



# HISTORIC BRIGHTON

## Newsletter and Journal

*Exploring our Town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.*

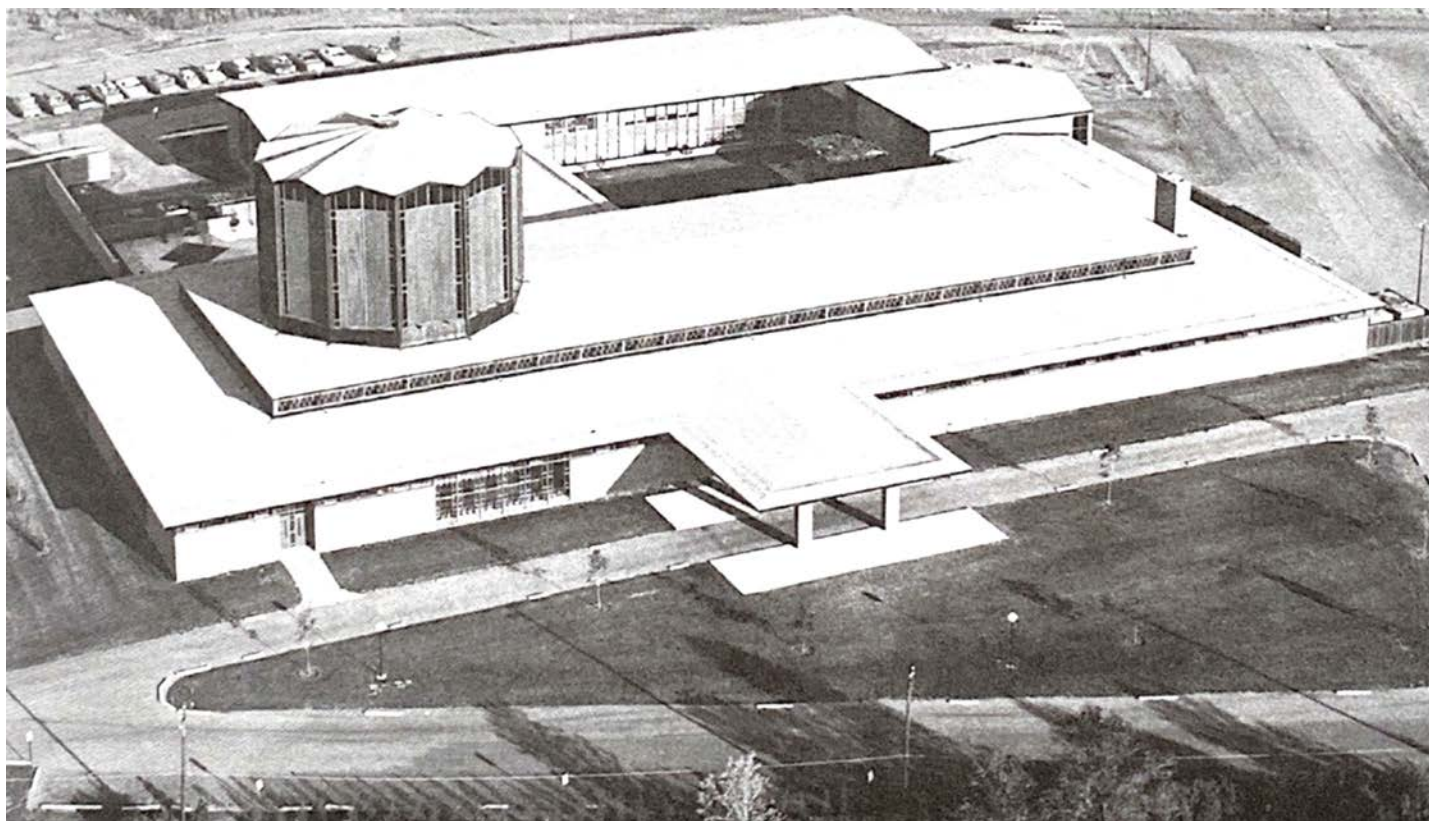
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Spring 2020

## FAITH IN BRIGHTON:

### A MULTI-PART SERIES ON THE DIVERSITY OF FAITHS IN OUR TOWN



*An early aerial view of the Midcentury-Modern Temple B'rith Kodesh religious complex on Elmwood Avenue before the surrounding parking areas were completed (Photo by Molitor, *Affirming the Covenant* p. 203)*

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## INTRODUCTION: FAITH IN BRIGHTON

By Matthew Bashore, President of Historic Brighton

We will never know when the first ritual acts of worship were conducted in Brighton. The Onondowagah (Seneca) tribe of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) who inhabited this land, recognized an “earth holder” deity and celebrated the passage of the seasons and life events with a complex ritual system. The first religious ritual in Brighton by a non-indigenous group was likely the celebration of a Catholic Mass in August of 1669 at Indian Landing in Ellison Park by Abbé François Dollier de Casson, who accompanied the explorer René-Robert Cavalier de la Salle. Near this same location, the first “house of worship” was possibly a tree bark cabin, erected in 1679 by Rev. Louis Hennepin and two other Franciscan priests. A plaque at Our Lady of Mercy School commemorates the event.

Christian Protestants such as Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians began to gather in the town around the same time that construction on the Erie Canal began. Typically, families would meet in schools or other public meeting places until enough money and interest was raised to hire a leader and construct a building. The Brighton Congregational Society, organized in 1817, built one of the earliest churches in Brighton on a hill at the southwest corner of Brighton Cemetery in 1825.

Since the town’s incorporation in 1814, and especially within the last 75 years, a great diversity of faiths has developed within the bounds of Brighton. The many religious orientations include Jewish, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Dutch Reform, Baptist,

Presbyterian, Evangelical, Mormon, United Church of Christ, Russian Orthodox, Islamic, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and many others.

With this issue, Historic Brighton begins an ongoing series of articles on the religious faith of our citizens and places of worship within the town’s borders. Historically, our houses of worship have played a significant part in the religious and social life of the Brighton community as well as an important role in educating our children. In upcoming issues, we hope to explore the many diverse faiths that enrich our community, and we begin with articles on Brighton’s oldest Jewish congregation.

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## BRIGHTON’S JEWISH COMMUNITY: A MINI-IMMIGRATION

By Mary Jo Lanphear, Town of Brighton Historian

At the time of the first census of the United States in 1790, the Jewish population numbered only 3,000 people out of a total of almost 4 million people. Fifty years later political conditions in Germany were such that thousands of Jews left that country seeking safety, liberty, and freedom of worship. Some of the 200,000 that arrived in the U.S. between 1848 and 1880 settled in Rochester.

The German Jews who immigrated in the late 1840s were not usually factory workers or farmers but small tradesmen who sought population centers as a market for their wares. The 1844 Rochester city directory lists Sigmund Rosenburd, a lace merchant; Joseph Altman, a dry goods merchant; and Mire Greentree whose occupation is not listed but who, from several accounts, went

into partnership with Joseph and Gabriel Wile and Hirsch Britenstool to found Rochester’s first large-scale clothing firm, located on Front Street near the River. From this nucleus came Rochester’s reputation as the home of fine clothing manufacturers and the epithet “Rochester Made Means Quality.”

The sixth ward of the city (later renumbered the seventh) was the home to the early settler and the newcomer. Conveniently located on the east side of town, it encompassed Clinton Avenue North and St. Joseph Street (later renamed Joseph Avenue) and had once been part of the town of Brighton.

It was here in 1848 that Temple B’rith Kodesh was founded in the parlor of a house on North Clinton Street. It was a congregation that

reflected the beliefs and practices of the German Jewish community although the congregation vacillated between traditional and progressive ritual practice over the years. In 1852 the congregation leased a former Baptist church on St. Paul Street before purchasing the building in 1856. In 1893 a new B’rith Kodesh synagogue was completed on Gibbs Street. The name B’rith Kodesh is a transliteration of the Hebrew words that mean Holy Covenant.

Through the nineteenth century the Joseph/Clinton area was a vibrant albeit crowded neighborhood, accommodating successive waves of newcomers from Ireland, Poland, Ukraine, Italy, and other European countries. The constant element was the well-established Jewish presence, the shops, the worship sites, the social organizations that characterized the

ward. By the 1930s, Ruth Lempert who grew up over her father's Joseph Avenue fish market, concluded "the neighborhood was a mix of vastly different cultures and ethnic groups and the stores and houses that lined the avenue reflected this diversity."<sup>1</sup> As each ethnic group prospered, it eventually moved away from the neighborhood to larger homes in the city and surrounding towns and the temples and synagogues founded in the city moved also.

Jewish migration from the crowded Joseph Avenue neighborhood began in the early twentieth century. As families prospered, they sought homes in less dense neighborhoods at the same time maintaining family businesses in the old neighborhood. According to Stuart Rosenberg, when Temple Beth El was founded in 1916, a site at 310 Oxford Street was selected and J. Foster Warner hired to design the Temple because "Oxford Street was the center of the new and rapidly developing Jewish neighborhood."<sup>2</sup> Warner's design went unused, however, when in 1917 Temple Beth El moved to the former Park Avenue Baptist Church. There it remained until a disastrous fire in 1960.

This new neighborhood included other former Brighton territory along Park Avenue, Meigs Street, Harvard Street, and Canterbury Road, to name a few. Children attended local schools then went on to East High School at 410 Alexander Street, founded in 1903, and Monroe High School at 164 Alexander Street that opened in 1923.

Not far away, in 1929 Congregation Beth Sholom bought the former St. Thomas Episcopal Church at 30 Field

Street near Monroe Avenue. Today the Modern Orthodox synagogue is located at 1161 Monroe Avenue on the site of the former Brighton school #8 across from Cobb's Hill. Within walking distance is one of Brighton's first neighborhoods, Home Acres, begun in 1912 on land formerly owned by Ellwanger & Barry Nurseries. The Monroe Avenue area west of Highland Avenue to the Canal saw the establishment of Jewish shops such as Orgel's book shop that sold religious goods.

Early twentieth century advances in both public transportation and private automobiles put apartments and family houses in Brighton within easy reach of the city. Using inferred name evidence, the federal and state census records for 1910 through 1930 show an increasing number of Jewish surnames primarily in the core of town, the center of the early twentieth century neighborhoods of Home Acres, Bel Air, Rose Lawn, and Meadowbrook.

Rochester's Urban Renewal program of the 1960s, centered in the Baden-Ormond Street area of the seventh ward, forced out the nine remaining mostly Orthodox congregations. Several relocated to Brighton or neighborhoods nearby. Beth Israel, founded in 1874 with the uniting of Congregation Bene Sholom and Congregation Sheves Achim, moved from 30 Leopold Street to East Avenue in 1973, merging with Congregation Beth Hamedresh Hagodel. Now called Beth Hamedresh-Beth Israel (BHBI), it is located on land that was part of Brighton Village before 1905.

Beth Hakneses Hachodosh, an Orthodox congregation often called the "Nusbaum Shul" after

its founders, Meyer and Sander Nusbaum, began at 402-408 Ormond Street. Also in need of a new worship site due to urban renewal, it bought the former Centenary Methodist Church at the corner of North St. Regis Drive and Monroe Avenue in 1961.

Temple Beth El, after the 1960 fire, built a new temple on land purchased in 1949 at the corner of Winton Road South and Hillside Avenue. Four scrolls miraculously unscathed by the fire were part of the dedication of the new temple in 1963.

A Sephardic community, Light of Israel, begun in the city in 1910, moved to 1675 Monroe Avenue in 2012. It is said to be the oldest Sephardic synagogue outside of New York City. The Sephardic tradition is connected to the Jews of Spain and Portugal who were driven out by Ferdinand and Isabella. Most of the other congregations in Brighton grew out of the Ashkenazi tradition with its roots in Germany and Eastern Europe.

Temple Beth Am, a Conservative congregation, was founded in 1960 at 3249 East Henrietta Road but left there a few years later to move to rented space at 2131 Elmwood Avenue, Temple B'rith Kodesh.

The venerable Temple B'rith Kodesh broke ground on Elmwood Avenue in Brighton on May 8, 1961. A group of congregants separated from Temple B'rith Kodesh in 1959 to form Temple Sinai and hired famed local architect James Johnson to design the distinctive structure on Penfield Road in Brighton.

Another Jewish institution of

[1] "Growing Up in the Old Neighborhood: A Memoir of Joseph Avenue" Rochester History Volume LXIV Summer 2002

[2] *The Jewish Community in Rochester, 1843-1925*, by Stuart E. Rosenberg, 1954, p. 176

long-standing also left the city for Brighton. In 1907 the Jewish Young Men's Association was formed from the Judean Club at 3 Franklin Square in downtown Rochester. Later that same year a Jewish Young Women's Association was founded. In 1936, the combined JYM&WA opened a new center at 380 Andrews Street where it remained until December 1973 when, under its new name, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester, Inc., it moved to 1200 Edgewood Avenue in Brighton. Originally intended for a nine-acre site on the northeast corner of Winton and Westfall Roads, it was

opposed by a neighborhood group, citing traffic concerns, and a group of Jewish members who lived in the city and Irondequoit who thought Brighton was too far away. Today the Jewish Community Center provides recreation, education, and fellowship for Brighton and beyond.

Residents of Brighton in the mid-twentieth century saw the establishment on Monroe Avenue of several businesses important to Jewish life in Brighton, for example, Lipman's Kosher Meats and Groceries at 1482 Monroe Avenue, Fox's Delicatessen at Winton and

Monroe, and Malek's Bakery at 1795 Monroe Avenue in addition to the many bagel shops at the Twelve Corners.

Migration in most instances involves a push-pull dynamic, e.g., something that causes an individual or group to leave a place and be drawn to another. It would appear that crowded conditions in the old seventh ward was the push and the opportunity to live in the less-crowded, more upscale part of Rochester was the pull for Brighton's Jewish community.

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## THE WOMEN OF TEMPLE B'RITH KODESH

By Marjorie B. Searl

Like most religious congregations founded in America's first centuries, Temple B'rith Kodesh was organized by a group of men. And, like most religious congregations, TBK has slowly evolved in its acceptance of women into its leadership ranks. However, women have been the heart of the community from its earliest years through the present day. Both inside the synagogue and out, TBK women have fulfilled the mission of Reform Judaism, "tikkun olam, the repair of our world, to bring about a world of justice, wholeness, and compassion." While the congregation has only "lived" in Brighton since 1962, its women's history, rooted in the Gibbs Street years, was firmly transplanted.

In the years leading up to the establishment of a women's group at TBK, women participated in synagogue activities and Jewish life outside the home by teaching in the day school, singing in the choir, and some were members of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society and the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society,

assisting poor women and orphans at Rochester City Hospital [AtC, pp. 26. 47, 81, 217]. However, women were not deemed eligible for positions of leadership in the synagogue. Things began to change, albeit slowly, with the 1871 arrival of liberal Reform Rabbi Max Landsberg [1845-1927] and his wife, Miriam [1847-1912] [AtC p. 42ff]. Both Landsbergs were supporters of civil rights for women and other progressive causes. Mrs. Landsberg encouraged the more formal participation of women in the synagogue and the community by founding the Sisterhood in 1892, two years after she was a founding (and for many years the only Jewish) member of The Wednesday Morning Club, a high-brow literary club that counted among its members some of Rochester's most powerful women. Both husband and wife joined in speaking and writing about the role of women in Judaism [AtC p. 83-89]. Miriam Landsberg was an active supporter of the work of Susan B. Anthony; her husband shared a podium with the controversial leader on several occasions.

In the 1891 Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, which Rabbi Landsberg had established with Anthony's church, First Unitarian, and which has been an annual Rochester tradition since 1871, Anthony opined "a 'wholesome' discontent had provided the impetus for the progress of women." In 1901, the local Council of Women met at Temple B'rith Kodesh, where Landsberg and Anthony again spoke from the same platform to the assembled group. This meeting, billed as the largest peace gathering ever held in the City of Rochester, coincided with the opening of the Court of International Arbitration at The Hague.

While the Landsbergs took very public positions on behalf of women's equality, members of the Sisterhood typically acted very concretely within the social sphere. Its founding mission of "charity, philanthropy, and education...and to lend a helping hand" was fulfilled many times over during the hundred and thirty years since Mrs. Landsberg called it into existence.

In Sisterhood's first year, school books were distributed to those in need. Milk was provided to students, as well as the help of a visiting nurse who gave lessons in hygiene. In 1901, two members of Sisterhood, Therese Katz and Fannie Gerson, created the beginnings of a settlement house, originally called "Social Settlement of Rochester," and then in the 1920s, called Baden Street Settlement, which still exists today to serve the needs of the community.

Many kinds of classes were offered in the early years to help newly arrived immigrant children and young women learn vocational and intellectual skills — sewing, crocheting, basket weaving, Shakespeare, Hebrew, current events, and also, kindergarten classes and a day nursery for the children of working mothers were established. In 1908, Baden Street's newsletter expanded into the journal "The Common Good," showcasing the many community-wide efforts to create healthy initiatives for residents of Rochester [AfC p. 102].

The Sisterhood's many fund-raising projects have supported needs of the synagogue as well as to lend a helping hand anywhere it was required. The 1911 Flour City Cookbook continued earlier efforts to promote wellness with its hygienic cooking tips. Art shows, antique shows, and rummage

sales have helped to fill the coffers in order to sustain important programs, many of which have been aimed at young people. From chaperoned community socials in its early years, to hospitality to international students, to present day scholarships for girls wanting to study science, Sisterhood initiatives have benefited many people in the Rochester community.

Current projects further some of Sisterhood's earliest ambitions: education — ongoing education of themselves and others, creation of a small museum of Jewish art and artifacts, and support of the Pencils and Paper program for teachers in Rochester City School District; hygiene — support of the P.A.D.S. personal hygiene supplies for homeless women, spearheaded by National Council of Jewish Women; enhancement of interfaith activity in the community — the annual interfaith event with women from other faith congregations; and social justice concerns — support of reproductive rights and civil rights for the LGBTQ community.

TBK Sisterhood is affiliated with Women of Reform Judaism, a global organizational umbrella that shares the Sisterhood's priorities for community and social action. In its support of religious practice, the Sisterhood has assumed responsibility for leading one

service every year, Sisterhood Shabbat, in which Sisterhood members lead the congregation in Sabbath prayers and Torah readings.

Meanwhile, by the 1940s, women began to assume leadership positions within the congregation. Elizabeth Schwartz was the first woman principal of the Sunday School in 1944, Nettie (Annette) Sheiman became the first woman board president in 1989, and the first woman rabbi, Rosalind Gold, was called in 1978 as assistant rabbi. Since then, women have continued as cantors (leaders of music liturgy), board presidents, school administrators, and rabbis. Women share equally in ritual practices, including the most sacred reading from the Torah.

The move to Elmwood Avenue from Gibbs Street firmly cemented the identity of Temple B'rith Kodesh as a local Brighton institution. Through TBK, its female members have found, for over 150 years, a spiritual home and an institutional base from which to care for community concerns and to serve the greater good. In the 21st century, Sisterhood continues its historic role of looking inward to the needs of the synagogue and looking outward to the needs of world.

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[1] For more on Reform Judaism, see <https://reformjudaism.org/what-reform-judaism> (retrieved April 7, 2020).

[2] Thanks to Peter Eisenstadt, PhD, for permission to draw heavily from his 1999 sesquicentennial history of Temple B'rith Kodesh, *Affirming the Covenant*, referred to as *AtC*.

[3] *AtC* p. 80; for more information about *The Wednesday Morning Club*, see <https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/3579> accessed April 7, 2020.

[4] *An Eventful Reception*, "Democrat & Chronicle, February 11, 1897, p. 11.

[5] "The Benefits of Unrest," *Democrat & Chronicle*, November 27, 1891, p. 6.

[6] "Meeting for Peace and Arbitration," *Democrat & Chronicle*, May 18, 1901, p. 13.

[7] Many thanks to Ellen Solomon, longtime Sisterhood member and leader, for providing information from the *Sisterhood Centennial* publication and for her careful reading and suggestions.

[8] A complete list of rabbis, board presidents, and educators can be found in *Affirming the Covenant*, pp. 251-156.

# B'RITH KODESH IN BRIGHTON: BUILDING A NEW BEGINNING

By Michael B. Lempert

Temple B'rith Kodesh, on Elmwood Avenue next to the Brickyard Trail, is certainly one of the most distinctive buildings in all of Brighton. It is a gathering place for Jewish worship and ceremonies, a center for education, and a meeting place for the community. From the exterior, TBK features a massive multi-faceted column rising above a Mid-Century Modern plinth of brick and glass, gathered around a central courtyard and sculpture garden, and surrounded by greenery on three sides.

The design and construction of this new home for congregation B'rith Kodesh took place from 1961-1963, which was around the same time that many other Jewish congregations were also relocating from their city structures to new facilities in primarily Brighton and Irondequoit.

The need for a new physical structure was, like the new sanctuary itself, multi-faceted. In addition to concerns about the Gibbs Street facility being reportedly dark and gloomy (a problem only partially resolved by an early 1950s renovation in lighter materials in an attempt to brighten the atmosphere), the Gibbs Street facility simply wasn't big enough to serve its membership. Affirming the Covenant by Peter Eisenstadt (a celebrated review of Temple B'rith Kodesh history) notes that the congregation numbered over 1,000 families, but in a building that was only built to serve 250 families and with a maximum capacity of only 850 people<sup>[1]</sup>. There was not enough seating, parking, or restroom facilities, and there were only classrooms to accommodate approximately one-third of the enrolled students. Further, a massive Cold War population shift saw citizens escaping city living for decentralized suburban

sprawl; almost a quarter of Rochester's Jewish population could be found in Brighton by the early 1960s – the highest of any suburb at the time by a wide margin.

By 1956, the Temple Board of Trustees began the process of searching for new land. Once the Elmwood Avenue plot was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Gordon (Rochester real estate developers) in 1958, the Building Committee settled on a respected architect, Italian immigrant Pietro Belluschi. At the time, Belluschi was the dean at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning, and approaching the end of a successful career which included the completion of a variety of religious institutions. While known primarily for his work on large-scale Modern buildings influenced by the International Style (works which include New York's Equitable Building completed in 1947 and Pan Am Building in 1963), his religious buildings were more often colloquial in nature, referencing local materials and enmeshed into the surrounding suburban context.

The new Temple complex was dedicated on the very same weekend of this writing (April 19-21) of 1963, at a final cost of over \$2,000,000 (approximately \$17,000,000 in 2019 dollars). The main architectural feature was the steel-and-glass 62-foot diameter and 65-foot high extruded dodecagon (a 12 sided polygon) of the main sanctuary space, capped by a large geometric stylized dome with an oculus in the center. Also per the Eisenstadt account of the Temple, the 12 faces of the sanctuary walls were meant to be symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the dome atop symbolic of the biblical meeting tent where the early tribes convened. The composition of the dramatic vertical

wooden slats cladding the perimeter of the high sanctuary space, which is outlined with thin slivers of light between structural members, exudes a feeling of reaching for the heavens above.

The striking geometric exterior of the building was complemented by an intricate interior filled with abstract art and sculptures, perhaps most notably by renowned sculptor Luise Kaish, whose work has been displayed in the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Jewish Museum, and the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery. Kaish was selected for multiple commissions in religious institutions, for projects like Holocaust memorials, menorahs, representations of Jesus Christ, and – like at B'rith Kodesh – sanctuary ark installations in various synagogues. (The ark is the holiest spot in the synagogue, as it is where the Torah scrolls are kept). The B'rith Kodesh ark project followed her return from one of several trips to Europe to study and develop her skills as a metal sculptor, and the large bronze casting (which she designed, constructed, and oversaw installation of herself) is considered by some to be one of the most significant sculptural works of the second half of the 20th century.

The display of art has long been a part of the B'rith Kodesh mission, although not all of the art is integrated with the structure. Perhaps lesser known than the extravagant sculptural work of the building and holy spaces within, B'rith Kodesh also has an outdoor sculpture garden, and inside can be found one of the largest collections of menorahs in the world, curated by General Myron Lewis. The General and his wife amassed a unique collection of menorahs from their global

explorations, including rarities like a menorah sculpted by Salvador Dalí. The collection was ultimately donated to B'rith Kodesh in order to situate the menorahs in a permanent home for others to enjoy. Chris Clemens covers the background and some specific items of the collection in more detail on his blog "Exploring Upstate" <sup>[2]</sup>.

The art and architecture of the building, grounds, and contents of the Judaica collections at Temple B'rith Kodesh continue to inspire, and serve to further congregational practices of prayer, education, and shared community life. While the congregation is actively rooted in the present and looks to the future, Temple B'rith Kodesh strives to

honor a past defined by the overcoming of hardships as well as the celebration of life from generation to generation, and like the menorah collection, a tradition found in almost every corner of the globe.

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*"The Dome links us to the very beginning of Jewish history. Like the Tabernacle of old, it teaches us to aspire, to build a better world here on earth. It reminds us of the sanctity, the grandeur, the nobility of life. It represents our responsibility to Jewish history to take over the role of the spiritual fountainhead of the future. It symbolizes the greatness, the opportunities, the responsibilities of our period of history, and it is a symbol of the promise of a world of peace and equity for all humanity."*

~Rabbi Herbert Bronstein



*Present-day exterior photograph of the West side of the main sanctuary architectural feature rising above the lower rectangular main building (photograph by Michael Lempert)*



*Present-day exterior photograph of the North (Elmwood Avenue) temple signage framed by orthogonal detailing and upper ribbon windows that span the perimeter (photograph by Michael Lempert)*



*Photograph of the sculptural Luise Kaish bronze Ark (where the Torah collection is stored in between prayers) in the main B'rith Kodesh sanctuary (image from Temple B'rith Kodesh website)*

[1] Thanks to Peter Eisenstadt, PhD, for permission to draw heavily from his 1999 sesquicentennial history of Temple B'rith Kodesh, *Affirming the Covenant*

[2] <https://exploringupstate.com/the-extraordinary-menorah-collection-of-temple-brith-kodesh/>

# RABBI JUDEA MILLER

By Elizabeth Doty

As the post-war culture in America began to shift in the 1960s and 70s, Temple B'rith Kodesh, like many religious institutions, suffered membership decline.<sup>[1]</sup> To combat perceptions of the cynicism and moral ambiguity of these times, the congregation searched for a rabbi who could inspire spiritual renewal and social transformation. What they found was a brave and energetic man who directly engaged with many of the social and political issues of the world.

Judea B. Miller was born in the Bronx in 1930 to Polish immigrants David and Yetta Miller. He was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family. He attended New York University, receiving a B.A in psychology in 1952 after only three years of study. There, he turned to Reform Judaism, with its liberal interpretation of Jewish belief for a modern world. In 1954, he earned a Bachelor of Hebrew Literature from the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, followed by an M.A, M.H.L. and ordination in 1957 from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In the 1950s, Rabbi Miller served as a chaplain in the military, where he gained experience in marital and draft counseling. In 1959, in his first position as congregational rabbi at Temple Emanu-el in Wichita, Kansas, he started on a path that led him to active participation in Civil Rights activities. In 1962 and 1963, he travelled south to Mississippi to assist in voter registration drives. He was arrested at least three times, serving time in Mississippi jails in Hattiesburg, McComb, and Jackson. Rabbi Miller also encouraged his

congregation, saying "I have in my congregation people who have become 'fire-eaters' when it comes to either Israel or civil rights." He called these individuals his "Hasidim" (righteous ones).<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1965, Judea Miller became the rabbi at Temple Tifereth Israel in Malden, Massachusetts. In addition he became the chaplain at the local Veteran's Administration neuropsychiatric hospital. During this time he served in the Delta Ministry in Mississippi, and in 1965 traveled to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, dining with a local minister at a Woolworth's lunch counter, thus participating in the first integrated meal to be served in that state.

Rabbi Miller served as the chairman of the Social Action Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, where he played an important role in exposing urban poverty and housing discrimination in the Boston area. In 1968 he attempted to resolve the housing disputes between Israel Mindick, a Dorchester landlord of forty-four multifamily buildings, and his eight hundred tenants, mostly black and Hispanic.<sup>[3]</sup>

Rabbi Miller was active in the grape boycotts of the United Farm Workers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and became a friend of United Farm Workers President Cesar Chavez. His synagogue in Malden was available for "sanctuary" for draft resisters, and he was a leader of an anti-war sit-in by Boston area rabbis in the Kennedy Federal Office Building.

In 1973, Rabbi Miller became the Senior Rabbi at Temple B'rith Kodesh in Rochester, New York, serving as

rabbi until his retirement in 1995. Just as he had built his counseling and political skills and reached out to and provided sanctuary for other groups in his previous congregations, he brought his passionate concern for social justice to Rochester.

Rabbi Miller sought to understand all views of a political issue. He believed in transgressing and breaking down barriers, and asking unanticipated and probing questions. In 1974 Miller was a delegate to the World Zionist Congress, and he was the only rabbi in attendance to travel to Arab countries, including Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, visiting several PLO camps on his journey.

In the mid-1970s, Rabbi Miller's aunt was robbed and brutally killed in her apartment in New York City. In response to this tragedy, he began a life-long crusade against the death penalty. He organized support from members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the local interfaith clergy councils in Rochester, and wrote many articles and letters to newspaper editors regarding his beliefs. Rabbi Miller also wrote hundreds of letters to politicians urging them to oppose the death penalty, and testified before the U.S. Congress on this issue.

During the 1970s, Rabbi Miller also supported the American Association for Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ), a small grassroots organization determined to help the threatened Beta Yisrael community fulfill the dream of rejoining their brethren in Israel.<sup>[4]</sup> In September 1986, he arranged for a "Rabbinic Call to Conscience" in Washington to lobby for Ethiopian Jews, and Miller later served as the

director for the American Rabbinic Network for Ethiopian Jewry, assisting in emigration to Israel for this vulnerable population.

Continuing advocacy for peaceful solutions to global concerns, in 1983 Miller was a vocal supporter of the Women's Peace Encampment for Nuclear Disarmament in Seneca Falls.

In a letter to the New York Times on December 2, 1984, responding to an article by Betty Friedan titled "Women on the Firing Line", Rabbi Miller mentioned his earlier support of members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis who protested a convention of a national rabbinical organization to be held in Arizona in 1979, a state that had refused to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.

In 1979, Rabbi Miller also addressed the issue of gay and lesbian rights, arguing that gay liberation and feminism freed all people, by enabling everyone to become more tolerant of others and of ourselves. His article, "The Closet: Another Religious View of Gay Liberation" was one of the first written on this subject.

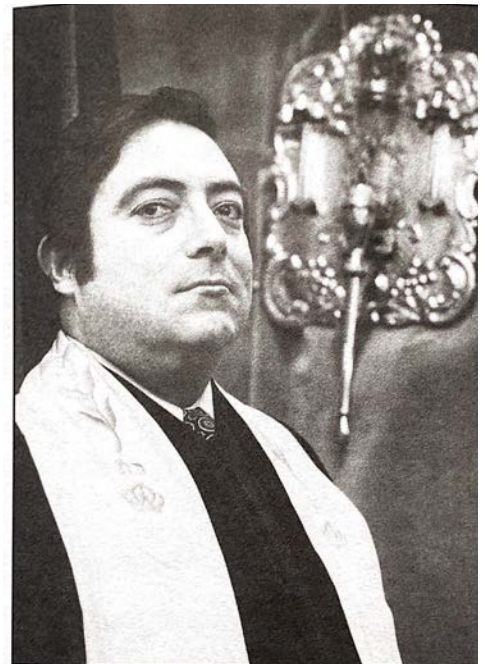
In 1986, Rabbi Miller joined the New Jewish Agenda, an organization of rabbis supporting sanctuary for Central American refugees, countering the Reagan Administration position that refugees illegally entering the country were

not fleeing war or oppression, but were seeking a better life and would be competing with U.S. citizens for jobs. The Sanctuary movement grew to encompass a variety of faiths, with about 270 Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic congregations offering sanctuary to Central Americans, all in defiance of U.S. government policy. Members risked arrest and possible jail sentences. In 1985, through his efforts, B'rith Kodesh declared itself a sanctuary for refugees of oppression from Central America and Southeast Asia.

The plight of Soviet Jews concerned him deeply: in 1964 Rabbi Miller fasted for two days of Passover to call attention to the fact that they were not allowed to practice their faith, or to emigrate. In the 1970s, when the struggles of these Jews became a world-wide issue, he offered Soviet émigrés free memberships in B'rith Kodesh, and encouraged them to participate in congregational affairs.

In 1984, Rabbi Miller started a campaign to release Rima Braave, a Soviet "refusnik" who had a fatal form of cancer. She was released in December 1986, and she lit the shamas candle in the B'rith Kodesh Chanukah celebration that year.

Judea Miller was haunted by the Holocaust, having lost his own half-brothers to the Nazis. In 1990 he found both their names in the Majdanek extermination camp records. His painful experience inspired one of the last crusades of



Rabbi Judea Miller

his life – against the ethnic slaughter of Muslims and Croats in Bosnia. In the 1990s, Rabbi Miller wrote many articles and sermons on this subject. He led an interfaith worship service on August 19, 1992, titled "A Service of Worship in Common Concern" in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians participated, calling for "an end to the political and physical oppression of people because of their religious belief, ethnic origin, or racial background".<sup>[5]</sup>

Rabbi Miller's papers are archived at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati, Ohio. His many correspondents included Saul Alinsky, President George H. W. Bush, President Jimmy Carter, Bishop Matthew Clark, Representative Barber Conable, Governor Mario Cuomo, Representative Frank Horton, Senator Jacob Javits, and Elie Wiesel. Rabbi Miller died on July 9, 1995. The Democrat & Chronicle posted the following editorial on July 11, 1995: "Hundreds of Rochesterians knew

*"The death penalty is a spiritual link between primitive society, medieval fanaticism and modern totalitarianism. It stands for everything that humanity must reject if it is to be worthy of survival."*  
-Rabbi Judea Miller

Rabbi Miller personally, through his unceasing efforts to bridge the racial and religious gaps that divide blacks, whites, Protestants, Catholics and Jews in our community. He was a frequent contributor (to the editorial pages), a voice of dignity, reason, and compassion, speaking always on behalf of justice and peace. His writings consistently revealed his sense of scholarship and history; and his empathy for peoples of every race and religion.”

On July 12, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan paid tribute to Rabbi Miller with a eulogy in the US Congress and a unanimously approved request that the obituary of Rabbi Miller in the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle be

printed in the Congressional Record. (Volume, 141, Number 112, Wednesday, July 12, 1995).

In his eulogy before Congress, Senator Moynihan remarked: “Rabbi Miller led an exciting life in which he continually challenged the status quo and injustice in society. Yet throughout his geographic moves, the rabbi held dear the notions of quality and acceptance. He continued his fight for justice taking stands against slumlords and poor education and capital punishment. He was a defender of faith in the largest sense and he reached out to other religions.” Said the Reverend Dwight Cook of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Rochester, “Rabbi Miller was about

bringing people of different races and different religions together.”

The Rochester Times-Union also ran an editorial that eulogized him as one who embodied the spirit of Tikkun Olam, and “had taught us all how to repair the world.”

At the Rabbi’s retirement, Temple B’rith Kodesh listed its membership at over 1350 families. As the Democrat & Chronicle stated in his obituary, “The only trouble he ever made was for those whose prejudice or ignorance stood in the way of the world of peace and justice that he envisioned.”

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[1] *The American Synagogue Historical Dictionary and Sourcebook*. Kerry Olitzky and Marc Lee Raphael, 1996

[2] “Jewish Community in Wichita, 1920-1970 Same Wagon, New Horses.” Jay M. Price, *Great Plains Quarterly*, Fall 2008.

[3] *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*. Hillel Levine, 2019

[4] *Black Jews, Jews, and Other Heroes: How Grassroots Activism Lead to the Rescue of Ethiopian Jews*. Howard Lenhoff, (Gefen: 2007), p. 128.

[5] *Affirming the Covenant: A History of Temple B’rith Kodesh, 1848-1998*, by Peter R. Eisenstadt, 1999

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## THE TEMPRO HOUSING PROJECT

By Marjorie B. Searl

In 1969, a group of TBK congregants was disturbed by the concerns of Rabbi Herbert Bronstein that homeless individuals and families were being housed in rundown hotel rooms with no cooking facilities. Determined that this community should provide safer and healthier residences for people experiencing critical needs, they formed TemPro (Temple Project to Help the Homeless). They pooled their expertise, found funding and set up a legal framework that permitted the acquisition of vacant lots and the building of homes. Starting with three homes near the Public Market, the program expanded over time to eleven

houses, intended to keep families housed together and not separated by gender and age. Collaboration with the County Department of Social Services, the local Catholic diocese, and the Rochester Continuum of Care Corporation has enabled around 150 families annually to have safe, clean shelter.

While the families reside in TemPro homes, their children are able to continue in their schools and family members have rides to medical appointments if public transportation is unavailable. TemPro staff also facilitate the families’ moves to more

permanent housing. Over time, partnering agencies have included Lewis Street Settlement and Habitat for Humanity. Volunteers are recruited for all aspects of the program. In 1990, three duplex homes were opened at Central Park and Niagara Street. By 2009, 37 temporary, transitional, and permanent housing units were available for Rochesterians in need, whether due to crisis or disability.

TemPro has successfully continued Temple B’rith Kodesh’s historic commitment to supporting community needs.

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*Additional resources on Temple B’rith Kodesh and the history of the Jewish Community in Rochester:*

[1] Phyllis Kasdin, *The Future Begins with the Past: An Archives Exhibit of Jewish Rochester*, (Rochester, New York: Fossil Press, 2005).

[2] McKelvey, Blake. “The Jews of Rochester: A Contribution to Their History During the Nineteenth Century, *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 40, no. 1 (September, 1950): 57-73. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/43058686](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43058686). Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

[3] Isaac A. Wile, *The History of the Jews of Rochester*, (Rochester, New York: 1912)

[4] Temple B’rith Kodesh website <https://www.tbk.org/our-community/social-action/tempro>

# WRITING *AFFIRMING THE COVENANT*

By Peter Eisenstadt

I moved to Rochester in 1995 from New York City. I wanted to join a synagogue, preferably a Reform congregation. I joined B'rith Kodesh, but it was a large congregation, and I didn't know anyone, and if I wanted to meet people, I knew that I had to become active in it. I learned that B'rith Kodesh was going to celebrate its sesquicentennial in 1998, and they were planning to write a commemorative history. I am a professional historian; I joined the committee preparing the history, and eventually I was tasked with writing the history, which was finished more or less in time for the celebration—it came out in 1999, and was distributed by Syracuse University Press. I met and became good friends with some wonderful people along the way, such as the late Aaron Braveman, who was the Temple's educational director for many years, and who, until his last days, remained a fierce opponent of forces of reaction in Israel and the United States; Teri and Don Jankowski, the book's designers became good friends. I especially was indebted to TBK's cantor, Martha Rock Birnbaum, who helped in the making, design, and production of the book in numerous ways, and became a close friend.

The prospect of writing a history of B'rith Kodesh appealed to me. It was an old-line Reform congregation dating back to 1848. The fact that the University of Rochester Special Collections in the Rush Rhees Library was processing the history of the papers of Rabbi Philip Bernstein, who was rabbi of B'rith Kodesh from 1926 to 1973 was an inducement. It was a large collection of documents from his fascinating career. There were other resources available; oral histories of the Rochester Jewish community; various collections in Rochester; I conducted some interviews, I took a research trip to the American Jewish archives in Cincinnati for further research. I made some nice discoveries in the course of my research; the one that I was happiest about was discovering the earliest printed sermon

from B'rith Kodesh in the Library of Congress; the German language "Opfer und Reue" (Sacrifice and Repentance) preached by Rabbi Simon Tuska on Rosh Hashana in 1854. (It was translated for the book.)

From the beginning, I wanted to write a history of B'rith Kodesh that would be of interest to someone knowing nothing of B'rith Kodesh or Rochester; when I, a newcomer, started out, this included myself.

By writing a history of B'rith Kodesh, I wanted to trace the history of Reform Judaism in one congregation, from its start in the 1840s from "German" Jews (actually German-speaking Jews from the German states and Central Europe), and its move from Orthodoxy to Radical Reform. This took several decades, and wasn't complete until Rabbi Max Landsberg arrived in 1871. He would remain rabbi at B'rith Kodesh until 1915. Radical Reform is perhaps difficult to understand today. Why eliminate B'nei Mitzvot? Why eliminate almost all Hebrew from the service? Why move the main weekly service to Sunday? The short answer is that Rabbi Landsberg and those who followed him thought that the best way to keep Judaism alive, at a time when many Jews were abandoning Judaism entirely, was a paring of what they thought to be inessential to its real meaning, and making it "modern."

B'rith Kodesh remained a bastion of the German Jewish community through the early 20th century. It was a wealthy congregation, supported by many of the Jewish entrepreneurs in the men's garment industry, a mainstay of Rochester's business activity. Its politics were conservative. This began to change when Horace Wolf became rabbi in 1910, staying in his position until his early death in 1927. The congregation became more open to labor, and to the Eastern European Jewish population in Rochester,

which soon outnumbered the German Jews. Under Rabbi Wolf, the congregation became active in a number of progressive reforms: building playgrounds, settlement houses, and other ways of eliminating poverty and to Americanize the city's growing immigrant population.

Rabbi Landsberg, like most products of Radical Reform, was, to the end of his days, bitterly anti-Zionist. Rabbi Wolf started as a non-Zionist, but over the course of his tenure, was increasingly sympathetic to Jewish settlement in Palestine. Rabbi Bernstein, throughout his career, was a passionate supporter of Zionism, and in the early 1950s, helped found the organization that became AIPAC. Rabbi Bernstein was passionate about a great many things. Like many after World War I, he became a leading Jewish pacifist. One the eve of World War II, he abandoned pacifism, and became the head of Jewish chaplains during World War II, and served the largely Jewish displaced persons community in Germany in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Bernstein presided over the post war growth of B'rith Kodesh. From the late 1940s on, he pressed for the building of a new sanctuary and temple complex outside of downtown Rochester, part of a move of many Jewish congregations in the post-war years, from the inner cities to the suburbs. The inner suburb of Brighton, which by the 1950s had a large Jewish population, was a natural choice for B'rith Kodesh's new home. The new sanctuary is now over 50 years old. Under Rabbis Miller, Kotok, and Stein, B'rith Kodesh continues, after 170 years, to reflect changes in Reform Judaism, in the American Jewish community, in Israel and in American life more broadly.

I no longer live in Rochester, but it was my privilege to write the history of the first century and a half of this remarkable congregation.

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# A RABBI “OF THE LIBERAL VARIETY”: RABBI PHILLIP BERNSTEIN’S LEGACY

By Jessica Lacher-Feldman

A legend in our community, Rabbi Philip Bernstein came of age and to prominence as a leader, activist, and scholar during a watershed period for America, and for the Jewish people. Bernstein helped to usher in modern Jewish thought and connections between activism and faith right here in our community. Born in Rochester on June 29, 1901, Philip S. Bernstein was the first-born son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants who arrived separately to the United States and met and married in Rochester. The family moved briefly to New York City, but returned to Rochester to stay around 1910.

Bernstein attended East High, leaving in 1917 without graduating. He maintained a strong determination to go to college, despite the lack of financial stability in his family. His determination brought him to Syracuse University in 1917, but in 1919, he was forced to abandon his studies for a time to help with the family tailoring business. He returned to Syracuse and graduated in 1921. While at Syracuse he began to teach Sunday School at a Reform synagogue, gaining his first exposure to rabbinical duties.

In addition to his early work teaching, he was exposed early in his life to the Zionist cause. At thirteen, in 1914, he served as an usher at the 17th National Convention of the Federation of American Zionists in Rochester. This experience, and his meeting the following year of future Supreme Court Judge and fellow Zionist Louis D. Brandeis ignited his lifelong commitment to Zionist and Jewish causes. After Syracuse, he studied at the newly founded Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, a pro-Zionist institution and was a member of their first graduating class in 1926. Despite being the only member of his family who went into this ancient and “old world” profession, Bernstein considered himself modern, saying that

“in addition to the modernization of my ideas, I wear Michaels Sterns clothes, Hannan shoes, Manhattan shirts and sport a snappy, collegiate haircut. A generous-minded person might mistake me on the street for an enterprising insurance agent.” This is a very different picture than one might expect from a rabbi.

Bernstein married Sophie Rubin in 1925, the niece of Syracuse Rabbi Benjamin Friedman. They traveled extensively in their early marriage, first to Europe, then to Egypt and Palestine, where Bernstein completed his studies in the first classes at Hebrew University. While in Palestine, a chance meeting with some touring residents of Rochester led Bernstein to apply for the position of assistant rabbi at Temple B’rith Kodesh. In August 1926 he was hired and when Rabbi Horace J. Wolf died in February of the next year, Bernstein became the sole rabbi. He remained at the head of the synagogue for 46 years until his retirement in June 1973. His tenure was neatly bifurcated by a nearly five-year absence during World War II. The first half of his career at B’rith Kodesh, from 1927 to 1942, was marked by his social activism in Rochester, extensive traveling abroad, where he observed and documented the increasing horrors inflicted on European Jewry, and his move from pacifism to acceptance of war as the only means to stop Hitler. In the second half of his career, from 1947 to 1973, Israel became the focus of his international concerns, and in his role as Rabbi in Rochester, he was vocal about the survival of Judaism in America.

Bernstein’s review of Judd L. Teller’s book, *Strangers and Natives* sums up his own experience of the development of American Jewry in the 47 years from 1921 to 1968 as: “the swift evolution from ghetto to suburbia, from poverty to affluence, from the laboring masses to

the middle classes, from anti-Semitism to a-Semitism, from segregation to acceptance, from inbreeding to intermarriage.” Bernstein was both a catalyst and an observer of the rapid shift to modern Jewish life, leading Rochester’s largest and only reform synagogue: Temple B’rith Kodesh. TBK, a mature temple founded in 1848, was liberal in theology and practice, and under Bernstein’s leadership found ways to both embrace the new and ignite pride in the old, finding ways to “to recapture the spirit, the teachings, the way of life enunciated by the Hebrew prophets.” Rabbi Bernstein brought to B’rith Kodesh a renewed emphasis on Jewish tradition—on ritual, ceremony, and symbolism, an effort to “re-Judaize Reform Judaism”, which had begun to shift away from the traditional as American Jews became wealthier, more suburban, and more professional. The Reform movement in the early part of the twentieth century had “little Judaism, [and] less Jewish observance (piety),” said Bernstein in the 1950s, and there was “not very much to distinguish the religious life of the temple from that of the First Unitarian Church.”

To understand the complexities of Rabbi Bernstein and his role is to recognize that although his name might not be as well-known as others, he worked tirelessly alongside some of the best-known minds of his time. With commitment to liberal thought and social activism (a foundational component of Reform Judaism), Rabbi Bernstein was drawn into activist and radical work both within the temple and within the community. Among his many causes, he worked for fair housing in Rochester, served on the Rochester Housing Commission and in his role as community member, often spoke at City Club on issues of ethics, economics and justice. As a man, and as a Rabbi, he could be seen as someone who was able to embrace the old and to

forge a new path. When B'rith Kodesh moved to Brighton in 1960s, most of the congregants were already living in Brighton. The increase in the number of congregants and increased wealth of the congregation was often at odds with Bernstein's desire to preserve and foster a distinctive and vibrant Jewish identity in his community. He felt that an active Jewish identity was the basis for participation with other creeds and movements in social reform. In the early 1930s he, along with Rochester Unitarian minister David Rhys Williams, were the foremost religious leaders of progressive reform in Rochester. Williams and Bernstein made a significant contribution to settlement houses,

missions, educational institutions, and political life in Rochester and Brighton.

Rabbi Bernstein's outspoken commitment to women's rights and Civil Rights was often far more progressive than popular public opinion in the Rochester community. Bernstein and Williams both invited Margaret Sanger to speak from their pulpits, publicly defending her and the birth control movement, and costing him some important temple members. In 1960 he touted that one of the most important contributions of Reform Judaism had been strong movement towards equality for women, pointing to the establishment of bat mitzvah/confirmation, for girls as

well as for boys, and of women serving in the rabbinate.

In the 1970s he began to suffer from Parkinson's Disease, and he died on December 3, 1985, at the age of 84. Before his death an endowed chair was established in his name in the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester.

To learn more about the rich and fascinating life and legacy of Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, access his papers, as well as the papers of Temple B'rith Kodesh, which are housed in the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation at the University of Rochester.

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## TEMPLE B'RITH KODESH & BRIGHTON

By Rabbi Peter Stein

In 2018, we marked the 170th anniversary of Temple B'rith Kodesh with a series of special events. To begin the year, we hosted the foremost American Jewish historian, Dr. Gary Zola, who presented in his inimitable fashion about the early years and evolution of the congregation. As a culmination, we hosted Cantor Ellen Dreskin, who led a series of presentations about innovations in 21st century worship.

As only the sixth senior rabbi of the congregation, I was honored to host these important gatherings. The important thread running through all of the celebrations was the temple's robust presence in the broader community as a progressive and innovative leader.

Each of my predecessors brought individual gifts to their role. What they shared, and what I hope to honor in my own leadership, is a commitment to Brighton, to Rochester, and to the state and country.

Rabbi Bernstein helped to initiate the Tempro project, providing housing for

Rochesterians in need.

Rabbi Miller founded a pulpit exchange with Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Rochester's oldest African American church, taking place over Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. weekend.

Rabbi Kotok initiated the extraordinary Kollel program, offering adult education opportunities within the temple, and to other faith communities.

In my own tenure, I have tried to strengthen and further each of these landmark efforts, and to continue TBK's commitment as a community leader. Our social action committee has joined with me in founding a statewide coalition for social justice, the Religious Action Center of New York. Our board of trustees ratified two important partnerships, one with the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN) and the other the refugee support group Keeping our Promise.

I have also led our congregation's effort to become a community campus. TBK, and by extension Brighton, is now

home to two additional synagogues, moving here from Henrietta and from Irondequoit. We also host a number of community groups from across the spectrum of the religious and secular community. Our doors are open to all who seek to strengthen our town.

In addition, in response to the unspeakable violence that took place at our sister congregation Tree of Life in Pittsburgh, TBK opened its doors as the community gathering place. In a historic moment for our community, not even 48 hours after the terrorist attack took place, several thousand people filled the temple, with many more lining Elmwood Avenue east to Twelve Corners, the largest gathering to take place in Brighton in many years.

I pray that we will gather for celebration many times in the future. The members of Temple B'rith Kodesh and I remain ready to serve as conveners and leaders in Brighton, building bridges and helping to create good will, understanding, and peace.

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# THE LEGACY OF CLOVER LANES: NEXT IN THE MERCHANTS OF MONROE SERIES

By Raymond Tierney III

A trip down Monroe Avenue near the Rt. 490 interchange today is met with a large empty lot on the north side. Of course Mario's Restaurant graced the western part of the lot and had a rich history, but nothing like the recently demolished Clover Lanes that occupied the majority of the site. When built in 1957, it was the largest bowling center in Monroe County and subsequently produced extraordinary Merchants of Monroe, Fred and Dan Morgenstern.

The 1950's and 1960's were, to many, the golden age of bowling in Rochester. Partners Issie Morgenstern and Armand Goldstein bought the proposed Clover Lanes site for \$92,000 and originally planned a 32 lane facility. They added an additional 18 lanes while the construction was ongoing, making it the largest facility with 50 "continuous" lanes until it was razed in 2019. Incidentally, that expanse of lanes led to an innovative approach to service and maintenance. An electric cart was used to shuttle parts and manpower behind the lanes. At the time of its opening in 1957, it was the largest bowling facility between Buffalo and New York City.

Something else was happening as Clover Lanes opened and began to flourish. Fred Morgenstern, who had signed on

as a mechanic and quickly advanced to General Manager approached his brother Issie wanting an interest in the endeavor. His original investment of 5% would grow to complete ownership in the future and he would lead Clover Lanes to elite bowling status in Rochester and Monroe County.

According to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (D&C) on 20 August 1961 there were 1186 lanes throughout Rochester. In addition to Clover Lanes, you could bowl at 86 different facilities from Olympic Bowl's 64 lanes down to smaller venues like St. Boniface Men's Club where yours truly was a pinsetter. Interest was exploding but so was the competitive marketplace. League bowling was a cash cow, but one that only gave milk for 9 months. The summertime was a bowling operator's challenge as the leagues ended and open bowling took a back seat to outdoor sports and entertainment. What do you do about a 50 lane bowling facility in June, July and August? It seems that Fred Morgenstern had an answer.

As the D&C illustrated in a 1964 advertisement, Clover Lanes was a dance venue during the summer months. One of the most recognizable bands of the day, Wilmer Alexander Jr.

and the Dukes played there often. As Dan Morgenstern recalls, "My brother and I would run the cigar boxes of bills back to my mother, Dora, in the office." That cover charge was just a dollar but it helped pack the plywood resurfaced lanes and pay the bills during the off season. Other area lanes were similarly transformed but Clover Lanes stood out as a destination spot during the mid to late sixties. The Dukes even "opened" for nationally known Tommy James and the Shondells. In addition, Clover Lanes hosted an "American Bandstand" type show aired locally on WROC Channel 8. These summer dances introduced bands such as the Showstoppers, Invictas, Sky Coasters and the Quirks. The Sky Coasters can still be found performing at the Town of Brighton's 4th of July celebration every year.

The 1960's found the elite area bowlers and notable teams such as Jenny Five and Harding Supply rolling at Clover Lanes. Some of the most sought after tournaments were held at Clover Lanes.

In 1968, Fred Morgenstern brought a Professional Bowlers Association event to Rochester. That event drew 19 of the top 20 tour money winners. Tim Harahan was victorious over a future Hall of Farmer, Don Johnson, 236-216 in the final match. Rochester was featuring some of the world's best bowlers at a time when it is noteworthy to remember that the golf's 1968 US Open, won by Lee Trevino, was played just a mile away at Oak Hill Country Club earlier in the summer.

Speaking of the best bowlers in the world, Millie Ignizio Martorella was certainly the best woman bowler in Rochester history and was considered by many as the best woman kegler of her time. In the late 1960's and 1970's,



*An exterior shot of Clover Lanes taken circa 1960, only a few years after the grand opening*

Millie (who regularly bowled at Clover Lanes) won four “Queens” tournaments (the only women’s major title at the time) and was the first woman bowler to roll a perfect 300 game in professional play. “Marvelous Millie” was inducted into the Woman Bowlers Hall of Fame in 1975

The challenge to create revenue came with such experiments as a 9AM league for women. Fred’s wife, Dora, managed an on-site day care for the kids while the moms bowled. Another underserved market was kids. At Clover Lanes, young bowlers were greeted with lane enhancements that kept the ball on the alley and always resulted in pin count. This was accomplished by filling the “gutters” with inflatable air bags. Clover Lanes even experimented with carpet rolls as the bags were subject to puncture and very labor intensive. These rolls were the disposable spools that were left after installation of “wall to wall” carpeting that was very popular in the 1960’s. By the 1980’s Dan Morgenstern initiated a “TinyTot” bowling league for bowlers 3-5 years of age. It was his way of building the market of tomorrow. As the 70’s and 80’s unfolded, bowling halls needed to broaden their market.

Fred’s son became managing partner in 1994 and improved the guest

experience. Dan followed his father’s lead and prohibited smoking inside the entire premises. This was done before legislation was enacted by the Monroe County Legislature. Back in 1976 his father had taken an early lead in limiting second hand smoke by restricting smoking to areas removed from the bowling experience. Dan was also a leader in changing pricing schedules and league bowling times, thereby freeing up popular times for open bowling. He did away with shoe rentals and even introduced constant background music. These improved experiences paved the way for Clover Lanes successor, Radio Social. Clover Lanes closure was not the result of internal economics but of an external offer for the property that as Dan put it “got his attention”. That offer ironically paves the way for a future Merchant of Monroe. Stay tuned!

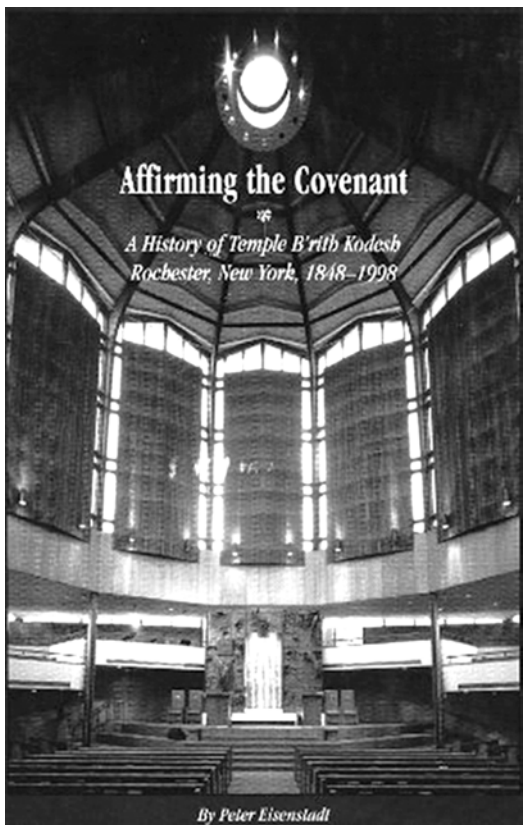
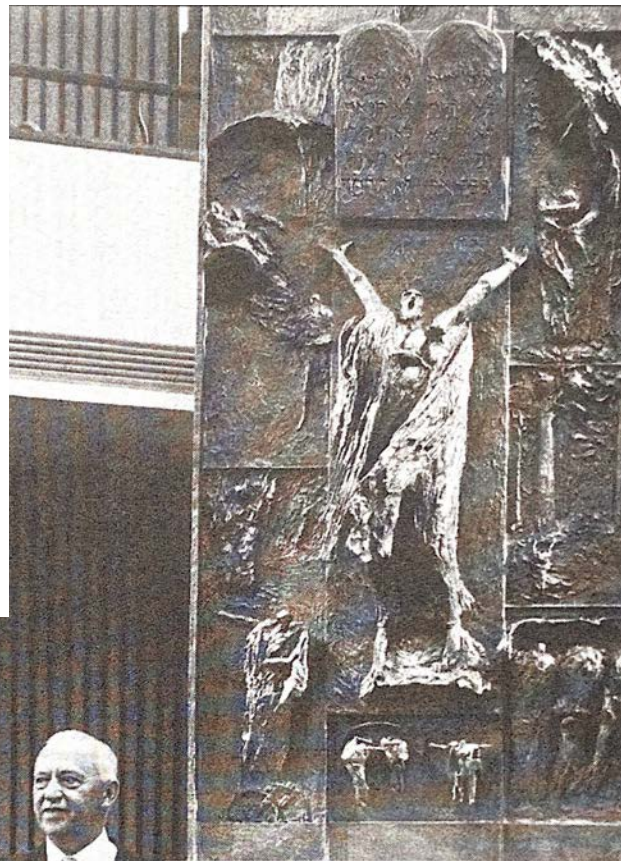
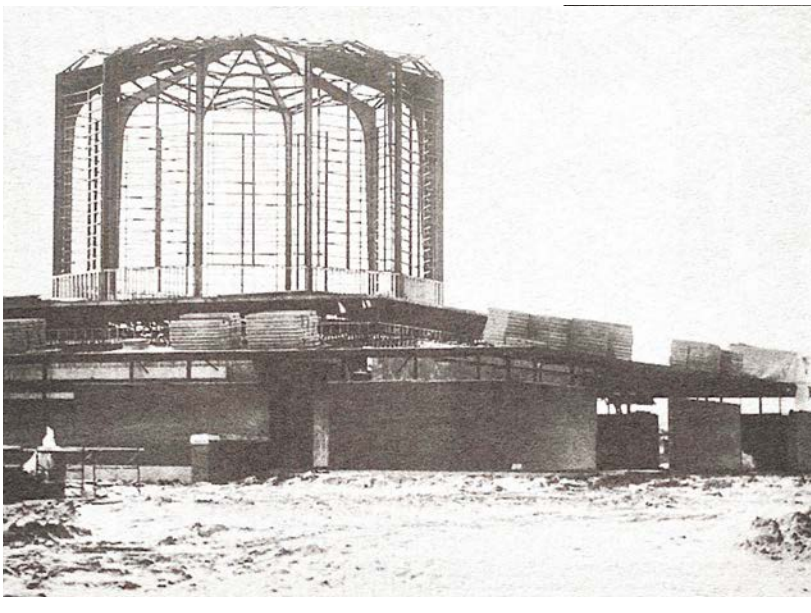
In my interview with Dan Morgenstern he was very clear that Radio Social, while a worthy successor to Clover Lanes, is a product of much more than the Clover Lanes legacy. He was very effusive in his appreciation of the contributions that his Clover Lanes employees had in designing the innovative venue that now resides in the former Stromberg Carlson plant. “Eatertainment” - a guest experience that involves food and/or beverage, before, after and during other activities seems like a natural succession of the Morgenstern’s entrepreneurial talents. An empty lot on Brighton’s border awaiting its next chapter has kindled great memories of its past and expectations for its future.

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*Right: 1961 bowling tournament photograph featuring Clover Lanes owner Fred Morganstern at center holding a bowling ball, and at far left, Rochester comedian phenom Foster Brooks*



*Interior photographs from 1960 showing the midcentury style and materials - some of the most elegant parts were lost to later renovations*



*Top left: The Elmwood Avenue building under construction; most of the lower main building appears completed, but the sanctuary tower and dome structural steel frame rises above the base, seen before the glass or wood treatments have been installed (image from Affirming the Covenant by Peter Eisenstadt)*

*Top right: Rabbi Phillip Bernstein addresses B'rith Kodesh congregants in the sanctuary at Elmwood Avenue with the newly completed Luise Kaish bronze ark casting as a backdrop (image from Affirming the Covenant by Peter Eisenstadt)*

*Bottom left: Cover of Affirming the Covenant, this issue's primary source of information on TBK*

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