

"O, how shall mortals praise Thee
When Angels strive in vain
Or build for Thee a dwelling
Whom worlds cannot contain?"

The saga of the People of the Book finds its counterpart down through the ages. Wherever man has raised a sanctuary to the Lord, there has he sung his praises and preserved His Holy name. So was it with Temple Israel in its modest beginnings. The founders held the concept of Liberal Judaism as a way of life and never wavered from the idea of embracing divine worship in the Reform manner.

At this historic milestone, it is good to look in retrospect upon twenty-five years of congregational life and history. The Temple was founded in memory of J. Leonard Levy, Rabbi of Temple Rodef Shalom, Pittsburgh, who worked with members in this community in creating a Jewish religious consciousness and who exerted a vital influence on the spiritual life of the youth.

The Congregation had its beginning in January 1926. The fourteen zealous members who pledged themselves to an undertaking of tremendous proportions were Marcus Feuchtwanger, Jacob F. Perelman, Jacob Cosel, Abe Levine, Samuel Klafter (these were the first officers) Dr. Benjamin M. Berger, Bernard Klive, Nanette Cosel Linville, Norman Ehrlich, H Harry Cuckerbaum, William L. Cosel, Robert Cosel, Joseph M. Ehrlich, and Jacob M. Altschuler. The initial meeting was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Kline and was presided over by Jacob F. Perelman. At a second meeting they were joined by Daniel Fisher, Edward Fisher, Michael Fisher, Abraham H. Gonick, Maurice J. Kraus and David Silveerman in making application for a charter for Temple Israel Congregation.

The charter which gave direction for a Liberal and Progressive form of worship was granted in March 1927. Regular Friday evening services in the homes, the purchase of a Torah and arrangements for High Holy Day worship in the Elks Lodge room with Herman Saville, then a student Rabbi, launched the activity of a growing congregation. (over)

In the Temple library there hangs a framed poem composed by the first Rabbi, Dr. Jacob B. Menkes, titled "The Temple Builder" a tribute to Marcus Feuchtwanger whose unswerving determination to build an edifice dignified in structure and representative of his people never wavered. With unbounded zeal, he interested co-religionists in other cities as well as non-Jews in the community to contribute to the building fund. His eighteen years of continued leadership (faithful), his unselfish labors and personal giving helped immeasurably to bring us to this day. At his death in 1944, he left a monument of good deeds.

Plans for a Temple of Moorish design, of grey brick with terra cotta trim and Flemish glass windows were drawn up by architect J.A. Altschuler. A double lot at the corner of Highland and Woody Avenues was purchased through the efforts of Norman Ehrlich, chairman of the Finance committee. A galaxy of famed Rabbis consecrated each stage of building and with impressive ceremonies inspired the young congregation toward continuity in the House of Israel. Dr. Isador E. Philo of Rodef Shalom Temple, Youngstown, at the ground breaking, April, 1927, Dr. Max C. Currick of Temple Anshe Chesed, Erie at the laying of the Corner stone in May, Dr. Samuel H. Goldenson of Temple Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh and his assistant Dr. B. Benedict Glazer and

TEMPLE ISRAEL -1926 - 1951

Dr Abba Hillel Silver of The Temple, Cleveland at the dedication in November made these occasions of high devotion, landmarks in an eight month period. Mrs. J. Leonard Levy kindled the perpetual light and Jacob Cosel deposited the first Torah in the Ark. In 1928 in the spirit of the liberal movement, Temple Israel with a membership of 44 was affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In August of 1928 in the interest of unity and harmony, upon invitation, the then existing Congregation (Conservative) joined forces with Temple Israel. This group, however, not finding satisfaction withdrew the following year.

Heavy indebtedness and ponderous maintenance costs assumed by the founders required sacrifices repeatedly but a steadily growing congregation lessened the need for so much devotion by a few.

The concern over proper burial was met by purchase of space in a special section of Oak Park Cemetary which had been acquired in 1913 by a member, Jonas Kaufman; In 1930 Dr. Menkes had consecrated this burial plot, suitable for seventy-five graves. In 1932 Mr. Kaufman generously transferred the deed for the rest of the land to the Temple. A larger cemetary adequate for present needs is now under consideration.

From the beginning services have been beautiful with traditional music provided often by faithful volunteers and later by professionals. For many years Abe Levine as choir director and Mrs. William L. Cosel as organist contributed their time and talents. Our Rabbis too have augmented the choir with cantorial embellishment. The first organ with pedal pumping was borrowed. In 1928 an electric two manual Estey organ with pedal keyboard was presented by Mr. and Mrs. Cass Sunstein of Pittsburgh. For the dedication Dr. Goldenson returned bringing with him Rodef Shalom's choir and organist. The beneficence of the Pittsburgh community will always remain in our memory.

Sabbath morning worship in addition to Friday evening has long been an institution since the first days. At times it followed Saturday morning sessions of the Religious School and boasted of a lusty children's choir, trained by Rabbi Avery Grossfield. Thirtynine pupils were enrolled in the school, 25% of whom were children of non-members. The devotion of a corps of teachers through the years can never be sufficiently estimated. The Social hour following Sabbath Eve service with a record from the inception of the Temple has become an Oneg Sabbath of good fellowship and cordiality.

The war years took their toll. Rabbi Norman H. Diamond after seven years of spiritual leadership left for war service in 1942. Twenty-one Temple youth served their country in the historic conflict to preserve freedom. One made the supreme sacrifice. First Aid classes were introduced and the Temple became an Air Raid Warden's station. Rabbi Leo B. Turitz served as chaplain to the Jewish members of the armed forces stationed in nearby colleges in 1943-44.

TEMPLE ISRAEL 1926 - 1951

Congregational life was greatly enriched by the formation of an auxiliary soon to become a Sisterhood. Few in number but with womanly awareness, the Sisterhood soon became a mainstay and guiding light. Support of the Religious School, Bible classes and Lecture courses, Sisterhood Sabbath, Hebrew Union College scholarships, Uniongrams, House of Living Judaism project contributed to the cultural life of the Temple and the parent body. The Donor dinner has become the social event and chief source of revenue. In 1938 the Sisterhood initiated the Temple Bulletin with Rabbi Diamond and Mrs. David Silverman as co-editors.

In 1939 Rabbi Diamond organized the Temple Youth Group to keep young people interested in the Temple and to guide their spiritual yearnings from Confirmation to early adulthood. Both he and his successor Rabbi Turitz supervised the activity and encouraged inter-city association.

After several attempts to form a Men's club, it finally became a reality during the incumbency of Dr. Irwan J. Gruen. The beautification of the Temple grounds is one of its achievements.

During the two and a half decades, magnanimous gifts have been made to endorn and enhance the Temple. To view the Ark of the Covenant flanked by stately Menorath is to be stirred to indescribable reverence. Just as the stained memorial windows through which the sun's glow falls softly on the assembled worshipers, send out their light, so the bronze memorial plaques light up the names of departed loved ones.

Through the years more ceremonialism has been introduced into the ritual. Friday evening Torah service, the Kiddush, candle lighting are accepted forms. Dr. Gruen is one who feels that the Reform movement is dynamic and evolutionary and cannot remain static. His ministrations have contributed to increased membership and to renewed Synagogue loyalty. He instituted special Friday evening services for students in the High School graduating class. His stand helped prevent the adoption of released time for religious education. To promote good will, he arranged a seminar for twenty-five clergymen with Dr. Jacob B. Marcus, professor at Hebrew Union College as leader.

Five Rabbis have served this congregation well. Each has promulgated his own design for Reformed living. Several have held services for the patients at Polk Institute. Some have taught Hebrew at Westminster College, Rabbi Grossfield being named Professor of Hebraic Literature. All belonged to the New Castle Ministerial Association and took part in the effort to promote Brotherhood.

Weddings, Confirmations and Bar Mitzvahs have made the Temple a center for family joys. The Tenth and Fifteenth Anniversaries as well as the burning of the mortgage were joyfully celebrated.

In this the twenty-fifth anniversary year the congregation stands more consolidated than ever and numbers 120 families with 88 pupils in the Religious school. The auditorium and vestry rooms have been used by various communal organizations. At one time 1927, Temple Israel Basketball team played with the Church League. Authorization for a new addition to the building to house four class rooms was recently announced.

During the past quarter of a century, Temple Israel has become generally recognized as a power and influence in the community, a unit in the spiritual life of New Castle. May its work continue into the future "for God, for Torah, for Israel."

Miriam Marlin Cosel