

FILE NAME: INTRO.80

*Congregation incorporated 1873*

The Pittsburgh Times, Monday, August 30, 1880

B'NAI ISRAEL. DEDICATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

Yesterday afternoon the new synagogue of the congregation of B'nai Israel, corner of Grant Street and Third Avenue, was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. The building was originally used by the Baptists. A Universalist congregation succeeded them, and then the church was closed for quite a time until the congregation, B'nai Israel, purchased it a few weeks ago. Since then the workmen have been busy until both outside and inside the building presents a vastly improved appearance. The outside has been painted in tasteful manner; inside, a gallery, used solely by the females of the congregation, has been erected; a reading platform and a pulpit have been placed in front of the synagogue, and behind the pulpit is the ark. Altogether the building presents a good appearance and is far superior to any place the congregation has ever had in the past.

The congregation of B'nai Israel is the orthodox congregation of this city. Its members are firm believers in the laws and tenets as laid down by Moses, and insist on the observance of all the ceremonials in use in the days when Jerusalem was the center of the world and all creation went "up" to Jerusalem. It was founded in August, 1870. At that time there were but few Jews in the city who were strictly orthodox, and they worshipped in the synagogue corner of Second Avenue and Market Street. At the time

mentioned, a congregation, the chief members of which were A. Skirbol, Simon Jacobs, H. Rosenblum, Isaac Novinski, Joseph Altman, Jacob Levi, David Oppenheim, and Jacob Saliman, was formed. The first place of worship was in a room corner of Third Avenue and Liberty Street. This became too small and they secured quarters above a grocery store corner of Virginia and Cherry alleys. The congregation increased steadily, and Fenian Hall above Philo Hall on Third Avenue was secured; from there they went to English's block on Fourth Avenue, then to Wylie Avenue. All this time the congregation was slowly increasing until it now numbers eighty-two. The Wylie Avenue rooms were small, and the building on Grant Street being on the market, it was purchased, and here the congregation hopes to stay for years to come. When the congregation was first started, Mr. Rosenblum acted as reader. The first regular priest was the Rev. Brodie. He was succeeded by the Rev. D. M. Levi, and he, in turn, by the Rev. M. Markowitz who has presided for the past two years and still hold the position.

The congregation assembled at the Wylie avenue Synagogue yesterday afternoon and proceeded to the Grant Street building, headed by the American flag. Mayor Liddell came first in a carriage, bearing a salver on which lay a gold key. After came Messrs. M. Fink, Josiah Cohen, H. Rosenblum, Wm Frank and M. Markowitz, each bearing one of the five seders or books of the bible. Arriving at the synagogue, Mayor Liddell unlocked the door with the gold key while the Rabbi sang "Open unto me the gates of righteousness and I will enter and praised the Lord."

Entering and going up into the synagogue. the scrolls were taken by Messrs. A. Abraham, A. Hyman, B.N. Jacobs, M. DeRoy and M. Miller, and the procession marched around the synagogue, the Rabbi singing until the scrolls were placed in the ark. The Reverend A. Crone of the Second avenue Synagogue, (Etz Hayim or Tree of Life) made a dedicatory address in Hebrew of some length. He was followed by Josiah Cohen Esq., who spoke at length. He said that he wished that the audience could have understood the minister who had just finished. He could reconcile the apparent differences between this and other religions. Mr. Cohen said he stood there as a representative of (Rodef Shalom Temple) the advanced and liberal ideas of Judaism, yet he had been asked to address this orthodox congregation. However much the branches might differ in outward ceremonial, they worshipped the same God - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Mr. Cohen said that the brightest jewel in the country was religious and civil liberty, and he hoped that the light would continue to burn until all men would be declared free and equal, not only in the United States, but in all the world. He reminded his hearers that besides the slavery of the body, there was the slavery of the mind which should have died with the days of superstition. Free worship and free thought were what he thought should have sway. Speaking of the Jewish nation, Mr. Cohen said that it was today the oldest nation in existence, and said that the reason for this was that it came from a source which was never-failing. It has survived all the persecutions human ingenuity could devise. Mr. Cohen said that, being born an Englishman, he never knew what religious persecution was, but coming to the united States, he found it

that city of refuge spoken of in the Bible. He claimed that there was no religion on the face of the earth so little known as is the Jewish. Prejudice, he said, was to blame for this.

"Education, which has enlightened all else, has left this corner dark. Men who have averted dangers to the nation have stumbled like blind men over Jews and Judaism.

In referring to the old days of persecution, Mr. Cohen said that what the Jews were compelled to stand had left them but two consolations: their language and their religion. He said that he cared not what church it was that taught the morality of Moses, that church was a good one. It is not the man who worshipped in a certain way because his father did, or the man who can see nothing in any other religion except his own who is happy, but the man who walks the earth having charity and love in his heart, and regards this life as a preparation of another life is the happy man. When this nation is composed of men like this, then the day will come when the lion and the lamb will lie down together. Mr. Cohen closed by asking his audience to so live that the name of a Jew would stand high in the community.

Mr. Fink, president of the Second Avenue Synagogue (Etz Hayim or Tree of Life) made an address which contained several good points. Referring to the difference between the Orthodox and Reformed congregations, he said that God did not ask a man to go to church six times a day and shake and pray all the time. What God asked was a pure heart and an upright life. He had often found that the man who went to church the most and prayed so frequently was, as a rule, the man who needed the greatest amount

of watching. The dedicatory services were concluded at five o'clock. In the evening the congregation had a feast in the basement which lasted to a late hour.

Name changed to Beth Hamedresh Hagadol and  
~~dedicated 1890~~ ~~dedicated~~  
rechartered 1893.