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Charleston, South Carolina, 1922, 1950.

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L
If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a telegram. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.	

WESTERN UNION



TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	Blue
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Night Letter	N L
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CHARLESTON SCAR 22

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

CLEVELAND OHIO

JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA ARRANGED BANQUET
FOR SUNDAY EVENING DECEMBER THIRD TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY
CENTER STOP COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY REQUEST YOUR PRESENCE KINDLY
WIRE COLLECT IF YOU CAN COME STATING HONORARIUM CARE JEWISH COMMUNITY
CENTER FIFTY FOUR GEORGE STREET

PHILLIP R GOLDSTEIN JEWISH WELFARE BOARD CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR.

Collect Day Letter
Regret exceedingly cannot accept. Must be in
Cleveland on Sunday. Our main service and many
Congregational activities occur on that day.
Abba Hillel Silver

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Charleston Jewish Community

Celebrating 200 Years Of American Jewish Life In Charleston

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

September 7, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

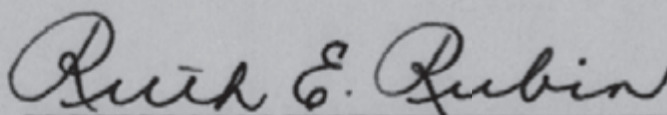
Dear Dr. Silver:

The Bicentennial Committee extends to you a cordial invitation to occupy the pulpit of historic Beth Elohim Temple as guest speaker on Friday night, November 24, when special Bicentennial religious services will be held jointly by the four congregations in Charleston.

The enclosed brochure will give you a brief outline of the Bicentennial and its background. Our Bicentennial is considered a significant event by leading national Jewish groups, as well as locally, because here is a community where, for more than two hundred years, Jews and non-Jews have lived and worked together in mutual respect and friendship as fellow citizens. This same spirit is carried out in the Bicentennial celebration; both Jews and non-Jews are working on the committees and will participate in all events.

The culminating event of the community celebration will be the special religious services which are being planned by representatives of the four congregations, and in which all of Charleston Jewry will participate. We hope that you can be with us for this significant occasion.

Very sincerely yours,



Mrs. Harry M. Rubin
Chairman
Bicentennial Steering Committee

RER:sf

Enc - brochure

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

FOUNDED 1750

The Cradle of Reform Judaism, 1824

72 HASSELL STREET

Charleston, South Carolina

ARTHUR V. WILLIAMS, PRES. EMERITUS
THOMAS J. TOBIAS, PRESIDENT
EDWIN S. PEARLSTINE, VICE-PRESIDENT
EDGAR A. COHEN, TREASURER
SAMUEL H. JACOBS, SECRETARY
59 BROAD ST., PHONE 8226

Dr. Allan Tarshish, Rabbi
85 MONTAGU STREET
PHONE 2-4634



September 8, 1950

Dear Dr Silver,

You have, or you will shortly, receive an invitation from the Community Committee of our Bi Centennial Celebration, to be our speaker at the Jewish community joint services which will be held at Beth Elohim, Friday evening, November 24, and I wanted to add my personal warm and pressing invitation.

We are all very anxious to have you with us on this signal occasion. It is an expression here of Jewish unity and you symbolize that so well.

We would deem it a great honor if you will be able to come, and I earnestly hope that you can.

With warmest best wishes for the New Year,

Cordially,

Allan Tarshish

Allan Tarshish

SINCE 1750 . . .

The Story of K. K. BETH ELOHIM



American Judaism
through Two Centuries

Charleston, South Carolina



SYNAGOGUE, 1792

years before the birth of the United States.

A cemetery was established at 189 Coming Street, which exists today as one of the country's most historic burial grounds, with graves dating back to 1762.

This congregation was the religious home of Moses Lindo, who before the Revolution, developed the fabulous Carolina indigo trade, the backbone of the wealth of the colony; and of Joseph Levy, who fought as a lieutenant against the Indians in the Cherokee War of 1760, probably the first Jewish officer in America.

The brilliant young Francis Salvador early cast his lot with the Revolutionary cause, and became a Deputy to the Provincial Congress in 1775, the first Jew to hold an elective office in the modern world. One year later he took part in the defense of the frontiers during the American Revolution, was scalped by Indians and died on August 1, 1776, being the first Jew to give his life for our country.

The young congregation worshipped in several places until 1780 when a site was purchased on Hasell Street (where the congregation still is) and a cotton gin was converted into a Synagogue. In 1792 an impressive Synagogue was built, which was destroyed in the great fire of 1838.

The present Synagogue, considered one of the country's finest examples of Greek Revival architecture, designed by C. L. Warner and built by David Lopez in 1840, is the second oldest synagogue building in the U. S. and the oldest in continuous use.

In 1790 Beth Elohim wrote congratulations to George Washington on becoming President. In his reply, Washington said:

"May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your congregation."

Impelled by the traditional Jewish devotion to charity, the members of Beth Elohim established, in 1784, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, oldest in the U. S., and in 1801, the Hebrew Orphan Society, both existing today.

THE PAST . . .

The story of Beth Elohim is a heritage which all American Jews can share with pride. It is a romantic story, a story of courage, of religious devotion, of American progress.

Jewish pioneers began to settle in Charleston soon after the founding of Carolina in 1670. The earliest mention of a Jew was in 1695. Religious services were held informally until their number was sufficient to organize officially as Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Holy Congregation House of God) on the day after Rosh Hashanah (New Year) in 1750, almost two score

Religious education was an important part of congregational life from the beginning. In 1838 Beth Elohim pioneered in a new approach to American Jewish education when it established the second Jewish Sunday School in the U. S., only a few months after Rebecca Gratz organized the first in Philadelphia.

Here taught Penina Moise, the indomitable blind poetess, who has written more hymns now appearing in the Union Hymnal than any other Jewish author.

Beth Elohim is memorable as the Cradle of Reform Judaism in

America. In 1824 a group of members, their petition for changes in the service refused, organized the "Reformed Society of Israelites" which existed until 1833. When the old Synagogue burned in 1838, this group, augmented by others, won out in the proposal to install an organ in the new (present) building. Liberal Judaism thus took root in the United States.

Throughout two centuries Beth Elohim has furnished leadership in the city, the state, the country: in war and in peace, in business and in the arts, in professions and in religion. Their names are too numerous to list. They have left their mark in deeds which are a rich legacy for all American Jews.

THE PRESENT . . .

While Beth Elohim takes a natural pride in its long and historic background, the congregation continues vigorous in its service to the present and the future.

Its two hundred members are active in religious life and are vital forces in the leadership of the community.

Its president, Thomas J. Tobias, is a direct descendant of Joseph Tobias, the first president of the congregation in 1750, and Abraham Alexander, who served as Rabbi during the Revolution. The congregation's membership includes other descendants of the founders of 1750.

The Congregation has a vital Sisterhood, an active Brotherhood, a lively young married and unmarried group known as the Temple Supper Club, and a vigorous Youth League. Its Religious School is housed in a recently constructed Tabernacle on the site of the old one. Religious devotion is strong.

Its members are active in all Jewish communal affairs, and hold important posts in the general community, such as: chairman of the County Board of Education, member of the S. C. State Ports Authority, directors of the County Health Department and of the County Tuberculosis Association, and are found on the City School Board and many other important agencies. They are leaders in the professions, in business, in the arts, and in public service.



NEW TABERNACLE, 1949

INTERIOR, 1792



THE FUTURE . . .

For the future, Beth Elohim has three major obligations: to inspire its members to fulfillment as Jews and as Americans; to serve the community in all its aspects; and to make its own history available as part of the rightful heritage of all American Jews.

For its members and the local community the Tabernacle, just rebuilt at a heavy cost for so small a group, and the historic Synagogue will continue as focal points of Jewish life and religion.

For American Jews, the Bi-Centennial Celebration in 1950 of the founding of the Charleston Jewish Community, as signalized in the birth of Beth Elohim, fixes nation-wide attention on 200 years of loyal and creative Jewish living in America, a rich contribution to the American way of life which sheds luster and dignity on American Jewry as a whole.

For those with personal ties to the Congregation, through family or friendship, for those of all faiths who recognize the values which such a past can contribute to the future, K. K. Beth Elohim has established a Patron Membership with minimum dues of \$20 a year. Beth Elohim, historic home of many American Jews and traditional heritage of all, will welcome your aid and support in continuing a vital, creative American Judaism. In addition, you will have another religious home, receive regular information about our work, and be listed officially. Our Congregation and Rabbi will be happy to serve you in any way.

K. K. Beth Elohim
72 Hasell Street
Charleston 8, S. C.

I wish to become a Patron Member of historic K. K. Beth Elohim. I enclose a check for \$_____. You may bill me for \$_____.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

City and State _____

Patron Membership, \$20 per year minimum;
Permanent Patron, \$250.

Others who might also be interested:

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

FOUNDED 1750

The Cradle of Reform Judaism, 1824

72 HASELL STREET

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

•
ARTHUR V. WILLIAMS, PRES. EMERITUS
THOMAS J. TOBIAS, PRESIDENT
EDWIN S. PEARLSTINE, VICE-PRESIDENT
DR. LEON BANOV, JR., TREASURER
SAMUEL H. JACOBS, SECRETARY
59 BROAD ST., PHONE 8226

•
DR. ALLAN TARSHISH, RABBI
85 MONTAGU ST., PHONE 2-4634



November 27, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
Cleveland, Ohio.

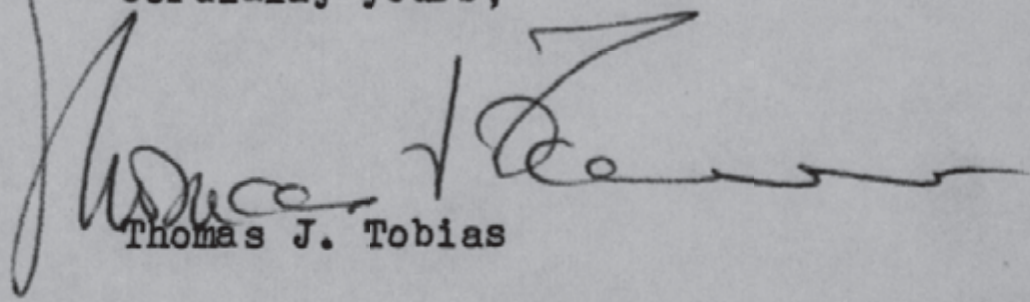
Dear Dr. Silver:

Just a line to express appreciation for the outstanding success which you made of our joint bicentennial religious service. It was a memorable experience to hear you talk. The entire community has expressed great enthusiasm over your address.

It was a great personal pleasure getting to meet you and I regret that I was unable to come to Rabbi Tarshish's home after the service. I was just too worn out from bicentennial responsibilities. It was perhaps just as well as I talked too much at dinner time anyway!

As President of Beth Elohim I wish to say that your appearance at our historic synagogue was in itself a historic occasion. It was a great privilege having you.

Cordially yours,


Thomas J. Tobias

P.S. I understand that you were interested in our bicentennial souvenir plate so I am sending you one.

December 5, 1950

Mr. Thomas J. Tobias
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
72 Hasell Street
Charleston, South Carolina

My dear Mr. Tobias:

Thank you for your kind letter of November 27th. It was a great pleasure to me to be able to participate in your bi-centennial celebration. I enjoyed the occasion exceedingly and I was very happy to have visited your community and to have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance and that of the other good people who made my all-too-brief stay in your city so thoroughly enjoyable.

With all good wishes and hoping that I may have the pleasure in the not-too-distant future of spending more time in your city and getting to know it, I remain

Most cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

P.S. I did receive the bicentennial souvenir plate. It is very attractive indeed.

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Charleston Jewish Community

Celebrating 200 Years Of American Jewish Life In Charleston

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

November 29, 1950

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

On behalf of the entire community of Charleston, I express our sincere appreciation to you for the time and effort you so generously contributed to make our Bicentennial celebration the success we had hoped it would be.


I use the term "entire community of Charleston" advisedly, because we have had most favorable comments from numbers of the citizens who heard the radio broadcast of your talk, as well as from those who were present to hear you in person.

We have been very much concerned about your return trip in the severe storm that disrupted transportation schedules in the area to which you were going and hope that you suffered no hardship.

Mr. Tobias, President of Beth Elohim, is sending you one of the Bicentennial plates sponsored by that congregation. It can be a tangible souvenir of an event that united the Jews of Charleston in spirit and fellowship more than any other circumstance in recent years.

Personally, it was a privilege to have you in Charleston and to be with you informally at the Tarshish home. I hope to have the pleasure of being with you again.

Very sincerely yours,


Mrs. Harry M. Rubin
Chairman
Steering Committee

RER:sf

November 29, 1950

Rabbi Allan Tarshish
85 Montagu Street
Charleston, South Carolina

Dear Rabbi Tarshish:

In connection with the recent eventful trip of Rabbi Silver to Charleston, his expenses amounted to \$160.00. A good part of this, as you know, was due to the chartering of a special plane from Charlotte to Charleston.

Because of the severe snow blizzard in Cleveland, Rabbi Silver was marooned in Washington from Saturday morning until yesterday, but he finally arrived home late yesterday. Despite all, he enjoyed very much his visit in your city.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary to Rabbi Silver

December 5, 1950

Mrs. Harry M. Rubin
Bicentennial Committee
Charleston Jewish Community
Charleston, South Carolina

My dear Mrs. Rubin;

Thank you for your kind note of November 29th. It is gratifying to me to know that my humble efforts in connection with the bicentennial in your community were so well received. My one regret was that I was able to spend so little time in Charleston which I was eager to get to know.

It was a pleasure to me to have made your acquaintance and that of the other good friends. I do hope that both Mrs. Silver and I shall have the privilege of re-visiting Charleston and of seeing you again, or that we may have the pleasure of welcoming you to our home here in Cleveland.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

FOUNDED 1750

The Cradle of Reform Judaism, 1824

72 HASSELL STREET

Charleston, South Carolina

ARTHUR V. WILLIAMS, PRES. EMERITUS
THOMAS J. TOBIAS, PRESIDENT
EDWIN S. PEARLSTINE, VICE-PRESIDENT
EDGAR A. COHEN, TREASURER
SAMUEL H. JACOBS, SECRETARY
59 BROAD ST., PHONE 6226

Dr. Allan Tarshish, Rabbi
85 MONTAGU STREET
PHONE 2-4634



December 2, 1950

Dear Dr Silver,

It was good to hear from your secretary that you had finally arrived safely in Cleveland. After you left here and we heard the news of the full extent of the storm, we feared that you would not be able to return as schedule (we hope however that the young couple is legally married).

We hope that your enforced stay in Washington was not too difficult for you, and perhaps you were able to get a bit of a rest.

We know how much you went through to come to us and we are all deeply grateful--more grateful than I can ever tell you. You gave us of your greatness and we shall never forget.

The people here have been so thrilled by your presence and your address that they have been talking about it constantly. It helped to bring a warm spirit of harmony to our Jewish community. The benefits will be incalculable.

Our deepest and most fervent thanks. I have turned Miss Rice's letter over to the treasurer of the committee and you should receive a check soon.

Ever cordially and gratefully,

Allan
Allan Tarshish

December 5, 1950

Dr. Allan Tarshish
85 Montagu Street
Charleston, South Carolina

My dear Dr. Tarshish:

Thank you so much for your letter of December 2nd. I enjoyed my visit to your community greatly and I thought that the Service was a very impressive one. I am sorry that I did not get the opportunity of spending a little more time seeing your city and getting acquainted with it.

It was indeed very gracious of you and Mrs. Tarshish to entertain me in your home and I appreciated it very much. Will you not convey to Mrs. Tarshish my pleasure in having enjoyed a Sabbath meal (in fact, two Sabbath meals) in your home.

With all good wishes and hoping that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again before long, I remain

Most cordially yours,

ABRA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

1750

BICENTENNIAL

1950

JEWISH COMMUNITY

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



SALVADOR GRANT OF ARMS

CHARLESTON JEWISH COMMUNITY BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 1750-1950

The Jewish community of Charleston, South Carolina, is celebrating 200 years of American Jewish life in Charleston.

The central figure about which the program will be planned is Francis Salvador, officer in the Revolutionary army, first Jew to be elected to public office in South Carolina (and probably in America), first South Carolina Jew to lose his life in the service of his country.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

Sunday, Nov. 19: Opening of special Bicentennial exhibits at Gibbes Art Gallery and Charleston Museum; guided tours to places of historic interest.

Monday, Nov. 20: *Afternoon:* Dedication of plaque to memory of Francis Salvador, with co-operation of Charleston Historic Commission, Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the Revolution and other organizations.

Night: Banquet, with nationally known speaker.

Tuesday, Nov. 21: Opening night of pageant, "For Those Who Live in the Sun", professionally written and produced, depicting the history of the Jews of Charleston against the background of the community.

Wednesday, Nov. 22: Pageant, "For Those Who Live in the Sun".

Thursday, Nov. 23: Pageant, "For Those Who Live in the Sun".

Friday, Nov. 24: Special religious services.

As early as 1695 there is recorded evidence that Jews lived in Charleston; by 1750 there were enough to organize a congregation. In that year Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Holy Congregation House of God) became incorporated, and has continued through the years.



K. K. BETH ELOHIM SYNAGOGUE

It was in this same Congregation in 1824 that Reform Judaism had its birth in America; here that the second Jewish Sunday School was organized in 1838; here that the first organ was installed in a synagogue in the United States in 1840.

From this congregation, from time to time, have



BRITH SHALOM SYNAGOGUE



BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE



EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE

stemmed the other three congregations in Charleston: Brith Sholom, oldest orthodox congregation in the South and one of the oldest in the country, organized in 1856; Beth Israel, orthodox congregation organized in 1911; Emanuel, conservative congregation organized in 1947.

From earliest days Jews have participated in the economic and cultural life of Charleston to such an extent that the history of Charleston Jewry reflects the general background of Charleston. For example: Moses Lindo who was an important figure in the development of the export trade in the indigo industry of South Carolina; Michael Lazarus who brought steam navigation to the Savannah River; Joshua Lazarus who introduced illuminating gas to Charleston in 1840; Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of the Confederacy, who spent his boyhood in Charleston; Penina Moise, well known poetess, and many others, including four of the nine founders of the Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masonry (founded in Charleston in 1801). So it is fitting that the entire community, Jewish and non Jewish, are participating jointly in the Bicentennial.

While the program for the community celebration will be concentrated in the period of the week of November 19, 1950, many other events will take place throughout the entire Bicentennial year. One such event will be Beth Elohim's own celebration of its founding on the actual date, September 15, when a re-dedication of the Temple will take place with appropriate exercises. Another will be the release of the book, *History of the Jews of Charleston*, by the Jewish Publication Society, in October.

Visitors to Charleston for the Bicentennial will also enjoy seeing the places of interest that bring thousands of tourists each year to one of America's most historic cities.

For information write to

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

58 St. Philip St.
Charleston, S. C.

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

of the

JEWS OF CHARLESTON

1750-1950



Commemorating Two Centuries of American Jewish Life

CHARLESTON JEWISH COMMUNITY
BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
1750-1950

TENTATIVE PROGRAM

- Monday, Nov. 13: Review of book, "The Jews of Charleston", at the Charleston Free Library.
- Sunday, Nov. 19: Opening of special Bicentennial exhibits at Gibbes Art Gallery and Charleston Museum; guided tours to places of historic interest.
- Monday, Nov. 20: *Afternoon*: Dedication of plaque to memory of Francis Salvador, with co-operation of Charleston Historic Commission, city council, and patriotic organizations.
Night: Banquet, with nationally known speaker.
- Tuesday, Nov. 21: Opening night of historic play with music, "For Those Who Live in the Sun", professionally written and produced by Sam Byrd, depicting the history of the Jews of Charleston against the background of the community.
- Wednesday, Nov. 22: Play, "For Those Who Live in the Sun", by Sam Byrd.
- Thursday, Nov. 23: Play, "For Those Who Live in the Sun", by Sam Byrd.
- Friday, Nov. 24: Special religious services.
- Saturday, Nov. 25: Play, "For Those Who Live in the Sun", by Sam Byrd.

AMERICAN JUDAISM

through more than

TWO CENTURIES

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Keep

The Jews of Charleston have their roots deep in the history of Charleston and America. Jewish pioneers began to settle here soon after the founding of the colony in 1670. The earliest mention of a Jew is in 1695, when Governor Archdale writes that he had a Spanish-speaking Jew to act as an interpreter in dealing with a group of Spanish-speaking Indians from Florida. But there were probably Jews here before that time and the names of Jews appear in the city records prior to 1700.

Along with others these early Jewish settlers were primarily attracted to Charleston by the climate of religious freedom which existed here from the beginning. They were few in number at first and worshipped in each others homes. But by 1750 there were more than a dozen Jewish families in the city, a sufficient number to organize a religious congregation. Almost two score years before the birth of the United States itself, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Holy Congregation House of God) came into being on September 15, 1750. So it is that all the Jews of Charleston are celebrating in 1950 the Bicentennial of the Jewish community as signalized by the founding of Beth Elohim, its first organization.

While the Jews of Charleston from the beginning expressed a profound devotion to their religious life, they have never lived isolated or in a vacuum, but have been part and parcel of the community as a whole from the earliest times until today. Charleston Jews have participated in the very creation of our state and country. Joseph Levy fought as a lieutenant against the Indians in the Cherokee War of 1760, probably the first Jewish officer in America.

A notable figure was the brilliant young Francis Salvador, who came from England to Charleston before the Revolution and early identified himself with the cause of freedom. He was elected a Deputy to the Provincial Congress of South Carolina in 1775, and later re-elected. This group threw off British rule and set up the first independent government in the United States. Thus Francis Salvador became one of the first Jews to hold an elective office in the Western world. A year later, taking part in the defense of the

frontiers during the Revolution, he was scalped by Indians and died on August 1, 1776. He was the first Jew to give up his life for our country and stands as a symbol of Jewish participation in the creation of the United States.

Many other Charleston Jews saw service in the Revolution, both as officers and in the ranks. Of the 60 men in Captain Lushington's company during the siege of Charleston, half were Jews. They took part in the War of 1812 and in the Mexican War. During the War Between the States, 182 Jews of Charleston served in the Confederate army and 25 of them gave their lives. (The average loss in the Confederate Army was 10 per cent.)

Charleston Jewry contributed many leaders to the Lost Cause. Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, known as the "brains of the Confederacy", lived here as a boy, was educated here, and attended services at Beth Elohim, of which his parents were members. Other notable Jews of this area were Dr. David C. De Leon, the first Surgeon-General of the Confederacy, and A. C. Mayers, the first Quartermaster General.

Charleston Jews have also been notable in their participation in civic undertakings from the earliest times to the present day. They have always been part of the community and have worked for its betterment. Jews were members of benevolent organizations from the earliest days, such as the St. Andrews Society, the South Carolina Society, and other groups.

The College of Charleston, the oldest municipal College in the country, lists Jewish alumni from early days, and Jews have been among the chief contributors to this educational institution. Only recently Mrs. Isabel Cohen Dowd, a descendant of Mordecai Cohen, himself a philanthropist of the early 19th century, willed some \$200,000 to the College, its largest benefaction. Jews were also early contributors to the Charleston Library and to the Charleston Orphan House.

Jews also took care of the needy of their own faith. They organized the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1784 and it is still active today, the oldest such organization in the United States; and in 1801,

they established the Hebrew Orphan Society, which was the first to employ the modern system of placing orphans in private homes. This Society still exists.

Masonry with its emphasis on the brotherhood of man strongly appealed to the Jews of Charleston. Isaac Da Costa, one of the founders of



K. K. BETH ELOHIM SYNAGOGUE

Beth Elohim, was a member of Charleston's King Solomon Lodge in 1753, and many Charleston Jews belonged to Friendship Lodge as early as 1766. The Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masonry was founded in Charleston in 1801, with Jews as four of the nine founders.

Jews have also taken an



B'RITH SHALOM SYNAGOGUE



BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE



EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE

active and prominent part in the economic life of Charleston. Before the Revolution, indigo, next to rice, was the backbone of the colony's prosperity. Most of us know how Eliza Lucas began the cultivation of indigo; but not so many are aware that a Jew, Moses Lindo, a former London indigo merchant, came to Charleston and was responsible for the development of the export trade in indigo to such an extent that he was made Surveyor and Inspector General of Indigo for the Colony of South Carolina. His mark of inspection qualified the Carolina-grown product for acceptance in the British markets. He is generally credited with being one of those most responsible for the great development of this industry before the Revolution.

There were also: Michael Lazarus, who brought steam navigation to the Savannah River; M. C. Mordecai, who established a line of steamships between Charleston and Havana; Daniel Hart, consul to the Kingdom of Holland; Joshua Lazarus, who introduced illuminating gas to Charleston in 1840; Mordecai Cohen, one of the leading business men of the state, and Nathan Nathans, a prominent planter.

There have also been many prominent Charleston Jewish artists, writers, doctors, lawyers, judges and political figures, too numerous to mention. Of special interest was Solomon Heydenfeldt, born in Charleston, who emigrated west and became a Justice of the Supreme Court of California in the middle of the 19th century. Bernard M. Baruch, on his mother's side is descended from Hartwig Cohen, Rabbi of Beth Elohim from 1818 to 1823.

Charleston's Jewish community today has about 2000 individuals, about 600 families. There are four congregations, a Jewish community center and a number of other organizations, which will be listed in this brochure under the heading, "Places of Interest to Visit."

In 1790, when George Washington was inaugurated as the first president of the United States, Jacob Cohen, then president of Beth Elohim wrote him a letter of congratulations. In his reply Washington said:

"The liberality of sentiment toward each other which marks every political and religious denomination of man in this country stands unparalleled in the history of nations . . . May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your congregation."

The spirit expressed in Washington's letter to the Jews of Charleston has endured. Jews have lived here in peace and security for more than 200 years, in harmony with their neighbors, and in active participation in the life of the community and the country. This is not only a tribute to the Jews, but a tribute to the spirit of Charleston and the American dream.

Thus the Bicentennial celebration of 1950 stands not only as a commemoration of two centuries of Jewish life in Charleston, but as a symbol, a demonstration of the spirit of understanding and mutual respect, which has existed in this New World.

Today when men are seeking ways and techniques for people to live together in justice and peace, Charleston is a living demonstration that this can be done. We have begun the pattern whereby men may express their own individuality in fulfillment, and yet join together for the great common ideals we all hold together. This bicentennial of the Charleston Jewish community commemorates the working of the American way of life over a period of more than two centuries in one American city.

PLACES OF JEWISH INTEREST TO VISIT

1) K. K. Beth Elohim—72 Hasell St. Religious Services, Friday at 8 P.M. and Saturday at 11 A.M. Also open daily from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M. Dr. Allan Tarshish, Rabbi. Thomas J. Tobias, president. Founded 1750. One of the oldest congregations in the United States. Second oldest Synagogue building in the U. S. and the oldest in continuous use. Present synagogue built in 1840, on site of former one built in 1792. Congregation has been on same site since 1780. Iron gates and fence date from 1792. The Cradle of Reform Judaism in America, where Reform Judaism started in the U. S. in 1824. Present synagogue was the first Jewish congregation in the U. S. to install an organ. Note the unusual translation of the Shema over the great doors, the fact that the Synagogue faces East, the painting of the old Synagogue, the remnant of the old cornerstone, the Menorahs dating back to 1802 (lost for some 70 years under the building and then found) and the unusual ark with the venerable Scrolls of the Law. The Bicentennial Tabernacle adjoining the Synagogue is built on the site of the old Tabernacle (1838-1948) in which was founded the second Jewish Sunday school in the U. S. Penina Moise, poetess and hymn writer, taught here.

2) Beth Elohim's Coming Street Cemetery—189 Coming St. One of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in America, with graves dating back to 1762. Here are buried many historic persons.

3) Former Shearith Israel Congregation—Wentworth St., between Meeting and Anson. Now a Negro church. When Beth Elohim installed an organ in 1840, a group seceded and organized this Synagogue in 1847. Returned to parent congregation in 1866. Note that this building also faces sideways to the street so that worshippers could face East.

4) 88 Broad St. (next to the County Court House)—Former home of the Hebrew Orphan Society, now an office building. A plaque relates its connection with the Hebrew Orphan Society.

5) Brith Sholom Synagogue—64 St. Philip St. Religious Services: Friday, sundown and 8:15 P. M. Saturday, 9:00 A. M. President, Melvin Jacobs. Founded in 1856. One of the oldest Orthodox congregations in the country and the oldest in the South. Beautiful interior.

6) Beth Israel Synagogue—182½ Rutledge Ave. Also Orthodox. Religious Services: Friday, sundown; Saturday, 9:00 A. M. Louis Tuchman, Rabbi. Martin Chase, president. Organized in 1911. This congregation in 1948 dedicated its new and beautiful Synagogue building.

7) Synagogue Emanuel—78 Gordon St. Conservative. Religious Services: Friday, 8:15 P. M., Saturday, 7:45—9:15 A. M., 10:30—11:30 A. M. Lewis Weintraub, Rabbi. Nathan Goldberg, president. This is the most recent congregation, organized in 1947. Note this former army chapel converted into a Synagogue in excellent taste.

8) Jewish Community Center—58 St. Philip St. Nathan Shulman, Director. David S. Goldberg, president. A Jewish community center, organized in 1923, went out of existence. It was reorganized in 1945. Meeting place for such organizations as the National Council of Jewish Women, B'nai B'rith and its Woman's Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans, Zionist Organization of America, Hadassah, Jewish Welfare Fund, and others.

Visitors to Charleston for the Bicentennial will also enjoy seeing the places of interest that bring thousands of tourists each year to one of America's most historic cities.

For information write to

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

58 St. Philip St.
Charleston, S. C.

UNION *Anniversary* SERIES

Beth

A Bi-Centennial Anniversary in Charleston

The Story of Congregation Beth Elohim

BY

DR. ALLAN TARSHISH



UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

CINCINNATI

1950

EDITED BY

EMANUEL GAMORAN, PH. D.

Educational Director

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION



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CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

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A BI-CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY IN CHARLESTON
THE STORY OF CONGREGATION BETH ELOHIM

by

Dr. Allan Tarshish

The Governor of South Carolina, John Archdale, recorded that soon after he assumed office in 1695 some Spanish speaking Floridian Indians were captured, and he wrote: "I had a Jew for an interpreter."

This is the first mention of a Jew in the colony of Charleston, which had been founded only twenty-five years before, in 1670. Who this Jew was, except that he probably was a S'fardic Jew who could speak Spanish, whether he was the only one in the colony at that time or whether there were others, how long he or they had been in the community, we do not know.

But we do know that September 15, 1950, marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, S. C., one of the oldest Jewish congregations in the United States, the Cradle of Reform Judaism in America, the religious home of the first Jew who died for American independence, the congregation which was the first to place an organ in its synagogue, and the second to establish a Jewish Sunday school.

Is there any meaning to this bi-centennial anniversary beyond the marking of a length of years? Why did Liberal Judaism in the United States come to light first in this old aristocratic S'fardic congregation of the Deep South? How did it happen that this group helped to pioneer in Jewish education? Why does patriotism run like a continuous motif through its history? If we explore the answers to these questions we can learn much about the story of American Judaism.

Early Days

Though we do not know the name of the Jew who served as an interpreter in 1695, we know the names and more about four Jews who lived in Charleston in 1697, and many others after that. For, from its beginnings, Charleston showed a liberal attitude toward differing religious groups. The Constitution proposed for the colony by the famous liberal philosopher, John Locke, expressly states that "Jews, heathens and dissenters" be entitled to the same rights as those of the dominant faith (Episcopalians). Though this constitution was not adopted, its spirit was observed in many ways. In 1697, the Assembly enacted an enabling law permitting citizenship rights for all aliens who applied. Some sixty aliens successfully petitioned for such rights, including four Jews. It is also on record that Jews participated in an election as early as 1703. Thus the practice as well as the theory of equal rights for all religious groups was early established in Charleston.

Charleston also soon became one of the most prosperous and cultured of the colonies. Josiah Quincy wrote to his wife in 1773, "In grandeur, splendor of buildings, commerce, shipping and indeed in almost everything, Charleston far surpasses all I ever saw in America." Its early prosperity was primarily based on rice and indigo.

There was established in Charleston the oldest city college in the United States, the first Chamber of Commerce, and one of the oldest library societies. In 1826 the city had four free schools, though free schooling was not general in the country until after the Civil War.

The Jews participated in this economic prosperity and culture, and flourished in this atmosphere of liberalism. Jews were merchants, brokers, ship owners. They advertised in the newspapers everything from calicoes to Spanish olives and Barbadoes rum.

Moses Lindo

Joseph Tobias called his schooner "The Judith." Moses Lindo called his ship "The Lindo Packett." Moses Lindo was one of the most interesting and important figures of that early time. He came to Charleston from London to purchase indigo. Great Britain, before the Revolution, paid a bounty on indigo from the British colonies. Lindo saw that South Carolina indigo could become important in its economic life and so he settled in Charleston to develop it. A group of merchants and leaders testified that he was "the only person known to us capable of rendering this service" and thus he was made Inspector General of Indigo. Unquestionably Moses Lindo was greatly instrumental in making indigo one of the mainstay's of the colony's prosperity.

He is not mentioned as active in the affairs of Beth Elohim, but undoubtedly he was a devoted Jew, for we find that in 1770 he sent a contribution to Brown University in Providence, R.I., because it admitted Jews.

The Founding of Beth Elohim

The Jews of Charleston must have held services and met together as Jews before 1750, but at first they were few in number, and it was not until the day after Rosh Ha-shono of 1750 that they met formally and decided to organize "Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Un've Shalom--Holy Congregation House of God and Mansion of Peace"

(the "Mansion of Peace" was later dropped and we presume there was no particular significance to its omission). It was the fourth or fifth Jewish congregation in the United States. The president was Joseph Tobias, and it is interesting that in 1950, two hundred years later, a direct descendent of his, Thomas Jefferson Tobias, is president of the congregation.

Beth Elohim was strictly Orthodox and followed the Siphardic minhag (mode of prayers), though there were a number of German and Polish Jews among its membership. The constitution of 1820 has been preserved and can give us an idea of the autocratic nature of the rules of the congregation.

Every Jew, resident in Charleston, over twenty-one years of age, had to be a member. After he was a member for two years, he might be entitled to become a Yochid. The Y'chidim elected twenty-five members as a General Adjunta. The General Adjunta elected seven members as the Private Adjunta. This Private Adjunta really ruled the congregation.

There were severe regulations about attending meetings, services and observing the Sabbath and Holydays, with heavy fines for violations. One rule stated that no other synagogue could be established within five miles of the city, and if anyone was guilty of such an "atrocious offense" he forfeited all honors in the congregation FOREVER. And if he returned, he had to pay a fine of \$200.00 and could receive no burial until the fine was paid.

From 1750 to 1780 the congregation worshipped in various places. In 1780 they secured a site on Hasell Street (where the congregation still is), and converted an old cotton gin factory into a synagogue. In 1792 they built their own synagogue which was in

use until 1838, when it was destroyed by fire. Lafayette, who visited this Synagogue in 1825, described it as "spacious and elegant." Inside it looked like a typical synagogue of the period with a praying desk in the center and benches facing the praying desk on each side, but outside it looked like a church and had a steeple. A cemetery at 189 Coming Street was acquired in 1764, which is still in use and is the largest pre-Revolutionary Jewish cemetery in the United States.

Francis Salvador and the Revolution

Young Francis Salvador came to Charleston from England in the beginning of December, 1773. "His manners were those of a polished gentleman," said a contemporary. He came from a wealthy family and owned 7000 acres of land. He must have made an impression very quickly, for in 1774 he was elected one of the representatives of his district to the Provincial Congress of South Carolina, and thus became one of the first Jews to hold an elective office in the modern world. He was also elected to the second Provincial Congress and held a number of important posts. In 1776 the second Provincial Congress became the first General Assembly of the State.

Soon after the end of this Assembly in April, 1776, the British fleet anchored off Charleston, which was the signal for the Indians and the Tories to attack the colony from the rear. Francis Salvador heard of the massing of the enemy and made a perilous ride through enemy lines to bring reinforcements from Major Andrew Williamson. Thus he came to be known as the "Jewish Paul Revere."

The reinforcements assembled on July 25. On July 31, Williamson set out to surround the enemy, with Salvador beside him,

but instead they were ambushed and a battle ensued. Salvador was shot with arrows, scalped, and died on the battle field, but he lived long enough to hear from Williamson that the enemy had been driven off. His last words expressed his joy at the deliverance of his compatriots. He died on August 1, 1776, as far as we know, the first Jew to die on the field of battle during the Revolution.

When he died he was only twenty-nine years old and had lived but three years in America, but he left an enduring impression.

Another Charlestonian, Joseph Levy, was probably the first Jew to hold an officer's commission in America. In 1757 he was commissioned a lieutenant, fought in the Cherokee War of 1760, and also in the American Revolution.

During the Revolution so many Jews of Charleston enlisted in Richard Lushington's Company that it was known as the "Jews' Company." Of the sixty men in the group, some twenty or thirty were Jews.

Post Revolutionary Days

After the Revolution the new constitution of the State of South Carolina of 1790 read in part: "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever hereafter be allowed within this state to all mankind."

An interesting incident occurred in connection with this constitutional convention. Christopher Knight had been elected a delegate and evidently a number of Jews had voted for him. He wanted to express his gratitude and sent fifty guineas (about \$250.00) to Beth Elohim to serve the poor. Jacob Cohen, the president of the congregation, returned the money and, though expressing his apprecia-

tion, stated that the congregation could not accept the gift "as it may be suggested at some future period that the members of our community were to be brought."

It was this Jacob Cohen who in 1790, as president of Beth Elohim, joined with the Jewish congregations of New York, Philadelphia and Richmond to write a letter of congratulation to George Washington on his election as president of the United States. Washington responded in part:

"The liberality of sentiment towards each other, which marks every political and religious denomination of man in this country stands unparalleled in the history of nations....

"May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me, rest upon your congregation."

Marriages and Duels

The members of the congregation were blessed with many joys, including weddings. One marriage notice appearing in the daily press of 1784 is of interest: "Last Wednesday was married in the 16th year of her age, at her mother's house near the Negroes' burying ground in this city, by Rabbi Abraham Alexander, Miss Rachel de la Motta, a native of St. Croix, to Abraham De Pass of Jamaica, two persons in whom wit, beauty, and good nature never shined more conspicuous!"

Jews, like non-Jews, had their differences and, following the customs of their environment, they often engaged in duels. When Mordecai Noah lived in Charleston in 1811-12, he had to fight a duel with another Jew named Cantor. In 1834 Jacob Schirmer made this comment in his diary: "Duel on the race course between Moise and Cohen, latter mortally wounded and died on the 12th." And as late

as 1874, O.R. Levy and Benjamin Hernandez fought a duel at the corner of Broad and Meeting Streets (one of the main centers of the town). It might be of interest to note that to this day when an official of the state takes his oath of office, he must swear that he will not fight a duel or be a second to it. Dueling, however, is actually no longer in practice!

The Golden Age of Charleston

After the American Revolution the city of Charleston entered upon its golden age, which reached its peak about 1820. In 1800 Charleston had the largest Jewish population in the United States, with 500 Jews compared to 400 in New York. Even in 1826, when there were about 6000 Jews in the United States as estimated by Isaac Harby, there were about 400 Jews in all of New England, the same number in Pennsylvania, in Virginia, in North Carolina, and in Georgia, about 950 in New York State--and 1200 in South Carolina. In 1825 one of Lafayette's companions wrote at length in his Journal about the Jews of South Carolina, and said that nowhere else were they in sufficient numbers to notice.

Leading Jews of Charleston brough steam navigation to the Savannah River, introduced illuminating gas to Charleston in 1840, established a line of steamships between Charleston and Havana, and pioneered in other industrial enterprises. There were also well-known Jewish writers, painters, teachers, lawyers, and physicians. At one time, of the four newspapers in Charleston, two were edited by Jews. Jews were active in the social and charitable life of the community. Of the nine people who founded the Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masonry in Charleston in 1801, four were Jews.

They also took care of members of their own faith. In 1784 they established the Hebrew Benevolent Society, still in existence and the oldest such society in the United States. In 1801, they also founded the Hebrew Orphan Society, which also still exists. It has become a trust organization with only eighteen members and a sort of honorary society of Jewish life in Charleston. Those Jews who have distinguished themselves in service to the Jewish community, are elected to its membership when a vacancy occurs.

The Beginning of the Reform Movement

Cordial interfaith relations existed among Jews and Christians. It was in this spirit that Rev. Samuel Gilman, outstanding minister of the Unitarian Church of Charleston, author of the ode "Fair Harvard," a friend of many of the members of Beth Elohim, came to the synagogue one morning and later wrote his impressions of the service in the North American Review of Boston.

He noted with surprise that people sat or stood at will. During the service one of the prominent members walked over to him and discussed a difficult point of Hebrew grammar, and then continued to converse on general subjects. The Rev. Gilman admired the gentleman's scholarship and sense of hospitality, but wondered about his piety.

The liturgy was in Hebrew and Spanish, the Spanish being used to announce the contributions offered. Chanting went on "with great indistinctness and volubility, now sinking into a low murmur, now in violent vociferation." The service took three hours, because it was rapidly done. He was informed that if it were properly carried out, it would have taken five hours. People went in and out, and there was no sermon.

It must have been with eyes such as these that many of the members of the congregation viewed their own service. They could not help contrasting its lack of decorum and interest with the dignity of the other phases of their life. We must remember that at this time Beth Elohim was the richest and largest Jewish congregation in America. Its members were leaders in all the general activities of the city. They mingled easily in polished circles with their fellow citizens, and were themselves people of culture.

They had heard of the beginnings of the Reform movement in Germany about 1810, and evidently felt that this was what they needed. Therefore in 1824 forty-seven leading members of the congregation petitioned the Adjunta for reforms in the services, stating: "As members of the great family of Israel, they cannot consent to place before their children examples which are only calculated to darken the mind and withhold from the rising generation the more rational means of worshipping the true God... We wish not to overthrow, but to rebuild, we wish not to destroy, but to reform and revise..."

They asked that the Hebrew prayers be translated also into English, that the principal ones should be kept and others omitted so that the service could be abridged, that the money offerings during the service be abolished as undignified, and that there should be an English sermon based on the portion of the week.

Today we would consider these Reforms moderate, but the Adjunta rejected the petition without public discussion and the right of appeal, so twelve of this group, on November 21, 1824, organized "The Reformed Society of Israelites," the first movement of Reform in the United States. In two months they had thirty-eight members and in two years, fifty and Isaac Harby wrote, "The Jews born in

Carolina are mostly our way of thinking on the subject of worship, but act from a tender regard for the opinions and feelings of their parents in not joining the society."

They organized their own religious school and prepared to educate a youth who might become their rabbi. They worshipped without hats, had instrumental music, and issued their own prayer book. This prayer book, written by Isaac Harby, Abraham Moise and David Carvalho, was in classical language and was not similar to the prayer book of the Hamburg Reform Temple, but followed the Portuguese service. It did omit the belief in a personal Messiah and in bodily resurrection, two theological beliefs also omitted in Reform Judaism today. Reform Judaism believes instead in a Messianic Age and in the immortality of the soul.

In 1826 they planned to build a temple of their own, and appealed for donations. But Isaac Harby, one of their leaders, left for New York in 1828, and though the society continued active for a few years, it was decided to disband in 1833, and most of the members rejoined the parent congregation.

Why did they disband? It has been generally stated that they were ahead of their time, and this is probably the chief reason. There were only seven other congregations in the United States at that time, most of them small. Other Jews were more concerned with adjusting economically to their new land, and probably had little energy and thought left to concern themselves about reforms in religion. Influential and persuasive rabbinical figures like Isaac Mayer Wise, David Einhorn, and others had not yet come to the United States, to bring power and learning to the Reform movement. The members of the Society were all laymen, and interested and well

educated though they were, they still did not have the time or the scholarship to bring to the movement which the rabbis did. They must also have missed the powerful leadership of Isaac Harby when he left for New York.

The New Synagogue and the Renewed Struggle for Reform

However, this was not the end of the Reform movement in Charleston, but just the beginning. In 1836 Rabbi Gustavus Poznanski, formerly assistant rabbi at Sherith Israel of New York, became rabbi of Beth Elohim. He was considered safely Orthodox when elected, but evidently he, too, came under the influence of Reform ideas in Charleston. Then in 1838 occurred an event which was to bring the matter again to the fore: the burning of the old synagogue which had been built in 1792.

The congregation began to make plans to build a new synagogue on the ashes of the old. Finally the plans of a New York architect, Cyrus L. Warner, was accepted, and David Lopez, a builder and member of the congregation, was commissioned to erect an imposing edifice.

This synagogue, in the Greek Revival style, was built in 1840 and dedicated in 1841. It faced sideways to the street, so that the Ark would be on the eastern wall. On the front is found the traditional "Sh'ma" with the unusual translation "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, is the Sole Eternal Being." This building has been in use ever since, and therefore is the second oldest synagogue building in the United, and the oldest in continuous use (in the year 1950, 110 years). The synagogue in Newport, R.I. is, of course, older, but it was not used for some hundred years during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When the old synagogue burned, and while the congregation contemplated erecting its new magnificent structure, they built what they called "a temporary tabernacle," so that the congregation would have an interim place of worship. In this tabernacle was started, in 1838, the second Jewish Sunday school in the United States. Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia had organized one a few months before, and she would write out the lessons and send them on to Charleston.

Incidentally this "temporary tabernacle" was built so well that it was modified for regular religious school and social purposes and was in use until 1948 (110 years) at which time it was torn down and a modern religious school building erected, called "The Bi-centennial Tabernacle," dedicated in 1950.

In 1840, as the congregation prepared to make use of the new synagogue, the Reform element petitioned for an organ in the new building. Rabbi Poznanski was asked his opinion and stated that Jewish law did not forbid instrumental music in the synagogue. An Orthodox member responded, "If Mosheh Rabbenu (Moses our teacher) were to appear and make that declaration, I would not believe him."

In this spirit the Board of the Congregation turned down the petition, but did bring it before the congregation as a whole, and they voted forty-six to forty in favor of the organ. This was the first organ in any synagogue in the United States, and from that time on the congregation moved further along the pathway of Reform Judaism.

At the dedication service on March 19, 1841, Rabbi Poznanski said:

"This synagogue is our Temple, this city our Jerusalem, this happy land our Palestine, and as our fathers defended

with their lives that Temple, that city and that land, so will their sons defend this Temple, this city and this land..."

Poznanski, of course, did not mean to evince any lack of sympathy for the Holy Land and all that it meant to Jews spiritually, or deny the right of other Jews to go to Palestine if they desired, but he was expressing the point of view of the Jews of Charleston, that they felt at home in their city and their country, that they felt they could worship God in their new Temple in complete fulfillment, as did their ancestors in the old Temple in Jerusalem. It was an expression of the complete adjustment of their lives.

At first the two groups in Beth Elohim were able to come to an understanding, it being agreed that the organ should be used only on alternate Saturdays, but soon thereafter the Orthodox element took the matter to court. After a trial that lasted three years and enlisted some of the ablest legal talent of the South, the decision went to the Reform group. The Court pointed out that they were in the majority and also were part of the atmosphere of American progressivism. The Orthodox element then withdrew, and in 1847 built their own synagogue a few streets away and called it Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel).

Isaac Mayer Wise and Charleston

In 1850, Rabbi Poznanski felt that he wanted to retire, and Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise was invited to come and visit Charleston. In his "Reminiscences" Wise devotes a number of pages to his Charleston experience and says, "I was much taken with Charleston. I liked the congregation with its Reform and its firm principles. The city

and its inhabitants, so refined and cultured, please me, as well as the not inconsiderable library..."

While Wise was in Charleston he listened to a debate between Rabbi Poznanski and Rabbi Morris Raphal of New York on the subject of Reform vs Orthodoxy. In the course of the debate Rabbi Raphal addressed the audience "Do you believe in the personal Messiah? Do you believe in the bodily resurrection?" Wise felt the questions were directed at him and he rose and said "No" in a loud voice.

After Wise left Charleston he was elected rabbi of Beth Elohim, but his friends in Albany persuaded him to stay there. However, shortly thereafter, the edict of excommunication which Rabbi Raphal and Shearith Israel congregation had issued against him, reached Albany, and it aroused many opponents within his own group. This led to the split in his congregation, and his eventual move to Cincinnati in 1854.

Although Wise did not accept the pulpit of Beth Elohim, the experience in Charleston gave him courage to continue his battles for Reform. He wrote "I felt exalted, vivacious and energetic. I was ready to engage in new struggles and looked hopefully toward the future..."

The Civil War

During the next decade Charleston and Beth Elohim were in the throes of the Civil War. Most of the members of the congregation were loyal to their section of the country, and some 180 of them enlisted and fought bravely and well. General Edwin Warren Moise spent \$10,000.00 of his own money to equip troops. Benjamin Mordecai made one of the largest gifts to the Confederacy when he established the Free Market of Charleston.

Judah P. Benjamin lived in Charleston as a youth. His father, Philip Benjamin, was a member of Beth Elohim and active in the Reformed Society of Israelites. Judah Benjamin was placed in the school of the Hebrew Orphan Society and received a thorough English and classical education in Charleston. Later he went to Yale, settled in New Orleans and became Secretary of State of the Confederacy.

As a result of the Civil War, both Beth Elohim and Shearith Israel which had seceded from it, were so impoverished that they agreed on a reunion. Shearith Israel dissolved and its members returned to the parent congregation, thus healing a breach of some twenty years. A moderate Reform was agreed upon, but gradually the congregation moved all the way toward Reform, and as soon as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was organized in 1873, Beth Elohim became a member.

Penina Moise

Perhaps one of the most unusual and heroic characters of Beth Elohim was the poetess, Penina Moise, who was born in Charleston in 1797 and died in 1880. She was one of a large family whose father died early, so that she had to work hard in the home and study at night. She ruined her eyesight and became blind. In addition she spent a good part of her life taking care of a paralyzed mother. Despite all this she conducted a private school, she was a noted leader in the literary circles of Charleston, wrote poetry for many of the publications of her day, was superintendent of the Sunday school of Beth Elohim and wrote a great many hymns which are now found in the Union Hymnal. The theme song of the radio program

"The Message of Israel": "God Supreme" is one of her hymns and epitomizes her life of courage and faith:

"God Supreme, to Thee we pray
Let our lips be taught to say,
Whether good or ill may flow
Heavenly Father, be it so."

Conclusion

Many other members of Beth Elohim served the state, the community, and other communities with distinction. Bernard Baruch traces his ancestry to an early Rabbi of Beth Elohim.

The present members of Beth Elohim are active in all Jewish communal affairs and hold important posts in the general community as: Chairman of the County Board of Education, Master In Equity, member of the South Carolina State's Ports Authority, Director of the Charleston County Health Department, Director of the County Tuberculosis Association, and they are found on the City School Board and other important agencies.

Some of the recent rabbis of Beth Elohim have been Dr. Barnett A. Elzas, who wrote the "Jews of South Carolina" and other historical works; Dr. Isaac E. Marcuson, now of Macon, the Administrative Secretary of the Central Conference of American Rabbis; Dr. Jacob Raisin, who wrote "The Haskalah Movement" and other scholarly works.

Beth Elohim today numbers about 200 members, some of whom are descended from the founding families, and its religious^{and} cultural life are most active. Its members face its Bi-centennial, proud of their past, but more concerned with their duty to the future: to continue to pioneer in progressive Judaism and to work for a dynamic American democracy.

Questions

1. What are "S'fardic" Jews and "Ashk'nazic" Jews, and why was it that more S'fardic Jews came to the United States in the early period?
2. Why were there more Jews in Charleston in the eighteenth century than in cities like Baltimore and Boston?
3. Can you name any other Jews, besides Moses Lindo, who have helped to develop our country economically?
4. Why was it so natural for most of the Jews in the United States at the time of the American Revolution to join the side of the colonists?
5. Do you think Francis Salvador or Haym Salomon was a greater American hero?
6. Do you agree that "The Reformed Society of Israelites" was ahead of its time?
7. What relation did the Court decision in the Beth Elohim case have to do with the fact that Reform Judaism spread more in the United States than in Europe where it started?
8. Do you think the Sunday school has proved its worth to Jewish education?
9. What happened in American history and in American Jewish history which caused the rise of other Jewish centers much larger than Charleston now?

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Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

FOUNDED 1750

The Cradle of Reform Judaism, 1824

72 HASELL STREET

Charleston, South Carolina

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59 BROAD ST., PHONE 8228

Dr. Allan Tarshish, Rabbi
85 MONTAGU STREET
PHONE 2-4634



October 3, 1950

Dear Dr. Silver,

Our whole Jewish community is delighted with the news that you have agreed to come and speak to us at our Community Religious Service, Friday, November 24th. The response is so enthusiastic that we will wire our Tabernacle with loud speakers, so that we can take care of the overflow. My guess is that most of the Jews of Charleston will be there that evening. The doctors report to me that all of their Jewish patients have informed them that they must be well on that date.

We have received the publicity material your office sent, and we appreciate it.

Under separate cover we are sending you some further material about the history of the community and the Bicentennial. The other three Rabbis and myself are meeting soon to plan a service acceptable to Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox (wish us luck!!). Of course the other three congregations will not have services that night.

We are all looking forward to a message from you which will voice the essentially spiritual nature of two hundred years of Judaism in an American community. We know that you will be able to express so well, what we haltingly try to say.

We have made reservations for you at the Fort Sumter Hotel, and will also make plane reservations for you back to Cleveland. When you know when you come in, let me know so that we can meet you at the airport.

With warmest best wishes and deepest appreciation for your acceptance.

Cordially,

Allan

Allan Tarshish

October 23, 1950

Dr. Allan Tarshish
85 Montagu Street
Charleston, South Carolina


Dear Dr. Tarshish:

With reference with Dr. Silver's visit to your community on November 24th, according to present plans he will leave here on Friday morning via Eastern Airlines, traveling by way of Charlotte, N.C., and Columbia, S.C., arriving in Charleston at 2:35 p.m.

Dr. Silver must be in Wheeling, West Virginia, on November 25th, and will, therefore, leave Charleston at midnight - 12:52 a.m. - so that it will not be necessary for you to arrange for his return transportation.

Sincerely yours,

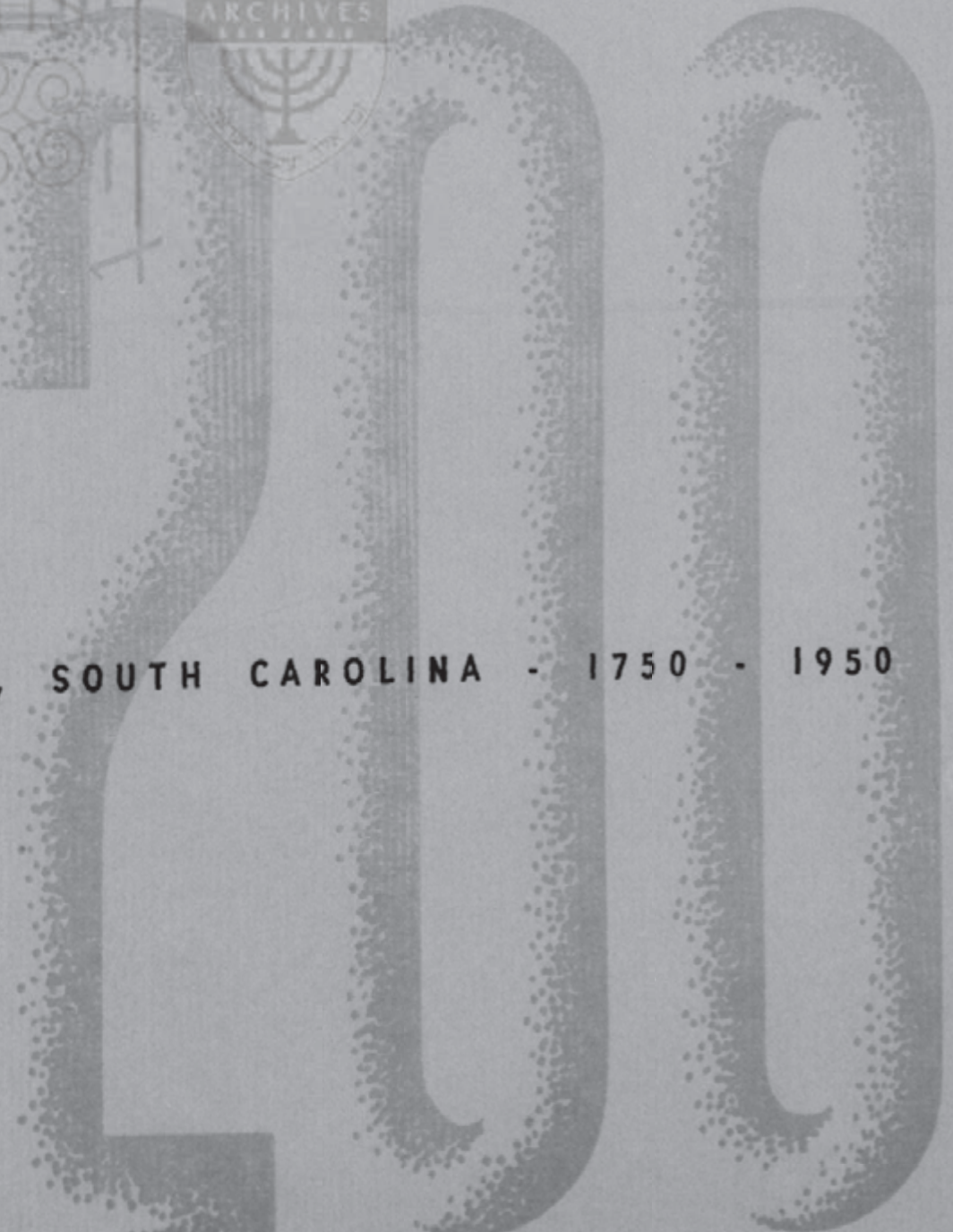
Secretary to Dr. Silver



REDEDICATION - KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM



CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA - 1750 - 1950



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

Founded September 15, 1750

Rededicated September 15, 1950





WHEREAS, on the day after Rosh Hashonah in the year 1750, on September 15th, the Jews of Charleston, few in number but devoted in faith, in thankful recognition of their new beginnings in a land of freedom, turned their hearts and thoughts to the founding and dedication of a religious congregation which they named Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Holy Congregation, House of God);

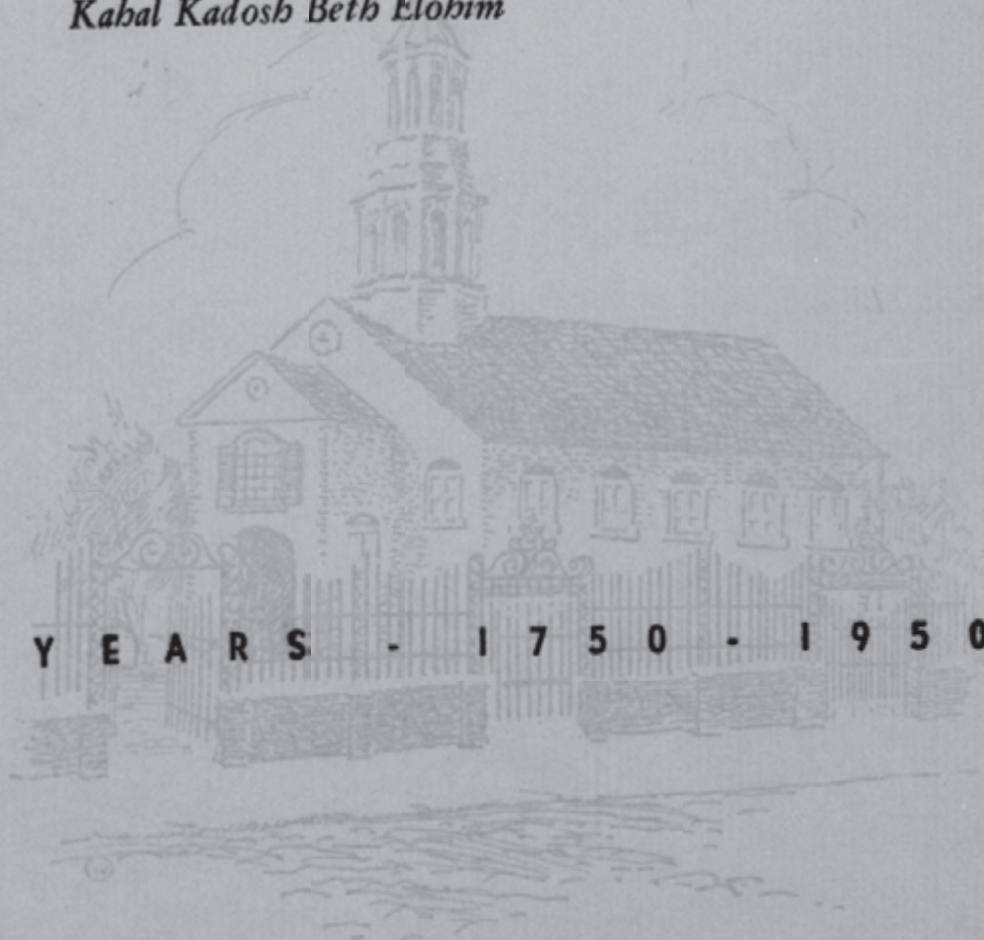
And WHEREAS the efforts of these, our spiritual ancestors, were blessed to such an extent that Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim has prospered and continued with undiminished strength through two centuries as a center of both religious and communal leadership;

And WHEREAS we are privileged to be alive at this historic occasion of our two hundredth anniversary;

THEREFORE, by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees and the Members of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, I do hereby proclaim Friday, September 15th, in the year 1950, to be a day of solemn re-dedication to the high principles that moved our founders to the service of God, our country and all mankind.

*Thomas J. Tobias, President
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim*

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Jewish pioneers began to settle in Charleston soon after the founding of Carolina in 1670. The earliest mention of a Jew is in 1695. Few at first, they worshipped informally until their number was sufficient to establish a congregation in 1750 almost two score years before the birth of the United States.

In 1790 Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim wrote congratulations to George Washington on becoming President. In his reply, Washington said: "May the same temporal and eternal blessing which you implore for me, rest upon your congregation."

Beth Elohim has its roots deep in the history of Charleston and America. It was the religious home of such notable figures as Moses Lindo, who during the colonial period developed the fabulous Carolina indigo trade; Francis Salvador, the Revolutionary patriot who stands as a symbol of Jewish participation in the creation of this country; and Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate statesman, who attended services here as a boy.

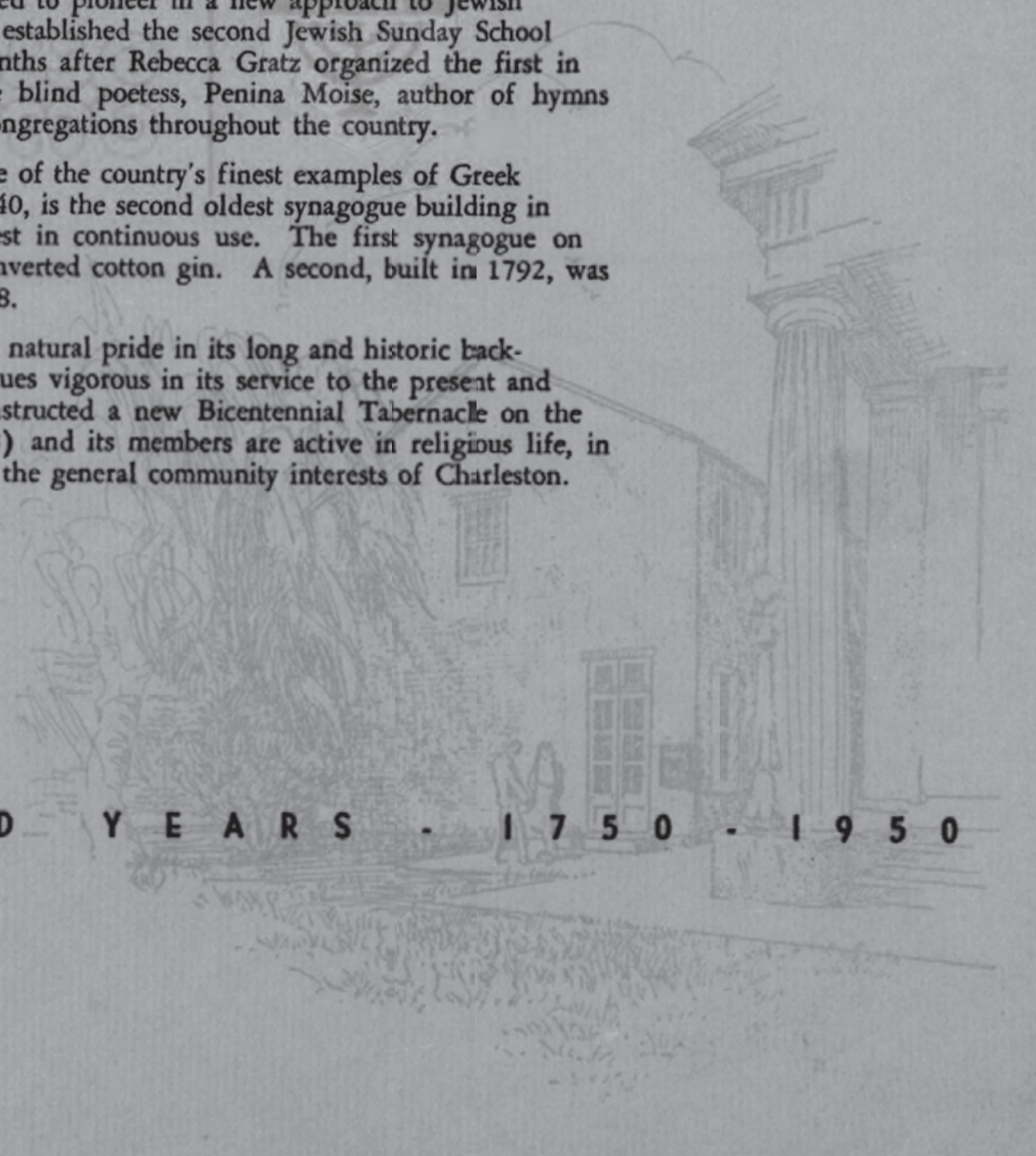
Beth Elohim is memorable as the Cradle of Reform Judaism in America. The Reformed Society of Israelites was organized in 1824 by members who sought a change from the orthodox Sephardic ritual.

In 1838 Beth Elohim helped to pioneer in a new approach to Jewish education for children when it established the second Jewish Sunday School in this country, only a few months after Rebecca Gratz organized the first in Philadelphia. Here taught the blind poetess, Penina Moise, author of hymns sung today in Liberal Jewish congregations throughout the country.

The present synagogue, one of the country's finest examples of Greek Revival architecture, built in 1840, is the second oldest synagogue building in the United States and the oldest in continuous use. The first synagogue on this site (1780-1792) was a converted cotton gin. A second, built in 1792, was burned in the great fire of 1838.

While Beth Elohim takes a natural pride in its long and historic background, the congregation continues vigorous in its service to the present and the future. It has recently constructed a new Bicentennial Tabernacle on the site of the old one (1838-1948) and its members are active in religious life, in Jewish affairs and in service to the general community interests of Charleston.

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REDEDICATION SERVICES
KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM

Charleston, S. C.

Friday, September 15, 1950, 8 P. M.

Shofar Call—M. Harold Baumrind.

(The dedication of the present Synagogue building in 1841 was heralded with the Shofar.)

Choir—*Baruch Habaw B'shem Adonoi*—Blessed be those who come in the name of the Lord.

Congregation rises.

Processional of Rabbis, Officers and Trustees, with Torahs.

Rededication Prayer before the Ark—Dr. Allan Tarshish:

Boruch Atto Adonoi Elehonu Melech Haolam, Shebeheyannu V'keey-mawnu V' Hig-geeyawnu Lazman Haze.

With joyous hearts we assemble before Thee, O our God and God of our fathers, to thank Thee for having granted us life, sustained us, and permitted us to witness this rededication of our holy congregation at this two hundredth anniversary service.

Imbue us with the strength and wisdom to continue the great work already done here. Speak unto us also the word of new life. Be Thou as the sun calling into blossom the latent power of every heart, that the glory in us may answer to the glory of Thee.

As those who have gone before us in this congregation have pioneered to bring Judaism to the shores of the western world, as they have carried the banner of Jewish education and liberal Judaism, as they have remained devoted to their faith and shown their loyalty to our beloved country, so may we of our day continue to pioneer in the world of the spirit.

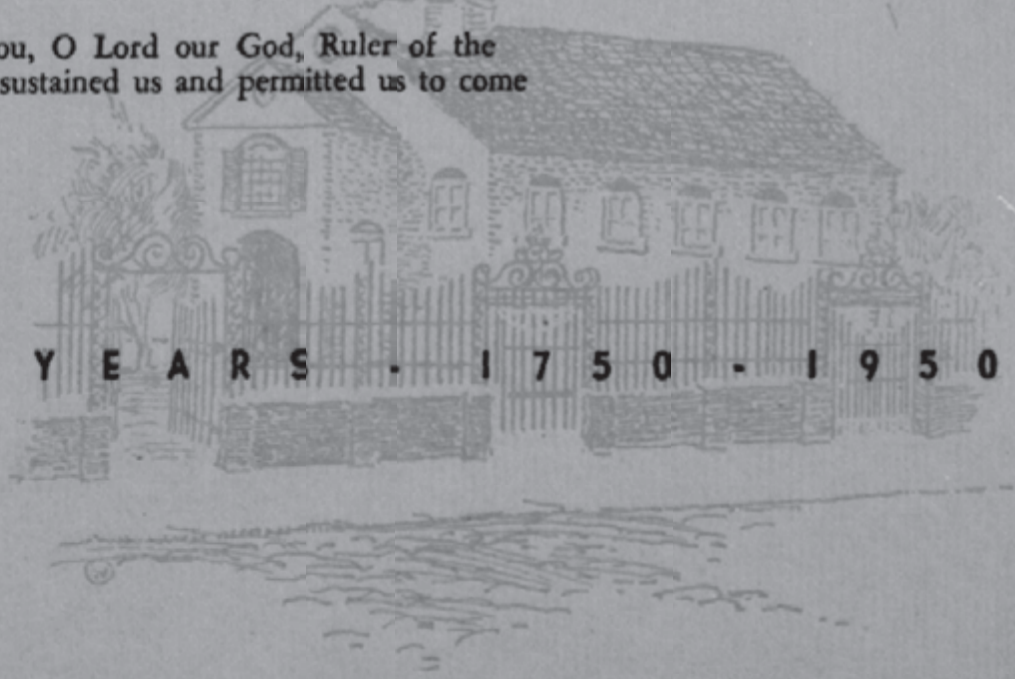
May we ever hear Thy voice in this holy Temple. May we hear Thy voice everywhere in Thy world. Let Thy spirit reach us in the quiet of our dwellings. May it penetrate to us in the tumult of the marketplace. May we hear Thy voice in the musician's strains, in the measures of the poets, and see Thee in the colors of the painter. May we carry Thy message to the faces of children and to the handclasp of human friendship.

As we stand in tribute to those before us, may our children, too, rise up and call us blessed. Amen.

Congregation is seated.

Choir—*Shebeheyannu*—Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and permitted us to come

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to this time.

Congregation rises.

Candle Blessing and *Kiddush*—Mrs. Milton A. Pearlstine and Karl Karesh.

Congregation is seated.

Choir—*Kiddush*.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Thou, O Lord, hast enthralled me, and I am enthralled

Thou has seized and overpowered me.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts,

My soul yearneth for the courts of the Lord

For the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him

To all that call upon Him in truth;

The Lord upholdeth all that fall

And raiseth up all those that are bowed down.

O Lord, one generation shall laud Thy works to another

And declare Thy mighty acts;

The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry has spoken to Colonial America

The American Revolution to the Reformed Society of Israelites

Rebecca Gratz caused her word to go forth to Sally Lopez

And the voices of children were heard by Thee in the Old Tabernacle

The writings of Mendelsohn came to the Vilna Gaon

*And Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe prayed to Thee from Beth
Elohim*

Out of the chaos and turmoil of civil war, they turned unto Thee

And new strength and life came to the South.

We have heard the cries of the concentration camps and the songs of Israel

We have lived and died at Anzio and Iwo Jima and cannot forget Hiroshima.

O Lord of Hosts and God of our fathers, be with us yet, be with us yet.

*So Thy word and Thy spirit shall not depart from us, nor from our children
and our children's children, henceforth and forever.*

UNION PRAYER BOOK, pp. 38-46.

TORAH SERVICE, Union Prayer Book, page 94. Rabbi Tarshish, Milton A.
Pearlstine, Maier Triest.

Organ—New World Symphony.

Congregation rises.

Rededication Pledge—Thomas J. Tobias, President:

Two hundred years are but a day in Thy sight, O Lord. But
two hundred years are many generations of human beings, with their
hopes and fears, their sufferings and aspirations, their failures and their
achievements. The men and women of the past have striven greatly toward

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Thee, and have given of themselves with notable service in religion, in patriotism, in charity and in work for the common good.

Our pledge to the future is to continue to seek Thee as our spiritual ancestors did before us. Let us emulate their faith in Thee, striving for greater religious devotion, broader service to our fellow man, and a deeper dedication both as Jews and as Americans.

Our pledge to the future is to invigorate ourselves with the spirit of the past and the guidance of the Lord; to make not only this historic synagogue a Beth Elohim, a House of God, but also to do all in our power to sanctify our daily lives.

Our pledge is to our homes and those dear to us, to our work and duties, to our dealings with our neighbors, and to our fellow countrymen and those who dwell in other lands. Let us carry the word of God in truth, in justice, in mercy, in fellowship, and in understanding throughout our lives. Amen.

Response by Congregation:

As the Hebrew of old responded *Na-a-seh V'nish-ma*—"We will do and we will hearken"—when they received the Ten Commandments at Sinai, we members of Beth Elohim, on the 200th anniversary of the founding of our congregation, continue to bear witness to the sacred covenant and reaffirm our unshaken faith in one God and one mankind. In justice and in peace, and in the liberal spirit of our historic synagogue, we pledge ourselves to live by and for these great principles to the fullest extent of our ability, so help us God.

Choir—*Shehebeyannu* (triumphantly).

TORAH RETURNED TO ARK.

Congregation is seated.

Introduction of Guest Speaker—Dr. Allan Tarshish.

Reconsecration Address—Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Choir—*Yigdal*—Praise to the Living God.

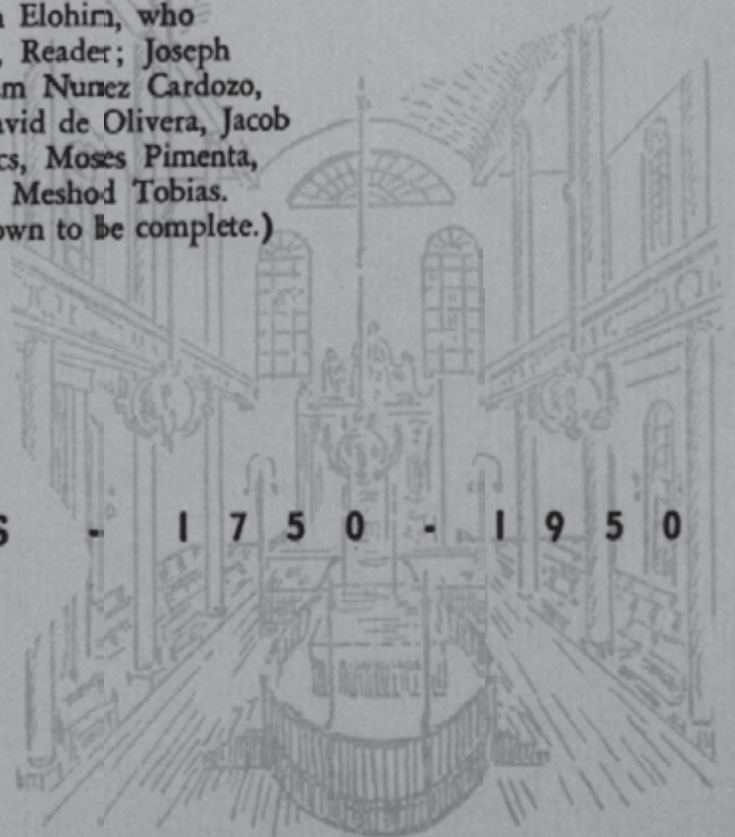
Closing Service—Union Prayer Book, page 71.

Kaddish memorializing the founders of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, who included Moses Cohen, Chief Rabbi; Isaac Da Costa, Reader; Joseph Tobias, President; Michael Lazarus, Secretary; Abraham Nunez Cardozo, Abraham Da Costa, Isaac De Paz, Moses de Mattos, David de Olivera, Jacob de Olivera, David Franks, Philip Hart, Solomon Isaacs, Moses Pimenta, Levi Sheftall, Mordecai Sheftall, Moses Solomons and Meshod Tobias.

(Compiled from available historical sources but not known to be complete.)

Benediction.

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Dr. Allan Tarshish, Rabbi

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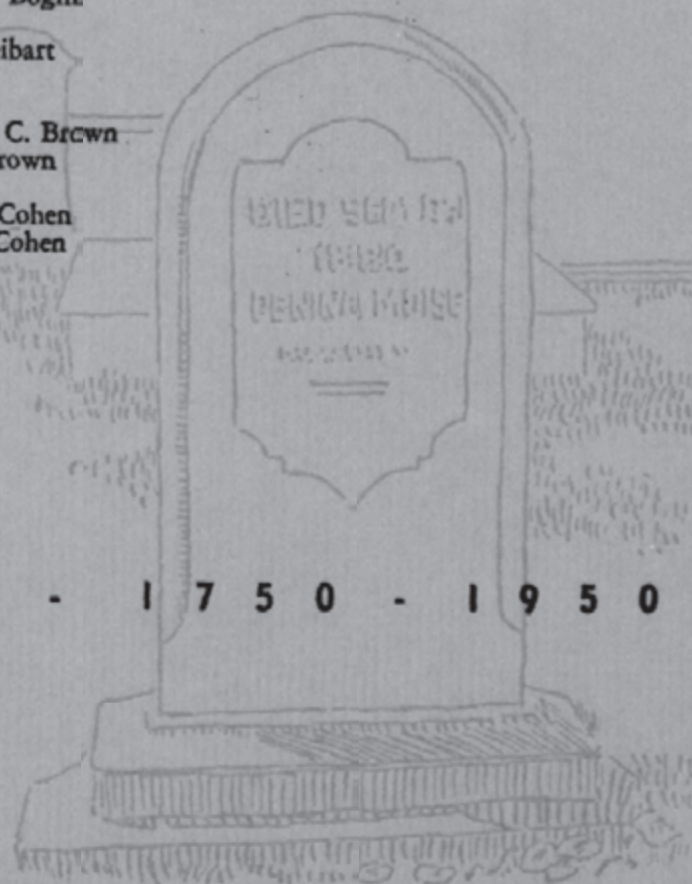
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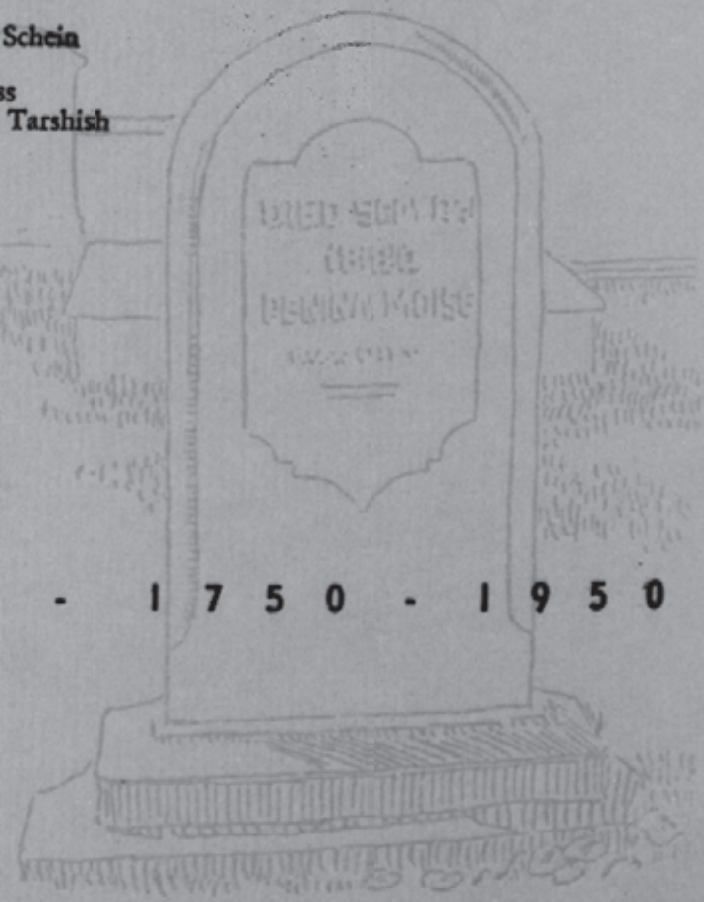
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The Sisterhood of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim
Will Give A Reception In The Bicentennial Tabernacle
Immediately Following The Rededication Service