Wartime

In this issue ...

Kane Street Synagogue commemorates Veteran’s Day on November 11th in honor of the men and women of the congregation who served our nation. The Torah portion, while not directly discussing warfare, touches on many of the moral issues surrounding war. In Chapter 19 God decides to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their ubiquitous violence, corruption and xenophobia. God confides this decision to Abraham who argues against it, wondering if the societies might be saved for fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, even ten righteous people. Sadly, these are not to be found. For Jewish moral thinkers, the stories raise issues of collective responsibility to protect civilians, collective punishment and the possibility of moral renewal even in evil societies.

Congregation Baith Israel was organized five years before the onset of the Civil War. Trustee minutes then were in German and our information about the Congregation’s war effort is limited. A few facts surface: Solomon Furst, the synagogue’s first President, was a member of the 2nd Calvary of the 70th Company of the New York Militia; Our women’s group, the Daughters of Israel, had a booth at the Sanitary Fair held at Packer Institute; Bernhard Schellenberg made uniforms for the 14th Regiment and sold them from his tailor’s shop at 119 Myrtle Avenue; Leopold C. Newman, an attorney and President of the Young Men’s Democratic Society, entered the war at the outbreak and commandeered the 31st Regiment of New York Volunteers. The Journal documents Newman’s life and death, using sources from The Brooklyn Eagle, The New York Times and the website of the New York State Military Museum and Research Center. Judy Greenwald reports on the Civil War hero and her quest to find his grave.

The Journal provides a commentary by Rabbi Goldfarb on patriotism during the congregation’s first one hundred years, articles about commemorative events held in gratitude to those who served, a ticket to the Victory Ball and photographs of commemorative markers. Next time you’re at Kane Street Synagogue look at the bronze tablet in the Sanctuary Lobby with the heading, “In honor of those who served for the cause of ‘Liberty, Justice & Democracy’ in the great War – 1914-1919.” We include a list of one hundred eleven men who served in WWI.

Please note that Rabbi Goldfarb compiled a Jewish hymnal, which was distributed to the US troops in World War II. The title of the hymnal is unknown. Synagogue Historians would greatly appreciate information from Journal readers about how the publication came to be written, distributed and used, and if a copy is available.

The congregation offers gratitude to all veterans who have undertaken “collective responsibility to protect civilians.” Esther Levine-Brill, a veteran of the Gulf War, reflects on her experience in, “What’s a Nice Jewish Girl Like You Doing in Combat Boots.” Esther ends her article with, “We all felt we would do it again, if called upon.”

Special thanks to: Rabbi Weintraub; Judith R. Greenwald; Esther Levine-Brill; Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle, New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center, http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/31stInf/31stInfPersonNewman.htm

Shalom,

Carol Levin, Editor
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Credit: New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center  
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Credit: The Brooklyn Eagle

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Credit: The Brooklyn Eagle

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Credit: The Brooklyn Eagle

The Jews True Patriots, May 8, 1899  
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Credit: The Brooklyn Eagle
Our Service to Our Country

The Centennial Banquet Journal from 1956 included Rabbi Israel Goldfarb’s history of Congregation Baith Israel Anshei. The following excerpt recounts our war efforts.

“Not only did our congregation distinguish itself by its loyalty to the God of Israel and its adherence to the traditions of our people, but also by its intense patriotism and love of our country.

In keeping with the teaching of Judaism which urges upon us to “Pray for the peace of the government,” Baith Israel Anshei Emes was ever ready to respond to the call of the country and to rally to the defense of its flag.

On the congregation’s old cemetery, at Union Field, one may still find evidences of Baith Israel’s sacrifices on the altar of patriotism during the Civil War. On an old gravestone one can still read the simple story of Lieutenant Colonel Leo C. Newman who fought with the army of the Potomac, was mortally wounded in the battle of Fredericksburg and died at Washington in 1863.

Again in the World War I, when our beloved country summoned its sons to rally around the Stars and Stripes, to the defense of Democracy, 111 of our boys responded to the call, four of whom made the Supreme Sacrifice. The impressive ceremony of the “Service Flag Presentation” held in our Synagogue on February 24, 1918, was most moving and soul stirring. The inspiring addresses of Mr. Louis Marshall and Commander Albert Moritz of the Camden Navy Yard, were filled with intense Jewish loyalty and with patriotic fervor. Together with our fellow citizens of other faiths we participated in the various Liberty Loans and Welfare Campaigns, contributing to all agencies that cooperated with the Government in serving the religious, social and recreational needs of the boys in camp.

It was a great and joyous day when, on October 12, 1919, a “Grand Jubilee” was held at our Synagogue in honor of our boys’ homecoming, when we unveiled the Bronze Memorial Tablet and presented each veteran with a suitably inscribed Bible as a memento of his service. The arrangements of this Grand Jubilee were in charge of that indefatigable worker, Mr. Samuel Cohn.”

Darkness and Dawn

“The years of prosperity and peace that followed the Country’s recovery from the economic depression were short-lived, however. New clouds, dark and ominous, began to gather again on the political skies. The storm which had its origin in Germany, with the sudden rise to power of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi hangmen was destined to engulf all nations and to shake the very foundations of the world.

World War II which followed as a result of the Nazi maniac’s ambitions, was the greatest and most devastating human conflict that the world had ever seen. The battle was extended to every continent and over every sea, on land, sea and in the sky. The losses in human life and property were staggering. The blackest chapter in the history of this war was, however, the inhuman extermination, by cremation in Nazi gas and torture chambers, of 6,000,000 Jews, and the destruction of their many hundreds of Synagogue, Schools, cultural and philanthropic institutions.

During this dark period Congregation B.I.A.E. was a source of great comfort, hope and encouragement to our people. Together with other Synagogues in our City and country we called for protest and prayer meetings. We held special services of intercession. We raised funds for the relief of the war sufferers and engaged in rescue work. When our country was drawn into the conflict by the sneak attack of the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, over 400 of our youth joined the armed forces of the U.S.A.”
Our Civil War Hero
by Judith R. Greenwald
Judith R. Greenwald has been an active member of Kane Street since 1966, taking leadership positions on the Kiddush, Journal, Dinner-Dance, Building and Renewal Campaign Committees, and as Secretary, Vice-President and President. She also has served as the Synagogue's Archivist and Historian and Editor of The Scroll.

The word “hero” is not used often anymore and little attention is paid to brave soldiers when they return from battle in body bags. Such was not the case during the Civil War and in the early years of our Congregation. In 1863, our member Lieutenant-Colonel Leopold Charles Newman, lying on his death bed in the National Hotel in Washington, D.C., was visited by President Abraham Lincoln who brought him a commission to the rank of brigadier-general, earned for valor.

Leopold Charles Newman was born in Brooklyn on July 26, 1839. His parents were Charles Newman and Eliza Morange, who were married on October 3, 1838 in a New York synagogue by Reverend Edward Miers. (In 1879 Congregation Beth Israel engaged Rabbi Miers.) Nothing is known of Newman’s early childhood, his schooling, or his family’s circumstances, other than that when Leopold was about eight years old his father served as a colonel in the Mexican War. Newman was sixteen when his mother died, nine days after she gave birth to his sister Victoria. There is an indication in war pension correspondence with the Department of the Interior that Newman also had a younger brother Isidore who died in childhood. Newman resided with his father and sister at 177 Court Street, and supported the family. Charles Newman suffered from kidney disease and impaired vision, and was unable to do manual work. It is not known when Newman and his father joined our Synagogue, which was founded in 1856, one year after his mother’s death.

On May 27th, 1861 just six weeks after the fall of Fort Sumter, Newman and two close friends were among the first to enlist in the 31st Infantry Regiment of New York Volunteers. Organized in Williamsburgh, the regiment was mustered in on May 24, 1861 under Col. Calvin E. Pratt. At the time of his enlistment, Newman was twenty-two and engaged to be married. He was well known as a good orator, a man of ability, and a lawyer of merit and distinction. More importantly, he displayed leadership, for he was a founding member of the Young Men’s Democratic Association of Brooklyn. Unlike Manhattan Democrats, the Democrats of Brooklyn, chief among them Walt Whitman, supported the war.

Newman was commissioned as a lieutenant in Company B of the 31st Regiment. After a four-week training period on Riker’s Island in Hardee’s light infantry tactics, the Regiment was transported by train to Washington D.C. where it joined the Army of the Potomac and entered combat. Two years later on June 4, 1863 the Regiment was mustered out. By one account it had suffered the loss of 379 officers and men: 71 dead, 168 wounded and 140 missing. By another account the 1,000-man regiment had been reduced to 300. In the battle of Maryse’ Heights alone, in two days of battle 12 men were killed, 58 were wounded and 87 were missing. See, New York in the War of the Rebellion, 3rd ed., Frederick Phisterer, Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912;

Newman’s regiment engaged in sixteen battles. In Virginia it fought at Fairfax Court House, Blackburn’s Ford, Bull Run, Munson’s Hill, Springfield Station, West Point, Gaines Mill, Garnett and Golden’s Farm, Glendale, Malvern Hill, Burke’s Station, Fredericksburg, and Mary’s Heights and Salem Church. In Maryland it battled at Crampton’s Pass and Antietam. Newman was in every one of these battles and he achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel by two promotions earned for valor. With only a few weeks left to serve, he returned home on leave only to be peremptorily recalled. “I’ll be home in a week father,” he said as he returned to Virginia for battle at Fredericksburg. There, General Sedgwick ordered the 31st to carry Maryse’ Heights, saying “You may lose all your men, but you will save the corps.” Newman, turning to his men cried, “Now gentlemen, over with you” and with banner in one hand and sword in the other he dashed into battle. The effort was successful, with the 31st Regiment making two of the most brilliant charges of the entire campaign and its flag the first to reach the rebels’ works, but Newman suffered a severe grape shot wound in his left foot. [See, http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/31stInf/31stInfCWN.htm, 31st Regiment New York Volunteers Civil War Newspaper Clippings, New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center.]

The shot broke several bones. At that time such an injury required amputation. The pain of surgery could be ameliorated only by surgical speed, for there was never enough chloroform to go around. With skill a leg could be removed in twelve seconds, an arm in nine. [See, E. L. Doctorow, The March, p. 58.] It is not clear if Newman was operated on in the field or at the National Hotel, in Washington D. C. to which he was evacuated. His died there on June 7th. President Abraham Lincoln arrived at Newman’s bedside either as he lay dying or just after he died and reportedly delivered to him his commission as a Brigadier-General.

Newman was buried with military honors in our Synagogue’s first cemetery “Union Field” in Cypress Hills. The Twenty-eighth Regiment of the National Guard with band and drum corps attended, together with numerous citizens and many discharged and furloughed soldiers. His tombstone read “He fought for his Country with the Army of the Potomac in every battle from Bull Run to that in which he fell leading his regiment in the storming of Morys Heights.”
Modern attempts to pay respects to this hero, which began in 1981 so far have failed. In Rabbi Goldfarb’s history of the congregation, he is specific as to the name and general location of the cemetery in which Newman’s body rests, but there are several cemeteries named Union Field in Cypress Hills. None of the cemeteries bearing the name Union Field has records of Newman’s interment. And while our Synagogue’s own cemetery records and maps are complete for all of the grounds it acquired since 1875, records before that time have been lost. Currently we await the renovation of Shearith Israel synagogue and the retrieval of that congregation’s archives from storage. Since our Congregation purchased Union Fields from Shearith Israel, its archives should hold a metes and bounds description of the purchase to help locate the spot. Meanwhile many unsuccessful trips have been made to Cypress Hills to find the grave. The area is vast and the oldest stones, which are made of soft sand stone, are illegible. For example, the grave of Leopold Newman’s father, Charles, who died in 1885, is located in our ground at Machpelah Cemetery in Cypress Hills. When first located in 1981 it was legible, but by 2006, it was not.

Fortunately, through Rabbi Goldfarb’s written histories and the preservation of records and documents by the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs and the National Archives, the heroism of our remarkable member Leopold C. Newman is preserved. As stated in one of his obituaries on file with the *31st Regiment New York Volunteers Civil War Newspaper Clippings*, he was “a loving and dutiful son, a kind brother, a warm friend, an iron-hearted soldier…. “
WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE.—Among the list of wounded at the late battle of Chancellorsville is the name of Lieut. Col. Leopold C. Newman, of the 31st Regiment, N. Y. S. V., who received an injury in the foot which incapacitates him at least temporarily from continuing on active duty. He assisted in the formation of regiment, and went out as Captain. His soldierly qualities soon attracted attention and he was promoted to Major; afterward, to the Lieutenant Colonelcy. The regiment was commanded by Col. Pratt, (who, with Lieut. Col. Newman, are residents of Brooklyn) who has been promoted to the position of Brigadier General for gallant service. No regiment has done better than the 31st.
Lieut. Col. Newman.—We learn that Lieut. Col. Leopold C. Newman, of the 31st regiment, has suffered amputation of one of his legs in one of the hospitals in Washington. Col. Newman is a resident of this city, and was well known as a promising politician. During the last Presidential campaign he was President of the Young Mem's Democratic Club of this city, and was very active in working for the interest of the party. When the war broke out he procured a commission as Lieutenant in one of the companies of the 31st regiment, and served with the regiment during its two years service with the army of the Potomac, being engaged in every battle fought by that army. He was rapidly promoted through all the grades until he attained the position of Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment. He escaped unscathed through all the terrible conflicts in which his regiment was engaged, but just a day or two before the service of his regiment expired the disastrous battle of Chancellorville occurred, in which he was wounded with a piece of shell in the leg, making a compound fracture, which rendered amputation necessary. The regiment was mustered out of service a few days since. We are glad to know that Mr. Newman is recovering rapidly.
The Late Lieut.-Col. Newman.

To the Editor of the Brooklyn Eagle:

Please rectify the mistake of the burial place of Lieut.-Col. Newman. He was buried at the Union Cemetery by the Congregation Beth Israel, with the military honors due to an officer of his rank. He led the 61st Regiment New York Volunteers on the charge on Mary's Heights, Fredericksburg, Va. He was a lawyer of distinction at the New York bar; also, President of the Young Men's Democratic Society. He entered the war at the outbreak of this rebellion as Captain. He commanded the Third Brigade at the battle of Antietam, Maryland, after which he was promoted to the Lieut.-Colonelcy of the Regiment which he commanded to the day of his death. He was born in the City of New York.

P. Maxx.
THE JEWS TRUE PATRIOTS

Dr. Madison C. Peters Says History Does Not Tell of Brewer Men.

HARDSHIRE TREATMENT IN GERMANY

The Congressman from All the Wars in Which the United States Has Been Engaged.

The story of Dr. Madison C. Peters, the former Congressman from the 15th District of Wisconsin, is one of the most remarkable of the Jewish leaders in the United States. He was born in Germany, where his father was a clerk in the government office. He received his education in a Jewish school and later went to the University of Breslau, where he studied medicine. He returned to the United States and became a doctor in Milwaukee.

In 1906, Peters was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, where he served for three years. He then moved to Chicago, where he practiced medicine and was active in Jewish social work. In 1920, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served for 20 years, representing the 15th District of Wisconsin.

During his time in Congress, Peters was known for his strong support of Jewish causes. He was a leading advocate of the establishment of Israel and was active in the fight against anti-Semitism. He was also known for his support of labor unions and his opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Peters died in 1961, but his legacy lives on through the work of the Jewish Congress, which he founded in 1925. The organization works to promote Jewish social and political causes, and has a network of chapters throughout the United States.
Right before my fortieth birthday, I was approached by some recruiters about joining the Army Reserves. I told them I was too old, but they assured me that they took recruits up to age forty. I first considered joining right after college, but six years seemed too long a commitment then, especially if I found that I didn’t like it. Added to that was I wondered if I would ever be able to meet a Jewish man in the army, or be able to keep kosher. But here, as I approached forty, I quit smoking and was into fitness. Suddenly the idea of joining was not so ludicrous anymore. In fact, I remember thinking “Hey, here’s one thing I don’t have to be sorry that I never did.”

Never did I think I would be called up for war, however. I was joining the army anticipating great opportunities. Suddenly though, just before Ed and I were to celebrate our twentieth anniversary and our son was nine-years-old, I was off to war. The night before I was to leave several of my friends, including many from the synagogue, gave me a going away party. One of my presents from Tucky Druker and Arlene Schneider was a green leather bound dairy. In it I started taking down notes. I later found that I had the basis of what was to become my doctoral dissertation on women reservists’ reactions to being called up. But that’s getting ahead of myself.

No, I never got to the Middle East; I spent my nine months on active duty stateside at Fort Monmouth and in Washington, DC. Although I had orders to go to Germany, the war ended before we were sent. My active duty station however, despite the one-army concept, had separate IDs for reservists who were active army and the “real active army”. We were constantly reminded that we were only reservists. As a Jewish woman, I remember thinking of what it must have felt like in Nazi Germany, where the Jews had to wear yellow stars to set them apart.

Family and friends were very supportive throughout. One warm memory is receiving Purim mishloah manot, from Rabbi Debby Cantor and the shul. I still have that Purim cup because it made me feel close to home. Getting to come home for Pesach was another important event.

Life in the army was very different than what many of us had been used to, however I remember feeling that I was going so my son would never have to. As I look around now at all the sons of mothers who have had to go for this latest war, I am saddened and horrified at the loss of life despite one acquaintance telling me “we still haven’t reached the numbers we lost in Viet Nam.” We in the Gulf War came home to parades and much acclaim. Like Viet Nam, I don’t think the soldiers of today will get their parade either. While those of us against the war should continue to oppose it, I hope we all remember, the sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters who are serving so the rest of us don’t have to go.

Just as transitioning to army life was difficult, returning to civilian life was problematical as well. Being part of a unit, where we were all supporting each other and had similar experiences and for many of the women, a sense of purpose. Life had gone on, and we were not there for many of the important life events of family and friends. I remember my son telling me, “we do things differently now.” Yes, they did, we were all different. We had lost and gained many things. The transition from home to army and back again was a journey, one which many of my compatriots shared with me, and which I proudly told in my dissertation. We all felt we would do it again, if called upon.
Victory Ball and Entertainment
of
Congregation Baithe Israel Anshei Emes
and affiliated societies
Sunday evening, March twenty-third, 1919
AT THE IMPERIAL
FULTON STREET AND RED HOOK LANE, BROOKLYN
Proceeds will be devoted to repair and alteration of Synagogue buildings
and to the reception of our gallant boys from "Over There"
Ticket, admitting gentleman and lady, one dollar.
TABLET UNVEILED
FOR OVERSEAS MEN

Congregation Beth Israel Anshei Emes Honors Returned
War Sons—Abram I. Elkus
Speaks.

Of the 104 soldiers boys of the Congregation Beth Israel Anshei Emes, Harrison, and Court St., who served
their country during the war, 104 of them met again last night at
the big welcome home program held in their honor by the members
of the synagogue. Praiseworthy service men made the supreme sacrifice. They
were Abraham Balkin, David Clark, Joseph Katzman, William H. Lischner
and Morris Neumann.

The program included addresses, an entertainment of music and songs,
a buffet dinner and a dance. A beautiful tablet on which were inscribed the
names of the 104 service men was unveiled by Miss Arnette Cohn, as the
104th Birthday of Liberty. During the entertainment the choir, led by Miss
Cohn, marched into the synagogue singing "The Star-Spangled Banner.

The audience joined in the singing of national anthems.

Abram I. Elkus, former Ambassador to Turkey, made a brief address in
which he described the sufferings of residents of that country, especially
the Jews at the hands of the Central Powers. Others who spoke were
District Attorney Harry H. Lewis, Barrister George A. Weinstock and Albert Mortiz.

Members of the Girl Scouts, Troop No. 28, besides furnishing the flowers
for the occasion, served the dinner to the service men. Assisting with the
tables were the Boy Scouts, Troop No. 104. They also acted as ushers for the
large attendance at the celebration.

After the dinner a reception was given to the soldier guests by the Ladies
Auxiliary of the synagogue.

The committee in charge consisted of Samuel Cohn, chairman; Mrs. A.
Wolfe, Dr. Norman Salt, Abe Freitag, Eva Rumppler and Isaac P. Busch. On
the reception committee were Harry G. Anderson, Lee Kantrowitz, Louis
Moses, T. K. Jasp, Julius Kahn, Michael Kohen and Mary Kaplan. Aaron
Dango, Samuel Cohn, Isaac P.
Busch, and Abe Freitag comprised the
tablet committee. The choir was un-
der the direction of Samuel Goldfarb.
"Our Heroes"

Roy Autor  Joseph Fiskoff  Abraham Neushatz
Joseph Barko  Morris Fox  Jesse Pasternak
Robert Barko  Irving Framan  *Joseph Rice
Harry Basist  Murray Framan  Bernard Rosenthal
Louis Baskin  Julien Friedman  Al Kumper
Sidney Baach  John Gabey  Maurice Salit
Samuel Bergman  David Gallop  Samuel Salit
Nathan Bergman  Larry Geller  Peter Samuels
Leo Berkman  Herman Goldberg  William Schneider
Charles Berlin  David L. Goldman  Harry Schnopen
*Abraham Bialkin  Herman Goldstein  Barnett Shagan
Morris Blinder  Jack Goldstein  Bob Shane
Aaron Block  Jacob D. Goldstein  Simon Shapiro
Joe Bogart  Nat Goldstein  Sara Shapiro
Lewis C. Brown  Harry Goodman  Henry Share
Jack Bruder  Leo Gottlieb  Henry Shevlowitz
Louis Budin  Louis C. Gutman  Eugene Shoen
Leo Bruder  Fincus Hersheff  H. H. Silverberg
Morris Bruder  Samuel Herowitz  David Silverman
Samuel Bruder  Davis Iothsky  Henry Steinfeld
Abraham Chast  Samuel Kaplan  Henry Summer
Samuel Chenken  *Joseph Katzman  Irving Swingold
*Isadore Clark  David Katzman  Frank Seralip
Samuel Cohen  Frank Kirschner  Jerome Traub
Sol Cohen  Samuel Kirschner  Milton Traub
Jerome Cohen  *William R. Kirschner  Samuel Waldman
Jack Cohn  Milton Klapper  Jacob Weinberg
David Cohn  Isadore Kess  Mortimer R. Weinberg
Leon Copland  Lester Lebowitz  Henry Weiss
Harry Curley  Charles Lebowitz  Nathan Weiss
Jerome Davis  Jerome A. Leberman  Lester Welsch
Harry Dickinson  Nathan M. Levy  Dr. Arthur Wildman
Joseph Eskowits  Sigmund Lille  L. Wiserman
Dr. L. Feinblatt  Max Martin  Martin Wiseman
Herman Fiorello  William A. Mastrov  Charles Wolf
Herbert Fiorello  Gus Meyer  Herman Wolf
Philip Fishman  Charles Miller
Oldest Boro Temple Welcomes GIs Back

A familiar ceremony was repeated last night at the Congregation Beth Israel, 236 King St., oldest synagogue in Brooklyn, as 180 World War II veterans were officially welcomed. The congregation in the past has greeted the return of members from the Civil War, Spanish-American War and World War I.

Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, spiritual leader of Beth Israel for 40 years, told the gathering of 600: "This is both a thanksgiving and a memorial service. We are thankful all the boys of our congregation returned safe, but let us not forget the untold numbers of all races, creeds and colors who will never return.

"We must not forget the ideals for which they fought and died. We must strive to spread and perpetuate the ideals of democracy for a world in which all can live in peace and harmony."

Other speakers were Jacob Hertz, president of the congregation, and Harold L. Turk, ex-president. Oscar Hertz, chairman of the veterans' committee, was in charge of arrangements.