

Chapter One

THE warm August day was drawing to a close. A group of Israelites was finishing *Maariv* at the Grossman home on Shenango Street. On the face of each man was a preoccupied look as though some thought other than the recited prayer were on his mind. For some time the need for a real place of worship had been uppermost in the minds of these men. Among those in this group were Nathan Rabinovitz, son-in-law of Grossman, Nathan, Harry, and Sam Rosenblum and their brother-in-law, Akiba Bearman, called "Kiva," Meyer J. Routman who was the *Shochet* and Hebrew teacher when there were fewer than ten Jewish families in the community, and his brother, Joseph, with his sons, Frank and Harry. Also, there were J. Shulansky, Isaac Rosenblum, Joshua Rabinovitz who was the *Shochet* and Hebrew teacher at this time, James Harris who was affectionately called "Johnny," and Aaron Cohen who came to Sharon in 1870.



Aaron Cohen,
A Founding Father Of
The House Of Israel

The year 1870 was a real milestone in Sharon. Its population was 4221. The name McDowell was just coming into eminence. Frank H. Buhl arrived to become manager of the Sharon Iron Works.

It was in 1871 that gas lighted the unpaved streets. Within a few years Sharon was a bustling mill town with company stores connected with the rolling mills. Already the population had grown to 7000. These were the horse and buggy days and peddling was the main form of earning a livelihood.

Almost all of this group of men came from Russia as immigrants, escaping persecution, and religious restrictions. Every Monday morning, making an early start, they shouldered the heavy packs of merchandise that the farmers needed; a heavy hook on one of the straps held a valise filled with notions: combs, needles, pins and tape. They returned for Sabbath services on Friday afternoon and to them a house of worship meant

a place for recreation, spiritual as well as social. Then, too, a house of worship would be a place to teach their children the meaning of the Torah, as well as a place of prayer which their wives could use in seclusion.

There were some in the community such as the Alexanders, the Traxlers and Mark Cohen who were already established merchants and held themselves aloof from this activity. Morris Daus was the first Jewish barber, who came in 1867. Nevertheless, the little group of Russian Jews calmly went about their planning. Single men who came to this country found a haven in the Aaron Cohen household, where they could board and room and hold services under his direction. There the first American of the group was born—his son, Louis. A stern and

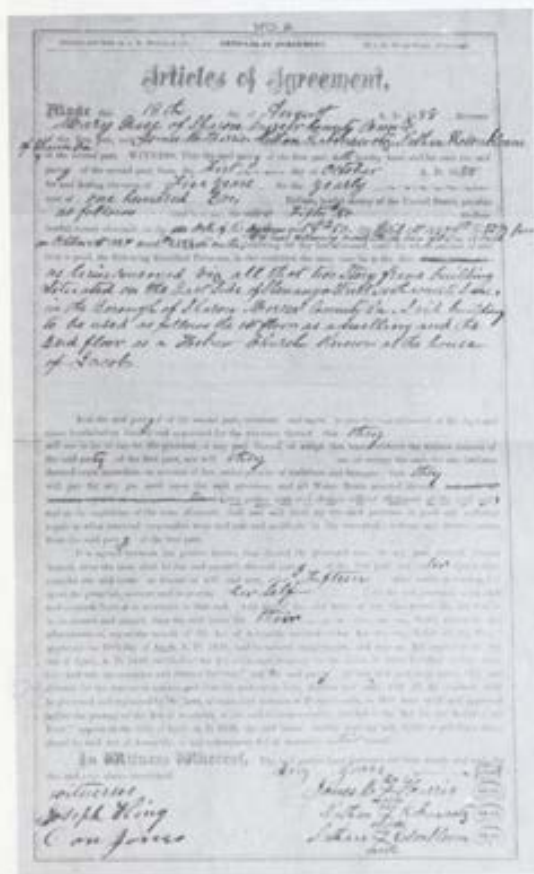
religious personality was Aaron Cohen. For him, there were no deviations from the precepts of the Prophets.

Matters being as they were, on this sunny August afternoon in 1888, the group had to discuss plans for a place of worship, because Rosh Hashonah was September sixth. In the midst of their talking, Nathan Rabinovitz suggested the empty rooms on the second floor of 62 Shenango Street, a property owned by a widow, Mrs. Mary Grace. This house was situated in the heart of the little Jewish community bounded by Railroad and Fisk Street on the east and Penn Avenue on the west. It seemed an ideal location.

Mrs. Grace graciously gave permission to remove one partition, making a room adequate to hold an *Aron Hakodesh*, a reading table, and benches to seat the little congregation. Steps were built; a door was cut to form an entrance. An aperture was cut into the last partition, and over it hung a lace curtain through which the women heard the services and joined in prayer. Nathan Rosenblum sent for and donated the first *Sefer Torah*. How hard those men worked who knew how to use hammer and saw. The Aron Hakodesh and the reading table were built in short order, but the benches! That took time and time was of the essence. Sunday was the only day that could be spared.

On another Sunday afternoon, the Congregation ascended the new steps to hold their first meeting. If the furniture had a crude look the membership did not notice it. This was the culmination of their efforts and it seemed good to them.

"The meeting will please come to order", said Johnny Harris with a smile. He had been selected president, and he took his office seriously. Dressed in a top hat and



Articles Of Agreement For Use Of 62 Shenango Street As Place Of Worship

frock coat as befitted the occasion, this tall handsome man added a dramatic touch to the meeting. Johnny was well liked, gracious, tactful — he was personality itself. As president, his name heads the list of signers on the deed. Nathan Rabinovitz and Nathan Rosenblum added their signatures. First on the agenda was the question of a name. "Let it be the House of Israel," said "Kiva" Bearman,



*James Harris,
First President Of
The House Of Israel*

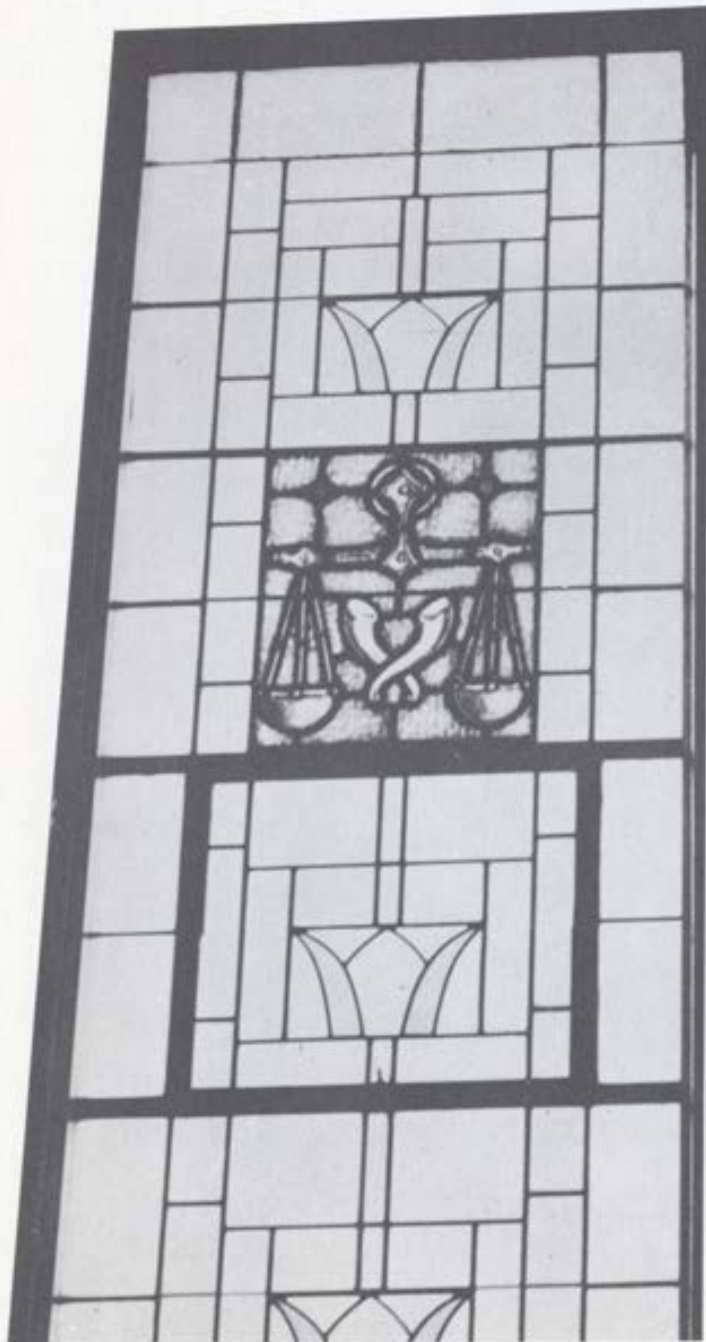
and it was approved. As a House of Israel, the place could properly be used for all community activity.

The rent for this second-floor Shul was settled at \$4.00 monthly, the dues being 25¢ monthly. As candles were still in use, each man having *yahrzeit* donated several pounds of candles. A *mikvah* was installed since no Jewish community was complete without this ritual bath.



62 Shenango Street. First Meeting Place Of The New Congregation

The Rosh Hashonah (Jewish New Year) window portrays the scales of justice reminiscent of this historic Day of Judgment, and contains two interlocking shofars blown each year to announce the advent of the New Year. The Bible speaks of it as the Day of the Blowing of the Shofar.



Chapter Two

THE HUB of Jewish traditional life centered around J. M. Rabinovitz, brother to Joshua, who acted in three capacities, as Cantor, *Mohel* and Shochet. His was a full time job to which he devoted himself and for over thirty years he was an outstanding figure in all phases of Jewish life. His income consisted of remuneration from the Synagogue, augmented by slaughtering fees as well as fees from circumcision, weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and *aliyahs*. In addition to this, he was assigned to the teaching of Hebrew to the children for which he received \$1.00 a month from each household-er as his fee.

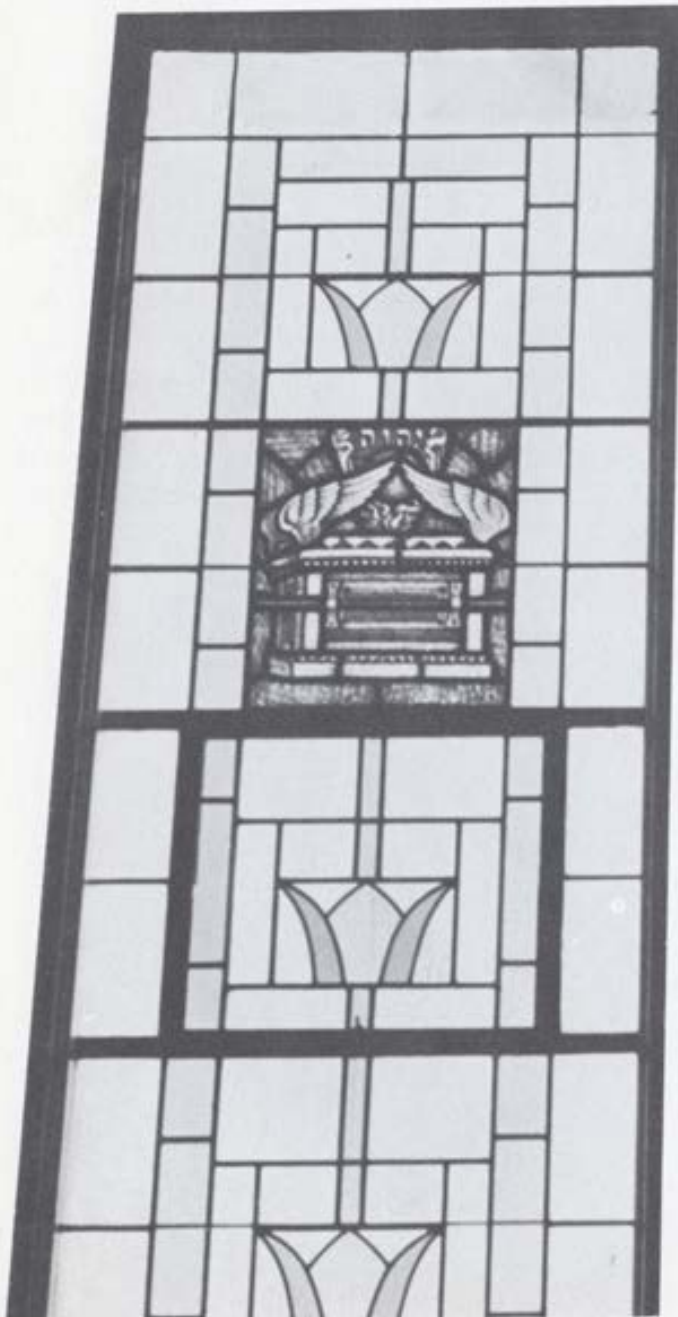
Not the least of his duties was the slaughtering of chickens and cattle. The members of the community were very strict about this tradition and for this, too, he was paid by each of the families for his services. In the early years the people would take turns making the long journey to Youngstown by train to secure meat for the entire Jewish populace. As the community grew it became more necessary to deal with a meat shop in Sharon. An arrangement was made with Edward Weitz, a local butcher, to purchase a separate block

to be used for Kosher meats. Here, two mornings a week, Reverend Rabinovitz would service the Jewish clientele. Years later, a Kosher meat market was finally opened by A. S. Robins to be succeeded by Louis Robinson in 1909. Mr. Robinson maintained his business successfully and served the needs of the community for thirty-five years.



*J. M. Rabinovitz, First Cantor Of The
House Of Israel*

The Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) window reveals the Ark in the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, with the smoke of incense behind it, and the four lettered ineffable name of God (JHVH) above. (It was only on Yom Kippur that the High Priest, and only he, was permitted to pronounce that name, and within the Holy of Holies).



Chapter Three

THE OLD CENTURY passed away, and with the new came new ideas and new ideals. President McKinley had just taken office at the White House. He, too, had descended from immigrants. It was a period of great individualism when leadership and talent could rise to its highest points. Already in Sharon the first telephone had been installed. The Willson Company built their first new brick building on State Street. Electric street lights illuminated a really grown-up town.



State Street in 1870

By the opening of the twentieth century, the children of the first Jewish settlers were growing up and becoming an active part of the Shul's activities. New immigrants were arriving and others were being sent

for. So it became evident that the group could no longer meet at 62 Shenango Street. The quarters were too small.

By this time, too, a unique change was steadily taking place: unlike their fathers, who were still peddling, the younger element had established businesses and was fast becoming full fledged merchants. The desperate struggle to survive in a new country had been met.

The year 1903 was a memorable one. The first synagogue was erected in Sharon. How wise these pioneers were and how much faith they possessed! In a new world, they dared to erect a house dedicated to their God. How proud they were in their achievement can be seen from the excerpt below detailing the great day of the laying of the cornerstone which appeared in the "Sharon Daily Telegraph" on August 10th, 1903:

"In the presence of a large number of people and with most interesting and impressive exercises, the cornerstone of the new House of Israel on Shenango Street was laid Sunday afternoon. The event was unique in the history of Sharon, indeed in the history of Mercer County, for it marks the progress of the first synagogue ever built in this territory.

"Following the ceremonies at 7 P. M. a banquet was held by the congregation in Shenango Hall on Fisk Street, during the

progress of which addresses were made by Rabbi Ashinsky, Rabbi Rabinovitz, and members of the congregation.

"After addresses by various notables, the balloting took place to decide to whom the honor of laying the cornerstone should fall. This was carried on in a novel manner, ballots being cast by anyone who desired at five cents a vote, the proceeds going to the building fund. When the result was announced, it was found that Major McDowell had been chosen to officiate, Rabbi Ashinsky of Pittsburgh, Dr. McKee, Joseph Goldberger and Samuel Lurie being among the other candidates. Several hundred dollars were raised for the building fund.

"With the words 'Long Live the Congregation', Major McDowell then laid the cornerstone, in which was enclosed a bottle containing the history of the congregation, a list of the officers, a copy of the Jewish Bible and copies of the local newspapers.

"The exercises were in charge of a committee composed of Frank Routman, Joseph Routman, Harry Lurie, Max Rosenblum, and Michael Rosenblum. Certainly, the House of Israel was started out under most auspicious circumstances and in the words of Major McDowell, 'Long Live the Congregation'."

The toil, the generosity, the perseverance that went into the building of the holy house must be explained. Ten members volunteered one hundred dollars each to start the building campaign. This, then, was the beginning. Another source of income was derived from the sale of seats. It is interesting to note from the minutes of 1905:

"On motion made by Harry Routman, seconded by Max Murstein, that four seats shall be reserved special, their price to be \$10.00". Another motion "by Max Adler, seconded by William Goldberg—the price of seat for the man of the family shall be \$3.00 to \$5.00 according to the ideas of the committee".

Another motion "by George Lurie, Sr., that all young men who earn wages shall pay \$1.00 for a seat". Even with this income they still had to burden themselves with the responsibility of a mortgage for \$1000.00. There were only about thirty members at that time, with Frank Routman as president.

Frank Routman was an executive, a fine person with a kindly smile. His tact and popularity went a long way to launch the new synagogue successfully. His father, Joseph Routman, was an indefatigable worker for his people and the Synagogue. Although he was steeped in tradition, he was one of the first liberals who conceded and endorsed changes when the need to change was obvious. Beloved by the entire congregation, he was an individual who took on the worries and joys of his friends. He was mediator and guide at once. Throughout the entire recorded minutes of the meetings Joseph Routman's name appears again and again, sometimes as officer, sometimes as trustee, sometimes as committeeman, but always working for the benefit of the Shul.

The new Shul was a great step forward. It was of brick construction with small high windows, having a seating capacity of about one hundred. There was a spacious balcony to accomodate women. The regular pews were purchased and each man had his own standard. Dues were raised to 50¢ per month. The following are the first recorded minutes taken on October 11, 1903. They represent a development of procedure that was remarkable in those early days:

"A regular meeting was held in Sharon Shul with Frank Routman as President in the chair. The following new officers had been elected — George Lurie, Sr., President; Joseph Routman, Vice President; M. E. Epstein, Secretary; Harry Routman, Assistant Secretary; Myer Routman, Treasurer. Three Trustees, Max Adler, M. Cohen, L. Bender. The following money has been collected:

Abe Daus for donations	\$ 5.00
Ike Rosenblum	11.75
Collected from Keeber	\$2.85, making a total of \$19.50.

"A medal was also presented to Joseph Routman for faithful service during the erection of our synagogue. The meeting was closed in due form.

M. E. Epstein, Secretary".

Various endowments were given: Joseph Routman gave \$10.00 for building a new Aron Hakodesh; the Ladies' Aid donated the Sefer Torah and the chandelier; Mrs. Esther Lurie endowed the *bimah* and mantles for the Torah.

The Services and ritual were entirely in Hebrew. On the High Holy Days one could hear the rhythmical chant of the "daveners" with Reverend Rabinovitz singing the ancient prayers in his beautiful tenor. The suspense of the auctioning of the aliyahs, the sing-song — "tzen shillings — *twanzig* shillings" were there. At the solemn services of *Yom Kippur* the devout ones, dressed in white robes and *Tallaisim* would sometimes go at four or five in the morning and stay until the sun had set. After the solemn services of *Yom Kippur* the *Succoth* festival was really something to enjoy. The building of the *Succoth*, the buying of the *esrog* or Palestinian citron with the palm, myrtle and willow entwined was carried to every home for the housewife to bless. But the climax of this festival was *Simchas Torah!* At the evening services, parents came with their children. Everyone threw heart and soul into making the most unique holder for the lighted candles which were used in the parade following the Cantor with the Torah.

The next morning after the services, the men made a day of it. From home to home they went — dancing and singing while they pilfered the housewives' most prized dishes, pretending to be intoxicated. The reading of the Torah had been finished and on the following Sabbath they would start again at the beginning. Was not that a reason for rejoicing?

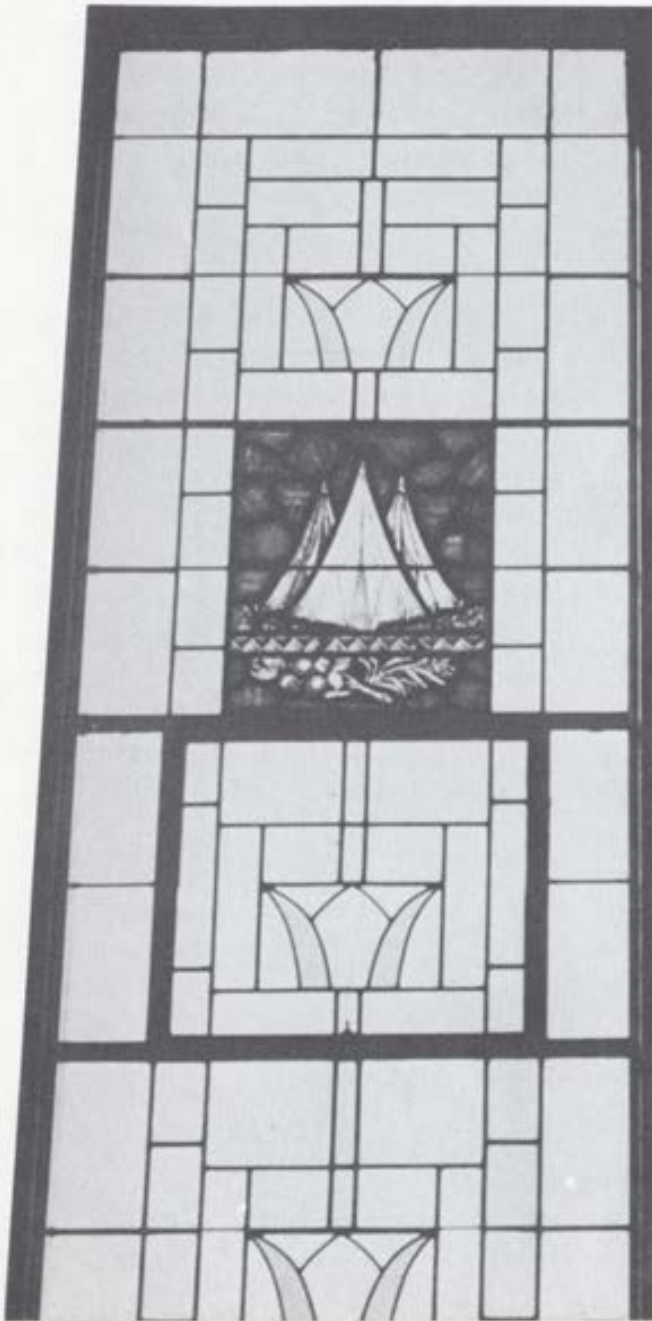
On *Channukah*, it was proper to play cards and to serve *lotkas* while the *Channukah* lights burned. Came *Purim* and every child was busy bringing *shalach monos* to friends. The delicious *homantasben* was seen in every home and there was an air of festivity and joy.

However, the picture was not always joyous. There were constant clashes of personality with little or no decorum in the Services or in the business meetings. The records are dotted with disturbances created by different members and fines had to be imposed. At this time a small group of members was dissatisfied with the ritual, for it was not as rigid as they wished. As a result they withdrew completely from the congregation and formed a new synagogue called "Shaarah Torah". Years later they were asked to unite again, which they did.



A. M. Rosenblum And Harry Routman.
The Two Living Charter Members

The Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles) window portrays an imaginative conception of the Succoth, or Tabernacles, in which Israel dwelt in the wilderness, and symbolizes the festival. Here are also depicted the various additional symbols of this festival: the lulav, or palm branch; the willow; the myrtle; the etbrog, or citron. Succoth is also the Feast of Ingathering, or Harvest.



Chapter Four

ALTHOUGH the services had not deviated, other forces of change were stirring. Social life began to take on more color. At the instigation of Reverend Rabinovitz, the Ladies' Aid had been organized with Mrs. Joseph Routman as the first president. Its purpose was first, to help the needy wayfarer, second, to give aid to any needy family, and finally, to be an auxiliary to the new Synagogue. They had their meetings once a month. There were other social events — Sunday evening card parties that were enjoyed by both men and women. Banquets by the Ladies' Aid were very often held in honor of holidays but best of all there were those gay and charming picnics at a farm in Orangeville, Ohio. The members named it the Montefiore Country Club. A small group of people had first rented a cottage there, and they liked it so well that they decided to buy the farm. There was to be a paid membership in this Montefiore Country Club, and from the minutes one can recall with nostalgia the following excerpts:

"1918 — Simon Cohen Report"
 5 Cases of Beer\$ 6.25
 5 Fishing Poles50

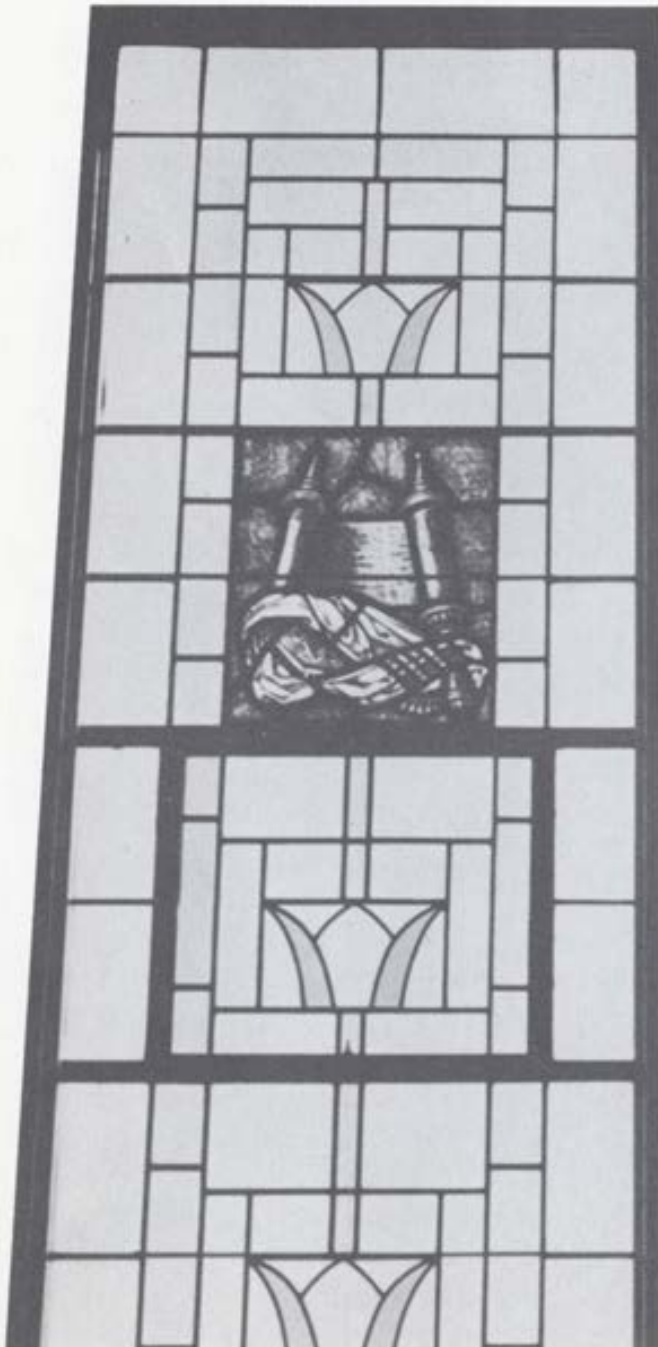
5 Lines40
Hooks25
2 Dozen Cards	4.50
3 Boxes Chips	2.25
Total	\$14.15
Pop	\$ 7.20
Bread	3.00
Herring72

These items tell most vividly the fun and pleasure the people derived from their gatherings.

During the span of years, there was constant difficulty in collection of dues and payments for seats. The members were concerned with repair bills, with balloting on new members, with maintenance itself. After ten years, the mortgage was finally paid.

This was the year of 1913 when the devastating flood hit Sharon. Many members of the congregation were affected. The more fortunate who escaped opened their homes to the victims and took care of their needs. In 1914, war was declared and many Jewish boys were called to the service. The women worked on the Liberty Loan Drives, Red Cross organization, the making of bandages, and took part in other civic projects connected with war.

The Simcath Torah (Feast of Rejoicing) window has an open scroll rolled to the end of Deuteronomy and a talith draped over the handles, as though the reader had just finished reading from the scroll. Simcath Torah is the festival when the annual cycle of reading the weekly lessons from the Pentateuch is ended and the cycle is immediately resumed.



Chapter Five

DURING Simon Cohen's twelve consecutive years as President, the first of a succession of Hebrew teachers was called to further the education of the children.

Reverend Rabinovitz found that his duties were accumulating to such an extent that he needed help. Therefore, the congregation engaged *m'lamdim* from out of the city to teach the children. These men had a knowledge of Hebrew but no method of teaching. Very often in the classroom there was general confusion, as rough discipline supplanted understanding as a tool of teaching.

Reverend Rabinovitz was further aided in his enormous task by the hiring of *Baalei T'Filoh* for the Holy Days, a forerunner of the realization that his was a full time profession.

One of the most significant accomplishments of this period was the purchase of ground together with South Sharon (Farrell)

to be used jointly as a cemetery. Each paid-up member was entitled to one cemetery lot. This was later changed to two lots apiece. What keen vision these men showed to secure the land that is used to this very day for the same purpose!

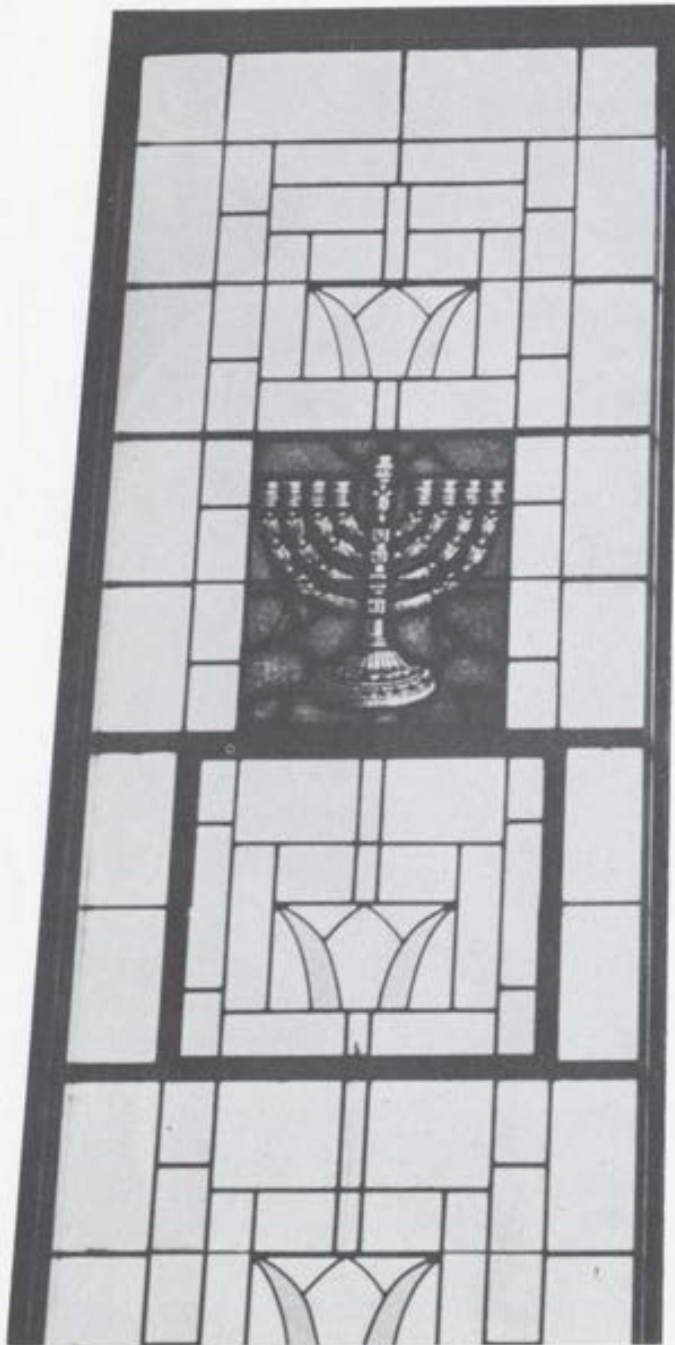
For his long term of office and the manner in which it was fulfilled, Simon Cohen was given a silver loving cup inscribed:

1921

*Presented to Simon Cohen by members
of the House of Israel for good service.*

The population of Sharon had now increased to 15,270. These were its last few years as a borough. Sharon took on the aspects of a city with the installation of traffic lights. The new High School was erected. Westinghouse came and many other improvements were made as part of a national phase of expansion which was the theme of the years that led into the twenties.

The Hanukkah (Feast of Lights) window has a lovely nine-branched Hanukkah Menorah, which is kindled during the eight days of Hanukkah, celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 165 B.C., after it had been desecrated by the hosts of the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes.



Chapter Six

THE years of 1920 and 1921 were good business years; the influx of immigration reached its highest level. In 1922, the national circulation of the Yiddish language "Jewish Daily Forward" hit its peak and the subsequent drop in its circulation is the measure of integration of these people into American habits. This country-wide growth, along with an acute housing shortage which occurred in Sharon, brought the Jews of the community into a closely knit neighborhood.

The membership list was growing for other reasons, too. The young men were coming of age, marrying and beginning to raise families. On June 24, 1923, the list of new members who were balloted favorably contained names that were to be a force in later years. They were Louis Rosenblum, Sam Epstein, Morris Schloss, and Harry Mermelstein. Further evidence of growth — on the distaff side — is reflected in some of the notations for Rosh Hashonah, 1923, where we read that M. J. Routman bought a seat for his son-in-law and Sam Lurie, "a Seat for George."

All through these years, new names appeared on the lists more and more frequently.

The need for expanded religious facilities

became apparent and on January 2, 1923, at a special meeting of the Congregation called by the President, A. M. Rosenblum, it was moved by Joseph Routman and seconded by Ike Rosenblum to remodel the Synagogue building. The business at hand is quickly reflected in the records of the Board meetings and the record of bills paid. The minutes of April 4, 1923 denote that a committee was selected to see the architect about plans. Another important detail: a committee was selected to go to the First National Bank "to see about funds."

Money had become a little tighter during the years of 1923 and 1924. There was a small business recession and most of the people of the House of Israel Congregation had obligations to relatives left behind in Europe. An intensive drive for new members and new funds had to be instituted. At an important meeting on August 26, the Congregation voted to borrow \$12,500 from the First National Bank. For the purpose of soliciting members, there was an affirmative vote on a "motion—we put a letter to invite all the Jewish people of the Valley to come to our meeting on Sunday, September 2nd, 1923 at 2 P. M., as we will sell seats and receive members in our congregation." Perhaps the need for a Rabbi was first felt at this

time, for Joseph Routman was to "go to Youngstown to see a Rabbi to come to Sharon." At this meeting, seats were auctioned off, (they had been revalued), top prices being paid by Nathan Rosenblum, Harry Mermelstein, Henry Ekker, Ben Friedman, and Jacob Goldberg for seats in Row A.

This time the contract for the general building was given to Troutman and Christman. Kohn Electric Company did the wiring and various details were undoubtedly seen to by the Board itself, for the records show that Reznor Manufacturing Company was paid \$31.50 for plating the chandelier.

The Sharon Herald ran a news article and an editorial concerning the opening at

the High Holy Days in 1924. Their description went in part, as follows:

" . . . handsome, new structure, just completed at a cost of \$30,000 . . . under construction for the last year and has been made possible through the earnest efforts of the men of the congregation.

"Although the building is an addition to the old structure which has been used for many years, it will replace it as the place of worship, the old building now being used as a Sunday School Room. The new Synagogue is beautifully finished on the interior and will seat approximately 300.

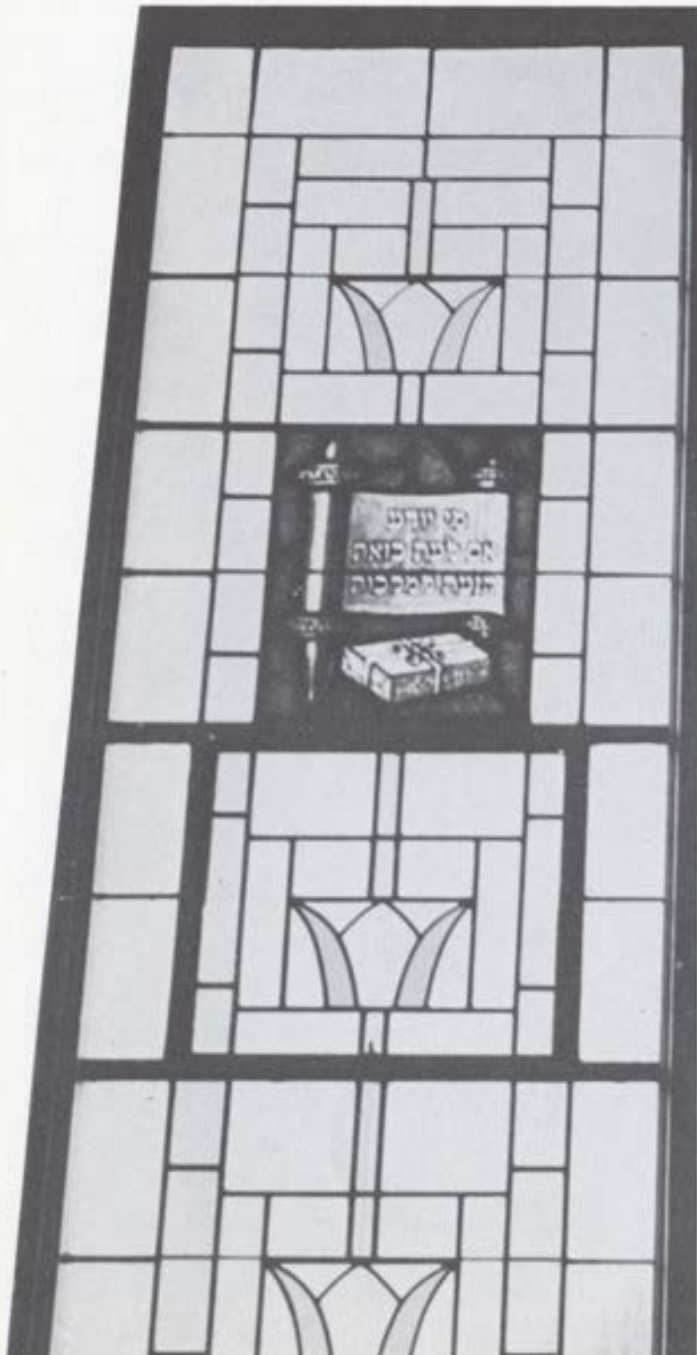
"The addition is 45 x 45 feet in size and has been constructed in front of the old building which is about the same size, giving the Congregation a building of 45 x 90 feet. It is built of brick and is modern and up-to-date in construction.

"The pulpit is located in the front of the building with the pews filling the remainder



Synagogue On Shenango Street

The Purim (Feast of Lots) window recalls that heroism of Esther which saved the Jews of Persia from their persecutors. Here we see an open scroll of the biblical Book of Esther with the Hebrew words inscribed, "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14), and below the scroll is the Sha'lach Monoth box in which gifts to the poor are deposited.



Chapter Seven

GREAT as this faith was, it was still practiced in a very orthodox manner, unmodified from European days, and in grave danger of not fitting properly into the American scene. Therefore, it really could never fit the lives of the younger men and women, and their children.

A rather more progressive group of Jewish immigrants saw this situation and felt the need for modernization. Their foresight was not so much a matter of perspicacity as one of background and upbringing. The nucleus of this small band of people was of German descent. Having joined the Synagogue, and not having found spiritual inspiration, they met and celebrated the holidays in one another's homes. There were never any hard feelings between the House of Israel Congregation and those who did not worship with them. When Alexander Green, then a non-member, was President of the JDC he found the Congregation most generous toward the cause he was heading.

Mrs. Max Daus who was also not a member of the Congregation, had been approached back in 1910 by the B'nai B'rith to start an English-speaking Religious

School. She had taught public school in Youngstown for ten years; in addition, she was possessed of a keen, original mind and a ready understanding. Mrs. Daus lacked teachers, so first of all, she trained ten of the older girls to instruct. Classes were held in the YMHA rooms and each Sunday some of the men came in to help and to watch Mrs. Daus' methods. One of them became her right-hand man. Joseph Goodstein was a teacher in early years and with his religious background, his patience in handling children, it was logical that he should later become principal. Today, he serves on the Temple Board as head of the Sunday School.

The children in the Sunday School paid for their own books; when Confirmation came, they would plan some affair to pay for the expenses of the ceremony. A wonderful dance arranged by the Class would earn the money to pay for the Thomas Theater, to buy a gift for the Rabbi who came from Youngstown, a gift, also, for their beloved Mrs. Daus, and to hire an orchestra for the dance. And the evening of Confirmation Day, confirmands' mothers held a reception honoring them.

So well established was the Sunday School, that when Harry Routman and

Isedore Zeff representing the Congregation, asked Mrs. Daus to hold the religious school in the basement of the Temple in 1924, it was agreed that at Confirmation time, the boys and girls would sit together, girls would lay flowers on the altar, and there would be piano music. Quite some concessions made, properly, for the sake of the children!

But, when the more progressive group was approached for membership, during the drive attendant to remodelling, their one request was turned down. They wanted men and women to sit together!

Through the early years of the 1920's, Sharon was a community growing fast as the first generation born in this country was coming of age. It was this American generation that was to modernize tradition. Their fathers who had had the job of establishing homes, learning the customs of this country, kept, as is natural, some of their European schooling and ways. They had no need of further religious training; their children's interest was kindled through those customs which were observed in the homes and often smothered by the tough pedagogical methods which had been employed in their *Cheders*.

Still, these younger men and women did interest themselves; the young-married women worked on the committees for the Shul suppers which the newly organized Sisterhood had instituted as a highly successful way of making money.

The women worked with zest on their Shul Suppers, older members and young alike pitching in. The community had first to be canvassed to sell tickets. The leg work was the difficult part, not the selling — for after the first supper, people were always turned away at the door. The ones most adept met to pluck the chickens and to

prepare them for the roasting pans. The tables had to be set up and placed, and most likely, the very day of the supper, for there was often a meeting the night before in the newly finished basement. Linens, flowers, silver, dishes; all were to be ready as the paprikash was blended, the chicken and potatoes roasted, while the carrots and peas waited until the last hour to be cooked. The menu was rarely varied for there seemed to be universal satisfaction with the first one chosen. Sponge cakes and tortes topped off this wonderful meal and entertainment followed.

The next day, the women were always exhausted, but the coffers of the Sisterhood were full. And well they had to be, for often an unexpected bill was tendered, as recorded on November 2, 1924, when it was moved that the Secretary of the Shul send this statement to the President of the Ladies' Auxiliary, "\$60 for painting Synagogue."

The Sisterhood had been organized at the request of the men of the Congregation to help to remove the Shul from debt. The women's organizations of the town were the Ladies' Aid, The Hadassah, and The Council of Jewish Women. The Ladies' Aid gave its attention to the transients who were a very large part of every community's pattern even through the decade of the 20's. Hadassah's work lay far away in Palestine. Through Council, the women did social welfare work independently and in affiliation with other community agencies, The Red Cross, the Sunshine Society and The War Fund. In 1917 the Council even assumed financial responsibility for the Sunday School. Since Mrs. Daus became the first President of the Sharon-Farrell Council of Jewish Women, it was to this organization that she turned for help in running what was primarily the Shul's responsibility. But

the Synagogue had no women's organization which was fully prepared to help.

Little by little, the need for a money raising women's organization became apparent, and at a Ladies' Aid Meeting, the Auxiliary was brought into being. Mrs. Ike Rosenblum organized and headed this group through its early years. The record of achievement was great for there was so much to be done. The kitchen was equipped; a stove, pots, pans, silverware were bought. Upstairs the Shul got the first of a long line of paint jobs and carpet was laid in the aisles and on the *bimah*.

Competent women set a pattern for the conduct and execution of the presidency which is followed to this very day.

The bills were paid and the Board was always happy when collections matched the expenses, even though they were not extensive. The Paid Out list for January 19, 1922, a few months after Mr. A. Freyman took over as Secretary of the Board, shows the scale and scope of the Synagogue's activities. Order 72 was to "Shames Lewis from January 27 to February 3 — \$5.00"; Order 75 to "J. M. Rabinovitz for Services from October to February — \$40.00"; checks for electric, gas and water sent out each month and Orders 89 and 90 were to "S. Cohen for Books from Hebrew Publishing Company" and "Donation to National Fund on Dr. Herzl's *yahrzeit*."



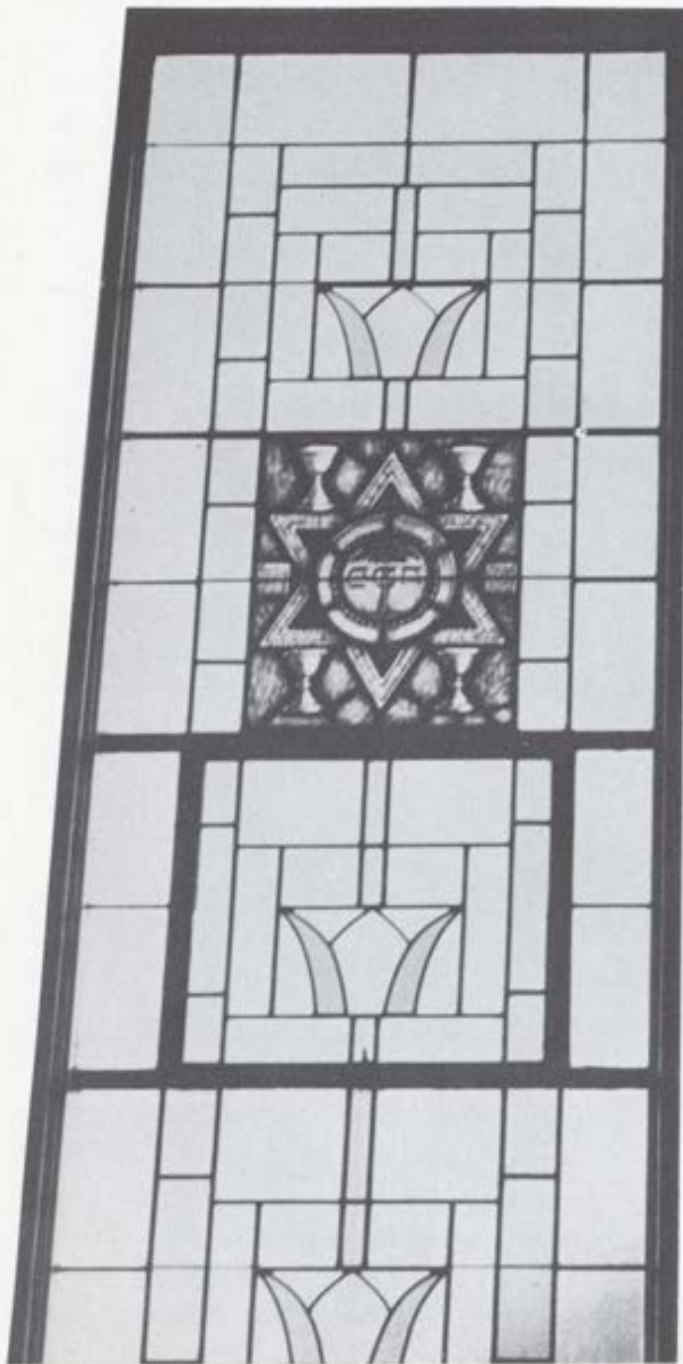
First Confirmation Class, June 4, 1916

Myrtle Routman Rosenblum
Esther Goldberg Davis
Beatrice Mayer Dunn
George Lurie, Jr.
William Cohen
Mrs. Max Daus

Bessie Routman Katlin
Sadie Goldstein Goldstone
Lottie Bender Rosenblum
Gertrude Epstein Kahn
Bess Epstein Ferbstein
Goldie Routman Myers

Rose Schlesinger

The Pesach (Passover) window presents the colorful symbols of the Passover, which commemorates the liberation of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It has a Mogen David in the heart of which is a replica of a silver Seder plate in the center of which is a palm tree and the word "Pesach". In the corners of the Mogen David are the four cups of wine ceremonially and ritually used at the Seder. On both sides of the Mogen David are matzoth.



Chapter Eight

THE era of the troubled '30's was reflected in the Congregational life and activity of the period. The decade opened with a new vitality, for the Congregation of the House of Israel had decided that it should have a full-time, full-paid rabbi as spiritual leader of the Congregation. The young-marrieds of the 20's now felt responsible for their children's training. The pace of life was quickening. The Shul had not properly assumed the teaching of religious customs, ethics, and history that was becoming increasingly more difficult for the individual to impart to his children. There must be more to the Synagogue as an institution than just to conduct services.

Maurice Moskovitz came and with him came a new vitality. Some few changes crept into the ritual: a late Friday evening service was established; English prayers were read; a sermon became a recognized part of the service; men and women sat together at last. Children went ungrudgingly — well, almost — to Hebrew classes after school.

But the momentum slowly died away. The story became the same with each succeeding Rabbi. From a fresh start, activity would begin at a high peak with his arrival

and would slowly descend a road of dissatisfaction. The community was in a stage of transition; ideas as to what it needed were crystallizing slowly from a mass of old established habits. The Rabbi was never really given a free hand to lead the Congregation and thus it was that no Rabbi ever stayed very long.

The only positive action in this period came from members of the Board and others interested in the affairs of the Congregation. In 1931, a handsome memorial tablet was given by Jacob Goldberg in the memory of his mother. Here, *yahrzeits* of members of the Congregation would be commemorated. Mr. Goldberg was a decisive leader in Jewish and civic life. He served on the Board for thirty years and in his service the young and the old found open-minded understanding. It is a fitting tribute to him and to his high place in Congregational life that his family has dedicated a new memorial plaque in the new Temple.

These were years when the Sisterhood kept interest awakened for the Shul in the community-at-large. Their constant efforts to support it bound the membership together in a way that the Services were failing to do.

The Shavuos (Feast of Weeks) window portrays the top of Mt. Sinai, clouds surrounding it, the lightning flashing, the flames emerging from it, and the two inscribed commandments, above the mountain, thus vividly symbolizing the historic Revelation imputed to Moses, which is commemorated each year on the Feast of Shavuos.



Chapter Nine

THE years of the war affected the House of Israel community as it did small groups the world over. Of course, all were Jews; but in such troubled times, all felt the need to voice beliefs, to re-affirm ideals, to find an established order in which to place one's hopes. It was a logical time for this community which had been growing and thinking to make its choice as to how it would practice its religion.

At the same time that the need for a modernized ritual was felt, leaders of the community knew that the Congregation would need a new building. Men of vision had for years been seeing a new Temple; one of these men, Nathan Routman, son of Frank, grandson of Joseph, in whose mind the seed had been germinating, planted it in the minds of others. In 1943, with his suggestion and guidance, and with their own generosity, the Rosenblum-Epstein families drew up a Trust Agreement, whereby they made to the House of Israel Congregation, a charitable bequest of \$25,000, subject to the condition that building of a new Temple or Synagogue be started within five years. The Congregation agreed to appoint a Building Committee whose task

it was to "... have custody of all funds, the initiation and supervision of a program to raise additional funds, the duty of purchasing a building site, the function of providing building plans for the erection of the new temple or Synagogue . . ."

The members of the family who signed the agreement were: Lillian C. Rosenblum, H. D. Rosenblum, Carol T. Rosenblum, Oscar Ben Rosenblum, Myrtle R. Rosenblum, Samuel W. Epstein, and Bess R. Epstein. Those who had been named to the Building Committee affixed their names: Nathan Routman, Myer Frank, Myer Yanowitz, Abe Rudberg, Mendall Bloom, Jacob B. Goldberg, Mildred Shanks, George Lurie, Jr., Philip Ellovich, Nate Rotter, and Benjamin H. Marks.

The language of the Trust Agreement expressed all that had lain within the hearts and minds of the thoughtful and perceiving members of the House of Israel:

"WHEREAS, it has been manifest for many years that the physical facilities of the House of Israel Congregation, have been inadequate and not consonant with growth of the Sharon Jewish Community; and —

"WHEREAS, it is evident that the spiritual, social, and educational life of the Jewish Community cannot be perpetuated nor enhanced, but is in fact retarded, by virtue of the facilities at the disposal of the party

of the second part and by reason of the location of the present synagogue; and—
"WHEREAS, it is further apparent that the time is now opportune to conceive a program and prepare for the erection of a proper edifice in which the religious and spiritual values of the Jewish religion might be preserved, where the education of our Jewish youth can be continued and improved under proper environmental conditions, and where the social life of the Jewish Community can be enhanced—so that the Jewish citizens of Sharon can worship their God with dignity, live among their neighbors with respect and inculcate in their children and themselves a love for their God and Country."

Things began to move immediately—the Committee activated itself and set about to raise fifty thousand more dollars. After much deliberation a site was selected, an

architect hired. Bids were put out for a building, but at this time—the height of war production—civilian construction was impossible. The money was put into War Bonds until it should be used.

The Sisterhood had been laying plans for its part in helping with the building, too. In 1942, they had voted to turn over the current expenses of the Shul to the men after October first. Now they decided to appropriate all of the revenues from the New Year Journal which for ten years they had published and the profits of which had been shared with the men. Henceforth, their budget was to allow a percentage of income for improvements and a percentage for a building fund.



*Jacob G. Goldberg, Past President And
Energetic Member Of The Temple Board
For Thirty Years*



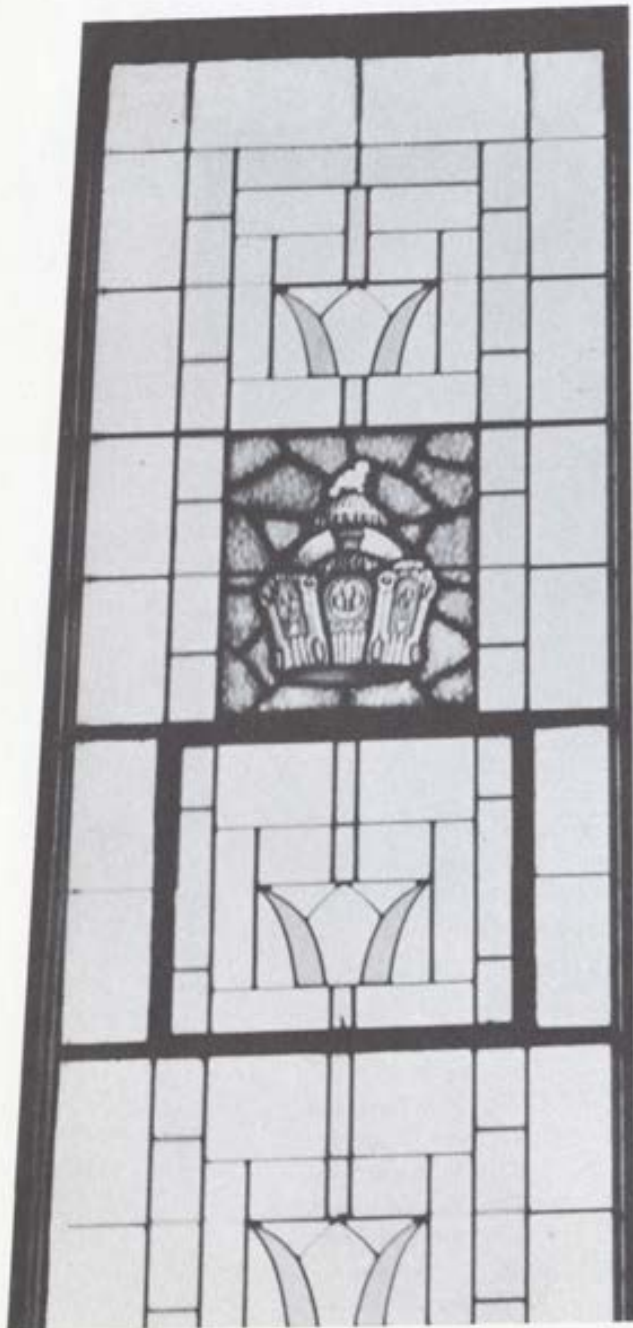
Temple Beth Israel Choir

Mrs. Sam Routman, Director
 Mrs. Nate Rotter, President
 Manuel Gingold, Treasurer
 Theodore Rabb, Librarian

Mrs. David Adelman
 Mrs. Charles Brier
 Mrs. Bernard Cohen
 Bernard Cohen
 Edward J. Courtney
 Mrs. Sam Epstein
 Miss Myra Goldstein
 Mrs. Alex Green
 Mrs. Lewis Krieger
 Arthur Krieger
 Mrs. Eugene Millman

Mrs. Edward Rabb
 Mrs. Elliot Rabb
 Ellis Rabb
 Pauline Robinson
 Mrs. Abe Routman
 Gertrude Routman
 Milton Shafran
 Mrs. Martin Shanks
 Mrs. John Shontz
 Dr. E. Sinoway
 Mrs. Ben Wittman

The "Crown of the Law" is one of three beautifully designed leaded-glass windows in the Temple, which represent the three functions of the Synagogue. It suggests knowledge and moral discipline as a function of Israel's Synagogue. The "Crown" usually adorns the Torah found in the Holy Ark.



Chapter Ten

MATTERS at hand were never neglected; many were the Servicemen's dances sponsored by the Sisterhood, and often were the visits to Camp. All Jewish organizations joined forces under the JWB to maintain recreational rooms for servicemen and most of everyone's time and energy went into helping the war effort.

The year of 1943 was a critical year. It contained seeds of swift progress and throwbacks to early, outmoded ritual. It was the year in which it was decided that Aliyahs should no longer be sold during the Services. In late November members of the Board petitioned the Sisterhood to take over, again, the paying of the utilities for the Synagogue. At the same time the membership learned that women would sit on the Shul Board to represent the Sisterhood. The organization was asked to appoint five women to help in the building program.

Since the program was going to be delayed there had to be some quarters in which the enlarged activities could be maintained. The need was immediate, for the inadequacies of the Shul became overwhelming when classes and clubs and committees were meeting daily.

When Nathan Routman, who has sat on the Board for more than twenty years and whose ideas always encompassed the future, saw the opportunity — a large house up for sale at the sheriff's office — he presented a plan again to the Rosenblums. Another gift was made. The Rosenblum-Epstein family donated a Jewish Center on Main Street at Washington to the House of Israel Congregation for temporary use.

Truly it became a center. To maintain it was the Sisterhood's job; the schoolrooms were equipped by Council; and the men raised money to furnish it. Its establishment gave great impetus to Jewish life and fostered the hope of the final goal of the Temple.

A momentous decision was made by the Congregation here, at a meeting in May, 1945. Transition had already taken place in the minds and habits of the majority; it needed only to be told. An affirmative decision to adopt a program of Progressive Judaism was made. To put the desires of the majority into concrete terms, a man of administrative talent was chosen to head the congregation. Samuel W. Epstein had served since 1925 on the Board, and his background and knowledge of its needs

fitted him for his new task of leadership.

The new plans promulgated by the Board did not suit all the members' desires. Arrangements were always made to provide traditional services on all occasions. Mr. Epstein's steadfastness of purpose in leading the Congregation forward and at the same time in recognizing the problems of orthodox worshipers set the keynote for the Temple's function today. He has been a central, guiding figure in all the thoughtful, serious planning which is behind the Temple's achievement and serves, still, as Vice-President.

The mandate to the Board led them to

the Jewish Institute of Religion headed by Dr. Stephen S. Wise in their search for a new rabbi. M. Robert Syme came to Sharon. With his capabilities and with majority approval, changes followed swiftly. A new, mixed choir was organized under the directorship of Mrs. Sam Routman. An organ was installed. A new ritual was defined, using the Union Prayer Book only at Friday evening services. Innovations brought large attendances. Schools took on regularity and order as outmoded texts were supplanted by modern material and method. Children participated in Services. The Sisterhood assumed the Sunday School. Young mothers put their children on the Cradle Roll.



The Jewish Community Center

There was some dissension felt almost from the beginning. No such a program could have gone completely smoothly; everyone worked at high tension and the changes came as an avalanche. When even more factors entered the picture, the Rabbi's resignation was accepted.

The program did not lag; strides long overdue having been made, the pace returned to normal. Greater strides were to come for the building was never forgotten. In 1948 when the bids went out again, they came back in astronomical figures as business was at the crest of post-war inflation.



Youth Group Officers

Allan Caplan, President
Gerald Davis, Vice-President

Miss Pauline Robinson, Secretary
Harold Freed, Treasurer

The Menorah (the seven-branched candelabrum) suggests inspiration, the light which comes from God. It symbolizes Israel's mission to be a "Light unto the Nations".



Chapter Eleven

JN THE SUMMER of that year, Meyer M. Abramowitz accepted the position of Rabbi of the House of Israel Congregation. On his suggestion, the Board renamed it Temple Beth Israel. His clear thinking and understanding of community problems helped it through a difficult period, bound it together, and gave it strength for the work still ahead.

Ideas were now reaching full flower; the liberal Judaism program was crystallizing. The Union Prayer Book which had been adopted by the Congregation on July 1, 1948 for the High Holy Days was first used in 1949. It was already in use for Sabbath and Festivals. The Service has become even more beautiful; the choir, now fully developed, selects music suited to each religious occasion from its liturgical repertoire. The Congregation became affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and thus is one of over four hundred Liberal congregations which the Union represents. The Sisterhood had already joined the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, an integral part of the Union. Thus the Congregation supports Liberal Judaism in the whole country,

spiritually and financially. A bulletin is published monthly. The Temple sponsors a Cub pack and a Boy Scout Troop. The Youth group is newly formed. The first community Seder was held in 1949. The Temple has really become an institution of varied activities.

When the bids were put out again in 1949, the Building Committee brought back good news. The contracts were within the Congregation's scope and building would begin!

It would begin, that is, after more money was raised. The original \$75,000 could not now do the work. And the community had been giving generously and steadily at home and overseas for ten years. In 1944, there had been a small drive conducted to retire the mortgage on the old building. Though difficulties were easily foreseen, Nathan Routman became head of the Finance Committee which laid plans for the biggest project that this Congregation of one hundred and forty families had ever undertaken. New members were brought in. Money was pledged on a five-year plan. New talents came to light as more men joined the committees.

Dr. David L. Ekker came to the presi-

dency with a capacity for financial planning that has put the Temple on a sound budgetary basis. Meeting followed meeting and finally the day for the breaking of ground arrived.

On a bright summer evening, Wednesday, July 27, 1949, a large crowd gathered

at the corner of Highland Road and Euclid Avenue. This site had been owned and donated by the Rosenblums when it was found to be a desirable location. There Abraham Freyman, the congregation's oldest member and still Financial Secretary to the Board, turned the first shovelful of earth.



Abraham Freyman Removes The First Shovelful Of Earth. Rabbi Abramowitz And Nathan Routman Assist



Ground Breaking Ceremonies Are Attended By Some Of The Past Presidents, Sam Epstein, Myer Yanowitz, Harry Routman, Nathan Routman, Jacob Goldberg, Harry Mermelstein

Three months later, on October 23, the cornerstone was laid. H. David Rosenblum had the honor of dedicating it: he represented the Rosenblum Family in recognition of their interest and generosity through the years. The Sharon Herald said on Monday, October 24, 1949:—

"A dream of a new and larger home for the Congregation of Temple Beth Israel moved toward reality with the laying of the new Temple's cornerstone at impressive ceremonies yesterday afternoon on Highland Road . . . Mayor Myron W. Jones . . . brought greetings from . . . Sharon, and placed a history and map of the city in a metal box which was later placed in the cornerstone."

Leaders of all types of organizations connected with Jewish life spoke and placed documents in the box. So represented in the Temple's foundation are — The Sisterhood, B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Council, Zionist Organization, Ladies' Aid, Jewish War Veterans, Junior Hadassah, AZA, Young Judea, and the Confirmation Class of 1950.

At the festive luncheon after the ceremonies, Dr. Solomon B. Freehof of Pittsburgh spoke, completing perfectly one of the most magnificent days in the Congregation's history.

The general contractors for the Temple

of 1950 were the Calvert Lumber Company with the construction supervisor being Calvin Banse. It is built of buff brick on a plot of land facing front on Highland Road, east on Euclid Avenue, and west on Independence Court. Morris W. Scheibel, a Youngstown, Ohio architect, conceived and designed the Temple and his comments follow:

"The problem of the Architect was to design the Temple so that it would be functional throughout, fashioned into an artistic pattern, and as far as possible within the monetary limitations of the Congregation; to properly relate and plan the structure to the topography of the site, which was indeed a challenge when it is considered that there is a difference of over fifteen feet in grade from Euclid Avenue to Independence Court.

"A basic requirement was that the Temple face to the East in accordance with the traditional orientation. In designing the exterior, I have attempted that it express qualities of deep, spiritual significance. Judaism as a living, thriving organism, and in a manner without borrowing or seeking inspiration from strange and unfriendly antiquities; a design that is expressive of our religious faith, emphasizing by its form and mass the One and Eternal God.

"The universality of our religious truths was never expressed in a standard architectural form; the synagogues of former days reflected the life and culture of the varied communities throughout the world where



Cornerstone Laying Ceremonies. Rabbi Abramowitz, H. David Rosenblum, and Dr. David Ekker Place Historic Documents In The Cornerstone. (left) Dr. Solomon Freehof, Guest Speaker at The Ceremonies Congratulates Rabbi Abramowitz, As Dr. Ekker Looks On. (right)

our forefathers cast their lot.

"The barrier that has separated our people from a greater participation in the fine arts was laid in the orthodox attitude toward "the graven image or the likeness of anything that was in the Heavens above or in the Earth beneath".

"Our prophets, from time immemorial, preached against the introduction into the Synagogue of decorations that might attract the eye and divert the mind from prayer. Every attempt to represent God in the appearance of human form was looked upon as profanation of His Nature. Painting and sculpture were banned by the piety of our rabbis and we were always reminded of the prohibitions of the Second Commandment.

"But a new spirit of architectural liberalism is upon us. Our modern Temples should no longer be clothed with architectural imitations or be replicas that indicate the mysteries of Greek Gods or the cult of the Mohammedan. The use of Greek or Roman or other styles does not express our religious yearning and aspirations but have actually screened or concealed them. I have sought truth and character above all and have allowed the new Temple design to express that from which its eternal qualities shine. Our religious faith is a progressive one; our ritual no longer contains the oriental pagantry of Palestinian days; our services and ceremonials have become comparatively simple and the design of Temple Beth Israel I believe reflects these transitions.

"We are passing through a renaissance of religious spirit and learning in our beloved land. Our religious faith occupies today a position of equality with that of our non-Jewish neighbors and we have departed from a fenced-in former seclusion to an eager and proud participation in fellowship with our neighbors in public and community life, for a greater integration into the American scene. It is this feeling which is reflected in the new Temple Beth Israel and it is for the reasons given, that contemporary design was employed. It is not alien to the American scene and is not venerated with the extraneous and borrowed finery of antiquity. The style of Temple Beth Israel fundamentally expresses our religious faith and character and emphasizes by its mass, the unity of the One God which is the primary tenet of our faith. Its ornamentation, sparingly used, symbolizes our Jewish tradition.

"In addition to all this, the Temple of our day has become a true fulfillment of being

not only a House of Prayer but a House of Learning and a gathering place for the social amenities of the Congregation. A visit to the Temple will disclose that the Main Floor contains the Sanctuary, Rabbi's Study, Temple office, six class-rooms, coat room and Men's and Women's Rest Rooms. The ground floor contains the Social Hall, Main Kitchen, Chapel, Women's Parlor, Kindergarten, a large room for the storage of dining room tables and chairs, Men's and Women's Rest Rooms, and the heating plant.

"The Sanctuary, very properly, dominates the composition. It is finished in simple dignity. It has a high ceiling acoustically treated, lighted by direct-indirect fixtures with reflected plaster domes, which give a soft uniform light for all purposes.

"The floor is inclined from the leather covered entrance doors to the base of the Pulpit Platform. The aisles are carpeted while the floor areas under the very comfortable pew seating, are covered with asphalt tile.

"On both sides of the Sanctuary are twelve decorative leaded glass windows; the number of windows symbolizes the Twelve tribes of Israel while the special panels of glass in scintillating colors are emblematic of the great Jewish holidays.

"The focal point of the Sanctuary is the Ark which is constructed of quarter sawn oak and highly finished. Above the Ark is a decorative carved Hebrew inscription which translated is, "Know thou before Whom thou standeth". The Ark has sliding doors with appropriate leaded glass panels; its interior is illuminated by concealed lighting to emphasize the beauty of the Scrolls which it houses. Above the doors are the Tablets of the Law with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew beautifully carved thereon. The walls of the Sanctuary have a wainscoting, banded in a combination of plain sawn and quarter sawn oak. The Pulpit Platform is carpeted; the background a beautiful treatment of oak paneling. On either side of the Ark, two bronze Menorahs. The Sanctuary is acoustically treated to produce the maximum of sound effect and has splendid unobstructed sight lines.

"The Class-rooms have been provided with the most modern equipment to suit the needs of children of different ages; green chalk boards have been installed to promote good vision, together with the necessary cork tacking boards. Each class-room has a book-case and teacher's desk. The class-rooms, while finished in a simple unpretentious manner, are comparable with the best standards of the modern Public School.

"The Chapel is provided with an Ark, equipped in the same manner as that of the Sanctuary.

"The Social Hall is completely finished and acoustically treated. It is well ventilated by a large expanse of windows on two sides. In addition to flush type ceiling lighting, the room is equipped for sound and motion picture projection. The Stage Platform is provided with concealed stage lighting. The kitchen is a large, airy room, well ventilated, in which has been installed the most modern equipment to serve fully the maximum needs of the Social Hall. Sliding windows and serving counter covered with stainless steel have been provided between the Social Hall and Kitchen.

"The floors of the building throughout are of steel and concrete construction; and the finished floors generally of asphalt tile of selected colors. Terrazzo floors of pleasing design have been installed in the Main Entrance Vestibule, Foyer and entrance to the social hall.

"The building is heated by means of a two pipe heating system operated by a gas fired boiler. All radiation and copper piping throughout has been recessed.

"The problems and labor of blending masonry and steel, wood and glass and other building materials which form this House of

Israel will soon be forgotten but the results achieved must speak for themselves."

During every step of construction, D. L. Ekker, the president, and Rabbi Abramowitz, the spiritual leader, gave studious attention to each detail. Dr. Ekker absorbed knowledge of building processes and terms so expertly that he was able to participate knowingly in every technical decision. Possessed of a tremendous vitality, he gave his time generously and with enthusiasm pushed the work through to an early, magnificent conclusion. The entire congregation worked behind him, on and off committees, and with a spirit and a will, the work has been accomplished. The Rabbi performed "beyond the line of duty" in advising and aiding in even the smallest of matters connected with construction, design, and execution. In matters of propriety, his, of course, was the final word. That everything is so fitting is testimony to his conception of religion.



The Temple Sanctuary

The priestly hands in benediction, against a background of a sunrise, suggests the third function of the synagogue, that of worship.



Chapter Twelve

FITTINGLY, the Temple was prepared for worship for the High Holy Days of 1950. On the Sunday preceding Rosh Hashonah, September 10, 1950, the Congregation Beth Israel met at evening Services in the old building on Shenango Street for the last time. After the prayers as the sun was lowering, sending its last and most beautiful rays through the windows, Abraham Freyman ascended to open the Ark. As the Rabbi removed the Torahs, he handed them to Morris Bloch, Louis Goldberg, Edward

Rabb, Harry Routman, and Harry Stahl. Then the new mantles given by the Rabbi and his wife were placed by Dr. Louis Applebaum, George Greenberg, Harry Greenberger, Walter Routman, and Bertram Speizer. Down the aisle, out the door they went—the men and the law—to ancient hymns sung by choir and Rabbi. The group followed and made its way up the hill, perhaps pausing to admire the site and sight of their new home. There Rabbi Abramowitz, Dr. Ekker, and Mrs. Sam Gerson opened the doors for the first time. In-



Moving Of The Torahs From The Old Temple



Arriving At The New Temple With The Torahs

side, in the presence of all, awe-struck and reverent as is every Jew when his Torah is displayed, Louis Stein opened the Ark, and Rudolph Goldstone, Harry Mermelstein, Sam Routman, Martin Shanks, and Jack Stern placed the Scrolls within. Robert Davis closed the doors, and the Law rested in its new Aron Hakodesh.

The story of this Temple is the story of constructive striving toward spiritual achievement that is religion. Progress is made where there is a disharmony of ideas

— a break from old to new — and a harmony of personalities. Religion builds people; people who have learned to live in unity and understanding, to work together, build buildings. The measure of their success is the splendor and the permanence of their creation.

Religion, progress, and achievement are writ large in the annals of Temple Beth Israel, for this is a Congregation which has learned to live together, to build together a place which truly "shall be called a House of Prayer for all people".

