

May 6, 1948

Rabbi Meyer M. Abramowitz
63-28 78th St.
Rego Park
Long Island, N. Y.

Dear Rabbi:

The Board of our Congregation met last night with everyone present except Mr. Rudberg who had to attend a business meeting. We covered a lot of ground --- I am going to briefly tell you the results of some of the important actions taken.

The Board appreciates your suggestion about the refrigerator and the stove, and passed a resolution to instruct Mr. Rudberg, who is in the furniture business, to purchase a stove and have it installed for the account of our Congregation. The matter of your moving expenses to Sharon was brought up and it developed that everybody on the Board understands it exactly as you do -- that is, that we are to see that you are moved to Sharon at the expense of the Congregation. There is no question in anybody's mind about this. We also accepted a contract from the United Gas Company to purchase a gas furnace at a price which they stipulated, and instructions were given to proceed with the installation immediately. The Board was notified that the lights in the Synagogue have been installed and those who saw them, praise the effect. The bill was okayed for payment.

The matter of the High Holiday books was brought up again to try to arrive at a decisive view point and it was very fully discussed. The vast majority favor the Union Prayerbook --- they feel that the pattern which was started on our Friday nights was met with favor. The indications are very clear that this is the approach which brings the greatest response. Nobody seemed to feel that this was a wide departure from Judaism, as a matter of fact, they all are of the opinion that it preserved more of the essence in an intelligible form than the Orthodox or Conservative Prayerbook. We passed no resolution dictating to you, but we are passing on to you a view point which is practically unanimous that the approach represented by the Union Prayerbook seems to be the one for which our Community is now prepared. We believe that it will bring the greatest response. It was also mentioned that this does not mean that we feel that some of the traditional singing by yourself and the choir should not be included, as a matter of fact, we think it is important that this background be maintained, but we feel that the Union Prayerbook is the better vehicle for maintaining the carrying through of the entire service. One Board Member felt that the Rabbi should be aggressive and should say "This is what I want", and demand it. It will be of Prayerbook or another. Our answer to

him was that the Rabbi has not been here yet, does not know the Community well enough and until he has been here awhile, it is important that those people who have been selected to be the leaders must try to pass on to him some guidance at the outstart. Our thoughts to you on the Union Prayerbook are given in the form of this guidance.

You will receive a communication from B'Nai Brith inviting you to attend an installation dinner on May 26th. If you are able to come to our city on that day, perhaps you will stay over and participate in a panel discussion on Tuesday, June 1st in the assembly room of the First Methodist Church in Sharon. The panel discussion will be Inter-State, Inter-Racial, Inter-Cultural, including background of problems representing our people. The purpose of the panel is to promote better understanding and fellowship among people in our complex life. I am quoting an extract from a letter which I received from the Program Committee who want us to have representation. Our Board does not feel that they want to have any laymen answer questions pertaining to our people and that, unless we can have either yourself or Rabbi Berkowitz from Youngstown, represent us on this panel, we will decline having anybody there. There is nothing compulsory about it and, furthermore, we do not know whether the meeting will be worth while. In any case, I am passing this information on to you and I'd like to have you let me know whether you can arrange to be here on that date. I know that you are planning to come here with your wife to look over the house and make arrangements for its repair and decoration, and I also know that this is rather early and it may not be possible. I would, however, like to have your answer immediately.

On June 7th, we will have another Board Meeting to complete our years work and on June 16th, we are going to have a Congregation Meeting at which we will make our report and give the Community a chance to elect Directors for the coming year.

With sincere regards, I am

Respectfully yours,

S. W. Epstein, President
House of Israel Congregation

May 26, 1948

Rabbi Meyer M. Abramowitz
63-28 78th St.
Rego Park
Long Island, N. Y.

Dear Rabbi:

I see that your letter to me is dated May 9th, and I am mortified that I permitted so much time to elapse before writing a reply, since I was well aware that these matters are important and that you would want to know our decision. It is inexcusable, although I have been very busy and I have a stack of business correspondence on my desk that has been there for over ten days that I do not seem to be able to get through. Your letter got into my file somewhere and, even though I thought of you frequently, I did not realize so much time had elapsed.

I have, however, taken care of the contents of your letter --- I made a duplicate of it and mailed it to our Board Members, and have had a Committee of women appointed by the Sisterhood. I also, told the Board to come to the conclusion that it is satisfactory for you to come to Sharon as you had planned and outlined in your letter.

This morning I talked to George Lurie who is Chairman of the Committee that looks after the house, and I find that the women have already contacted him and that they are working on your home. They realize that the work must be done so that you can take possession the 1st of July --- we think that this will work out satisfactory all around.

As I told you on the telephone, B'Nai Brith, through Mr. Bloom, is going to have representation at the Inter-Faith's Meeting. Although I do not approve of a laymen trying to carry the ball at a time like this, naturally, I have nothing to say inasmuch as another organization is taking hold of it, but insofar as the House of Israel is concerned, we have bowed out until you get here.

I concur with you fully in your desire to withhold any decision on the books until you get here. There are some folks who are very anxious for the Union Prayerbook, there are others who will accept either way, and still others who feel that we have made very great changes and that we should be content with these changes without going into the Union Prayerbook for the High Holy Days. They seem to feel this quite keenly, and it so happens that none of these people are represented on our Board.

It is a matter that shouldn't be rushed. At the Congregational Meeting in June, I expect to give them a chance to discuss it, and I might even let them take a vote on it in order that we may have some indication of sentiment to guide you when you get here in July.

I might say that the Committee, which has been appointed to take care of the decoration of the house, is a very capable one, and I am hoping that their work will please you. I appreciate the fact that you called me upon not having heard from me, although I am regretful that it was necessary. In the future, please do not hesitate to crowd me in case I seem to take too long to reply --- this may happen, although I assure you it certainly is not to my liking or by choice.

Let me hear from you, and if you have any directions, suggestions or thoughts, don't hesitate. The Confirmation preparations are going along in fine shape --- they had a rehearsal here Sunday and Rabbi Berkowitz came over from Youngstown, the Choir is practicing the music, and the children seem very well pleased with the program. We have already received the Bibles to be given to them with their names on the cover, and we have ordered the gowns for the ceremony. We were very fortunate to have secured Rabbi Berkowitz to pinch-hit at a time when we needed him so acutely. Mr. Jacobson will leave us the 15th of June, and we will close down our Hebrew School completely. He has been very satisfactory all around, and has been able to keep them applied to their Hebrew --- in this way avoiding its becoming rusty. He has not taught them much, over and above the Hebrew.

With regards, I am

Respectfully yours,

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S. W. Epstein, President