

The Synagogue Journal

1856-2006

January 6, 2006

Contact us: historicaljournal@kanestreet.org

Vayigash

An online publication
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Issue 1 Beginnings

Editor's Page

Baith Israel's First Congregation

This profile of the congregation lists members during the Atlantic Street Synagogue years, 1856-1862.

By Carol Levin

Baith Israel: 1855-1856

The 1855 account book is opened to pages showing the "Member's Roll" and "Trustees 1855-1856".

Photo credit: Paul Bernstein

Seat Assignments in 1856

The March 22, 1856 minutes list thirty members with two sets of seat numbers, indicating that there may have been a seat book from an earlier date.

Act of Incorporation

The document states that Morris Ehrlich and Marcus Bass were elected on the 22nd day of March to serve as President and Vice-President of Congregation Baith Israel at 155 Atlantic Street and that the certificate is, "Recorded in the Kings County Clerk's Office in Liber 1 of Certificates of Incorporation, Page 192, July 8, 1856, at 11.20 A.M.)

"The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac"

1886, Page 68

This listing of significant events and conditions in Brooklyn during the years 1832 – 1885 provides a context for the actions of the congregation and the members of the Jewish community. The price of the Almanac was 25 cents.

"Reformed Judaism"

Brooklyn Eagle, February 11, 1870, Page 3

This "succinct history" of the Jews in the city since 1850, establishes 1852 as the year that Beth Israel first began to hold meetings on Atlantic Street. The article was written on the occasion of Beth Eloheim's purchase of the Schermerhorn Street building.

"Consecrating A Jewish Burial Ground."

Brooklyn Eagle, December 30, 1857, Page 3

This article describes the United Brethren Benefit Society, which was organized by Baith Israel founders. Rev. Dr. Gershan served as the congregation's first rabbi. Morris Ehrlich resided at Union Street.

"United Brethren"

Brooklyn Eagle, July 18, 1877, Page 4

A report on a picnic held by the "Oldest Hebrew Association in Brooklyn" locates the lodge rooms on Columbia Street and lists members of the society.

About the Journal ...

"The Synagogue Journal" is a one-year online publication at www.kanestreet.org, designed to highlight the Kane Street Synagogue congregation's rich historical record. It will draw primarily on original source material: oral histories, minute books and financial ledgers, souvenir journals, newsletters, and stories of the nineteenth century from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online TM, Brooklyn Public Library.

Each week in 2006, the Journal will explore a specific theme, related to the congregation's experience. Articles will illustrate the three historic periods: the first fifty years as Congregation Baith Israel at both the Atlantic Street and Boerum Place sites; the middle years with Rabbi Israel Goldfarb as spiritual leader of the consolidated Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes at the present location, and the last fifty years, as the synagogue evolved to be the congregation that we know today.

Journal readers who take in the entire series will view the panorama of our special synagogue's experience in Brooklyn, the City of Churches: the constants, the changes and the cycles. Our intention is to foster greater understanding about synagogue customs and rituals and explore the development of the oldest Conservative congregation during its proud history.

Those of you who have watched the congregation grow over the last decades and guided its course have a treasured perspective. We welcome your reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story.

For further information, please contact us at: historicaljournal@kanestreet.org.

In this issue ...

Our theme for the first week of 2006 is **Beginnings**. Although the congregation was officially organized in January 1856, Baith Israel's founders began to organize the Jewish community several years earlier with the United Brethren Association. Items feature in this issue include a social history of Brooklyn, a list of significant local developments from 1832-1885 and a profile of the membership with a list of members up to 1862.

We acknowledge the pioneers, the early supporters who made it happen. We also say a hearty "thank you" to the core who gave support and helped launch the Journal: Dozier Hasty (Brooklyn Daily Eagle), Rabbi Sam Weintraub, Judith Greenwald, Dugans Martinez, David Grupper, Susan Benz (brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle), Vivien Shelanski and Jack Levin.

Let the triple jubilee year begin. Happy 150th, Kane Street Synagogue

Carol Levin, Editor
historicaljournal@kanestreet.org

Baith Israel's First Congregation

By Carol Levin

We know the names of the congregation's founders from numerous histories. When the safe was opened during the 2004 renovation, we discovered the actual page of signatures that had been removed to make a copy for display in an anniversary journal. But other than a few addresses, occupations and speculations about countries of origin, we know very little about the circumstances of the first members.

To better understand the composition of the Jewish community in 1850's, let's turn to the archives in the Special Collections Library at the Jewish Theological Seminary and reconstruct an ad hoc membership roll, using the ledgers from the years 1856-1862. This is the period when Congregation Baith Israel was known as the Atlantic Street Synagogue. The elaborate script is often challenging to read, but we interpret the names as best we can and compile a list of 168. The number is surely inflated with duplicate entries due to spelling errors and incorrect initials. It's a place to begin.

The occupations and addresses of many individuals are established by cross referencing school records, financial records, seat books or trustee minutes. Occupations include: attorney, hatter, furrier, barroom, mason, rabbi, pawnbroker, tailor shop, builder and carpenter. Common addresses are Atlantic, Myrtle, Baltic, Fulton, Main, Gold and Hamilton. A few New York City addresses are given. Is it the place of business or a residence? People were highly mobile then. Many downtown Manhattan congregations relocated uptown to follow members to the better neighborhoods.

Another choice neighborhood was across the East River to the newly developed, former farmlands of Brooklyn. Ferry service between Whitehall Street in Manhattan to South Ferry at the foot of Atlantic Street had existed since 1836. The Atlantic Street Synagogue, just slightly east of the Brooklyn Ferry House, must have seemed convenient to many. Ferry service was fast, frequent and inexpensive. David Ansel Weiss reports in the *Brooklyn Heights Press and Cobble Hill News*, 11/24/2005, "In the year 1869 there were almost 52 million passengers." The old story that the Jews of Brooklyn organized Baith Israel because they were tired of rowing across the river to attend New York synagogues is a folk tale.

The following names are recorded in Congregation Baith Israel:

J. Abrahams, A. Alexander, Joel Alexander, T. Alexander, Simon Asher, S. Baer, A. Bandman, Abraham Bass, Baer Bass, Lewis Bass, Marcus Bass, Simon Bass, Wolf Bass, Lazarus Baum, F. Beesman, I. Bick, Joseph Bierman, Moses Blank, H. Blitz, Angel Boxiers, Samuel Brenner, Samuel, H. Brook, Brooklyn Savings Bank teller, Herman Bruck, City Bank of Brooklyn, A. Cohen, Coleman Cohen, David Cohen, Jacob Cohen, Michael Cohen, Heyman Cohn, Loebel Cohn, Morris Cohn, A. Coleman, Isaac Coleman, Moses Coleman, R. Coleman, T. Coleman, Julius Corn, Samuel Corn, Adolph Courrant, A. Cowan, Marks Cowen, David D'Ancona, B. Davis, Donlan Bros, Morris Ehrlich, Ettinger, Julius Flatto, Isidor Frank, Julius Franklyn, Julius Friedberg, Solomon Furst, M. Goldshmit, Alexander Goldsmith, I. Goldsmith, B. Grodjiysky, James Gruschenski, Michael Gruschenske, Simon Guttman, Israel Guttstam, S. Hanover, Salomon Hant, Elias Harris, James Harris, William Harris, Abraham Heller, J.L.Hersh, Moses Hess, Nathan Hess, Samuel Hess, Sigmund Hirshfeld, Nepomuch Hofheimer, Nehemiah Hafheimer, Abraham Jacob, Samuel Jacobowsky, Isaac Jacobs, William Jacobs, I. Jacobsohn, I. Jonas, H. Kalisch, Bernard Katz, B. Kaufman, Adolph Kessler, Kethum, A. Kohl, Korn, Samuel Krotoshmer, Michel Lamm, Selig Lamm, S. Langsfield, I. Leoboldti, Salmon Leser, L. Levie, Levison, Lewitzki, Lisner, M. Loewenthal, Moses Lowenthal, Long, Isidor Losser, Simon Manne, I. Marks, Joseph John Marks, John Marx, Herman Mathias, John Mendes, Joseph Merzbacher, Metsger, Michaelzky, Michalsky, Elias Morris, Samuel Morris, William Morris, H. Moshner, Henry Muttner, M. Muttner, Netzbauner, Chas. Newman, Chas, H. Oettinger, I. Pinner, Posner, Michael Prince, Radjiski, Mrs. Reichwald, Adolph Ressler, S. Rich, Robertsohn, H. Rosenberg, Sigmund Rosenberg, Salmon Rosenfeld, B. Ross, Henry Salmonskey, L. Salomoninsky, Jacob Samter, Tobias Samter, S. Scherick, M. Scherser, Schlegel, Co - Builders & Carpenters, M. Seller, Bernard Shellenberg, Nathan. Shellenberg, Louis Sheritzky, Louis, Shyer, Robert Silverberg, P. Simon, A.J.Spieldock, Peter Spitz, Stern, M. Stolz, M. Stone, Raphael Straus, B. Strauss, Salomon Taylor, Joseph Trammes, Louis Treitelfeld, Abraham Wechsler, Weigel, Marcus Weile, Weinberg, Marcus Wellman, I, Wider's widow, J. Witlock, Daniel Wolf, Wolff Pawnbroker, Isidor Wolff, Joseph Wolff, M. Wolff.

Carol Levin, a Trustee of Kane
Street Synagogue, is Editor of
The Synagogue Journal

n avenue ; Rev.
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 corner Degraw
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 roll street, near
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 . D.
 r Myrtle avenue ;
 r Patchen ; Rev.
 venue, near Nor-
 hington avenue,

McDonough street ; Rev. George F. Pentecost, D. D.

Union, Music Hall, Rev. Everitt Smith, D. D.
 Willoughby Avenue Chapel, Willoughby ave-
 nue, near Grand ; Rev. Mr. Walton.

JEWISH SYNAGOGUES.

Ahavath Achem, Johnson avenue, near Ewen street ; Morris J. Luebke, Rabbi.

Aohai Israel, Columbia street ; Rev. G. Brandenstein, Rabbi.

Beth Elohim, State street, near Hoyt ; William Sparger, Rabbi.

Beth Elohim, Keap street, near Division ave-
 nue ; Dr. L. Wintner, Rabbi.

Beth Israel, Boerum place, corner State
 street ; Mr. Fisher, Rabbi.

Beth Jacob, Tenth street, near South Fifth (E.
 D.) ; Lewis Lewinski, Rabbi.

Bikur Choulm, Washington street ; L. Pul-
 vermacher, Rabbi.

Temple Israel, Greene avenue, near Carlton ;
 Rev. Mr. Eisenberg, Rabbi.

LUTHERAN.

Bethlehem, 299 Pacific street ; Rev. A. Rodell.
 Emanuel, Seventh street, near Fifth avenue ;
 Rev. E. S. Wisswaesser.

Emanuel, South First street, corner Eighth
 (E. D.) ; Rev. F. T. Koerner.

German Evangelical, Schermerhorn, near
 Court street ; Rev. Theodore Dresel.

Grace (English), Tenth street, near South Sec-
 ond ; Rev. G. H. Behringer.

Our Saviour (Danish), Ninth street, near Third
 avenue ; Rev. R. Anderson.

St. Johannes, Graham avenue, near Ten Eyck

Act of Incorporation



Know all Men by these Presents that MORRIS EHRLICH, a member of the Congregation Baith Israel, a religious society, having publicly notified the said Congregation that an election for Trustees to take charge of the estate and property belonging to said Congregation, and to transact all affairs relative to the temporalities thereof, would be held at the Room 155 Atlantic Street where the said Congregation statedly attend for divine worship in the City of Brooklyn, on the 22nd day of March, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six, at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon, and having given said notification more than fifteen days before said day of election, and for two successive Sabbaths on which said Congregation statedly met for public worship, preceding the day of election, and on said 22nd day of March, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six, the male persons of full age belonging to said Congregation having assembled at the said room 155 Atlantic Street, and having by a majority of the members present nominated us, Morris Ehrlich and Marcus Bass, two of the members of said Congregation, to preside at such election, receive the votes of the electors, and judge of the qualifications of such electors and the officers to return the names of the persons who, by plurality of voices, should be elected to serve as trustees for the said Congregation, and we having presided at such an election on the 22nd day of March, 1856, and received the votes of the electors according to the directions of the statute in such case made and provided, DO HEREBY CERTIFY, that at said meeting MORRIS EHRLICH, MARCUS BASS, ISAAC JONES, NAHOMA HOFHEIMER, TAGOL SAMTER, MICHAEL PRINCE and JOHN MENDES were duly elected by a plurality of voices to serve as Trustees of the Congregation Baith Israel; the said Trustees and their successors shall forever hereafter be called and known by the name BAITH ISRAEL.

Certified and given under our hands and seals this 22nd day of March, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six.

MORRIS EHRLICH, President (L. S.)

MARCUS BASS, Vice-President (L. S.)

Kings County }
City of Brooklyn } ss:

On this 8th day of July, A. D. 1856, before me personally appeared Morris Ehrlich and Marcus Bass, who being satisfactorily proven to me by the oath of Philip Smith to be the persons described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and who being by me duly sworn deposed and said that they are the President and Vice-President of the corporation therein referred to, and that they executed the said instrument by authority and direction of said corporation, and they thereupon severally acknowledged the execution thereof.

A. H. OSBORN

Commissioner of Deeds.

King County }
City of Brooklyn } ss:

On this 8th day of July, A. D. 1856, before me came Philip Smith, to me known, who being by me duly sworn, deposed and saith that he resided in the City of Brooklyn. That he knows Morris Ehrlich and Marcus Bass, the persons described in and who executed the within instrument, and they are severally the President and Vice President of the corporation referred to therein, and the said Morris Ehrlich and Marcus Bass being by me duly sworn, deposed and said they are severally President and Vice President of said corporation, and that their signatures as such officers were affixed to said instrument by the authority and direction of said corporation.

A. H. OSBORN

Commissioner of Deeds.

(Recorded in the Kings County Clerk's Office
in Liber 1 of Certificates of Incorporation, Page
192, July 8, 1856, at 11.20 A. M.)

REFORMED JUDAISM.

Interesting Record of the Hebrews in this City--Mr. Talmage's Church becomes the Temple "Beth Elohim."

The Israelites of the City of New York have, during the past few years, erected many magnificent houses of worship, some of which are not equalled in the world. Their co-religionists in this city have shown but little enterprise in this respect, and it is only lately that they bestirred themselves to have a suitable place of worship. As it is our intention to give a true and succinct history and advent of the Jews in this city, it will be necessary to state that previous to the year 1850 but a few Jewish families resided in this city, which from that period commenced to rise to the third largest city in the Union. The commerce and trade then becoming important and extensive, many Israelites were drawn hither, most all of whom prospered with the prosperity of our city. As early as 1852 the want of a place of worship was felt, and a large room was hired in Atlantic street, for the purpose of divine service, and the congregation "Both Israel" was established, which exists up to the present time with their own Synagogue in Boerum, near Smith street. Although the members represented different nationalities, the greatest harmony prevailed, until the year 1861, in October, when the spirit of discontent arose owing to the use of certain Rituals. And when in the same year the secession of the Southern States was spoken of, and really took place soon after, the discontented members, desiring the use of the German mode of prayers, instead of the Polish, seceded from the Congregation "Both Israel" and directly after formed the Congregation "Beth Elohim." On the 21st of October 1861, Calvary Church in Pearl street, between Concord and Nassau streets, was purchased and altered to a Synagogue, which was consecrated on the 30th of March 1862, a full account of which was published in the EAGLE next day.

This congregation, which commenced with thirty-four members, has prospered ever since, and has now after a lapse of eight years, over one hundred members and has been able on Monday last to purchase the magnificent "Central Presbyterian Church," (Rev. DeWitt Talmage) in Schermerhorn street, between Powers and Nevins streets, for the sum of \$55,000. The latter congregation are about to build a large Tabernacle, which will probably be finished in July next, so that in August the temple "Beth Elohim" will be consecrated. This church covers four full lots and has 186 family pews, a splendid organ, Sunday school and lecture rooms, all elegantly furnished. There can be no doubt that this congregation will be in a few years the largest in the United States, and will be a nucleus for the thousands of Israelites now living in this city. Since the purchase of this Church, only a few days ago, the Secretary has already twenty-seven applications for membership on his desk. We omitted to state that hitherto the congregation, "Beth Elohim," have conducted their divine service according to orthodox rituals, but have now adopted the moderate reform services which will be inaugurated for the first time on the 19th inst., in the Pearl street Synagogue, with choir and organ.

In conclusion we add the officers of this enterprising congregation: Nisan Hess, President; A. C. Wechsler, Vice-President; Bernhardt Schellenberg, Treasurer; Isidor Norden, Secretary; L. Blumenau, N. Hofheimer, I. B. Shenfeld, B. Goldschmidt, H. Altmayer and L. Stetthauer, Trustees.

The Rabbi is at present the Rev. G. Brandenstein, but a distinguished Rabbi from Europe has already been written for to officiate in the new temple "Beth Elohim."

CONSECRATING A JEWISH BURIAL GROUND.—A most imposing ceremony took place on Tuesday, at the Washington Cemetery, Gravesend, on the occasion of the consecration of part of the Cemetery for a Jewish burial ground, by a Society of South Brooklyn Jews called the United Brethren Benefit Society, held at 25 Union street.—The ceremony was performed by Rev. Dr. Gershan, in presence of the members of the above Society. The arrangements were under the direction of Messrs. Prince, Mendes, D'Ancona, and Julian. The ceremony was performed after the following manner: The Rabbi first broke the sod, and the members in rotation followed in like manner. They then walked over the ground three times, reading appropriate prayers. The Rev. gentleman made a very feeling address and invoked the blessing of Almighty God on this most charitable Society. The corpse of a child of Mr. Henry Cohen was then lowered to its last resting-place, with the regular Jewish rites.