 families. His legacy included uniting the San Diego Jewish community and his pioneering efforts in interfaith relations.

### *Beth Israel's Gift Shop*

*by Joan Kutner*

IN THE 1960s, Beth Israel's gift shop consisted of one jewelry display counter with retail proceeds benefiting religious school programs. In the early 1970s, the display case was moved to an area just inside the street entrance to the temple center. A secure nook with display shelves allowed more stock to be offered for sale. By the early 1970s, the gift shop was called the Sisterhood Shop and was staffed with volunteers from the Sisterhood membership.

The shop offered Judaica merchandise that was not otherwise available in San Diego. This saved Beth Israel members from having to drive to Los Angeles to obtain such items. The funds raised from the shop continued to be used to benefit the religious school.

In early 1980, the gift shop grew into a true shop when a storeroom was converted into additional retail space. Sisterhood relinquished managing and staffing the shop, and it was renamed the Temple Gift Shop. Now there were two display cases, multiple shelves and a much larger assortment of Judaica items. Proceeds were used to benefit various temple programs.

When Beth Israel moved to its current campus in University City, the beautiful Glazer Gift Shop came into being, a far cry from the original, single display case and very cramped multi-use room. Even now, in late 2011 and 2012, the Glazer Gift Shop is being upgraded and stocked with new inventory. Its highly anticipated reopening is scheduled for the summer of 2012.

# HIGH HOLY DAYS SERVICES: FROM MEMBERS' HOMES TO THE CIVIC THEATRE

By Anna Newton

**C**ELEBRATING THE High Holy Days as a community has been central to Beth Israel, from its beginnings in 1861 to the present day. An early newspaper article described the “Israelites gathering in their homes to celebrate their religious holidays.” When times were lean and the local economy was challenged, members of Beth Israel still managed to gather for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Early on, members met in individuals’ homes, and later in the temple on Second and Beech streets. Some years, High Holy Days services constituted the congregation’s only communal events.

The High Holy Days remain the unifying holiday for many Jews who are not involved in organized religious life the rest of the year. The High Holy Days also provide an opportunity for congregations, including Beth Israel, to grow membership rolls and to open their doors to unaffiliated Jews who seek a religious home as well as a place to celebrate the New Year and observe the Day of



*Crowds outgrew the sanctuary at Third and Laurel, and Beth Israel began holding High Holy Days services at the Civic Theatre in downtown San Diego in 1965.*

Atonement with fellow Jews.

As Beth Israel grew in size, the congregation in 1965 began holding its High Holy Days services in downtown San Diego at the Civic Theatre in order to accommodate all members and nonmembers who wished to attend.



*For 35 years, beginning in 1965, congregant Mel Goldzband oversaw the set and lighting for High Holy Days services at the Civic Theatre.*

The location was close to the temple at Third and Laurel, and it offered adequate parking for the increasingly suburban San Diego population. High Holy Days services at the Civic Theatre continue to the present day, although, in honor of the 150th anniversary of Beth Israel in 2011, the congregation moved its Yom Kippur afternoon services to its own sanctuary, opening the social hall to accommodate the large number of worshippers. The congregation’s response to being able to hold at least part of High Holy Days worship at Beth Israel was overwhelmingly positive.

High Holy Days services involve logistical operations among Beth Israel clergy, administration and support staff. The larger venue and location of the Civic Theatre add challenges that require meticulous planning and execution. While this complex undertaking is accomplished, the guiding values remain to create a warm and welcoming opportunity for Beth Israel members, families and unaffiliated Jews to gather for worship and community.

Rabbi Melvin Weinman was engaged in July 1962 under a three-year contract. At that time, Robert Epsten, age 37, became the youngest person to serve as president of the congregation. Epsten had grown up hearing stories about his grandfather, Henry Weinberger, who had served as the sixth president of the congregation. It was during Epsten's tenure that David Mitchell was appointed temple administrator. Mitchell came to Beth Israel from Temple Emanuel in Tucson, Arizona, where he was a pioneer in the field of synagogue administration. This was a time when few congregations had such a position.



*In 1960, a small group split off from Beth Israel to found Temple Solel. In 1967, when Beth Israel had a building and no rabbi, and Temple Solel had a rabbi and no building, the two congregations merged.*

When High Holy Days crowds outgrew Beth Israel's sanctuary, the congregation leased the San Diego Civic Theatre for its 1965 Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Rabbi Weinman and Mel Goldzband arranged with the art and set departments of the Old Globe Theatre to construct an ark to be used during these High Holy Days services. This ark continued to be used through 2008. Goldzband designed the set and its lighting, and for 35 years he oversaw its modifications and updating.

Times were changing. In May 1964, Mary Lynne Slayen was the first female to read from the Torah at a confirmation service at Beth Israel. It was her brother, Howard, who just four years earlier was the first bar mitzvah boy at Beth Israel to wear a *tallit*.

Beth Israel was moving gradually toward more

traditional Jewish practice, but not completely. When the congregation first used the Civic Theatre in 1965 for High Holy Days services, an expectant worshiper was turned away from the service by the usher, Richard "Bud" Levi, for wearing a *tallit*.

In June 1965, Rabbi Samuel H. Markowitz assumed the position of rabbinic supervisor of religious education, taking the place of Bernard Wind.

In the summer of 1966, Rabbi Weinman resigned. To fill in for the High Holy Days, Rabbi Erwin Herman, the regional director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was asked to officiate, together with Cantor Howard Fried. When David Mitchell accepted a position at a temple near Philadelphia, Norman Fogel became temple administrator. After the High Holy Days, the congregation engaged Rabbi Morton C. Fierman of Los Angeles to occupy the pulpit for the balance of the year while the congregation sought a permanent successor.

At that moment, Beth Israel had a building and no rabbi, while Temple Solel had a rabbi and no building. Under the leadership of Alvin Cushman and Seymour Rabin, Beth Israel and Temple Solel merged in 1967. Rabbi Joel S. Goor became the rabbi of this merged entity; Henri Goldberg became the cantor. Ken Fall, organist and choir director at Temple Solel, came to Beth Israel and served for many years. Beth Israel took over ownership of the land in Old Town previously owned by Temple Solel.

Rabbi Goor was an advocate of prophetic Judaism and often sermonized on the civil rights issues that were riveting the nation.

While still at Temple Solel, he joined Martin Luther King Jr. on his march for freedom in Selma, Alabama. At the Friday night service following the shootings at Kent State University in May 1970, Rabbi Goor memorialized the four students who were killed and the nine students who were wounded when demonstrating against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. He led congregants in a march to Balboa Park every Simchat Torah to mark the plight of Soviet Jewry. Each year during the High Holy Days, Rabbi Goor identified the Social Sin of the Year.





## FIRST FULL-TIME DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

In 1968, Lawrence Meyers was selected to become the temple's first full-time director of education. There were some 700 students in the religious school.

Beth Israel received a significant contribution in December 1967 from Marianne Cantwell to expand the library, and the congregation hired Anna Newton on a part-time basis. Newton sorted through the volumes that the temple had accumulated and established a catalogue and circulation system. She was also responsible for ordering books to meet the needs of the religious school. Newton continued as a part-time, paid librarian until the congregation's financial crisis of 1974. During that span, she built the library to several hundred volumes, worked closely with the religious school faculty, and attended regional meetings of the Jewish Library Association in Los Angeles. After 1974, the library was serviced by a series of volunteers under the oversight of the religious school, until Elaine Springer was hired in 1977.

One of the memorable events of 1967 was a concert by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach at Beth Israel. Although the two-hour performance was generally well-received, "it was not without controversy," according to longtime member David Schlafman. "This was before the time of men hugging, which was part and parcel of Shlomo's performances," he said. "Also, a few older congregants were vocal in their discomfort of Shlomo's performance having been held in the sanctuary."

The congregation formed the Social Action Committee to apply Jewish ideals and ethics to modern-day life. Beth Israel sponsored a day camp for underprivileged children and a sales training program for African-American women, conducted by Maggie (Mrs. Sidney) Silverman, who ultimately placed 44 women in sales positions. Maggie Silverman's work later inspired her son, Scott Silverman, to found Second Chance, a San Diego nonprofit that provides work readiness training and job placement services to former substance abusers, ex-offenders, homeless veterans and at-risk youth. Temple members also tutored in inner-city schools.

Cantor Goldberg left the congregation in 1968. That summer and the next, Beth Israel held UNI Camp, an interreligious and interracial day camp under the guidance of Pauline Foster, Helene Schlafman and Diane Baer. The parking lot at Second and Maple was completed with funds raised by a Sisterhood country fair and auction. Shirley Chisholm joined the staff as the

rabbi's secretary. Many members were involved in the congregation's 35 committees.

A highlight of 1969 was the production – entirely in Hebrew – of *Fiddler on the Roof* by religious school students under the direction of Helene Schlafman. At this same time, Schlafman created the ground-breaking madrichim program, which later served as a model for congregations throughout the country. Over the years, hundreds of Beth Israel teenagers have participated in this leadership program, which trains them to become assistant teachers in the religious school and counselors-in-training at the religious school's weekend camps.



*In 1967–1968, when this photo of religious school faculty members was taken, enrollment in the school was approximately 700 students.*

At High Holy Days services in September 1969, a new congregation tradition began that continued for about a decade. The youth groups of the congregation wrote and conducted a creative High Holy Days service on the evening of Yom Kippur. This service was held in the temple sanctuary as an alternative to the more traditional service at the Civic Theatre.

Alice T. Engel succeeded Norman Fogel as temple administrator. The congregation engaged its first assistant rabbi, Jerold Levy, in 1971. One of Rabbi Levy's accomplishments was the establishment of the congregation's first chavurah.

# A HISTORY OF OVERNIGHT CAMPING

By David and Helene Schlafman

ORGANIZED CAMPING in the United States is as old as Beth Israel. A Connecticut beach was the site where Frederick Gunn, in 1861, led camping activities for the 47 students of his school. The Gunnery continues today as a well-known college preparatory school.

According to the [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com) website, Jewish overnight camping started in 1893 in New York. The UAHC (now the Union for Reform Judaism, or URJ) opened its first camp in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, in 1951. It operates today as one of 13 URJ camps. Three additional camps are sponsored by URJ congregations. Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles operates Camp Hess Kramer and Gindling Hilltop Camp, many of whose campers have been Beth Israel children. URJ Camp Swig in Saratoga, California, was a favorite of Beth Israel campers for many years. It recently closed, and has been succeeded by URJ Camp Newman in Santa Rosa.

In 2005, Camp Mountain Chai (CMC), a Southern California Jewish community camp in the San Bernardino Mountains, opened its doors to its first campers. Thanks to the generosity and efforts of Beth Israel members Murray and Elaine Galinson, Jack and Jean Bark and family, Elene and Herb Solomon, Jean and Herman Gordon, Dawn and Brian Berson and family, and Ed and Rae Samiljan, the dream for a San Diego Jewish community camp became a reality. Currently on the board of directors are Beth Israel's Helene Schlafman,

Nadine Finkel, Dawn and Brian Berson, Ed Samiljan, David Bark, Debra Stern-Ellis and President Todd Kobernick.

Beth Israel implemented its first weekend overnight camp in 1967, and through 1977, a confirmation camp weekend was held each year at Camp Marston in Julian.

In the summers of 1968 and 1969, the congregation sponsored a day camp for Beth Israel students and youth from southeast San Diego. UNI Camp's purpose was to promote interreligious and interracial understanding. Pauline Foster, Helene Schlafman and Diane Baer guided this effort.

In 1969, Helene "Eemah" Schlafman started the congregation's first madrichim camp at Raintree Ranch, which was part of Camp Marston. In the following years, the madrichim camp program produced the first Beth Israel Hebrew teaching movies, *Haboker Baboker* and *Vowel Villain*, which later were converted to DVD and are still used in religious school Hebrew classes. These weekend camps continued until 1998, and the many teaching videos produced there continue to be used in the religious school curriculum.

Beginning in 1977, Schlafman developed Beth Israel's Hebrew camp weekends for students in grades four through seven and teens in the madrichim program. As this program grew, it moved to Camp Cuyamaca. A seventh/eighth grade camp was also started.

In 1980, Schlafman, together with Steve Makoff, executive director of Beth Israel and former director



*Children and teens enjoy camaraderie and informal Jewish learning through Jewish camping. Beth Israel started its first weekend overnight camp in 1967 and its first two-week overnight camp in 1980.*





*Helene “Eemah” Schlafman developed Beth Israel’s Hebrew Camp weekends for religious school students. Teens in the madrichim program participate as assistant counselors and song leaders.*

of Camp Swig, created Camp Beth Israel, a two-week sleep-away camp at Camp Marston in Julian. This highly successful camp was expanded to three weeks in 1982, and Louie Vener became the summer director. Schlafman and Deborah Geary developed the Jewish programming and Tammy Vener was a unit head. Among the songleaders were Steve Gross and Phil Nadel, both of whom became rabbis, and Craig Harwood, now a cantor and professor and dean of Davenport College at Yale University. Lee Finkel, whose daughter became a madricha, and Stacey Coleman, now with her own daughters in Beth Israel’s religious school, also were song leaders. Many of the congregation’s current members served as counselors.

Camp Beth Israel continued until 1988, when it felt the impact of year-round public school schedules. When Schlafman retired as director of education in 1995, some of the weekend camps continued but on a smaller scale.

Currently, Beth Israel holds two camp weekends each year: one for sixth and seventh graders, and one for fourth and fifth graders. Madrichim participate as assistant counselors. The programs for these camps are developed by Schlafman and the madrichim. Many of the older counselors are former madrichim.

## THE MADRICHIM PROGRAM

*M*ADRICHIM (from *madrich*, Hebrew for *counselor, guide, or leader*) is a program that trains teenagers to become assistant teachers in religious school classrooms and counselors-in-training at Beth Israel’s weekend camps. Eighth graders apply to participate in the madrichim program. As part of this special leadership seminar, they study group dynamics, child development, and leadership techniques as well as teaching skills. Each year madrichim also develop a teaching video emphasizing an aspect of the Hebrew language.

Beth Israel’s madrichim program was the first in the country. It was started in 1969 by Helene Schlafman, later director of education, when she was pregnant with her son, Daniel. Students began to call her Eemah, mommy, and the name stuck.

Eemah and her “mads” bonded in innumerable ways. Several former madrichim became rabbis, cantors, educators, temple board members and temple presidents. Schlafman still sends out a newsletter to more than 400 former mads. Rick Shumacher, madrichim class of 1972, created a madrichim website, complete with photos taken throughout the years, and the group is also on Facebook.

Beth Israel’s madrichim program continues to thrive to this day. Madrichim serve as role models for younger religious school students, provide opportunities for individualized and small group instruction in the classroom, and offer exciting programs and memorable weekend camp experiences to younger students.



In 1969, the religious school dedicated the Bill Rubin Learning Center, to be used for enrichment programs such as art, drama, dance and film making. It was funded by Jeannette Rubin in memory of her son. In December, at the National Association of Temple Educators convention, Beth Israel won both the Creative Camping Award, for the congregation's unique interracial and interreligious day camp program, and the Curriculum Award, for the religious school's Hebrew program. This was the first time that one congregation earned both awards.

By 1971, the religious school's rolls numbered more than 600 students from kindergarten through confirmation. The religious school was expanded from Sunday mornings to include two afternoons per week for students in grades three through seven. Lily Arstein and Helene Schlafman taught an optional *ulpan* program that emphasized spoken Hebrew.

In the fall of 1969, Anna Newton, temple librarian, was asked to reach out to the newly arrived Navy chaplain, Rabbi Dan Roberts, and help him feel welcome at Beth Israel. Dinners and socializing were arranged, and Rabbi Goor became good friends with Rabbi Roberts. Rabbi Roberts got to know congregants and assisted with services on several occasions, sometimes speaking at Friday night services. After he completed his military service, Rabbi Roberts became a congregational rabbi in Cleveland, where he is now rabbi emeritus of Temple Emanu El.

Beth Israel's Murray D. Goodrich Scholar-in-Residence Program launched in February 1969, with the eminent Jewish educator and founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan, as the first scholar. Among the adult education classes offered in 1972 were Instant Hebrew, Torah Sabbaths, Weekend of Learning, Sisterhood Study Group and Lunch 'n' Learn.

At the end of 1970, the congregation sold its property in Old Town, previously owned by Temple Solel.

Dr. Leonard Bloom reinvigorated the Men's Club in January 1973.

In 1973, when Rabbi Levy left, the congregation engaged Rabbi Michael P. Sternfield as assistant rabbi. This was Rabbi Sternfield's first pulpit after his ordination by Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. The next year, Rabbi Goor became president of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis. He went on a six-month sabbatical to Israel in 1975, and upon his return, admitted to having had an extramarital relationship in Israel. The board asked for his resignation, and Rabbi Goor concluded his rabbinate at Beth Israel. He died on December 21, 2011.

The year 1974 started with a funding shortfall. Although the temple raised standard dues to \$400, then-President Fred Weitzen recalls that it became impossible to pay the rabbi. He went to area business owners who belonged to Beth Israel and proposed that they contribute at least \$1,000 a year in dues. Many accepted his proposal and committed to \$1,000 dues, with a few even offering to pay \$2,000 a year. Weitzen then established the Century Club to honor members who voluntarily paid dues of \$1,000 or more. A lifelong member, Weitzen looks back with pride in his ability to come through for the rabbi and congregation. The Century Club continues today as a program of enhanced annual support of the synagogue above standard dues. Century Club support allows Beth Israel to offer membership to everyone regardless of ability to pay full membership dues.

When Alice Engel resigned as temple administrator, the congregation created a combined temple educator-administrator position. Dr. Meyers' contract as educator ended, and Dr. Bert S. Gerard was hired to fill the combined position. At that time, the following committees were active: choir, rabbinical liaison, social action, museum, personnel, religious school, youth activities, adult education, budget and campership.





# CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL RABBIS



Samuel Freuder 1888–1889



Marx Moses 1890–1893



Emil Ellinger 1909–1911



Dr. Montague N.A. Cohen  
1912–1916



Jacob K. Levin 1925–1930



H. Cerf Straus 1930–1934



Moise Bergman 1934–1946



Morton J. Cohn 1946–1962



Jonathan Stein 1994–2001



Benjamin Kamin 2001–2004



Paul J. Citrin 2004–2007



Michael Berk 2007–present

# CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL PRESIDENTS



Marcus Schiller  
1861–1904



Abraham Blochman  
1904–1909



Simon Levi  
1909–1912



Adolph Levi  
1912–1926



Samuel I. Fox  
1926–1939



Henry Weinberger  
1939–1946



Richard Lustig  
1957 and 1959



Alfred Brooks  
1961



Allan Lame\*  
1961



Milton Fredman\*  
1962



Robert Epsten  
1962–1963



William Starr  
1963



Fred Weitzen, Jr.  
1973–1974



Carl M. Esenoff  
1974–1975



Joan Jacobs  
1976–1978



James Milch  
1978–1980



Eugene Heikoff  
1980–1982



Robert Berton  
1982–1984



Gerald J. Rosen  
1997–1999



Allan Ziman  
1999–2001



Jerold Goldberg  
2001–2003



Jeffrey H. Silberman  
2003–2005



Barbara Haworth  
2005–2007



Amy Corton  
2007–2009





Julius Halprin 1917–1918



Alexander Segel 1918–1919



Ernest R. Trattner 1920–1921



Maxwell H. Dubin 1922–1925



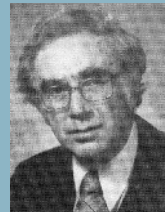
Melvin Weinman 1962–1966



Joel S. Goor 1967–1975



Michael P. Sternfield 1976–1993



Robert Shapiro 1993–1994



Nathan F. Baranov  
1946–1949 and  
1953–1954



Nathan Schiller  
1949 and 1951



Murray D. Goodrich  
1950 and 1958



Morris W. Douglas  
1952–1953  
and 1960



Mac Esterson  
1954–1955



Robert M. Stone  
1956



Gerald Kobernick  
1964–1965



Elliott Cushman\*  
1965



John Ingram\*  
1966



Alvin Cushman  
1966–1969



Seymour Rabin  
1967\* and  
1969–1971



David Alpert  
1971–1972



Richard C. Barrett, Jr.  
1984–1986



Simon Coleman  
1986–1988



Patricia Perlman  
1988–1990



Betty Byrnes  
1990–1992



Mary Ann Scher  
1992–1995



Dona Gratt  
1995–1997



Ronald I. Simon  
2009–2011



Emily Jennewein  
2011–present

\*President of Temple Solel, which separated from and then merged with Beth Israel

