

The Synagogue Journal

1856-2006

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Vayakhel Pekudei

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Issue 12

Women and the Synagogue

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Reported on the News and History of the Daughters of Israel Society

1 "Daughters of Israel" *August 18, 1875, Page 3.* / 2 "Picnic of the Daughters of Israel. A Large Gathering at Schuetzen Park Last Evening" *August 13, 1884, Page 3.* / 3 "The Daughters of Israel. The Thirteenth Annual Picnic of Its Benefit Society", *July 16, 1887, Page 2.* / 4 "Daughters of Israel. Tenth Annual Ball of the Society at Grand Central Hall Last Night", *November 29, 1882, Page 2.* / 5 "General Matters in the Courts. Daughters of Israel", *May 10, 1884, Page 6.* / 6 "Held Last Night", *January 23, 1899, Page 5.* / 7 "Daughters of Israel", *January 22, 1899, Page 7.* / 8 "Daughters of Israel", *March 3, 1902, Page 5.*

"Woman's Place in the Jewish Synagogue"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, December 1, 1878, Page 2

Presents proposal at Shaarai Tephila to allow women to sit beside men during divine service.

"Getting Ready for the Big Jewish Hospital Fair"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, October 12, 1902

Article about the "Tabernacle of Succoth" benefit held at the Academy of Music for one week. Includes a photo of Daughter of Israel leader Mrs Amelia Fallek "one of the most prominent workers" ran booth five.

Women's Organizations *By Carol Levin*

Provides Rabbi Goldfarb's 1956 summary of the congregation's women's organizations that appeared in the Centennial Banquet book and a brief history of the Daughters of Israel Society by the Editor.

Sisterhood Minute Book (1912-1920) The Sisterhood Minutes from 1912-1920 present details of the organization, including the order of the meetings, activities, financial reports and the names of the members. Mrs. Sophie Weinberg, who served as sisterhood president from 1912 -1915, was one of the only women whose first name appears in the book. Other women are recorded with either "Mrs" or "sister," followed by the initial letter of her husband's first name and then her surname." [Page 49](#) [Page 77](#) [Page 78](#)

Egalitarian Milestones

150 years ago, synagogue life was very different for the women of this congregation. The list records the milestones of their inclusion and achievement.

The Women's Movement *By Judith R. Greenwald*

This article about the participation of women in the synagogue is excerpted from *Jews of Brooklyn, First Synagogues The First 144 Years of Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes (The Kane Street Synagogue).*

An Interview With Ann Rosalsky *By Judy Greenwald, BIAE Journal of 1988*

In this issue ...

The participation of women in synagogue life is examined. Women play a pivotal role In Parsha Vayekhel (Exodus 35-38.) Rabbis believed that without their devotion to keeping ancestral traditions in the home during 400 years of slavery and protecting children after Pharaoh's genocidal decree, the Israelites would not have been redeemed from Egypt. The Israelite women did not join the men in worshipping the Golden Calf, but afterwards, they contributed their gold and silver jewelry willingly to make the Temple artifacts. Vayekhel, begins with "And he assembled. And Moses assembled the KOL ADAT, the entire Congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them "These are the things that G-d commanded." This was followed by a reminder of the commandment to keep the Shabbat and detailed information about the contributions to, and the construction of the Tabernacle. The commandment was to men and women alike.

Throughout the congregation's history, women have assembled and worked together to benefit the synagogue. Read about the good works in the nineteenth century of the Daughters of Israel Benefit Society. In the early to mid-20th century, the Sisterhood raised substantial funds to maintain and renovate the synagogue. In the last thirty years, as leadership and ritual positions became fully available to women, individuals have taken responsibility for the care and continuity of the congregation. In 2006, women comprise more than half the total number of Officers and Trustees.

Carol Levin, Editor
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About the Journal ...

The Synagogue Journal" is a one-year online publication at www.kanestreet.org/historical_journal.html, designed to highlight the three periods of the Kane Street Synagogue congregation: the first fifty years as Congregation Baith Israel at both the Atlantic Street and the Boerum Place sites; the middle years (1905-1956) with Rabbi Israel Goldfarb as spiritual leader of the consolidated Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes at the present location that was known as Harrison Street, and the last fifty years, as the synagogue evolved to be the Congregation that we know today.

We welcome submissions of reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story. For a list of upcoming Journal themes or to read past issues, see "Archives," located under the Journal banner.

Special thanks to: Rabbi Samuel Weintraub; webmaster Dugans Martinez; the Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle

DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL.

Second Annual Picnic and Summer Night's Festival of the Society.

The second annual picnic and Summer night's festival of the association known as the Daughters' of Israel, took place yesterday, afternoon and evening, at Myrtle avenue Park. The association is a benevolent one, and was organized about two years' ago by the ladies of the Synagogue, at the corner of Boerum place and State street. Its object is to provide for the Jewish poor of the city, and this it has attained to a remarkable degree.

The following ladies, officers of the society, assemble every three weeks to take action on the affairs of the association: Mrs. Amelia Lamm, President; Mrs. C. Bass, Vice President; Mrs. W. Morris, Treasurer, Mrs. S. Krotoshiner, Secretary.

The proceeds of the picnic as well as all the other funds of the association, are disposed of in a benevolent way.

The picnic and festival of yesterday was, in the most gratifying sense, successful.

At five o'clock, there were about one hundred and fifty persons present, but before eight o'clock there were many times that number. Apart from the pleasant intercourse characteristic of all well-conducted picnics, the dances and music constituted the conspicuous feature of the occasion. Music was furnished by Solomon's Band. Dancing was commenced at seven o'clock and was continued well on until morning. Among those present were noticed the following ladies and gentlemen: Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Cohen, Mr. and Mrs. M. Gomm, Mr. Samuel Fox and lady, Mr. E. Cowan and Miss Rachael Schenfeld, Mr. Henry M. Cellar and sister, Miss F. Aarons and brother, Miss M. Colman and brother, Mr. Joseph Mathias and Miss Sarah Jamm, Miss D. Sullivan and brother, Mr. H. Miller and wife, Mr. J. Franklin and family, Mr. M. Goldsmith and lady, Mr. J. Levison, Mr. A. Rosenweig, Mr. H. Mathias and Mrs. Jesser.

PICNIC OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL.

A Large Gathering at Schuetzen Park Last Evening.

The Daughters of Israel Benefit Society held its ninth annual picnic at Schuetzen Park last evening. The large dancing platform had been specially decorated for the occasion with flags and banners, and with the aid of two electric lights presented a gay appearance as the band struck up the opening march shortly after 8 o'clock. Over the door leading to the platform was a transparency upon which the words "Welcome, friends of the Daughters of Israel" were traced. The march, which contained over two hundred couples, was led by Mr. Sidney Franklin and Miss S. Lamm, a pretty, black-eyed Jewess of 17 summers. Under Mr. Franklin's able management the long line of marchers executed many difficult figures, first two couples front, then four and so on, until the entire floor was covered by a dozen straight lines running the length of the room. Mr. Franklin then performed the snake figure, which consists in bringing the marchers round and round in a circle and the uncoiling of the same. For this difficult maneuver the leader was loudly applauded by the large number of lookers on. At the conclusion of the march the orchestra played a quadrille and the ball was formally opened. The sight from the gallery was a pleasing one, the gay dresses of the ladies standing out in strong relief to the somber suits of their partners. The dancing order contained 24 numbers, many of which were dedicated to the president of the society, the Beth Israel, the Brooklyn Social, and J. Dobblus, the owner of the park. At 11 o'clock there was an intermission. No better night could have been selected by the managers of the society. The air was delightfully cool making dancing most enjoyable. The society is now in its tenth year, and during its existence has accomplished a vast deal of good. Its object is to relieve the destitute Hebrews of the city, whether they are members of the organization or not. The management is entirely in the hands of ladies benevolently inclined. The yearly dues are nominal, but the benefits derived from being a member are large. The society takes upon itself the burial of any of its members in case of death, and if the deceased's family are in destitute circumstances they are at once cared for. It numbers among its members many of the managers of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and other worthy charities. The officers are Mrs. A. Lamm, president; Mrs. D. Franklin, vice president; Mrs. S. Gold, treasurer, and Mesdames O. Brenner, S. Sidenberg and N. Wides, trustees. Mr. Louis Bass acts as secretary.

Among those present last evening were Frank Symons, Misses Symons, L. Michaels, Misses Michaels, Mr. and Mrs. J. Franklin, Misses Franklin, C. Fisher, of New Haven; M. Weider, Misses Weider, M. Barnett, Misses Barnett, Misses Werner, M. Levison, Misses Levison, M. A. Cohen, Misses Cohen, H. Bendit, E. Lesser, P. Guttelfeld, Miss Levy, Misses Lamm, Herman Gross, Misses Gross, A. Goldsmith, P. Franklin and Samuel Lederman.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL.

**The Thirteenth Annual Picnic of Its
Benefit Society.**

The thirteenth annual picnic of the Daughters of Israel Benefit Society took place at Schuetzen Park on Wednesday evening and was largely attended. About 300 couples took part in the opening march. The Daughters of Israel are a benefit society connected with Synagogue Beth Israel, on Boorum place. It has a membership of 200 made up of both lady and gentlemen members of the church. The officers are Mrs. Emelia Lamm, president; Mrs. Fannie Jacobs, vice president; Mrs. Sarah Gold, treasurer; Mr. Louis Bass, secretary. Trustees, Mrs. Rachel Coleman, Mrs. Deborah Franklin, Miss Dora Taylor.

The various committees comprise:

Floor—Moses Franklin, Edward Lesser, W. J. Coleman, H. Newman, G. Rosenstein, D. Jacobs, Jr., B. Kalisher, A. Newman, N. Sonnenstrahl, S. Jacobs, Albert Stern and George Leryson.

Reception—Isaac Gold, S. Lamm, B. Kalisher, J. Franklin, M. Coleman, L. Bass, J. Brouner, M. Taylor, L. Jacobs and H. Sidenberg.

Arrangements—Mrs. Rachel Coleman and Mrs. Sarah Gold.

DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL.

Tenth Annual Ball of the Society at Grand Central Hall Last Night.

The tenth annual ball of the Daughters of Israel Benevolent Society was given last night at Grand Central Hall, No. 422 Fulton street, and was very largely attended. This is one of the finest charitable institutions in Brooklyn and has been a great boon to the poor Hebrews of the city. It is managed by both ladies and gentlemen, and it numbers among its members some of the most influential Hebrews of the city. The preparations for the ball were made on a large and extensive scale. The hall was profusely decorated with flags and bunting, and the name of the society was brilliantly displayed in gas jet letters at the end of the ball room. Miss H. Coleman and Mr. J. Franklin played a piano duet as a prelude to the evening's entertainment. The grand march was led by Mr. Sidney Franklin and Miss S. Lamm, and in going round the hall they found the initials of the society, "D. O. I. B. S." Among those present were J. Franklin and lady, Mr. Franklin and sister, S. Lamm, wife and daughter, A. Newman, Mr. Marcus Levy and sister, William Morris, wife and daughter, Mr. Lehman and daughter, D. Schwartz, H. Meyers and lady, Max Shillak, Benjamin Rollshar and lady, Louis Jacobs, Edward Lasser, Moses Morris, Joseph Levison, Henry Miller and sisters, J. O'Connell, J. McCormack, L. Levy and sister, C. Wild, Samuel Ketchum, Nathan Hess, S. Hess, P. Hess, S. Zoffer, P. Morse and lady, M. H. Meyers and lady, S. Wolf, Morris Schillak and the Misses Solomon, S. W. Glanber, Louis Harrison and lady, and Louis Jacobs and wife. The officers in charge of the ball were as follows:

Floor manager, Sidney Franklin; assistant, Julius Gumpert; floor committee—M. Levy, M. Franklin, M. Morris, E. Lasser, B. Kalischer, J. Levison, R. Lamm, J. Mathias; reception committee—M. Coleman, chairman; H. Mathias, M. Bass, L. Bass, H. Soldenberg, S. Lamm, L. Jacobs, A. Bass, J. Cellar; committee of arrangements—Mrs. J. Franklin, chairman; Mrs. J. Coleman, Mrs. R. Newman, Mrs. M. Jacobs, Mrs. A. Kalischer.

GENERAL MATTERS IN THE COURT.

Daughters of Israel.

This morning Counselor Jacob Bremer filed in the office of the County Clerk the certificate of incorporation of the Daughters of Israel. The members of the society are to visit each other in times of sickness and relieve each other by donations and contributions. The incorporators are Amelia Lannor, Deborah Franklyn, Sarah Gold, Caroline Brenner, Selma Seidenberg, Mattie Wieder, Lavinia Cohn and Mrs. Colman.

Did He Promise to Marry Her.

John Devoy, a well known resident of South Brooklyn, was arrested last evening by Deputy Sheriff Lawrence, on a warrant issued by Judge Reynolds, of the City Court, on a breach of promise suit begun against him by Mary Brown, of No. 410 Columbia street. In her complaint she alleges that the defendant under promise of marriage betrayed her. She further says that on many occasions the defendant took her among his friends and introduced her as his "coming wife," and that he also presented her with an engagement ring.

Held Last Night

The twenty-fifth anniversary reception and dinner of the Daughters of Israel Benefit Society was held in Prospect Hall, Prospect avenue, near Fifth, last night. The society is well known in this borough and many prominent Hebrews of the city gathered to attend the reception. The dinner was served to the members and a few friends about 5 o'clock. Mrs. Amella Lamm presided and speeches were made by W. J. Coleman, H. M. Copeland, Louis Bass and B. Kalisha.

The dance hall was profusely decorated with red, white and blue bunting and was brilliantly illuminated. At 9 o'clock dancing commenced. The committee in charge of arrangements was Mrs. A. Lamm, Mrs. D. Taylor, Mrs. A. Phillips, Mrs. A. Kronheim, Mrs. H. Celler, Mrs. R. Coleman, Mrs. B. Celler, Mrs. H. Fallek and Mrs. M. Kalisha. Among those present were:

Mrs. Jetta Bass, Mrs. Hanchen Blek, Mrs. Salomon Lesser, Mrs. Deborah Franklyn, Mrs. Caroline Brenner, Miss Caroline Newman, Mrs. Mina Kalisha, Mrs. Bertha Greenfeld, S. Sonnenstrahl, Mrs. Cecilla Byer, Mrs. Betja Alexander, Mrs. Hattie Sellner, Mrs. Bertha Celler, Mrs. H. Celler, Mrs. Flora Lehman, Mr. and Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Anna Kronheim, Mr. and Mrs. A. Palley, Mrs. Sarah Perz, Mr. and Mrs. A. Pelz, Mrs. L. L. Cardozo, Mr. and Mrs. C. Gallitzka, Mrs. Toba Solomon, Mr. and Mrs. E. Rablin, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Curtis, Mrs. Anna Levinson, Mrs. Hannah Lesser, Mr. and Mrs. Lovitts, Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson, Mrs. Latta Teska, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Gallitzka, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Simon, Mr. and Mrs. A. Lamm, R. Lamm, Mr. and Mrs. M. Pelz, Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Copeland, S. Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. M. Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. J. Franklin, Miss Rebecca Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. W. Morris, Mrs. Warsawer, the Misses Warsawer, Mr. and Mrs. I. Solomon, Mr. and Mrs. J. Lehman, L. Bass, S. Gold, A. Faller, D. Taylor, A. Phillips, Mrs. Judith Coleman, Mrs. Hanchen Jacobs, Miss Louisa Jacobs, Miss Henrietta Damon, Mrs. Sophia Levyson, Mrs. Sophie Mathias, Mrs. Lena Rosenthal.

DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL

The Daughters of Israel Benefit Society was organized twenty-five years ago with about fifteen members. It has grown slowly and as the old members passed away new ones were elected to fill their places. The society has to-day fifty members. To celebrate its long career the society will have a banquet followed by a reception at Prospect Hall this evening. The committee who has charge of the celebration has been working hard to make the affair a success. Mrs. Amelia Lamm, chairman of the committee, has been president of the society for over twenty-three years.

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DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL.

At a special meeting held yesterday afternoon, the vice president, Mrs. Amalia Falk, presented to the Daughters of Israel Benefit Society a solid ivory gavel and ballot box. The presentation address was made by the secretary, Louis Bass, and Mrs. S. Sonnonstrate, the president, thanked the donor in the name of the society. A raffle for a fine ornamental clock also took place and the lucky winner was Mrs. Davis of 126 Bergen street. Refreshment was served after the close of meeting.

WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE.

An exciting controversy is going on among the electors and seat holders of the congregation of Shaarai Tephila, whose synagogue, of which Rabbi Mendes is the present, and the late Rabbi Isaacs was the former pastor, is situated in West Forty-fourth street, New York. It appears that this synagogue is heavily burdened with debt to the extent of some \$86,000, of which \$64,000 are in a mortgage upon its property held by the Union Dime Savings Bank. As the interest is overdue, there is an immediate prospect of foreclosure. The members of the synagogue who held interest bearing bonds have been in the habit of paying the rent of their seats in the unsalable coupons of their bonds. As one of the members remarked at a meeting which was recently held, "the Savings Bank won't take coupons, and the ministers, sexton and choir can't eat coupons." It is a clear case of ecclesiastical bankruptcy unless the rulers of the synagogue can devise a way of escape.

The scheme hit upon by some of the electors is a very simple one, being no more than the abandonment of the traditional custom of this and the other orthodox synagogues in not allowing the women to sit beside the men during divine service. The meeting to discuss this was of exceptional interest, as bringing face to face the orthodox and the liberal factions, as Israel and Judah faced each other of old. Mr. Isaacs, son of the late venerable rabbi, led the orthodox phalanx, and a Mr. Leopold Cohen spoke out for the reformers. And as of old "the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel," so the words of the son of Isaacs and his tribe were fiercer than the words of the tribe of Cohen.

those who are about to enter on that sacramental union is that they may love each other and serve God in a love consecrated home, as did Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel. But the case of Jacob reminds us that the Jewish Church did not spontaneously enthrone the wife as Christianity has done. It was for many centuries a more respectable Mormonism, and only the social influence of the Church of Jesus of Nazareth upon it made it at last reluctantly cast off polygamy, and then not until long after the Christian era. Many of the ancient Jews believed that women had no souls, and that when her "grinding at the mill" was over, there was an end of her. True, there had been Joans of Arc in the Jewish nation. "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, till that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose a mother in Israel." Rahab, the harlot, was honored for her concealment of the two spies whom Joshua sent to Jericho, and whose pursuers she put upon a false scent by ingenious "white lies" which even Christian casuistry will find excuse for. The good Queen Esther ranks high in the calendar of Hebrew women, for her patriotic courage and unselfish devotion to her suffering race. But despite all this, the Jews have not honored woman in her moral and intellectual nature as the Christian Church has done, and we see the remnant of their old contempt for her as an immortal being in the strong prejudice which the orthodox Israelites still feel against permitting her to worship beside her father and brothers, her husband and her sons, the Eternal, who chose her people for his own, saying, "Is not this Jacob whom I love and Israel whom I have chosen."

The objections of the former are significant of the alarm which pervades the strictly orthodox Hebrews at the progress of liberal and rationalistic sentiments within the ancient church which Moses founded and Jehovah blessed. They regard this commingling of the sexes in worship, as only the getting in of "the thin end of the wedge." "It is a dangerous innovation," exclaimed one of the broad phylactery partisans: "We have no example of this heresy in Europe, and I cannot but think that the effect on the morals of our wives and daughters will be bad. Suppose the men neglect to go to church; would you have the modest women obliged to go to their seats alone, in the midst of a mixed company staring at them? From this innovation who knows what may follow? We may fall away as far from the true faith of our fathers as the Temple Emanu-El has fallen." This is a very dreadful apprehension to the orthodox Israelite of New York, for the Temple Emanu-El is regarded as the headquarters of Jewish Neology, much as Mr. Frothingham's and Mr. Chadwick's congregations are regarded by orthodox Christians, and as being "very far gone from original righteousness." One of the horrified children of Israel expressed his fear that the next step to allowing women to sit beside their hus-

bands and brothers would be that the men would worship God with their hats off. A thrill of horror ran through the veins of the orthodox at the bare thought of such irreverence to Jehovah. But the reformers were not dismayed, and one of them boldly shouted in tones that might have rent Mount Sinai, "The hats are bound to go, if the life of the "synagogue is in question." Such Israelites as are in the hat trade will probably to a man support the orthodox party. On Sunday another meeting was held and a letter read from Rabbi Mendes, the pastor, opposing the pew system and the amalgamation of the sexes, as startling and anti-Jewish innovations.

The social and ethical interest of this controversy centres in the position of women in the Jewish Church. No people are more exemplary in their family relations than the Jews. The harmony and affection that reign in their families are both an example and a rebuke to the Christian commonwealth. This people is unsurpassed in domestic affections and social friendships. It has been so since David wished that he had died for Absalom, and looked forward to reunion with his child by Bathsheba, in the shadowy mansions of the Great Unknown. In the marriage service of the English Church the prayer offered for

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Profit on Ball up to date is \$376.75

It was regularly moved and seconded to have the Shul decorated with palms and flowers for Shovuth. The president undertook to look after the matter.

It was further moved and seconded to ratify the action of the plumbing committee and to expend the sum of \$1070.00 - 525 of which is to go to the plumber, 170 to the carpenter, and 375 to the plasterer.

Receipts for dues was -	2.75
" " Banquet	1.50
" " Theatre tickets	48.75
" " Journal ads.	33.00
Total Receipts	\$85.00

Money in Savings Bank	500.00
" " hands of Treas.	266.04
Total	851.04

Disbursements	Disb.	17.85
Candy for Purim -	\$15.00	15.00
Postage, stationery, stamp	1.85	1.85
Coffee	1.00	1.00
		17.85

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned. Coffee & cake was served to those present.
Mrs. D. Goldfarb secy

B'klyn. Dec. 12, 1915

The annual meeting of the Sisterhood was held on (the above) Sunday afternoon, ^{Dec. 12,} in the vestry rooms of the Congregation. The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted and adopted as correct. With the exception of the vice-president Sister Schmittka all other officers were present.

A resignation was read from Sister A. Wolf but was not accepted, a committee consisting of sisters Summer and Salit were appointed to see Mrs Wolf and ask her to withdraw her resignation.

A Committee from the Congregation called upon the Sisterhood and reported that it was the wish of the Congregation, that the Sisterhood be not hasty in their undertaking of renovating the class rooms of the Sunday School unless they are sure that the necessary funds have been provided for, after some discussion in which members of the Congregation's committee as well as members

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of the Sisterhood took part, it was unanimously agreed upon that the Sisterhood ask the Congregation for permission to start the work at once and ask them to appoint a committee to co-operate with the Sisterhood.

It was reg. moved and seconded that the Sisterhood arrange a Theatre Party for the benefit of the Talmud Torah. Sister S. Summer is the Chair lady with the following assistants sisters S. Alexander, and Mr. Brown, Mr. D. Schmittka and Mr. S. Summer.

It was further moved and seconded to send \$150.⁰⁰ $\frac{1}{2}$ of the profit of our Ball to the war sufferers, and that we give \$10.⁰⁰ to the Sunday School towards the candy for Chanukah.

The secretary then read the report of the year.

Women's Organizations

Rabbi Goldfarb summarized "THE SISTERHOOD" for the 1956 Centennial Banquet Dinner journal.

"THE SISTERHOOD"

In reviewing the history of the congregation we must not lose sight of the part the women have taken in furthering its interests. The first attempt to organize the women of Baith Israel was made as early as 1868 when the "Daughters of Israel Benefit Society" was formed. This Association, although not organized specifically as an auxiliary to the congregation, proved itself, nevertheless, a beneficial factor in the promotion of its welfare. Several attempts were afterwards made at organizing a sisterhood but each time the organization was short-lived. It was not until December, 1908, that a permanent organization of women was effected through the efforts of President H. M. Copland and Rabbi Israel Goldfarb. The Society was named "The Sisterhood of Congregation Baith Israel" and its purpose was "to assist the congregation and the Talmud Torah." The first officers of the Sisterhood were: Mrs. L. Summer, President; Mrs. P. Weinberg, Vice-President; Mrs. I. Applebaum, Treasurer; and Mrs. I. Goldfarb, Secretary.

Much has been said of what the men have done for the Synagogue. It now remains to state that the women have taken no mean part in the up-building of the congregation. The Sisterhood has done monumental work not only in beautifying the Congregation building, but also by contributing large sums of money to the Congregation's treasury. The Sisterhood also participated in other philanthropic endeavors such as the War Relief, Palestine Appeal, Adoption of War Orphans, Women's League of the United Synagogue, Social service, local charities, maintenance of Sunday school, etc. Those who served the organization as president since its reorganization are: Mrs. L. Summer, Mrs. Sophie Weinberg, Mrs. M. Salit, Mrs. A. Wolf, Mrs. I. Goldfarb, Mrs. Jennie Kern, Mrs. S. Rosalsky and Mrs. Jacob Ilson. Other women who will be long remembered in the annals of the congregation for their splendid service either as officials or as benefactresses are: Mrs. Amelia Lamm, who served as president of the "Daughters of Israel" for 28 years, Mrs. H. Sonnenstrahl, Mrs. J. Lehman, Mrs. B. Kalischer, and last but not least the Grand old Lady, Mrs. J. Kurtz of blessed memory."

This brief history on the Daughters of Israel Society was gathered from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

In 1874, past-president Herman Matthias organizes the Daughters of Israel Society of Beth Israel, entrusting its care to Mrs. Amelia Lamm who serves as president for twenty-five years. The society's aim is to relieve the poor and sick in distress and the burying of the dead. They assemble every three weeks at Boerum Place Synagogue and raise funds through annual picnics and balls. The initial group in 1874 is only 15 women, but by 1877, membership grows to 75. Amelia sets a trend with many of the married ladies in the group. In 1884 when they officially incorporate, seven of the eight incorporators use their first name instead of the usual fashion with "Mrs." followed by the husband's name.

In addition to helping the poor, members agree "to visit each other in times of sickness and relieve each other by donations and contributions." "The management is entirely in the hands of ladies benevolently inclined. The yearly dues are nominal, but the benefits derived from being a member are large. The society takes upon itself the burial of any of its members in case of death. If the deceased's family is in destitute circumstances they are at once cared for. The society numbers among its members many of the managers of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. By 1887, "a membership of 200 made up of both lady and gentlemen members of the church." By 1899, membership decreases to 50. In October 1902, they participate at the weeklong fair for the Jewish Hospital, setting up a booth under the elaborate Succoth tent erected at the Academy of Music. The Eagle article features Daughters of Israel member Amelia Fallek as "one of the most prominent workers."

Editor

Egalitarian Milestones

1873 - Women and men sit together in family pews.

1930s - Women and men sing in mixed choir.

1966 - First pulpit honors to a woman, gelilah – Jacob and Anne Hertz are the first couple to share an aliyah.

1971 - Women are called to the Torah. Sisterhood pres Sally Solomon promotes participation of women at services.

1971 - First woman to wear a tallit – Barbara Bingham.

1972 - First woman trustee - Evelyn Rubenstein.

1973 - Women allowed to open Ark; speak from Bimah; receive Aliyot.

1974 - Women counted in a minyan; hold and read Torah; chant Haftarah.

1977 - Bat Kohane and Baat Levi accorded the same privileges as male offspring.

1978 - First Bat Mitzvah - Jane Abramowitz.

1980 - First woman president – Nancy Fink.

1982 - Women given full equality with the right to serve as rabbi, cantor, lead services; blow the shofar, and as daughters of Kohanim, *duchen* (recite the blessings of the priests over the congregation.)

1988 - First woman rabbi - Rabbi Debra Cantor.

1990 - First time when three generations of women read from the Torah – Jenny Brooks, Joy Fallek and Ronit Fallek.

1992 - First woman shofar blower – Rena Schklowsky.

2002 - First woman cantor – Cantor Sharon Bernstein leads Friday night services and serves as part-time Music Director.

The Women's Movement

By Judith R. Greenwald

Women, individually and in groups, have always participated in the life of the Synagogue, as fully as law and custom as variously construed during different historic periods allowed. The feminist movement of the 1970s brought about many changes in the manner in which women participated in the life of the Congregation.

During Rabbi Scheindlin's tenure, one of the boldest and most beneficial decisions ever made in the Congregation's history was adopted. During the early 1970s the women's movement had liberated the energies of female constituents. It had the blessings of the Sisterhood, led by President Sally Solomon. In Rabbi Rosen's tenure, women were called to the Torah. Several, among them Paula Scharf, Miryam Wasserman and Ellen Friedman, read Haftorah. Evelyn Rubenstein organized many successful street fairs. Judy Greenwald took turns with Isaac Druker and Ben Zalman in organizing the anniversary dinner-dances and publishing the dinner-dance journals. Miryam Wasserman served as Prozdor Principal. Rachel Epstein edited the Scroll and Gerry Gross prepared the press releases and newspaper articles about the Synagogue and its members. The impact of the Congregation's women reached a zenith with the election in 1980 of Nancy Fink, a Brooklyn Law School professor, as President. To this position she brought considerable energy, aspiration and administrative skill.

In 1982 President Fink called a full membership meeting to consider whether women should be accorded full ritual participation. There were three questions to be answered: may a woman serve as sheliah tzibbur, may a woman blow shofar on Rosh Hashana, and may daughters of Kohanim duchen (recite the blessing of the priests over the congregation). Rabbi Scheindlin addressed the meeting and carefully instructed the Congregation about the halakhic principles involved. He explained that the principle underlying the first two issues was one of agency: may the congregation's men deputize a woman to perform time-bound rituals that they are obligated to perform, but she is not. Historically women were not required to carry out time-bound rituals whereas men were obligated to perform them. While the Rabbinic answer to this question is no, Rabbi Scheindlin observed that the Rabbis had based the exemption of women from time-bound rituals upon certain social conventions that no longer obtained. This explanation indicated to the Congregation that when the reason for a rule ceases, the rule may cease. A different principle was involved with respect to duchening. Rabbi Scheindlin made it clear that a woman is not of priestly status, but that duchening did not involve any exclusively priestly practices. This indicated to the Congregation that daughters of Kohanim could duchen without violating any halakhic principle.

"The rest is history." The Congregation's consensus was to accord full equality to women and the Board so resolved. Since then women have participated fully in all aspects of Congregation life and two, Judith R. Greenwald and Ellen A. Bowin, followed in Nancy Fink's steps and served as Congregation presidents.

The egalitarian decision was a bold decision, nevertheless, because it did not please everyone. Some members left the Congregation. Yet, given the difficult lives led by members and the enormous claims on their time, it is apparent that had this decision not been made, this largely participatory, volunteer-run Congregation, would not have had sufficient strength to carry out its ambitious educational, social and ritual programs.

The decision to be fully egalitarian led to the next bold decision: to ask a woman, Rabbi Debra Cantor, to accept the position of Rabbi. This displeased a few more members and they defected to play a major role in the development of a new neighborhood Orthodox minyan into a viable and vibrant Orthodox congregation. Yet these bold moves, like previous bold moves, proved equally fruitful. They had the positive effect of bringing into being a new Congregation in the area. Once again, Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes was a "mother" congregation seeding new congregations with its own members. They also enabled the Congregation to draw upon an enlarged pool of members who could read Torah and lead in ritual obligations. For a participatory congregation, strength in numbers is vital. They also attracted scores of young couples for whom egalitarianism was a reality and a commitment. They also served to motivate the next generation. Today, after their bar/bat mitzvahs, young men and women read Torah and serve the Congregation at services shoulder-to-shoulder with their elders.

In the year 2000, two young women of the Congregation, Alice Phillips and Liba Rubenstein, won "Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel". This prestigious grant is awarded annually to only twenty-six in a competition among students from all over the United States and Canada. The statistical fact that two young women from one small congregation were among the few winners in so large a field is a telling sign that Baith Israel Anshei Emes' bold egalitarian decisions have been correct on all counts.

Judith R. Greenwald, Congregation past-president, archivist and historian, wrote this article for *Jews of Brooklyn*, edited by Ilana Abramovitch, Sean Glavin, Brandeis University Press, 2003

An Interview With Ann Rosalsky

This 1988 interview by Judy Greenwald appeared in the 132nd Anniversary Dinner Journal

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANN ROSALSKY

By JUDY GREENWALD

Late evening is a perfect time to interview Ann Rosalsky. By then she has shut her kitchen down for the night and there is not a morsel of food on the immaculate counter tops in need of her attention. After I refused all offers of tea, cookies, fruit or candy, we began.

What brought you to the Kane Street Synagogue?

ANN: The Harrison Street Trolley. It ran from Williamsburg, where I lived as a child. For a nickel my brother and I could ride it to visit my Aunt who owned a candy store in Cobble Hill. She belonged to the Shul and she would take us in to services. That was about seventy-five years ago.

When did you become a member in your own right?

ANN: After I married Sam. His father had joined the Shul in 1925 and Sam and I joined the following year. At first we lived in Bensonhurst, but after Seymour was born, we bought the building in which we ran our Army-Navy store, we renovated it and moved in. The store was on Columbia Street. In those days Brooklyn Heights was a rather restricted area so we certainly could not live there.

Were you always active in the Synagogue?

ANN: I was always a member of the Sisterhood and the Sisterhood always did a lot for the Shul. We ran fund-raisers every year. We used to hold bazaars. We actively solicited funds. The Sisterhood embroidered the kiddish tablecloth. Members paid to have their names inscribed on it. Our luncheon meetings took place in my home. The Synagogue had big challenges to meet and we met them. We paid off our mortgage. We renovated our Sanctuary.

I was Sisterhood President for about fourteen years, off and on. In 1939 the Congregation presented me with a diamond wrist watch at the annual dinner-dance. It was held at the Hotel St. George. Harold Turk was President of the Synagogue at that time.

Were you involved in other philanthropic activities?

ANN: I was also active in the UJA and held UJA luncheon meetings in my home. We solicited funds from the Jewish merchants on Columbia Street. Most of the Shul members were Columbia Street shopkeepers. In later years I worked for Fight for Sight.

Did you always love to be a hostess?

ANN: I always loved to cook for people. When we renovated our store I had Sam make a little kitchen in the back so I could cook in the shop. When the customers came in, I used to enjoy offering them coffee and cake. I still enjoy cooking. Sarah and Bernie Leeman and Nancy Fink take me shopping. I get a weekly delivery of fresh fish. I buy fresh yeast from the Italian Bakery. I particularly like to make yeast cakes and my own challah. Last Friday night I served fricassee, vegetable soup and roast chicken. It's always a pleasure to have Shul members dine in my home.