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A Perspective of Temple Shalom, Cincinnati, Ohio
on Their 50th Anniversary - 2004

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A Jewish Community A Half Century in the Making:
A Perspective of Temple Sholom, Cincinnati, Ohio
on Their 50th Anniversary—2004

Randi Chudakoff Nagel

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Ordination

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Referee, Professor Jonathan Krasner

Digest

Temple Sholom, established in 1954, was founded with the understanding that it would be a Reform congregation with a more traditional approach to Judaism. Today, Temple Sholom is one of four major synagogues on a short stretch of Ridge Road, in the heavily Jewish Amberley Village in suburban Cincinnati, Ohio. 2004 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Temple Sholom and the goal of this thesis is to give the reader a detailed history of the congregation. Rabbi Stanley R. Brav founded Temple Sholom. Rabbi Brav was a strong and inspired leader who had a particular vision for a traditional Reform synagogue in the northern suburbs of Cincinnati. Since he was forced to take an early retirement due to his failing health the congregation has struggled with its identity and purpose. Even under rabbinical leadership of his able successors, Temple Sholom has remained Rabbi Brav's synagogue.

This thesis incorporates documents and research never before used for writing a history of the congregation. Chapter One establishes the origins of Temple Sholom as a break off congregation from K.K. Bene Israel (Rockdale Temple) due to exclusiveness, location of congregation, the curriculum for the Hebrew school, and Rabbi Brav's political and interpersonal difficulties.

Chapter Two describes Rabbi Brav's role in the founding Rabbi for Temple Sholom in 1954 and the Brav rabbinate. Temple Sholom finds a temporary home, becomes a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and begins full operation. The acquisition of land in Amberley Village and the construction of the new building are also included.

Chapter Three focuses on the tenure of Rabbi Donald Splansky, Temple Sholom's second rabbi. The congregation becomes youth centered. There is growth in the religious school, the youth group, and participation in camping. The congregation's increased involvement with the State of Israel is also discussed.

Chapter Four discusses Temple Sholom's third rabbi, Rabbi Gerry Walter, who helps formalize the congregation's religious practice. At this time, the congregation moves significantly more to the right of Reform Judaism while exhibiting liberal tendencies towards inclusiveness and social action. This chapter also discusses the building's expansion.

The Summary and Conclusions contain an overview of the congregation's rabbinical influence, participation in the Social Action Committee, its building projects and its continuous financial struggles. The chapter ends with a section that looks forward to and makes recommendations for, the future of Temple Sholom.

To the members of Temple Sholom,
thank you for sharing your journey and history with me. Temple Sholom
will forever be a part of my life.

This thesis would have never come to fruition without the help of many people. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Jonathan Krasner, for his patience, understanding and willingness to work with me. I also want to thank the members of Temple Sholom for taking the time to reminisce about Sholom's history. To Claire Krome for spending time gathering and putting the archives of Temple Sholom together. I also want to thank Allison Baker for proofreading this thesis and all those, especially my parents, who gave of their time to help get this thesis done.

To the two most important men in my life: Daniel, you inspired me to finish this thesis so that I could spend more time with you. You are a true blessing. Scott, this thesis could not have been possible without your help, support and love. You share much of the credit. You have always encouraged me and helped me every step of the way.

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Chapter One In the Beginning	1
Chapter Two 1954-1972: Rabbi Stanley R. Brav, "Beloved Rabbi"	14
Chapter Three 1971-1984: Rabbi Donald M. Splansky, "Guiding Temple Sholom Through its Teen Years"	41
Chapter Four 1984-present: Rabbi Gerry H. Walter, "Community Minded Mentor"	59
Summary and Conclusion	74
Appendix	85
Bibliography	96

Preface

As Temple Sholom, Cincinnati, Ohio celebrates its fiftieth year, a look backward at its founding and history can provide a perspective of how to approach its next fifty years. For me, this project has been a labor of love as I have served Temple Sholom as rabbinic intern during my fourth and fifth years at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Over the past year, with the boxes of documents stacked in my office and the countless interviews with the members of Temple Sholom, I have come to know Temple Sholom in a manner that is usually reserved to those who have shared in the congregation's history from the very beginning. At times I found myself laughing out loud while poring through the documents, uncovering the origins of certain activities and *minhagim*. Some traditions were founded with intention, while others were not. Among the most surprising accidents was the arrangement of the overhead lights in the sanctuary so that when lit there appears a Star of David on the ceiling. This outcome was unintentional having only to do with support structure and wiring, and nothing to do with design. Nevertheless, the Star of David lighting adds to the ambience in the sanctuary.

The microcosm of Temple Sholom illustrates the trends of Reform Judaism during the later half of the twentieth century in America. It serves equally well as a model in describing the experience of a break off congregation in the search for its own sacred space and identity. 2004 also marks the 350th anniversary of the American Jewish community. It is fitting that this anniversary is shared in part by Temple Sholom for the

study of its history can lead to a greater understanding of the American Jewish experience as a whole.

As part of this research process, Temple Sholom's archives have been organized and prepared to be moved to the American Jewish Archives on the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. This will provide other scholars of American Jewish history access to this information to study and learn.

In its own right, Temple Sholom stands as a caring home for Reform Judaism in Cincinnati. It is the most traditional of the four Reform synagogues in Cincinnati and is dedicated to learning, worship, and inclusion. It has been my privilege to have Temple Sholom as part of my life journey and my experience has only been enhanced in studying and coming to understand the congregation's own journey. This undertaking has provided me with an opportunity to give something small back to the congregation that has given me a spiritual home during my time in Cincinnati. It is my hope that this thesis will be received well, providing worthwhile information, recreating fond memories, helping to foster understanding, and providing insight for the future.

Chapter One

In the Beginning

K.K. Bene Israel/Rockdale Avenue Temple

Temple Sholom finds its origins in the first Reform congregation established in Cincinnati, K.K. Bene Israel/Rockdale Avenue Temple.¹ K.K. Bene Israel began its historic role in Cincinnati in 1824 with the purpose “of glorifying God, and observing the fundamental principles of our faith, as developed in the laws of Moses.”² K.K. Bene Israel was the first Jewish congregation west of the Allegheny Mountains. In 1853, Cincinnati Jewry underwent significant change with the arrival of Isaac Mayer Wise who served as rabbi of Cincinnati’s second congregation, K.K. Bene Yeshurun.³ Isaac Mayer Wise’s work led to the birth of organized American Reform Judaism, and his congregation found great success and popularity because of this ideology. K.K. Bene Israel, wanting to share in the success of Reform Judaism sought to hire a rabbi who would operate under Reform ideology. In 1855, upon the suggestion of Isaac Meyer Wise, the congregation appointed Dr. Max Lilienthal⁴ as the first permanent rabbi to officiate at K.K. Bene Israel. From 1888 to 1938 Dr. David Philipson⁵ led the

¹ For the early history of K.K. Bene Israel see Rabbi David Philipson’s *The Oldest Jewish Congregation in the West*. (Cincinnati: Rockdale Avenue Temple, 1924).

² *Rockdale Temple: One Hundred Seventieth Congregational Anniversary Directory*. 1994.

³ Founded in 1840, K.K. Bene Yeshurun was a moderate Orthodox congregation. Upon Wise’s arrival in 1854, he instituted reforms in the congregation that would make it one of the leading Reform temples in the United States. (source: Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein. *The Jews of Cincinnati*. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, 1989)48).

⁴ Dr./Rabbi Max Lilienthal was born in Munich, Bavaria in 1815 and died in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1882, Dr. Lilienthal was widely known in the Mid-West and in Cincinnati. Along with his duties as Rabbi of K.K. Bene Israel he filled posts of distinction on the Board of Education and at the University of Cincinnati. (source: Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein 50).

⁵ Dr./Rabbi David Philipson was Rabbi of Rockdale Temple for half a century (1888-1938) and rabbi-emeritus for 11 more years. The last surviving member of the first ordination class of Hebrew Union

congregation. During Dr. Philipson's rabbinate, K.K. Bene Israel built its fourth building on Rockdale and Harvey Avenues. This move gave rise to the name Rockdale Temple. In 1926, Dr. Victor Reichert⁶ came to Rockdale Temple as the Assistant Rabbi and upon Dr. Philipson's retirement in 1938 was elected Senior Rabbi of the congregation. In 1948, Rabbi Reichert was looking for a new Associate Rabbi and he turned to Rabbi Stanley Brav who was then serving as the Rabbi at Temple Anshe Chesed in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Rabbi Brav Comes From Vicksburg, Mississippi

After serving the Jewish community of Vicksburg, Mississippi for eleven years, Rabbi Stanley R. Brav⁷ was hired as the Associate Rabbi at K.K. Bene Israel/Rockdale Temple. As Associate Rabbi, Rabbi Brav's duties included assisting Dr. Reichert with religious and pastoral duties as well as supervising the religious school.

Rockdale Temple hired Rabbi Brav as the Associate Rabbi because of his love for the Jewish people and his interest and active participation in interfaith issues. Rabbi Brav's move to Cincinnati in 1948 was a return home for his wife. For while a student at

College, Philipson represented what came to be known as Classical Reform Judaism. He taught that only America was the homeland for American Jews and that Jewish ideals must be applied to the adornment of this homeland. Dr. Philipson was respected by Jews and Gentiles alike for his decades of service to the community and for his close ties to civic leaders. (source: Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein 116.)

⁶ Dr./Rabbi Victor Reichert was appointed Associate Rabbi of Rockdale Temple in 1928, two years after becoming Rabbi Philipson's assistant. Rabbi Reichert focused on winning young people back to the synagogue. He created new programs aimed at promoting social justice and improved interfaith relations. He also placed new stress on the importance of Jewish education and scholarship, where he set a personal example. (source: Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein 129.)

⁷ Rabbi Stanley R. Brav was a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and a graduate of the University of Cincinnati. He was ordained at the Hebrew Union College in 1934 and received a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Webster University in Atlanta, Ga., in 1939. In 1932 he married Ruth Englander of Cincinnati, Ohio. Rabbi Brav served as Assistant Rabbi in Dallas, Texas from 1934-1937. He was the Rabbi of Temple Anshe Chesed in Vicksburg, Mississippi, from 1937-1948. In 1948, he became the Associate Rabbi at Rockdale Temple. In 1954 he helped found the first new Reform Jewish congregation established in the northern Cincinnati suburbs. Rabbi Brav was one of the leading pacifists in the American Rabbinate and helped organize the Jewish Peace Fellowship. He also actively participated in interfaith and interracial causes. Rabbi Brav died November 9, 1992.

the Hebrew Union College⁸ in Cincinnati from 1929 to 1934 he married Ruth Englander a Cincinnati native. His return however, was more than personal; he hoped to provide innovation and encourage a move towards tradition in the services at Rockdale Temple, which were Classical Reform, as well as to continue to push for the causes he treasured.

With the onset of the 1950s the Reform Movement grew dramatically. A significant factor in this increased participation was the renewed interest in Jewish religion. This resurgence brought back many old members who had lost their interest in and connection to the synagogue. Additionally Jews who had never been affiliated started joining synagogues en masse. Being the oldest congregation in Cincinnati, membership in Rockdale Temple was seen as a stigma. Younger couples and new arrivals to the community viewed Rockdale Temple as "the establishment." They were looking to belong somewhere where they felt the interaction between Reform Judaism and modernity, and sensed an opportunity for change and growth. These desires were somewhat problematic for Rockdale Temple because of its history in the community and of its aging congregants who were still committed to the values and practices of Classical Reform Judaism.

Younger middle class couples were nervous about joining Rockdale Temple because of a perceived difference in class between the wealthy existing membership, whose families had been members for generations and themselves. Rabbi Brav wanted to work on these issues and began to look for ways that Rockdale Temple could serve both

⁸ Founded in 1875, by Isaac Mayer Wise, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion is the nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. Today, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion is an international seminary and university of graduate studies offering a wide variety of academic and professional programs. In addition to its Rabbinical School, the College-Institute includes Schools of Graduate Studies, Education, Jewish Communal Service, Sacred Music, and Biblical archeology. (source: www.huc.edu).

its committed membership and the "new Reform Jew of the 50s" looking for a spiritual home.⁹

From the beginning of his tenure at Rockdale Temple Rabbi Brav pushed for change. Initially, Rabbi Brav added more traditional elements into services such as chanting *Kiddush*. He added weekday sessions in the Religious School in order to teach Hebrew. And he advanced the age of Confirmation in the city from thirteen to sixteen in both Reform congregations.¹⁰ Shortly after coming to Rockdale Temple, Rabbi Brav helped organize the temple's highly successful "Mr. and Mrs. Club" of young married couples. Along with his involvement inside the congregation, Rabbi Brav continued his active civic involvement within the greater Cincinnati community. In 1950, Rabbi Brav was promoted to the title of Co-Rabbi of Rockdale Temple along with Rabbi Reichert who was completing his twenty-fifth year of service to the congregation.

Murmurings Arise

Rabbi Brav was outspoken for the causes he believed in. Throughout his time at Rockdale, Rabbi Brav gave memorable sermons pushing his congregants to re-evaluate and renew their knowledge and commitment to Jewish religious practice. He also pushed for more people to attend services. In 1950, Rabbi Brav gave a sermon entitled "Re-evaluating our Judaism." In part he said:

...In terms of Religion, America Jewry today is critically ill, and unless we find a therapy for it in our generation, we not only deprive ourselves of Judaism's rich benefits, but we fail to act in good faith with the coming generations, and fail to match what our fathers and grandfathers did for us. We cannot speak or act for

⁹ Stanley R. Brav. *Dawn of Reckoning: Self-Portrait of a Liberal Rabbi*. (Cincinnati: Temple Sholom Press, 1971) 188-90.

¹⁰ The other Reform congregation in town was and is K.K. Bene Yeshurun/ The Isaac M. Wise Temple. Founded in 1840, K.K. Bene Yeshurun broke away from K.K. Bene Israel/Rockdale Temple. Today Wise Temple has two main places of worship and learning; one in downtown Cincinnati, the historic Plum Street Temple and the other on Ridge Road in Amberley Village.

our Orthodox and Conservative brethren. Indeed, we cannot speak and act for all Reform Jews. But we CAN make a beginning of regeneration and revival here in our own Congregation, and this—it seems to me—is the first obligation upon us, in the months and years ahead.¹¹ [emphasis in original]

The revival Rabbi Brav was talking about was taking place nationwide. One of the major issues influenced by this revival was the concern for Jewish education. In the post World War II years, larger families began to arise along with a deeper awareness of and pride in Jewish identity. Reform religious schools in the United States in the early 1950s “busied themselves with establishing proper curricula, teacher procurement, in-training services, publication of adequate textbooks, teacher’s guides, standards for Boards of Education, programs for Parent-Teacher Associations.”¹² Rabbi Brav, supervising the religious school at Rockdale invested and intertwined himself in the future of the school. In 1953, Rabbi Brav, with the assistance of the Religious School Committee, created a teacher’s manual designed to improve the classroom techniques of teachers.¹³ In addition, he sought to enhance the existing curriculum of the religious school by adding a large Hebrew language component. Rabbi Brav’s emphasis on and commitment to Hebrew sparked a long battle within the religious school over the continuation of Wednesday classes during the week. Many members felt that Rabbi Brav’s emphasis on Hebrew was unnecessary and therefore the time of religious school could be shortened by discontinuing or making voluntary the Wednesday afternoon classes and only holding religious school on the weekend.

In May of 1953, the Religious School Committee presented a report to the Board of Trustees recommending that Hebrew be taught on Wednesday afternoons on a

¹¹ American Jewish Archives; Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection Number 152, Folder 10.

¹² Max J. Rutenber, *Decades of Decision*. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1973) 30.

¹³ Minutes. Congregational Meeting Rockdale Avenue Temple. Religious School Committee Report. January 25, 1953.

mandatory basis for those students in grades 5 through 8 and a voluntary basis for all other grades.¹⁴ The Board defeated the Religious School Committee's recommendation.¹⁵

During the next month's board meeting the suggestion of switching Hebrew from Saturday and Sunday mornings to Wednesday afternoons was addressed again. This time the motion passed and the committee was asked to make a survey by questionnaire of religious school children's parents to ascertain their thoughts on this switch.¹⁶

There was a hiatus over the summer regarding this question and in September of 1953, it was moved and passed that the Board itself, acting instead of the Religious School Committee, proceed to carry out the instructions previously ordered at the June board meeting. The president appointed a special committee of board members to develop a questionnaire to be presented to all members of the congregation. This move symbolized the beginning of a congregational battle that would include the Board, the Religious School Committee and Rabbi Brav.

The next month the special committee approached the board with a prepared letter to be sent to the congregation asking their opinion on the matter of teaching Hebrew as a required subject in the religious school. A second motion was made suggesting that added to the letter should be Rabbi Brav's opinion that Hebrew was a necessary component to the curriculum. This motion was defeated and it was moved and passed that the letter be sent to the congregation as first prepared. In the meantime, at the same meeting, the Religious School Committee stated that the voluntary, advanced courses in

¹⁴ Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. May 7, 1953.

¹⁵ Because of the large number of students (450), religious school classes for the students of the K.K. Bene Israel were held on both Saturdays and Sundays; about 1/3 of the students attended class on Saturdays.

¹⁶ Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. June 4, 1953.

Hebrew on Wednesday afternoons had grown to such an extent that it was now necessary to divide the class into two sections and hire another teacher. The Board approved the hiring of another Hebrew teacher on Wednesday afternoons and provided the requested funds.¹⁷

The Religious School of K.K. Bene Israel was functioning three days a week. There was a mandatory religious school program on both Saturday and Sunday mornings for all grade levels and a mandatory Hebrew centered curriculum on Wednesday afternoons for grades 5 through 8. The Wednesday afternoon block also included a voluntary advanced Hebrew class.

There was growing concern among some congregants that too much time and money was now being spent on Hebrew in the religious school to the extent that other areas were being neglected. A petition signed by twenty members of the congregation was presented to the board requesting a special meeting of the congregation to consider the religious school curriculum, "especially as it pertains to compulsory Hebrew and mandatory Wednesday afternoon classes."¹⁸ The Board was unsure of how to resolve the controversy. But they agreed to call for a special membership meeting. At this meeting held on December 1, 1953, the Board presented a resolution to the congregation suggesting the following modifications to the Sunday school curriculum:

1. That present Wednesday afternoon subjects be taught on Saturday and Sunday.
2. Hebrew as presently taught on Saturday and Sunday be taught on Wednesday afternoon on a voluntary basis.
3. The Baruch [sic.-Barchu], Sh'ama and the traditional prayers and responses and their meaning be taught in Hebrew by transliteration or other acceptable techniques on Saturday and Sunday, and integrated into the curriculum on those days.

¹⁷Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. October 8, 1953.

¹⁸ Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. November 2, 1953.

4. That additional intensive Hebrew courses on a voluntary basis be held weekday afternoons in addition to the Wednesday classes to the extent necessary to accommodate the demand therefore.

Ultimately the Board condensed the resolution and passed it as follows:

That attendance at the present Wednesday afternoon classes be on a voluntary basis without an examination being required and that Saturday-Sunday curriculum be adjusted to include the subjects now being taught at the Wednesday classes.

Rabbi Brav stated that making any change in this or any curriculum during the current school year was too difficult; so therefore, the curriculum should be changed according to the motion commencing with the school year 1954. At the end of the congregational meeting, Rabbi Brav suggested increasing the hours of the Saturday and Sunday classes. Initially it seemed as though Rabbi Brav would be granted his wish however, ultimately no consensus could be made as the hours in which the religious school classes were to meet and since it was midnight Rabbi Brav withdrew his motion.¹⁹

The perception of this meeting in which over five hundred members participated varied depending on the person recounting the events. While the president asserted that everyone was satisfied with the final decisions and conclusions,²⁰ the Religious School Committee Chair stressed the difference of opinions in the matters discussed.²¹ Overall the congregants were willing to say that, "there was significant common ground to ensure the continuing and also the improvement of our school."²²

In light of the events at the congregational meeting in December of 1953, the Board discontinued the mandatory mid-week classes for the students of K.K. Bene Israel

¹⁹ Minutes. Special Congregational Meeting. December 1, 1953.

²⁰ Minutes. Congregational Meeting. President's Report for 1953-1954. January 24, 1954. For fuller report see Appendix Document 1.

²¹ Minutes. Congregational Meeting. Religious School Committee Report for 1953-1954. January 24, 1954. For fuller report see Appendix Document 2.

²² Ibid.

beginning in September of 1954. However, the voluntary advanced Hebrew classes continued. Rabbi Brav was very disheartened with this change, as now only 23 students, as opposed to 450 students, would receive schooling in Hebrew on Wednesdays. Even though the school continued to thrive at Rockdale Temple after these changes, Rabbi Brav did not. Confronted with open opposition to his insistence that Hebrew be retained as a fundamental subject for all children in the Religious School, Rabbi Brav became unhappy with some of the members of Rockdale Temple. In his memoirs he wrote, "I was dismayed at the scandalous treatment of Hebrew in the curriculum, as though it were a football to be tossed up and down the field of our programming at will."²³ The changes that the Board instituted in September of 1954 were in direct opposition to Rabbi Brav's desires for the congregation.

Break off Inevitable

Rabbi Brav's troubles with Rockdale Temple did not end with the Religious School. His relationship with the Board of Trustees was somewhat stressed as well. In response to Rabbi Brav's request for a raise in salary, the Board held a special meeting in November of 1952.²⁴ The special committee's response to Rabbi Brav was a significant blow to his confidence and understanding of his role at Rockdale Temple. They delivered the following three messages:

1. It is unlikely that in the foreseeable future, your ideas of the monetary value of Rabbinic services can be met by Rockdale Avenue Temple.
2. The Board of Trustees is not in favor of granting any guaranteed tenure of position.
3. Bearing in mind your expressed wish that an honest and frank statement of facts be given you, the Board feels that if the scale you have in mind in your projection of the value of Rabbinic services to Rockdale Avenue

²³ Stanley R. Brav. *Dawn of Reckoning: Self-Portrait of a Liberal Rabbi*. (Cincinnati: Temple Sholom Press, 1971)195.

²⁴ This date is listed as Spring 1954 in Rabbi Brav's memoirs *Dawn of Reckoning* 195.

Temple is available to you elsewhere, it (The Board) certainly would not (and of course could not) stand in your way. Furthermore, it was the Board's wish for you to know too that they want you to feel free to look elsewhere, if you so desire, to obtain that which you are seeking.²⁵

Rabbi Brav recalled in his memoirs that this statement took him totally by surprise. He was now well aware that he would never become Senior Rabbi of Rockdale Temple. He wrote, "I was offended by such lack of confidence on the part of significant lay leaders."²⁶ He considered making a public issue out of the Board's recommendation. However, Rabbi Brav ultimately decided that he did not wish to remain in a place where a significant part of the leadership did not respect him or his rabbinic leadership.

The overall problem was Rabbi Brav's insistence on change and movement towards tradition. Rockdale Temple was not ready to abandon its classical roots and embrace the evolving nature of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Brav's rabbinate forced the congregants to come face to face with this issue. Due to their attitude at the time, removing Rabbi Brav was easier than instituting change. Rabbi Brav proved this to the congregation as he continued to push the community even after receiving these sentiments from the Board. In January of 1953, Rabbi Brav delivered a sermon entitled, *Going Forward or Backward*: "...WE in reform have evidence of a certain type of orthodoxy in our own ranks. There are some people who imagine that Reform can only be the Reform that was sanctioned by Isaac Mayer Wise prior to fifty years ago...If you do not go forward, you fall behind."²⁷

By the Spring of 1954, with the reorganization of the Religious School that was directly in opposition to Rabbi Brav's vision for the congregation he realized that his time

²⁵ Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. November 16, 1952.

²⁶ *Dawn of Reckoning* 196.

²⁷ American Jewish Archives: Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection Number 152, Folder 10.

at Rockdale Temple was coming to a close. There was still the question though of what to do upon leaving K.K. Bene Israel. He enjoyed Cincinnati and his wife's family lived there. After careful consideration, he decided to undertake the founding of a new and progressive congregation, one that would meet the needs of the "new" Reform Jew. He had been speaking to some members of Rockdale Temple expressing his belief that there was a need for Reform Judaism in what was at that time, the far northern suburbs of Cincinnati. Why not look into forming a new congregation there? Rabbi Brav was well aware of the potential personal and professional dangers in doing so. He approached two young men, Arnold L. Beck²⁸ and Leonard Seligman,²⁹ who were members of Rockdale Temple and asked them to canvas friends "to discover if the formation of a new liberal congregation in the northern suburbs during the months ahead was within the realm of practicality."³⁰ It took only a few days for the men to report to Rabbi Brav that if he would publicly resign his post for the purpose of founding a new congregation, some fifty or sixty families would join the new congregation before the coming High Holidays in September of 1954.³¹

Rabbi Brav did not hesitate to act on the men's recommendation. On July 1, 1954 he submitted his letter of resignation to the President of the congregation, which also appeared in the American Israelite on July 8th. He wrote:

I herewith submit to the Board of Trustees my resignation as Rabbi...I shall always be grateful for the privilege of teaching Judaism in one of the historic citadels of its American expression. My continued prayers shall be that the Congregation's future will equal and surpass its illustrious past...The call to help establish and develop a new liberal congregation...and to serve as its rabbi is a spiritual challenge and opportunity I feel that I cannot resist...All of us eager to

²⁸ Arnold L. Beck served as Temple Sholom's first President from 1954-1955.

²⁹ Leonard Seligman served as Temple Sholom's second President from 1955-1957.

³⁰ *Dawn of Reckoning* 199.

³¹ *Ibid*

encourage the growth of Progressive Judaism must welcome this enterprise with open arms and hearts. Most sincerely I invite Bene Israel's generous response—also Ben Yeshurun's—as the frontiers of our people's faith are advanced.³²

With the resignation of Rabbi Brav and his immediate intention of forming a new congregation with fifty or sixty families from the existing membership of Rockdale Temple, there was a danger of hard feelings. The process of a congregation splitting is referred to as “religious schism.” The breaking off of members from Rockdale Temple is a classic example of this phenomenon. Usually, the group leaves under difficult and spiteful circumstances,³³ however, this process for the Rockdale Temple was different; there was no real upheaval. Due to the fact that the fifty families leaving Rockdale were comprised of the younger, less affluent members who were interested in the new trends of Reform Judaism, Rockdale Temple as a whole was unconcerned about their departure. The congregation remained fiscally viable and well attended without these constituents.

Rockdale Temple welcomed and supported the break off to form a new congregation because it alleviated Rockdale's concern of having to alter its ideology. In fact, upon Rabbi Brav's resignation he received word from the Rockdale Temple Board that it would continue to pay his salary, housing allowance and pension fund payments for the first year of his service to the newly formed synagogue. Rabbi Brav responded to this generous offer with gratitude and wrote a letter of thanks to the president in which he commended Rockdale Temple for its “understanding [and] cooperation in the work of

³² Minutes. Special Meeting of K.K. Bene Israel Trustees. July 6, 1954. For the whole document see Appendix Document 3.

³³ Phil Zuckerman. *Strife in the Sanctuary: Religious Schism in a Jewish Community*. (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1999) 11.

advancing Liberal Judaism,"³⁴ of which he was a part. Rabbi Brav looked forward to a continued friendship and relationship with K.K. Bene Israel in his future endeavor.

From the beginning, Rabbi Brav's intention was to minimize any negative impact that this split would have on the Jewish community of Cincinnati. His sincere wish was to keep positive relations between all congregations, old and new. He recalled in his memoir, "something new was being offered, and from the beginning peaceful relationships with the long-established temples and synagogues was a key policy. I convinced old friends and acquaintances to remain where their roots were already deep and firm."³⁵ Even the name of the new congregation, a temple of peace, stated Rabbi Brav's intentions clearly. It was one of many Temple Sholom's that arose in peace in the period of religious growth in the 1950s.

³⁴ Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. September 9, 1954. For the whole document see Appendix Document 4.

³⁵ *Dawn of Reckoning* 203.

CHAPTER TWO

1954-1972: Rabbi Stanley R. Brav, "Beloved Rabbi"

The early years 1954-1957: From Roselawn to Longmeadow Lane

Without a space of its own, the newly formed Congregation Sholom held its first parlor meeting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Seligman. After welcoming remarks by the hosts, Rabbi Stanley Brav gave an opening prayer and everyone present introduced themselves. The twenty-six people who attended this first meeting desired to create such a congregation that was located in the upcoming Jewish residential areas and that would have a capped membership in order to keep the congregation small and promote community and understanding.¹ But the founders of Temple Sholom wanted more than to just meet the needs of the families who had moved to the northern suburbs of Cincinnati. According to these charter members, the older sister congregations in the area were doing fine in perpetuating Classical Reform Judaism. Therefore, they sought to make Temple Sholom, "the new liberal Jewish congregation in Cincinnati," which was to be the home for Reform Jews who were looking for more tradition than Classical Reform had to offer. The changes included the use of prayer shawls on the bima, *B'nei Mitzvot* for the children, expanding Hebrew in the service and participatory congregational singing.²

In addition, these twenty-six people read a letter that had been distributed throughout the Jewish community explaining the new congregation's goals, answering

¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. July 14, 1954.

² Ibid

major questions and attempting to reach out to the unaffiliated Jews in the community.³ It was also explained to those present that the necessary papers were filed with the Ohio Secretary of State naming Arnold Beck, William Maxwell⁴, Carl Rubin⁵, and Leonard Seligman as incorporators of the new congregation.⁶

Of special concern in that first meeting were the related issues of location and finances. Because finances were limited, Temple Sholom was unable to find a suitable building in the growing Jewish residential area of Amberley Village, which was their ultimate goal. They considered existing buildings in nearby Roselawn as viable alternatives since there was still a considerable Jewish population there.⁷

They also decided at this meeting that congregational dues could be no higher than those of the other two Reform congregations in town. This decision was necessary for the survival of the new congregation in a community where there were many alternatives. This limitation of dues would remain true throughout the history of Temple Sholom.⁸

As the last order of business at this initial meeting, the twenty-six young people, all of whom were ex-Rockdale members, friends of the Beck's and Seligman's and supporters of Brav, unanimously elected Arnold Beck as chairman of the Temporary Planning Committee. They also named the following officers to serve with Arnold Beck until the first general meeting of the congregation in September: Vice Chairman, Leonard Seligman; Secretary, William Maxwell; and Treasurer, Carl Rubin.⁹

³ See Appendix Document 5

⁴ William Maxwell served as President of Temple Sholom from 1959-1961.

⁵ Carl Rubin was the first Treasurer of Temple Sholom from 1954-1956.

⁶ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. July 14, 1954.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

Upon hearing that the Secretary of State responded positively and granted the charter for the new congregation, the founding members of Temple Sholom continued to hold parlor meetings and sought to recruit new members. Reaction to the publicity in the *American Israelite*¹⁰ had been overwhelmingly positive. Fifty to sixty people had contacted the new leaders for membership information. A number of committees were formed including a Membership Committee and a Housing Committee.¹¹

Under the guidance of the Temporary Planning Committee, these new committees worked diligently to increase membership and locate a congregational home before the first scheduled service on September 10, 1954. According to the Housing Committee, an unused Lutheran church located at 7471 Ross Avenue, near Section Road in Roselawn, was the only possible site found for the new congregation. Temple Sholom purchased the Lutheran Church for \$11,000; the building provided a place, albeit a bit small, for the new congregation to pray together and hold religious school classes, as well as conduct social and business affairs. However, due to the building's small size and anticipated large number of worshippers, the congregation held its first Friday evening service on September 10, 1954, and its High Holiday Services, in the Chapel of the Hebrew Union College¹².

By August of the same year, the Membership Committee reported that sixty-four families had joined Temple Sholom. Additional committees had been established

¹⁰ *American Israelite*. July 8, 1954. The *American Israelite* is a weekly journal established in Cincinnati, Ohio, in July of 1854, by Isaac Mayer Wise under the title of "The Israelite." It was founded with two objectives: (1) to propagate the principles of Reform Judaism; and (2) to keep the Israelites that lived—often singly or in communities of two or three families, in the numerous small towns of the United States—in touch with Jewish affairs, thus contributing to save them to Judaism. "The American Israelite" has always advocated progressive Judaism while planting itself on the platform of Americanism. (Source: www.jewishencyclopedia.com)

¹¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. July 14, 1954.

¹² Ibid

including a Cemetery Committee, a Men's Club, a Sisterhood and a Community Council Committee. These new committees had little money to work with, for the finances of the congregation were tight. Collecting the \$11,000 necessary to buy the building on Ross Avenue left the congregation with little in its bank account.¹³

Although they did not have enough money, Temple Sholom was still in need of cemetery facilities. Thus, they turned to the United Jewish Cemetery, an organization who for more than a hundred years had served the needs of the city's established liberal congregations. In the United Jewish Cemetery's Articles of Agreement, a provision had been made that, in the event a new Reform temple should be organized in Cincinnati, it would have the right to buy into the Cemetery as an equal owner at one third of the current property-value. Since Temple Sholom could not afford even this, the cemetery association gave the front slopes of its Ludlow Avenue property, in Clifton, exclusively to the members of Temple Sholom. The association also relieved Temple Sholom of all the burdens of upkeep and the responsibilities of management involved until they were in better fiscal condition.¹⁴ This was not the first time that the community extended its arms to the new congregation. Rockdale Temple continued to pay Rabbi Brav's salary during the first year of his appointment at Temple Sholom and Hebrew Union College opened its doors for the congregation to hold services. This relationship with the community

¹³ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. August 10, 1954.

¹⁴Rabbi Stanley R. Brav. *Temple Sholom 1954-1964: 10th Anniversary Souvenir, A Personal Memoir*. Today, the situation regarding the United Jewish Cemetery continues to be the same. The members of Temple Sholom still have the property granted to them on Ludlow Avenue and if they wish to purchase plots they may do so. But the congregation as a whole does not have the financial burden of upkeep. In return, the cemetery receives all of the money generated from the sales of plots and Temple Sholom has no financial gain.

reflects the amicable break off from Rockdale and the need for a more progressive Reform synagogue in Cincinnati.¹⁵

1954 continued to be a busy and exciting time in the life of the temple. The temple held open houses for new members, who were interested in joining the new congregation. At this point Temple Sholom was drawing its membership from the unaffiliated Jews who were unable to find a spiritual home in the existing Classical Reform synagogues.

The Dedication of Temple Sholom

Although no services were to be held until Friday, September 10, 1954, on the first of that month, Rabbi Stanley Brav officially assumed his position as Rabbi of Temple Sholom. He wrote:

On this historic day when Temple Sholom is formally united with its Rabbi, I speak my fervent prayer that God may guide us all and bring us a full measure of blessing in the exhilarating spiritual adventure upon which we are embarked. I would like, personally, to greet each man, woman and child in our Congregation: *hazak v'ematz*—"Be strong, and of good courage and cheer!" The foundations of our congregation are soundly and solidly laid. We have only to build upon them wisely, with vision, and in the spirit of our wonderful name, Sholom—"Peace!"¹⁶

The first official function of Temple Sholom was a congregational meeting on Wednesday evening, September 8, 1954, which was held at the newly acquired building at 7471 Ross Avenue. During the meeting, members elected officers and determined policies.¹⁷ The Board decided not to limit membership at this time and that if necessary two services for the High Holidays in the same or different buildings could be conducted this year only. Although it was not necessary to have two different services, this policy

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Typed Letter sent to the Congregation. Rabbi Stanley R. Brav. Temple Sholom Archives. September 1, 1954.

¹⁷ See the *American Israelite* August 12, 1954.

established the precedent that Temple Sholom was to be a congregation that prayed together. It was important to the congregation that their size be one in which they could truly be a sharing community. Their aim was to celebrate everything together as one large, extended family. Ultimately, their goal was to never be separate for services on the High Holidays or any other festival. Yet, the size of the building on Ross Avenue hindered this goal, as it forced the congregation to rent the Roselawn Public School for the school year of 1954-1955 in order to have enough classroom space for their Religious School. Again, the Board pledged that this scenario would only be for one year. It was already necessary to search for new space.¹⁸

The fall and winter of that year remained busy, with the High Holidays, continuous meetings and social events. Temple Sholom was admitted into the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in November.¹⁹ However, the culminating event took place on January 20 and 21, 1955 with the official dedication ceremony of Temple Sholom at the Hotel Alms. The entire community participated in the dedication ceremony. Professor Sylvan Schwartzman of the Hebrew Union College served as toastmaster. Rabbi Samuel Wohl of the Isaac Mayer Wise Temple provided the invocation. Mr. Arnold Beck, President of Temple Sholom welcomed the guests. Greetings came from the Honorable Carl W. Rich, Mayor of Cincinnati; Dr. Leon Saks, President of the Ohio Valley Region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Reverend B. Bruce Whittemore, Executive Secretary of the council of Churches of

¹⁸ Rabbi Stanley R. Brav. *Dawn of Reckoning: Self-Portrait of a Liberal Rabbi*. (Cincinnati: Temple Sholom Press, 1971) 205.

¹⁹ The Union for Reform Judaism (formally named the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) is the central body of the Reform Movement in North America. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise founded it in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1873. The Union has grown from an initial membership of 34 congregations in 28 cities to more than 900 congregations in the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and the

Greater Cincinnati; and Dr. Victor Reichert of Rockdale Temple. The Dedicatory Address came for Professor Jacob Rader Marcus, Director of the American Jewish Archives. Dr. Nelson Glueck, President of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion installed Rabbi Brav as the first Rabbi of Temple Sholom. The evening ended with a benediction from Rabbi Fishel J. Goldfeder of Congregation Adath Israel.²⁰ The dedication ceremony was truly a community wide celebration ceremony.

Unprecedented in many communities, the Jews of Cincinnati welcomed a third Reform congregation into the city that evening. The two sister Reform congregations, Rockdale and Wise clearly did not see Temple Sholom as a threat. In all likelihood they expected the new temple to draw from a different population than that which they served. The older temples published greetings and good wishes in the *American Israelite* and each presented the congregation with a Sefer Torah. The Wise Brotherhood presented the Temple with a hand crafted *Ner Tamid* (eternal light). The founding members of Temple Sholom desired the friendship and cooperation of all the existing congregations and they truly received it.

Education as a Priority

Less than five months after the first service, Temple Sholom was in full swing. The Adult Education Committee announced a Temple Sholom "College of Jewish Studies" under the direction of Rabbi Brav.²¹ Rabbi Brav taught Hebrew as well as contemporary topics. This was an important step in the formation of the Temple; for according to the first letter sent to the community, two of the six founding principles

Virgin Islands. It is the largest Jewish movement in North America and represents an estimated 1.5 million Jews. (source: www.urj.org/about.shtml)

²⁰ Dedication Program of Temple Sholom. Dedication Dinner. January 20, 1955.

²¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. January 4, 1955.

included education of adults. One principle specified that the new Temple intended to create a positive, progressive Jewish educational program for adults as well as children. The other principle stated that the members wished to create a community in which the rabbi would be close to each family and its needs, as well as teach from the pulpit rather than preach from the pulpit.²² The spirit behind the founding principles was the driving force behind many of the programs created at Temple Sholom. Even today, many of the programs revolve around education, as the Adult Education Committee continues to thrive by bringing in speakers and holding monthly adult education programs.

Not only did the adult education programs thrive, but the religious school was very successful as well, serving nearly two hundred children. Temple Sholom's religious school began with a full program for kindergarten through twelfth grade. Along with other synagogue members, Rabbi Brav's three daughters taught in the religious school. Rabbi Brav served as principal, led the music and worship programs, taught advanced Hebrew and instructed the high school grades and confirmation classes. Rabbi Brav was able to institute the intensive Hebrew program that he had desired at Rockdale, for Temple Sholom gave him the freedom that Rockdale had withheld. In fact, Rabbi Brav's reputation of a pedagogue helped the school grow quickly. Soon the small building on Ross Avenue could not contain the school.²³

The Cincinnati Board of Education allowed Temple Sholom to use the Roselawn Public School for its Saturday morning religious school. Because of the congregation's desire to pray together, Temple Sholom pledged to move the Religious School to a different facility as soon as possible. Less than a full year in operation the

²² See Appendix Document 5

members of Temple Sholom were already outgrowing their building. Pressure was building from outside and within the community to create a space large enough to house the religious school and worship services. Some of the pressure from within the community came from the Jewish Community Relations Committee of Cincinnati²⁴ of which Rabbi Brav was a member. Having battled earlier for the separation of church and state, the JCRC felt that Sholom's use of public school property on Saturday for religious school purposes compromised its position. The leadership of Temple Sholom reasoned with the members of the JCRC by calling attention to the fact that the religious school was only welcomed on an "emergency" basis and were already starting a search for their own school.²⁵

Quest for New Space

With the tension burning in the minds of the members and the JCRC pushing for Temple Sholom to leave Roselawn Public School, the Board of Trustees was unanimously given the authority to investigate new property on February 22, 1955.

Over the next few months, two special committees were formed: one committee for land procurement and one committee for land fundraising. Carl Rubin headed the Land Procurement Committee, and the Land Fundraising Committee was co-chaired by Harris Tash and Bud Rattner.²⁶ On August 9, 1955, the Land Acquisition Committee reported that they were confining their search to a small area in Amberley Village—one

²³ Stanley R. Brav. *Dawn of Reckoning: Self-Portrait of a Liberal Rabbi*. (Cincinnati: Sholom Press, 1971) 205.

²⁴ Today, the Jewish Community Relations Committee is part of the Jewish Federation and renamed the Jewish Community Relations Council. The mission of the JCRC is to protect Jewish security, recognizing that Jewish security depends on a just society for all. To achieve its mission, the JCRC works on a broad range of local, national, and international issues, including Israel and the Middle East, jeopardy in other countries, antisemitism, civil rights and civil liberties, inter-group relations, and cults and missionary activities.

²⁵ *Dawn of Reckoning* 205.

roughly bounded by Seymour Avenue, Paddock Road, Ridge Road and Galbraith Road. The Land Fundraising Committee reported that the committee was certain that \$25,000 to \$35,000 could be raised without real difficulty among the congregants if the land were found. Chairman Tash also announced that Nathan Gilbert²⁷ was assembling layouts of Temples for future consideration and that Bud Rattner²⁸ was working on a brochure to begin active fund raising.²⁹

After focusing on the area recommended above, the Land Acquisition Committee was ready to present the congregants of the Temple with a specific piece of property in Amberley Village. Building a temple in Amberley Village, which was a growing Jewish residential area, had always been the ultimate goal of Sholom. The location of this property marked another significant step in Temple Sholom's fulfillment of its original charter.

A congregational meeting was called for December 6, 1955 in which 159 people attended. Carl Rubin, Chairman of the Land Acquisition Committee gave a detailed report endorsed by the committee in which he stated, "Bearing in mind that problems will exist after the purchase of this tract, and that certain disadvantages will remain, it is the unanimous opinion of the Land Acquisition Committee that the tract in question be purchased and that, in accordance with the charter of Temple Sholom, a suitable place of worship and Sunday school be erected thereon at the earliest possible time." Among the problems and disadvantages discussed were the accessibility of the new location and the additional costs associated with the proper leveling and drainage needed to make the land

²⁶ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. July 6, 1955.

²⁷ Nathan Gilbert served on the Board of Trustees during this time.

²⁸ Bud Rattner served on the Board of Trustees during this time.

²⁹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. August 9, 1955

suitable for building. The decision to purchase the land was adopted by a vote of 123 for, 11 against and 25 abstaining³⁰. A new building for Temple Sholom was in the horizon.

In April of 1956, the tract of land in Amberley village was purchased for \$38,000. A campaign to raise \$200,000 in order to build a new sanctuary and religious school on the land was well on its way. Members were asked to contribute two percent of their annual income as a minimum annual contribution to the fund.³¹ The congregation hired the firm of George F. Schatz and Associates to construct an architectural design for the proposed new building. The hope of the congregation was to break ground for the new building on March 1, 1957.

1957-1967 A New Sanctuary

The driving force behind the new Temple Sholom building was the idea that the synagogue should fulfill a triple function, that of a House of Prayer, a House of Study and a House of Assembly.³² The building envisioned was one reflective of the times; for the decades of the 1940's and 50's saw a mass migration of Jews moving from the city to the suburbs. This migration also saw with it the building of synagogues that included educational and recreational facilities.³³ Temple Sholom's new building was to be a contemporary synagogue, which filled the idea that the synagogue was to be a place of gathering and prayer. This new synagogue was to be situated on the corner of Ridge Road and Longmeadow Lane in suburban Amberley Village.

³⁰ Minutes. Temple Sholom Congregational Meeting. December 6, 1955.

³¹ Fund Raising Brochure 1956.

³² Dr. Abraham Kampf. "The Synagogue." *Recent American Synagogue Architecture*. Ed. Richard Meier. (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1963) 11.

³³ Arthur A. Goren. "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945-1955." *The American Jewish Experience*. Ed. Jonathan D. Sarna. (New York: Homes & Meier, 1986) 294-311.

Although the land was purchased, a problem arose when applying for a building permit. For the Village of Amberley, named after the beautiful countryside town of Amberley, England, claimed that it valued its suburban atmosphere and was therefore hesitant to allow business or institutions into the area.³⁴ Although Rabbi Brav recalls, "even a Catholic parochial school had been dissuaded from locating there," community sentiments against the Jewish congregation were even more negative. "Protests now came to the Village Council against granting a building-permit for the liberal synagogue that had presumptuously invaded the cherished peace and serenity of the suburban neighborhood."³⁵ After hearing about Temple Sholom's plan to build a sanctuary, the Village of Amberley introduced an ordinance specifying that, "churches shall not include facilities for food service, athletic and/or social activities not directly connected with religious worship."³⁶ This ordinance was suggested by non-Jewish residents of Amberley Village who were concerned that the new synagogue would encourage even more Jews to move into the area.

A public hearing on March 20, 1958 heard arguments for and against the new ordinance. The Cincinnati Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Congress, and the Cincinnati Council of Churches lent their support to the congregation and its attorney. At the hearing one village resident appeared with a list of forty residents who desired to welcome Temple Sholom publicly to the area. Following this, a former councilman of Amberley Village proposed to circulate a petition on the Temple's behalf. On April 14th the ordinance was unanimously rescinded and a new liberalized ordinance enacted,

³⁴ Kerstine, Richard S. Chairman, Book Committee. *Amberley Village: Its History and Its People*. (Amberley Village: The Village of Amberley Village, 1990).

³⁵ Rabbi Stanley R. Brav. *Temple Sholom 1954-1964: 10th Anniversary Souvenir, A Personal Memoir*.

³⁶ Ordinance of Amberley Village February 10, 1958.

confirming Sholom's building permit. The opposition melted quickly because of the significant number of Jews who were already residents in Amberley Village.³⁷ Temple Sholom had permission to build its new place of worship. In its fight against this ordinance of Amberley Village, Temple Sholom paved the way for the subsequent relocation of its sister congregations, Rockdale Temple and Wise Temple to Ridge Road. Both Rockdale and Wise eventually realized that Rabbi Brav's vision in establishing a suburban center was necessary for the continued survival of Cincinnati Reform Jewry.

Financial Trouble

With the legal issue resolved, the plans for the synagogue were well under way. The members of Temple Sholom were dreaming of a new building and the architect had plans drawn up; however, the dreams of the congregation were fading. Letters went out encouraging members to give to the building fund. A bond program was set up that would allow members to give money over a five-year period. However, according to the sub-committee on bond sales the temple was unsure how it was going to pay back the bonds. The committee concluded that, "while every effort should be made to follow sound business financing principles, this was not and could not be the sole consideration in building a temple."³⁸ The members had a vision and knew that their new business endeavor of selling bonds was risky. They understood that they were extending themselves beyond their present ability to pay. Furthermore, they concluded that in order to meet their obligations they would acquire new members as quickly as possible, still keeping in mind that the overall membership needed to be kept within a reasonable

³⁷Rabbi Stanley R. Brav. *Temple Sholom 1954-1964: 10th Anniversary Souvenir, A Personal Memoir*.

³⁸ Progress Report on the Sub-committee on Bond Sales. Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. January 8, 1957.

number. The ideal was to try and solicit the maximum pledges from these new members and collect every pledge as scheduled, from both the old and new members.³⁹

Even with this plan in place however, the dreams and visions to build a new synagogue struggled to take shape fiscally. Originally, the congregation's hope was to break ground in March 1957; yet two months later, there was still not enough money to begin construction. At the May Board of Trustees meeting, Harris Tash stated that he was planning a full reorganization of the fund raising plan and would try a fresh attack of the problems involved. In describing the Fund Raising Committee's financial situation, Tash pointed out that in 1956, 28 of the pre-September members had not as of yet made pledges, 21 of the post-September members had not made pledges, and that 21 of the members had still not made payments on the pledges that they had made.⁴⁰

Entering the new year of 1958, the financial situation of Temple Sholom still seemed rather bleak. The congregation had only raised about half of the \$200,000 needed to break ground for the nine schoolrooms and meeting hall that would comprise the original building of the new Temple Sholom. The members were looking for a miracle. This miracle occurred when restaurant chain owner David Frisch⁴¹ presented a

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ David Frisch 1902-1970: Born in 1902, Frisch began life as the ninth of ten children of a West End restaurateur. When Frisch was eight, the family moved to Norwood, where he sold newspapers and helped in his father's restaurant. He dropped out of school in his teens to work full time at the restaurant, but was encouraged by his father to return to get his diploma. He finally did so at 21, graduating in 1923 as president of his senior class.

That same year, his father died and Frisch took over the restaurant. Frisch continued to open and close restaurants over the years. In 1938, one attempt ended in bankruptcy. In 1946, Frisch visited one of his brothers near Los Angeles and met a restaurateur named Bob Wian who had the innovative idea to make double-decker hamburgers to reduce cooking time and increase the service speed. Frisch signed an agreement with Wian to sell the "Big Boy" in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Florida.

In 1947, Frisch issued his first franchise to operate a Big Boy restaurant to his brother. Over the years, Frisch amassed a fortune and became well known for his extensive philanthropic activities in Cincinnati and elsewhere, both through Frisch's Restaurants and the David Frisch Foundation. In 1963, the City of Hope, a non-profit research hospital near Los Angeles, named him Humanitarian of the Year. His

\$100,000 pledge that would allow the first phase of construction to begin. In his memoirs Rabbi Brav recalls:

Then it was discovered that one of our earliest members who had scarcely made a personal appearance in our midst was just about to set up a philanthropic foundation with the considerable fortune he had been amassing. I was asked to put before him the financial problem of our building program and its opportunities—was it on the very day that he was contemplating the initial large donation that his foundation would make? David Frisch heard me out patiently for fifteen or twenty minutes and then inquired, “How much money will you need, Rabbi?” I took a deep breath before saying \$100,000—at that time an unheard of sum for a single religious congregation of any denomination in our area. Without a moment’s hesitation, Mr. Frisch responded in his quiet, almost embarrassed manner, “I think that can be arranged, Rabbi.”

That was a unique thrill, as if an angel from on high had been incarnated to advance our cause. For with those words the erection of Frisch Hall was immediately activated, and it served to inspire further gifts that enabled our school structure to be reared without delay.⁴²

With David Frisch’s pledge and the other pledges it inspired, the temple secured a bank loan on February 14. On May 11, 1958 the ground breaking ceremony took place and eight months later, on October 5, 1958, approximately 275 members of Temple Sholom gathered in dedication of their new spiritual home as the cornerstone of Frisch Hall was laid. Once again, because of monetary reasons there was a setback. Frisch Hall was built as the first phase of construction, but there was no money to build the classrooms. After some more fundraising, the proposed classroom wing could be built and by October of 1959, one year later, the new auditorium and classrooms were complete. The hard work and dedication of so many men and women came to fruition.

lesser-known acts of kindness included regularly donating boxes of shirts to local orphanages and donating the first non-oxygen incubator to Jewish Hospital. Frisch died at age 67 in 1970. (Source: www.cincypost.com/living/1999/frisch082499.html)

⁴² *Dawn of Reckoning* 207.

A new suburban congregation appeared twelve miles from Cincinnati proper in Amberley village.⁴³

Although the congregation was still without a "proper" sanctuary, the auditorium served as both a place of worship and a meeting hall. The classrooms allowed the religious school the ability to move out of the Roselawn public schools and the congregation continued to bustle and grow. The building was formally dedicated over the weekend of February 5-7, 1960.

Social Action

With a new building in place, the leaders of the congregation were now able to turn some of their energies toward developing community activities and committees. There were active committees in the areas of religious school education, adult education, youth group, ritual and choir, publicity, landscaping, cemetery and social action. In examining the work of the social action committee, which had a difficult relationship with the Temple Board and the Education Committee, which had a very positive relationship with the Board, it is possible to gain an understanding of committees in general during this time period at Temple Shalom.

According to the October 4, 1960 Board Minutes, had been making plans to form the first liberal Jewish social action committee in Cincinnati. The temple did not create the social action committee, called the Public Affairs Committee, to enter into partisan politics. Rather, with Rabbi Brav's blessing and direction it created the committee to

⁴³ See Appendix Document 6 for picture

study social problems on behalf of the congregation and then create proposals for action.⁴⁴

At the November 1960 Board Meeting, the Board passed a motion that gave the Public Affairs Committee a seat on the Board. However, the Board also said that the Public Affairs Committee **must** "report back to the board at the earliest possible meeting, with an outline of the basic objectives and guiding principle and mode of operation, prior to undertaking any substantive action." Interest in the committee among congregants turned out to be poor; however some programs continued to be planned by the small cadre of committee members. The Public Affairs Committee held its first official program on Friday, March 3rd, 1961 (six months after talks began to create the committee). The program consisted of an abbreviated service followed by a discussion on "Religion in the Public Schools."⁴⁵

While Temple Sholom was the first in the city to officially create a social action committee, only a minority of its congregants participated actively in the committee or attended committee sponsored programs in the synagogue. While social action was on the agenda of Rabbi Brav and some of the congregants, it was not a focal point of the Temple; this despite the fact that the 1960's was an era of growing social awareness and that Rabbi Brav had participated in the fight for civil rights and the anti-war movement. Temple Sholom was not one of the institutions vastly changed, challenged or reshaped by the "turbulent sixties" as described by Jack Wertheimer's article of the same title.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. October 4, 1960.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Jack Wertheimer. "The Turbulent Sixties." *The American Jewish Experience*. Ed. Jonathan D. Sarna. (New York: Homes & Meier, 1986) 330-347.

It seemed that there was always strife between the Board and the Public Affairs Committee. At the June 26, 1962 Board Meeting, the Board took action against the Public Affairs Committee. They mandated that the Board preview all subjects about which the Public Affairs Committee would write and discuss. Furthermore, they banned all committees from expressing controversial ideas and opinions in the *Voice of Sholom* [the Temple newsletter]; these privileges would now be limited to only the rabbi and Temple president.⁴⁷ Although Temple Sholom was the most socially liberal and progressive synagogue in Cincinnati, its membership was still quite conservative. In fact, Cincinnati as a whole tended to hold quite conservative political views. At this point in its young life, the membership of Temple Sholom was afraid to drastically away from the mainstream conservative trends of the city.⁴⁸

The biggest battle between the Board and the Public Affairs Committee took place in 1963 when some of the congregants wished to attend the "March on Washington" on August 28th, 1963, and use the Temple's name. Ultimately the Board gave permission for the 20 congregant's attending to use Temple Sholom's name.

Throughout the sixties, the Public Affairs Committee struggled to grow within the larger community of Temple Sholom. In July of 1964, the committee went on hiatus. Nothing appears in the Board Minutes until February of 1965, when the members of the committee once again looked to the congregation for support. In March of 1965, the committee sent a letter to the members of the congregation inviting them to participate in the committee's work.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. November 6, 1963.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. February 10, 1965.

In July of 1967, another significant conflict occurred between the Public Affairs Committee and the Board. The committee had approached the Board to request funds for the mentally retarded people in the community. Not only did the Board deny this request, but they ended the discussion with a statement by the president of the Temple, Bernard Doctor⁵⁰ who said that the "Public Affairs Committee does not necessarily speak for Temple Sholom."⁵¹

With almost no support from the Board, the Public Affairs Committee of Temple Sholom nearly ceased to exist and by October of 1969, only one person remained on the committee. Struggling for survival, the Public Affairs Committee turned to the youth of the congregation and entered a new phase, one that would become more successful in the next decade.

Religious School and Worship

The Religious School Education Committee of the 1960's had a very different relationship with the Board of Trustees of Temple Sholom. Starting with 193 children in 1954, by 1963 there were over 450. The Religious School was one of the major financial lifelines of the temple and therefore, its committee chair and committee members were well respected. In 1963 and 1964 the board gave the committee unconditional support in hiring staff for the Religious School, which had previously been run by Rabbi Brav and volunteers.⁵²

⁵⁰ Bernard Doctor served as President of Temple Sholom from 1965-1967.

⁵¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. July 6, 1966.

⁵² Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. November 6, 1963.

When disagreements arose between the Religious School Committee and the Board,⁵³ the committee usually resolved the matter with the support and direction of Rabbi Brav. The committee worked hard and tirelessly to recruit, maintain and educate the youth of Temple Sholom and for the most part enjoyed the full support of the Board.

While people attended committee meetings and community activities in the 1960's attendance at worship services remained quite low. At the 1963 Congregational meeting, Rabbi Brav spoke of the "Sabbath Dilemma." He wrote, "I confess that I dared hope nine years ago that our new congregation would set a glowing example to our community and to Jews everywhere in Sabbath observance and in Sabbath attendance at worship services. I still cherish this dream."⁵⁴

However, Rabbi Brav's dream would not come to fruition during his tenure. In terms of synagogue worship, Temple Sholom was a product of the times. Theodore Lenn conducted a study that found that a vast majority of Reform congregants did not consider themselves religious,⁵⁵ and therefore did not attend their synagogues for religious services but rather for the social and educational programs that they offered. This was true for the congregants of Temple Sholom as well, and although this apathy toward

⁵³Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. October 3, 1961. A discussion took place regarding the distribution of students between Saturday and Sunday. Because the school was so large it was split between the two days. The safety of the parking lot was also an issue. It was suggested that the parking lot be marked with clear lines and that a policeman be on the lot on Sundays.

Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. October 6, 1964. A discussion took place regarding a suggestion by the Committee that there be no smoking or chewing gum during sessions either by teachers or students.

Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. September 19, 1967. A discussion took place regarding limiting the size of the Religious School Committee since there was little cooperation the previous year with a larger Committee.

Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. November 11, 1969. A discussion took place regarding requiring a boy to sign a pledge before his *Bar Mitzvah* that he would continue his Jewish education through Confirmation.

⁵⁴ Minutes. Temple Sholom Annual Congregational Meeting. June 12, 1963.

⁵⁵ Theodore Lenn and associates. *American Reform Judaism: A Study Commissioned by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Part II.* (West Hartford: CCAR, 1971).

services plagued the temple and Rabbi Brav, he would continue to struggle and fight for higher service attendance until his retirement.⁵⁶

With participation in religious services at an all time low, it was doubtful that the second phase of construction, the building of a permanent sanctuary, would begin. However, ten years into its life, Temple Sholom found a renewed interest; perhaps it was the ten-year anniversary celebration that gave the congregation the fervor to begin actively planning for their sanctuary. Prior to the congregational meeting on June 8, 1965 during which the plans for the new sanctuary would be discussed, Rabbi Brav wrote in the Temple newsletter, "we either advance or retreat; progress or regress."⁵⁷ With his urging, the congregation chose to progress. In the Fall of 1965, after having paid off the mortgage for Frisch Hall and the existing classrooms, the congregation again embarked on a capital campaign with the goal of raising enough money to construct a sanctuary, library and rabbi's study.⁵⁸

The fact that the congregants of Temple Sholom were so willing to embark again on the quest of fundraising goes to the heart of their mission and goal. For many said, that although the building of Ross Avenue was only a memory, they recalled its intimacy and yearned to pray in the same way again. Up until this point, the congregation had been worshipping in the multi-purpose room of Frisch Hall. The space was expansive, the seats were uncomfortable and it looked and felt as though the congregants were praying in a community center rather than in an intimate sanctuary. Everyone agreed that

⁵⁶ In Rabbi Brav's report dated June 1962 (found in the Minutes of Congregational Meeting June 1962) he emotionally wrote, "One principle ambition of mine remains to be implemented—beyond the ultimate erection of our completed building, namely, to have Temple Sholom become—for every family in our membership—the most religiously worshipful Congregation in the land, Sabbath after Sabbath; for from that alone will come the countless spiritual blessings to which I aspire for each man, woman and child in our midst."

⁵⁷ *The Voice of Sholom*. May 1965.

the building of a warm, and beautiful sanctuary was bound to result in increased congregational participation at worship services.⁵⁹

While the dream of building a warm, friendly and intimate sanctuary was in place, the ability to make it a reality was difficult. Once again the congregation had trouble financing their building plans. Since 1961 the congregation had been on a "self-assessment dues plan" where based on an income dues chart scale, everyone fixed his or her own dues. The plan worked better than cynics would imagine, but some congregants did not assess themselves at the appropriate level. Therefore, dues did not provide enough income for the congregation to make the necessary repairs on the existing building and save for the new construction. In response, a special congregational meeting was called in April of 1962, where the congregation initiated a building fund assessment program that would raise all members' financial contributions to Sholom and hopefully help the financial situation of the temple.

Even with the building fund assessment of 1962, it took four and a half more years to raise enough money to break ground new sanctuary. Still, the only delay on construction was lack of money. In 1965, the members of the synagogue called on Rabbi Brav once again to approach a congregant and appeal for the needed funds, something he had not done since he asked David Frisch for \$100,000. Unfortunately, he was unable to secure a pledge; thus, the congregation had to go to the bank for a loan. The congregation decided to pursue a loan from the bank because the Board members felt that

⁵⁸ *Dawn of Reckoning* 209.

⁵⁹ Minutes. Special Congregational Meeting. April 1962.

waiting until they had the money to proceed with the original plans would have a very bad effect on the congregation.⁶⁰

Having secured a loan, the congregation was finally able to begin construction. Once again, the architects at George F. Schatz and Associates designed the sanctuary. Their sanctuary planned resembled one typical of the post World War II era. Although the congregants of Temple Sholom wanted to make significant social and architectural statements with their sacred space, economy ruled the day. This was true for most synagogues and churches of the time. Daniel Freeland writes in his article, "Why Temples Look the Way They Do," that financial realities often dictated synagogues that were low and square with cinder block walls. Synagogues attempted to bring warmth to these inexpensive places with wall-to wall carpeting. Synagogues built at this time included large *bimot* to accommodate the growing number of participants who would lead the worship service. Another feature of the synagogue sanctuary in this era was the retractable or folding wall that separated the permanent sanctuary from a much larger space that would accommodate the additional worshippers on the High Holidays.⁶¹

The sanctuary planned for Temple Sholom was no exception to these trends. The new sanctuary would be connected to the existing Frisch Hall with retractable folding walls, the *bimah* would be large and raised and the sanctuary would have wall-to-wall carpeting. Rabbi Brav took special care in designing the sanctuary. He was of the opinion that "businessmen and architects deal with brick and mortar...[but] when it came to the arrangements for placing the organ and the choir pews, and for the spirit that must infuse the *bimah* and ark and exterior sculpture—here was a province for a rabbi who

⁶⁰ Minutes of the Emergency Board Meeting. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. March 15, 1966.

⁶¹ Daniel Hillel Freeland. "Why Temples Look the Way They Do." *Reform Judaism*. (Fall 1994) 35-36.

loved art..."⁶² Rabbi Brav wanted to create a space that would represent the unique character of his beloved Temple Sholom.

Rabbi Brav and a special committee dealing with synagogue art consulted Joseph Gutman, Hebrew Union College's Associate Professor of Jewish Art, and the sculptor Edgar Tafur.⁶³ Tafur was commissioned to create three pieces of art for the new Sanctuary: 1) A production of a "Burning Bush" (which would become the symbol of Temple Sholom), 2) an Eternal Light and 3) One grill work in Hebrew lettering.⁶⁴

Nine months after breaking ground, the Sanctuary of Temple Sholom was complete. The dedication ceremony took place on Sunday, June 4, 1967 and Confirmation ceremonies were held there on Shavuot morning, June 14th. Only three additional classrooms and a small chapel, that had been part of the original building design, remained a dream. Thirteen years after its founding, Temple Sholom was almost complete.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the new sanctuary did not raise Shabbat attendance as anticipated. In 1967 the "Conscience of Temple Sholom," a regular column in the temple's newsletter, bemoaned that only about fifty people attended services each Shabbat.⁶⁶ The congregation would need to continue its effort to raise the level of participation in religious services well into the next decade.

⁶² *Dawn of Reckoning* 209.

⁶³ Edgar Tafur a former resident of Hamilton, Ohio, created artwork for the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, the Lewis Center Chapel in Cincinnati as well as others. He was born and raised in Cali, Columbia and earned a degree in architecture from Bogota. He came to the University of Cincinnati in 1952 after studying sculpture at the University of Florida (Source: Betty Dietz Krebs. "Behind Sculpture Lies Architecture." *Dayton Daily News*. Sunday, April 2, 1967).

⁶⁴ The Grill Work in Hebrew lettering is from Micah 6:8 "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

⁶⁵ The congregation would once again build in the 1980's, for more information see Chapter 4.

Impending Retirement and the Search for a New Leader

After thirty-five years as a rabbi, with a career that spanned two congregations and a the founding of a third, Rabbi Brav indicated to the Board of Trustees that he wished to retire on or soon after his 65th birthday. Thus, at the 1969 Annual Congregational Meeting, along with the usual discussion of monetary problems, the Board discussed Rabbi Brav's impending retirement. They set a plan that would allow him to retire near his 65th birthday as he had requested, in the Fall of 1973.⁶⁷

Until his retirement, Rabbi Brav continued to work tirelessly for the congregation. From June of 1969 until June of 1970, Temple Sholom's four hundred members celebrated an unprecedented number of occasions: twenty-one *b'nei mitzvot*, twenty-three weddings, six conversions (a record high for Rabbi Brav in one year) and eight funerals.

With so much activity at the synagogue, Rabbi Brav continued to push for more volunteers. Volunteerism in the synagogue, which was so vital, had decreased. The reason was, in part, sociological, for many of the former volunteers were now working women. Due to the lack of volunteers, Rabbi Brav was concerned that the synagogue would need to move towards a more professional infrastructure, which would put further strain on the congregational budget. His real passion however, was still with the issue of service attendance. Rabbi Brav pleaded with the congregation to attend more worship services. Addressing the congregation, he argued, "if our congregants attend our services

⁶⁶ *The Voice of Sholom*. July 1968.

⁶⁷ Minutes. Temple Sholom Annual Congregational Meeting. June 3, 1969.

with greater regularity and assist us to evolve a richer and more meaningful Sabbath worship experience, we have much to look forward to in the coming years.”⁶⁸

On June 19, 1970, Rabbi Brav suffered a heart attack, which incapacitated him for six months. During Rabbi Brav’s recovery, Dr. Stanley Chyet⁶⁹ conducted High Holiday services and a fifth year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College performed the duties of rabbi for the congregation.⁷⁰

In January, Rabbi Brav returned to Sholom, but his health was still unstable. Seeing this, the Board decided to secure an associate rabbi who would serve with Rabbi Brav until his retirement in 1973. During the board meeting on May 10, 1971, the special selection committee, that had been formed to find the new Associate Rabbi, announced to the Board that they had received five applications for the position. After reviewing the applications, the Board granted two interviews and ultimately recommended Rabbi Donald Splansky. As Associate Rabbi, Rabbi Splansky’s responsibilities would include the religious school (something Rabbi Brav had always loved), the youth group of Temple Sholom, and pastoral duties. The committee offered Rabbi Splansky a two-year contract and he accepted.⁷¹

At the June 1971 Annual Congregational Meeting, the Board introduced Rabbi Donald M. Splansky as the new Associate Rabbi. However, Temple Sholom remained a two rabbi congregation for only a matter of months. For reasons of health, on November 16, 1971, Temple Sholom’s Board of Trustees granted Rabbi Brav’s request for early

⁶⁸ Rabbi Brav. Congregational Address. June 10, 1970.

⁶⁹ Dr. Stanley Chyet served as Professor of Jewish History at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion from 1963-1974.

⁷⁰ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. August 4, 1970.

⁷¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. May 10, 1971.

retirement from the active rabbinate. In June of 1972, the temple appointed Rabbi Brav
Honorary Rabbi For Life.⁷²

⁷² Minutes. Temple Sholom Annual Congregational Meeting. June 13, 1972.

Chapter Three

1971-1984: Rabbi Donald M. Splansky, “Guiding Temple Sholom Through its Teen Years”

“Call Me Rabbi”

1971-72 was a transitional year for Temple Sholom. Rabbi Splansky began his tenure as Associate Rabbi in July and under the guidance of Rabbi Brav quickly became acclimated into life at Temple Sholom. For the first time, the congregation was under the leadership of two rabbis who both worked tirelessly to strengthen Temple Sholom and enrich the life of its congregants. In June of 1972, Rabbi Brav retired with the title of Founding Rabbi/Honorary Rabbi for Life.¹

Due to the congregation's reluctance to see Rabbi Brav retire, they did not publish Rabbi Splansky's name as the sole rabbi of the congregation until the October 1972 issue of the Temple newsletter, *The Voice of Sholom*. In his first official newsletter column as rabbi he wrote:

Now that I have been formally consecrated as rabbi of Temple Sholom, let me risk appearing too formal. Friends can be formal or familiar or both. A rabbi must be both, if he wishes to serve a congregation.

I mean specifically this business of calling me by my first name in public. Privately congregants may address me in any way they wish (well, almost any way!), but publicly the congregational needs require the word “rabbi.”

Picture a receiving line on Friday nights in which people file out of the sanctuary. I remember the expression of surprise on a young girl's face as she overheard the man in front of her greet me with a “Hi Don.” She felt uneasy because of her need for a rabbi-congregant relationship.

Lest you think I am disturbed, please know that I'm not. Lest you think the first-naming has become the general custom at Sholom, let me assure you it has not. I wish only to change a growing trend which has become too common in

¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Annual Congregational Meeting. June 13, 1972.

several Cincinnati congregations. Some year or other I will receive a Ph.D (maybe in Jenerwelt). Even then I will prefer being called "rabbi" rather than "doctor." I will try to be consistent, it you will too.²

Because it was still early in Rabbi Splansky's tenure, the congregants did not yet see him as their rabbi. Rabbi Splansky simply was not Rabbi Brav. Since Temple Sholom was "the synagogue that Brav built," anyone who came to replace him would have had difficulty filling the same role for the congregants as Rabbi Brav. Furthermore, Rabbi Splansky, being young and relatively new to the rabbinate, stood as quite a contrast to Rabbi Brav, who had served Temple Sholom at the end of his career. With limited experience, Rabbi Splansky did not have the same confidence and presence as Rabbi Brav. These differences caused Rabbi Splansky to struggle with the issue of congregational acceptance throughout much of his time at Temple Sholom. It was not that the congregation did not respect, admire or even love Rabbi Splansky; it was just that the congregation was not ready to replace their founder. Ultimately the congregation was able to see that, "each Rabbi was unique in his own beautiful way."³

The congregation's core issue was the huge sense of loss that they felt upon Rabbi Brav's retirement. Rabbi Splansky worked hard to diminish this feeling of loss but he too needed to be nurtured in his rabbinate. Rabbi Splansky had only been out of rabbinical school for five years when he became the rabbi of Temple Sholom. Although known for being a scholar, he was also concerned with the continuing life and vitality of the Jewish people, and the membership of Temple Sholom. Rabbi Splansky, having the vitality of a young, ambitious new rabbi, had big dreams for the congregation. He understood that

² *The Voice of Sholom*. October 1972.

³ *25th Anniversary Service*. Temple Sholom. Friday Night, October 19, 1979.

changes continued to take place in the Jewish community, and with the advent of a new decade, committed himself to making those changes happen at Temple Sholom.

A Focus on Education

The 1970's saw new forms of Jewish identity emerge; it had become clear to American Jews that there was more than one way to be a Jew. "After the public silence of the fifties, when being Jewish seemed submerged in the efforts to establish an American identity and prove loyalty, many Jews of the 1960's and the 1970's seemed to revel in "being 'noisy' about Jewishness."⁴ Seeing the change in American Jewish culture, Rabbi Splansky committed himself to nurturing the new emerging Jew. However, in order to nurture this new type of Jew and simultaneously maintain the loyalty of the older membership, Rabbi Splansky's rabbinate focused on education, youth activities, Jewish camping, Israel, the growing Havurah movement and social action.

Like it had done in the 1950's and 1960's, Temple Sholom continued to value education in the 1970's. It was clear the temple valued education when they hired Rabbi Splansky who, after receiving rabbinic ordination, continued to further his own education by working toward his doctorate from Hebrew Union College as well as teaching homiletics to students at the College. Rabbi Splansky also committed himself to maintaining and creating new and extensive adult education programming at the Temple.

The temple was also making changes in the religious school. In a report presented to the Temple Board on January 16, 1973, Mrs. Myra Brichto⁵, the religious

⁴ Samuel C. Heilman. *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995) 61.

⁵ Mrs. Myra Brichto was the principal of the Temple Sholom Religious School for six years 1972-1978.

school principal, commented on the "constantly improving program."⁶ Temple Sholom, at this time, was the only Reform congregation in the city to offer religious school twice a week to students in grades 4-7. In September of 1973 the school increased the program time by twenty minutes.⁷

The temple also took teacher planning seriously. Weekly teacher meetings were required for all faculty an hour before school began on Sundays. The hope of the religious school in the coming year was to find new ways to enrich the high school program for the increasing numbers of teens wanting to continue and deepen their Jewish knowledge. Mrs. Brichto also stated that the school was planning for an intensive student assistant program, which would allow students to work in the religious school as teacher's aids after confirmation. Much time and effort went into the religious school of Temple Sholom, for these young people were the future of the Jewish people and hopefully the congregation. Rabbi Splansky worked hard to make sure he knew all of the students in the religious school, especially the students of *Bar and Bat Mitzvah* and confirmation age.⁸

By 1974, the new high school program was in place with the hope that it could afford the students the early opportunity to be ready for the Judaica offerings available in numerous universities. The committed Jews of Temple Sholom understood that enrollment of Jews in universities was up and they wanted to send their young people out into the world of academia with Jewish knowledge and values.⁹

⁶*The Voice of Sholom*. March 1973.

⁷ Principal's Report. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. January 16, 1973.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ *The Voice of Sholom*. March 1974.

Of special concern to Rabbi Splansky was the role of young women in the religious school and Jewish tradition. Although the enrollment numbers for boys and girls in the religious school were similar, older stereotypes held firm; only a small percentage of girls participated in the ceremony of becoming a *Bat Mitzvah*. In the December 1973 newsletter Rabbi Splansky wrote:

During this "preaching year" 1973-74 we have at Temple Sholom twenty-one Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Of these, only four are Bat Mitzvahs, or 19% of the total number. Last year, (1972-73) we had twenty-two Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, of which only five (23%) were Bat Mitzvahs. These facts confirm what many people knew by guessing, viz., despite our talk in liberal Judaism about "religious equality for the sexes," parents do not grant their girls the same religious opportunities, privileges, and joys as they give their sons.¹⁰

Rabbi Splansky insisted that, since congregants could not possibly love their daughters less than they love their sons, nor want their daughters to be Jewish less than they want their sons to be Jewish, he charged the congregation to encourage each and every one of its daughters to have a *Bat Mitzvah*. He thought this would help rid the young female population of self-esteem issues that grew out of feelings of inferior ability and worthiness to those of boys, which were held over from earlier decades.

Rabbi Splansky addressed an important issue in the congregation, the issue of equality. Although Sholom continued to change with the times, it still had work to do. By asserting that boys and girls should both receive equal opportunities for Jewish education, Rabbi Splansky brought the issue of feminism to the forefront of the consciousness of Temple Sholom's membership.¹¹ It should be noted that Rabbi

¹⁰ *The Voice of Sholom*. December 1973.

¹¹ Beginning in the 1960's Jewish women sought to establish and develop a distinctly Jewish feminism. Women also sought and achieved more participation and equality in services and more religious study and training. The first woman rabbi was ordained in 1972 at Hebrew Union College. (source: Gerald Sorin. *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)205). Rabbi Splansky was well aware of the growing changes regarding women in Judaism

Splansky's choice to champion this issue arose largely because of the fact that he himself had two daughters in the religious school. His success on this issue becomes evident when, during Rabbi Splansky's tenure, Temple Sholom elects the first woman president at a synagogue in the Cincinnati area during his tenure.¹²

Rabbi Splansky spent a significant amount of time with the Religious School Committee in an attempt to make religious school more meaningful for the students. However, in spite of good intentions and due diligence, the religious school often failed to reach and impact the lives of its young members. Despite the fact that the students spent more time at religious school, they still did not gain the tools necessary to live as Jews. By 1981, the Temple Sholom Religious School showed a great decline in participants. This resulted not only from a decline in birth rate but also from a lack of interest in formal Jewish education.¹³

Informal Jewish Education

With the turn away from formal religious training in the late 1970s Jewish children became involved in their faith through other means. The most prevalent entry into Jewish life was through the youth groups and youth movements. According to one scholar, "many American-Jewish adults have fond memories of youthful participation in Jewish youth groups and camps. Some have speculated that such informal—and sometimes transformative—educational activities may be more effective educationally

and Reform Judaism in particular and brought his valuable insights and understanding to the members of Temple Sholom.

¹²Mrs. Alice Fegelman served as president from 1976-1978. Before her presidency she also served as vice-president of Temple Sholom Sisterhood for four years, corresponding secretary for the Board of Trustees for one year, vice-president and senior vice-president both for one year. (Source: *The Voice of Sholom*, September 1976.) Mrs. Fegelman also had the full support of Rabbi Splansky and according to first hand accounts there were "no rumblings" from the members of the congregation that a woman was president.

¹³ Minutes. Temple Sholom Religious School Committee Meeting. April 7, 1981.

than formal classes.”¹⁴ It is possible that informal educational activities impacted the Jewish identities of Temple Sholom’s children more than formal Jewish education, however the participation rate in these informal activities was still small. The Youth Group of Temple Sholom (YGOTS) struggled to grow, but still actively participated in the Temple community during the 1970s and early 80s. Some of the activities included: leading *Havdalah* services, building the Temple Sukkah, creating and running the Temple Purim Carnival, helping with Temple yard work and participating in social action in the greater Jewish community.¹⁵ However, despite the number of activities that took place, the membership total for YGOTS in 1975 was only thirty-eight; there was potential for ninety people to belong to the group.¹⁶ Thus, in the mid-1970s the group considered opening their membership to children of non-synagogue members. Rabbi Splansky pushed for other informal educational opportunities for the youth because the youth group failed to reach so many teenagers.

Another way in which Rabbi Splansky tried to reach the youth of Temple Sholom was through camping. Every January, in the Temple newsletter, Rabbi Splansky addressed the enormous value of Jewish summer camping. He addressed the parents of school age children and implored them to consider sending their children to a Jewish camp for the summer where their connection to Judaism would undoubtedly increase. He even compared Jewish summer camp to *olam ha-ba*, “the perfect Jewish world.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Sylvia Barack Fishman. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000) 63.

¹⁵ The list was compiled using the Minutes of the Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. June 1976-July 1977.

¹⁶ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. September 21, 1976.

¹⁷ *The Voice of Sholom*. January 1974.

The *Statement of Principles Guiding UAHC Camps*, published in 1970, stated that, "the UAHC [Union of American Hebrew Congregations]¹⁸ looks upon its camps as extensions in a country setting of the Jewish home, the congregation's religious school, and also as a most significant area in its program of experimental education."¹⁹ Rabbi Splansky whole-heartedly agreed with this principal and instilled the value of Jewish camping into the members of Temple Sholom. With this level of dedication to camp he increased the congregation's participation in summer programs to a level not seen under Rabbi Brav. Some members did send their children to Jewish summer camps and many of those children returned to Sholom with a renewed vigor for Judaism. Camp was able to reach the young people at Temple Sholom that were uninterested in youth group and unfulfilled Judaically in religious school.²⁰

Support for Israel

Rabbi Splansky also made Israel awareness a priority. Given his preaching, talking and writing about Israel and with Israel being a constant topic in the news, it did not take long for the members of Temple Sholom to become actively involved in supporting the State. Although there was a significant response to the 1967 War²¹, the members of Temple Sholom did not respond as a united community in support of Israel, until the war in 1973. The members' commitment to Israel intensified in the 1970s, and similar to the larger Jewish community, the Jews of Sholom raised more money during

¹⁸ The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the central body of the Reform Movement in North America was founded in Cincinnati in 1873 by Isaac Mayer Wise. As the congregational arm of the Reform Movement the primary mission of the UAHC is to create and sustain vibrant Jewish congregations wherever Reform Jews live. At the time of the writing of this paper the Union changed its name to the Union for Reform Judaism, serving Reform congregations Across North America.

¹⁹ Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman, Ed. *Camp Counselor and Staff Orientation Manual*. (New York: UAHC Press, 1970) 8.

²⁰ *The Voice of Sholom*. March 1976.

²¹ *The Voice of Sholom*. July 1967.

the Yom Kippur War of 1973 than in the 1967 War. Since the War in 1973 was significantly longer, Temple Sholom's membership became involved with the Israeli's struggle for existence more than it ever had before.²²

The outpouring of money to Israel from the congregation was difficult for some members to accept because, since the beginning of Sholom's history, the congregation had always had trouble raising money. Now, many congregants sent money to Israel instead of paying dues to the Temple. Some residual resentment in 1976, when the president of the congregation said in a newspaper interview, in good humor, that "we'll have a good year, if another Yom Kippur War doesn't erupt with members of the temple sending money to Israel as they did before."²³

Rabbi Splansky's love and passion for Zion intensified the members' commitment to Israel. Throughout his tenure as Rabbi of Temple Sholom, Rabbi Splansky's preaching and newsletters had been filled with writings regarding Israel. Only four months after the Yom Kippur War, Rabbi Splansky planned a trip to Israel for the congregation. He was confident that the best way to show support for the State of Israel was to travel there.²⁴

The conflict in Israel forced the members of Temple Sholom, like Jews throughout the country, to confront their Jewish identity. According to one scholar, "Jewish Americans in the 1960s and 1970s still cared about social and racial justice in the United States, and they still wanted to end the war in Vietnam, but they cared most about Israel."²⁵ Israel Bonds programs and aid to Israel continued to flourish at Temple

²² See *The Voice of Sholom*. October 1973-May 1974.

²³ Newspaper clipping from the Cincinnati Enquirer 1976, found in the Temple Sholom Archives.

²⁴ *The Voice of Sholom*. January 1974.

²⁵ Sorin 216.

Sholom through the mid seventies. From the mid-seventies on, Israel remained a focus but aid, in the form of money, dwindled. On March 24, 1979, Rabbi Splansky delivered a sermon that responded to the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. He told the congregation that the dawn of a new age for American Jews and Israelis had begun. A new relationship was necessary "because American Jewish identity will no longer require a fire-brigade mentality for saving Israel in crisis. Faster, bigger jets will bring increased tourism and dual-residences in Israel and the U.S. Secularism will rise in both countries, but significant 'saving remnants' will produce Jewish cultures greater than any of the past." Rabbi Splansky realized that American Jews and Israelis would need to connect on a higher level than the issue of survival. Therefore, he stressed the notion that Israel would, like America, become a Jewish cultural center in which the congregants of Temple Sholom could participate and benefit.²⁶ This understanding brought Temple Sholom's Zionism into the modern era.

A new era had begun between the Jews of the United States and the Jews of Israel, one that would test the members of Temple Sholom. Now that Israel was no longer in crisis, how would the members of Temple Sholom respond? One way in which Rabbi Splansky urged them to respond was through supporting the Progressive Movement²⁷ in Israel. In the March 1980 newsletter, Rabbi Splansky described the state of the Progressive Movement in Israel. He wrote of the Israeli's who were seeking a religious home. He also wrote about *Kibbutz Yahel*, the first Reform *kibbutz* in Israel. Of specific interest was the plight of the twenty Reform rabbis in Israel who were unable to

²⁶ From Rabbi Splansky's Sermon of March 24, 1979 found in *The Voice of Sholom*, April 1979.

²⁷ The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism traces its roots back to 19th century Germany. In its practice, Progressive Judaism in Israel is in some ways more traditional than in the Diaspora. However, like Reform Jews world wide, the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism values inclusiveness of all Jews. (source: www.reform.org.il/English/About/ProgressiveJudaismiInIsrael.htm)

legally perform wedding ceremonies or conversions. Rabbi Splansky continued to educate his congregants on these issues and pushed them to support Israel. In 1982, he urged every member of Sholom to join ARZA, The Association of Reform Zionists of America.²⁸

The *Havurah* Movement

While Israel remained a central issue for Temple Sholom and Rabbi Splansky during the 1970s, the growing *havurah* movement and the establishment of *havurot* within Temple Sholom was a primary focus closer to home. Beginning in the late 1960s, Jews began to look for ways to enhance their spiritual and religious lives. Beginning in Boston, Massachusetts in 1967, what would come to be called the *havurah* movement “focused on making a fellowship of Jewish learning and observance part of the post-college experience.” A variety of communities established *Havurot* in order to enhance Jewish education and spirituality as well as reestablish feelings of Jewish communal life. Some larger congregations adopted the practice of forming *havurot* within the larger community so that people with similar interests would be able to pray and study together in a smaller more intimate setting than the large impersonal sanctuaries that had been created in the 1950s and 60s.²⁹

Although small study groups had existed at Temple Sholom from its very founding and were qualitatively similar to *havurot*, Rabbi Splansky officially named the groups *havurot* and pushed members to create and join more groups. Rabbi Splansky

²⁸ *The Voice of Sholom*. June 1982. The Association of Reform Zionists (ARZA) was established in 1978 after years of growing identification by Reform Jews with the national aspirations of the Jewish people and with the state of Israel. In 1998, ARZA merged with the World Union for Progressive Judaism and today ARZA/World Union is the representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in the United States and Canada. It is the official organization of North American Reform and Reconstructionist communities for all issues pertaining to Israel, Zionism and Progressive Judaism worldwide. (source: www.arza.org)

²⁹ Heilman 90.

founded and directed one new group called *Havurah Aleph*. *Havurah Aleph* began in 1976 with the purpose of reaching out to young adults within the congregation. After the first meeting Rabbi Splansky wrote that, "people came to the meeting as separate couples or singles and left with a sense of unified purpose. Whether or not this unified purpose leads to true friendship remains to be seen, but as of now I am highly optimistic. Friendliness is contagious, so they will 'catch it.'"³⁰

Almost a year later, in a report to the Board of Trustees, Rabbi Splansky stated that "a new family *havurah* is in formation."³¹ He spoke of *Havurah Aleph*, which was still in its planning stages. Rabbi Splansky found *Havurah Aleph* somewhat difficult to begin and maintain because most of the members had small children, thus finding the time to commit to the group was not easy. Despite Rabbi Splansky's effort, the group failed to reach a significant number of members and ultimately disappeared.

Still, Rabbi Splansky remained focused on the growing *havurah* movement. He believed that people would gain interest and feel more connected to the synagogue if they joined a group. In the October 1976 newsletter Rabbi Splansky included an application to all the members of Temple Sholom that asked them to join a group. The response was good. A month later, in November, Rabbi Splansky re-addressed the issue of joining a *havurah*. He hoped that these small groups would provide an easy and comfortable entry into congregational life for the temple's membership. His ultimate goal was increased participation in all congregational activities especially worship and holiday observance.³²

Despite the initial receptivity to the idea, overall participation in the *havurot* was disappointing. Rabbi Splansky continued to plead with the members to join a *havurah*

³⁰ *The Voice of Sholom*. November 1976.

³¹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. December 20, 1977.

³² *The Voice of Sholom*. November 1976.

well into the 1980s. The numbers at Temple were dropping. The religious school enrollment and participation numbers in services were declining. Applications continued to appear in *The Voice of Sholom*. In November of 1981, Rabbi Splansky once again wrote in the newsletter to the members of Temple Sholom urging them to join a Havurah.

What we need more than ever, or at least as much as ever, are human beings—Jewish human beings,” wrote Franz Rosenzweig in the early 1920s. Such Jewishness he added, “can be grasped through neither the writing or reading of books...It is only live...” No one can learn about warmth, closeness, and community of a Shabbat experience until it is lived... Won’t you join a Havurah or find some other way to come regularly to a group of Jews at Sholom?³³

Rabbi Splansky’s hope, that Temple Sholom’s membership would find a home in small groups, failed. While specific *havurot* had been established in the community, community participation as a whole did not grow. A vast number of Sholomites, like the majority of Jews in America at the time, did not participate in synagogue life.

The 1970s was a time of redefinition for Jews. Rabbi Splansky was well aware of the fact that the role of religion had to be rethought in the United States. According to a 1971 national survey “less than half the Jewish population was affiliated with a synagogue.”³⁴ Therefore, besides urging the formation of *havurot* in the community, Rabbi Splansky pushed the members to rethink their Judaism. Rabbi Splansky believed that in order for Judaism to survive, people were going to have to confront their Judaism and make it meaningful for themselves. His hope was that the meaning would come from within the synagogue through education, social action, and religious services.³⁵

The Turn Towards Tradition

³³ *The Voice of Sholom*. November 1981.

³⁴ Jack Wertheimer. “The Turbulent Sixties.” *The American Jewish Experience*. Ed. Jonathan D. Sarna. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986) 337.

³⁵ *The Voice of Sholom*. November 1981.

In August of 1977, Rabbi Splansky began wearing a *kippah* at services and abandoned the traditional robe. He explained to the congregation that he had found new meaning in an old ritual. His intent was to conspicuously identify himself as a Jew at prayer and as a proud member of the larger, world wide Jewish community.³⁶

Rabbi Splansky's turn toward tradition had a profound affect on the members of Temple Sholom. In the late 1970s, the members of Sholom restored many rituals: more members began wearing *kippot* and *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and a new service arose on Saturday mornings, a "bimah service" where all members would sit on the bimah and hold an informal more quaint worship experience. The re-embracing of tradition was movement-wide and not restricted to Temple Sholom. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to today, the Reform movement began to emphasize tradition. "A new prayer book focusing on Sabbath observance and religious commandment was published in 1979, and Reform Judaism instituted a day school movement in 1985, thereby moving from its classic universalism to a some what more particularistic position. The changes partly eroded that denomination's reputation as cold and overly rational."³⁷

For some, changes in the Reform Movement were difficult to accept. Some congregants pressured Rabbi Splansky to continue the old ways of Temple Sholom; however, he continued to push himself and the congregants to search for meaning in ritual and practice. Rabbi Splansky knew that this marked a significant change for the founding members of Temple Sholom yet he insisted on responding to the current needs of the community. On January 26, 1979, Rabbi Splansky delivered a sermon in which he discussed the trend in Reform Judaism's move toward "new traditionalism." He said that

³⁶ Donald M. Splansky. Sermon at Sholom on August 26, 1977. See Appendix Document 7.

³⁷ Sorin 202.

if we find meaning in old ritual, even if what we find is something completely new and unintended by tradition it is still an acceptable and proper expression of Jewish tradition.³⁸

Social Action

While Rabbi Splansky and some of the members searched for meaning in ritual and tradition, other members remained Jewish by performing charitable acts and promoting social justice. As stated in Chapter Two, Temple Sholom did not always nurture social action in the 1960s. The 1970s, however, saw a different response. As Temple Sholom reached its twentieth birthday, the congregants felt secure with their place in the community and embraced their opportunities to make the larger Cincinnati community a better place. In 1975, Temple Sholom established a new committee that replaced the Public Affairs Committee.³⁹ They called the new group The Committee for Community Service, whose purpose it was to assist the needs of the community.

The committee's first project was to provide furnishings for the new émigrés who had settled in Cincinnati from the Soviet Union. The response for this project was large and many were moved to help.⁴⁰ Soviet Jews coming en masse to the United States rejuvenated the Jewish community in the United States,⁴¹ including Temple Sholom. Helping Russian Jews become Jewish inspired involvement from many Jews who otherwise would not have participated in the synagogue at all.

Another area of social action, that developed at Temple Sholom during this time was a program called *Tikvah*. *Tikvah* was a "social, cultural and recreational program

³⁸ From Rabbi Splansky's Sermon of January 26, 1979 found in *The Voice of Sholom*. March 1979.

³⁹ *The Voice of Sholom*. April 1975.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Sorin 246.

with Jewish content and direction for mentally retarded young Jewish adults in the Greater Cincinnati Area."⁴² Tikvah operated at two levels; the Junior Program level served elementary-age children while the senior program served high school age children. The senior program provided the older children with the opportunity to learn vocational skills.

The Search for a New Leader

Although there was not a defining moment for Temple Shalom in the 1970s, the members continued to grow and mature. Rabbi Splansky worked hard at helping the members mature while remaining true to his own self and rabbinate. Described as an intelligent, sweet, sensitive and reserved man, Rabbi Splansky grew into his own at Temple Shalom. Maintaining a relationship with the Hebrew Union College was one of the main reasons Rabbi Splansky chose to stay in Cincinnati. During his thirteen years at Temple Shalom, he continued to study at the College, forging a love for the College into the framework of Temple Shalom.⁴³

After thirteen years of service, Rabbi Splansky felt that it was time for him to move on. He had received a job offer from Temple Beth Am in Framingham, Massachusetts. Although while at Temple Shalom, he was unable to raise participation rates to a level with which he was satisfied, he succeeded in instilling many important values into the congregation that would carry them into the future.

On January 30, 1984, Rabbi Splansky wrote the following letter to the congregants:

Dear Friends,

⁴² *The Voice of Shalom*. February 1976.

⁴³ Personal Interview with Rabbi Donald Splansky. December 20, 2003.

With mixed emotions I am writing to inform you of an important development. At the next meeting of the Board of Trustees of Temple Sholom I will tender my resignation, effective June 30, 1984, because I have accepted the position as rabbi of Temple Beth Am in Framingham, Massachusetts (just outside of Boston). I wanted you to hear this news directly from me, and also to know that the reasons for this change imply nothing negative about Temple Sholom. The time simply has come for a change. The thirteen years of my rabbinic service here have been deeply fulfilling, rich in friendships, and full of joys. (In the sanctuary of Sholom my daughter Karen became a *Bat Mitzvah* and Confirmand, my daughter Yael soon will become a *Bat Mitzvah*, and my son Joshua at his "*bris*" entered the Covenant of Abraham.) You have always honored me by calling me "rabbi." Often I have looked out at the congregation and prayed with our father Jacob, "*Katontee mikol hachasadim*—I am unworthy of all the kindnesses that have been shown me..."⁴⁴

One month later, on February 20, 1984 the president of Temple Sholom, Carl Schwartz,⁴⁵ sent a letter went to the community that stated, "the unwelcome news of Rabbi Splansky's departure at the end of June has not reduced the responsibility of your officers and Board of Trustees to find the best possible rabbi to occupy our pulpit. I appointed a 'search committee' of nine so that conscientious attention would be given in meeting this responsibility promptly."⁴⁶

The Search Committee had approximately three months to find a new rabbi for the congregation. The following months at Temple Sholom continued to run smoothly with the Search Committee interviewing and screening new potential rabbis. Rabbi Splansky even helped the Search Committee to the best of his ability, although he would not offer opinions about the abilities of individual candidates.⁴⁷

On the whole, members understood that it was the best move for the Rabbi and his family. In Rabbi Splansky's final newsletter column he wrote, "My thirteen years at

⁴⁴ Letter found in *The Voice of Sholom*. February 1984.

⁴⁵ Carl Schwartz served as President of Temple Sholom from 1983-1985.

⁴⁶ Letter from Temple Sholom Archives. February 20, 1984.

⁴⁷ *The Voice of Sholom*. March 1984.

Temple Sholom have been deeply gratifying...friendships do endure like the Jewish people itself."⁴⁸ Rabbi Splansky shared joys and the sorrows and helped Temple Sholom through its teenage years. The congregation, as well as Rabbi Splansky, grew during his time as Rabbi of Temple Sholom.

⁴⁸ *The Voice of Sholom*, June 1984.

Chapter Four

1984-present: Rabbi Gerry H. Walter, "Community Minded Mentor"

The Move Towards Tradition

Through the passage of time, Rabbi Brav's memory continued to recede and he became more of a mythological figure than the archetype of desired rabbinical leadership. As the members of Temple Sholom embraced their third rabbi they felt more open than ever before to something new. On September 1, 1984, after serving a pulpit in Roanoke, Virginia for ten years, Rabbi Gerry Walter became Temple Sholom's third rabbi. Rabbi Walter chose Temple Sholom because it was a small to medium sized congregation with a warm and caring community that found itself on the traditional end of Reform Judaism.¹ Temple Sholom chose Rabbi Walter because of his commitment to tradition, love for Jewish education and his belief that prayer was central to the Jewish experience.² At the first Executive Board meeting Rabbi Walter attended, he enumerated two priorities. The first was to acquaint himself with the purpose and specific activities of the temple's various committees as well as to understand the nature of volunteerism at Temple Sholom. His second priority was to form a representative committee to help form policies for ritual observance of life cycle events.³

A Religious Observance Committee was formed soon after, and based on existing procedures at Temple Sholom, other congregations, the CCAR and the UAHC,

¹Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

²Biography of Rabbi Gerry H. Walter. Temple Sholom Archives. 1984.

³Minutes. Temple Sholom Executive Board Meeting. September 11, 1984.

the committee compiled the "Procedures for Religious Observance in Temple Sholom."⁴ Rabbi Walter and the committee published the procedures to assure that the temple's religious observances and practices were consistent. Upon Rabbi Walter's arrival, he noticed a distinct difference between the way temple's members wanted to be ritually and the way they actually practiced. The fact that people conducted business on Shabbat in the synagogue, that the synagogue accepted deliveries on Shabbat and that the temple office was open on festivals was inconsistent with the ideals of the traditional-minded congregation. Because the congregants had been looking for strong leadership and guidance, Rabbi Walter found the creation of these procedures to be a positive experience to which almost everyone was amenable. It took only a few committee meetings to compile a document that the congregation was readily willing to accept.⁵

The document was based in part on Rabbi Brav's original guide of religious practice for Temple Sholom.⁶ The document contained two sections. The first section, "General Considerations and Practices," discussed issues dealing with food and decorum during worship services. The committee decided, with the Board's approval, that no pork, pork products and shellfish would be served in the temple or at temple functions; that all food served in the Temple during Passover would correspond to the prohibition on the use of bread or leaven; and that all visitors and caterers using the kitchen would abide by these rules. The second section, "Rabbi and Pulpit," gave the rabbi the authority to determine proper procedures for all life-cycle events. This section also protected the

⁴Letter to Temple Sholom Board Members. Temple Sholom Archives. November 25, 1985.

⁵Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter February 9, 2004.

For the whole document see Appendix Document 8.

⁶Stanley R. Brav. "A Guide to Religious Practice." (Cincinnati: Temple Sholom Press, 1960).

rabbi from the necessity of performing any ceremonies that would be contrary to personal convictions, including intermarriages.⁷

Rabbi Walter was adamant that the creation of these guidelines be among the first of his official duties because he wanted to ensure that the traditional nature of the congregation, which drew him to Temple Sholom in the first place, would be stated in such an explicit way that everyone could identify Temple Sholom, as being on the right side of the Reform Jewish spectrum. Rabbi Walter was also concerned about the increasing number of intermarriages that had been taking place in the Reform Movement in the early 1980s. As early as possible, he wished to get the congregation's support, in writing, for his position against officiating at intermarriages. Due to Rabbi Walter's personal beliefs and insistence on these matters, Temple Sholom was able to solidify its role as the "traditional Reform synagogue in Cincinnati."

The changes in religious observance taking place at Temple Sholom were not unique; changes were taking place in the larger Jewish community as well. In the 1980s and 1990s, some Jews who had been shying away from their Jewishness began to re-embrace it. Jews were firmly established in American society, antisemitism was low and there was a trend in American culture during this time to embrace differences.⁸ These factors allowed the members of Temple Sholom to feel comfortable enough to not only revamp their religious observances and practices but to also add more Hebrew into the service. The chanting of the second and third prayers of the *Amidah* became custom, as well as turning to face the ark for the *Barchu*. Just as Rabbi Splansky had done in the late 1970s, Rabbi Walter wore a *kippah* while leading services.

⁷ Letter to Temple Sholom Board Members. Temple Sholom Archives. November 25, 1985.

⁸ Gerald Sorin. *Traditional Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 232.

Rabbi Walter's leadership also brought significant changes that separated Temple Sholom from the trends in the larger Reform Movement.⁹ These changes included celebrating the second day of Rosh Hashannah and holding religious services for the festivals of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Shavuot and Passover on the actual days in which they fell rather than adding these observances to the closest Shabbat. At first there was some resistance to these changes, but after two years of pushing and teaching, Rabbi Walter was able to guide the congregation through these transitions. Although the additional services Rabbi Walter instituted did not attract many people, they were very meaningful for the members who did attend.¹⁰

There had always been a high level of volunteerism and congregational participation in service leading at Temple Sholom. Soon after Rabbi Walter's arrival, he established and coordinated summer services. The Ritual and Choir Committees were in charge of organizing and leading services in Rabbi Walter's absence. The choir, comprised of laity, participated in services even when Rabbi Walter was in town. They helped to lead Shabbat services once a month. The Purim service attracted the greatest amount of lay participation because it contained much music and celebration. Each year, beginning in 1985, there was a surprise theme that included a band. The was made up of Rabbi Walter, along with congregants and students from Hebrew Union College. Many congregants remember one of the first Purim services that Rabbi Walter organized and the shock that pervaded through the congregation when he appeared on the bimah

⁹ For more on the trends of the larger Reform Movement see Dana Evan Kaplan. *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003) specifically pages 66-78.

¹⁰ Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

wearing a coconut bra.¹¹ This kind of over the top musical and comedic Purim celebration, according to Rabbi Walter, was seminal for the Reform Movement. He said that nothing of this grandeur had been done before and the Hebrew Union College students that participated over the years were able to take this piece of Temple Sholom to their respective congregations upon ordination.¹²

Another important innovation during this time was the establishment of the Talmud Study group. Since its formation in 1984, this group, which still has many of the original members, has met almost every Sunday and together has invested many hours in serious study. The majority of the members of this group claim that this study experience has been among the most formidable in the creation of their Jewish identities and they feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment in devoting so much time and energy to the pursuit of Jewish knowledge.¹³

Social Action

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Temple Sholom was energized by the plight of Soviet Jewry. The two major waves of Soviet emigration occurred from 1967 to 1981 and after 1991. From 1976 to 1981 the majority of Jews leaving the Soviet Union chose to settle in the United States, while prior to this they chose to settle in Israel. Then in 1981, the Soviet Union once again slammed their doors shut and only allowed a handful of Jews to leave. When Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the USSR in 1985, he instituted the policy of *glasnost*. This policy permitted public discussions about current and historical problems in the country, ultimately allowing open immigration again. "A new immigration began, gathering tremendous force with the fall of the Communist

¹¹ Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

¹² Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

¹³ Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

regime in 1991. Since 1987, more than a million Jews have left the former Soviet Union. Approximately 300,000 have settled in the United States."¹⁴

Against this backdrop, the members of Temple Sholom continued their work on behalf of Soviet Jewry, started under Rabbi Splansky. In November of 1986, the congregation and the Central Conference of American Rabbis helped send Rabbi Walter to the Soviet Union in order to visit refuseniks and families of prisoners. In 1987, the congregation sponsored a family in the Soviet Union in order to help them immigrate to the United States. While at other times in its history, the congregation had difficulties with participation in social action, with the urging of Rabbi Walter the members of Temple Sholom joined together in support of Soviet Jews in response to the new immigration policy. Temple Sholom embraced the Reform Movement's resolutions regarding Soviet Jewry and created synagogue action programs¹⁵ designed to raise awareness of the issues and gather support and resources for the refuseniks.

Jewish activism on behalf of social causes had often been a cornerstone of the Reform movement in the past, yet Temple Sholom was lax on this front. Now, in addition to Soviet Jewry Temple Sholom's Social Action Committee was actively involved in feeding the hungry. In 1986, Temple Sholom became a member of Mazon.¹⁶ Mazon, an organization devoted to gathering support and resources from the Jewish community to feed the hungry all over the world, asks its partner synagogues to encourage congregants to donate three percent of the cost of their life-cycle celebrations

¹⁴Annelise Orleck. *The Soviet Jewish Americans*. (Westport, Connecticut; Greenwood Press, 1999) 5.

¹⁵The programs on Soviet Jewry included: "a lunchless lunch" in 1984, study sessions, fundraisers, and silent vigils.

¹⁶Minutes. Temple Sholom Executive Board Meeting. July 15, 1986.

Since 1985, Mazon has provided food and help to hungry people of all faiths and backgrounds. It has done so through donations from the Jewish community, which, in turn, are allocated to the most effective hunger relief organizations in the United States, Israel and poor countries worldwide.

as well as donate money for the equivalent of the food they would have eaten on Yom Kippor and equal to the cost of a Passover seder. Temple Sholom partnered with Mazon three years before the Central Conference of American Rabbis resolved at their annual convention, to encourage congregational participation in the work of Mazon.¹⁷

Closer to home the congregants of Temple Sholom came together to help feed the hungry in Cincinnati. Their time and money was channeled primarily into the Over-the-Rhine Soup Kitchen. Volunteering at the soup kitchen not only helped the needy of Cincinnati, but it also helped to foster relationships within the congregation. Over the years, Temple Sholom's youth group has become more involved in the soup kitchen. Through that experience, they have created relationships with many of the congregation's adult groups, to the extent that the youth group is now specifically invited to attend almost every function and committee meeting.¹⁸

Even though Jewish activism will always find new causes, lately, Temple Sholom has suffered a decline in the number of participants in social action projects. It seems as though the interest and level of participation in the 1980s was only a short-term phenomenon. This is due largely to the aging of the temple population that has been historically most involved in social action. The younger generations, those in their 30's and 40's, are busy with their families and careers. The recent necessity of having dual career families has taken many members from the Temple Sholom Social Action Committee. Although the committee continues to serve the needs of the community, monetary donations have come to replace participation and attendance.¹⁹

¹⁷Resolution Adopted by the CCAR. "Mazon." (Cincinnati; June 1989).

¹⁸ This is based on my own observations as rabbinic intern at Temple Sholom from 2002-2004.

¹⁹ Ibid

Quest for More Space

The 1980s once again found Temple Sholom feeling constricted by its physical surroundings. Two significant occurrences sparked the desire for more space. The first was the growing membership of Temple Sholom due to the many Conservative Jews looking for a new place of worship. The second (in part due to the first) was the growth of the religious school under a very able and beloved principal. Beginning in the 1970s Conservative Judaism was "torn between those within it who felt that its ideological essence was to allow for development and change, to be unorthodox, and those who felt that it should be slow to change, conservative in the most basic sense."²⁰

The pressure for inclusiveness came mostly from the laity. Thus, there was a growing chasm between the clergy and the lay members in Conservative synagogues. This division in the Conservative Movement was strong in Cincinnati in the 1980s. As a result, the Conservative synagogues and their clergy were not meeting the needs of their congregants. Many members were looking for other places to worship and affiliate. Some Conservative Jews turned to the Reform movement for a Judaism that was more inclusive and less critical of personal practice. Temple Sholom was the obvious choice for the displaced members of the Conservative synagogues because it was more traditional than the other Cincinnati Reform congregations. The new Conservative members felt comfortable in Temple Sholom's services; there was more Hebrew, they wore *kippot* and *tallitot*, and Rabbi Walter valued text study. By 1987 the membership of Temple Sholom had increased to almost five hundred families.

²⁰ Samuel C. Heilman. *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995) 73.

This dramatic increase in membership trickled down into the religious school. However, the growing number of religious school students was not only due to an increase in Temple membership. It was also due to a dynamic principal of the school at this time Steven Leder.²¹ Leder served as religious school principal from 1984 to 1986, while a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College. He developed new curricula for all grades, increased the amount of time students spent on Hebrew, and created a revolutionary new program for Junior High School students called *Yeshivat Noar*. *Yeshivat Noar* (Youth Academy) was a program that gave students the freedom to choose electives in the area of Judaic studies and encouraged them to participate in youth group activities.

Statistics show that the school enrollment increased dramatically. While in 1984, eleven students participated in the Consecration ceremony marking the beginning of their Jewish studies, in 1986 thirty-one students participated. More significant however, was the fact that all but two of the families whose children were consecrated in 1986 joined Temple Sholom in the years between 1984-1986.²² With twice as many students entering the school than graduating, there was a need for more space.

In the Fall of 1985, the temple formed a Planning Committee to begin researching the building of an additional wing. The hope was to refurbish and expand classroom space and add new administrative areas to the building. The Board of Trustees hired the architectural firm of Gartner, Burdick, Bauer-Nilsen, Inc.,²³ to develop conceptual expansion plans and sketches and to provide cost estimates for construction. At the

²¹Rabbi Steven Leder class of 1987 currently serves as the rabbi for Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, California.

²²*The Voice of Sholom*. November 1986.

²³ Robert Gramann was the architect from the Cincinnati based firm of Gartner, Burdick, Bauer-Nilsen, Inc. hired to draw up plans for the new addition.

Annual Congregational Meeting in 1986, the members of Temple Sholom voted to initiate a capital improvement drive in order to raise 1.2 million dollars that was required for the addition.²⁴

The capital improvement drive failed to meet the goal. By 1987, the congregation had raised less than half of the necessary money. This was not the first time that actions taken to secure money for the future of the congregation proved disappointing despite the fact that at this point in Temple Sholom's history they had more members than ever before. Regardless, as it had done in the past, the Board of Trustees voted to begin building the new addition without having secured enough money. To fund the construction, the congregation took out a mortgage and reduced the size of the addition. They also used the money from the capital drive for the initial mortgage payments.²⁵

By the Summer of 1989, the additional classrooms and administrative offices were complete but ultimately the Building Program and Capital Improvement Drive was a failure. The elaborate plans to create a new and more modern building never came to fruition. Many members had invested so much time and energy that by the time the new building was complete, they felt a sense of relief and not exaltation.

Inclusiveness and Accessibility

In 1992 the CCAR created a responsum dealing with the obligations of the community, and specifically of congregations, toward physically and mentally disabled persons. The Responsum stated that the movement "cannot obligate any rabbi or congregation to provide special services to all disabled persons who come into their purview, but the obligation to be of whatever service possible has the status of a

²⁴ Minutes. Annual Congregational Meeting. June 1986.

²⁵ Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

mitzvah.”²⁶ In order to facilitate the participation of disabled people in the spiritual life of the community, it was necessary for Temple Sholom to make some changes. The congregation’s involvement with accessibility was due to a few factors: the changes in thinking in the Reform Movement as well as the society at large, the needs of the aging members, and the involvement of the other synagogues who had restructured their buildings to meet the needs of those who were physically challenged.²⁷

In January 1996 an Accessibility Committee was formed to evaluate new and different ways to make the synagogue accessible to all congregants.²⁸ By this time, Temple Sholom was the only synagogue on Ridge Road without accessibility for those with physical difficulties. The special committee formed to deal with the changes that would be necessary began with the bimah in the sanctuary. Because of the 1950s architecture, Temple Sholom’s bimah was elevated above the congregation by five large steps. Therefore, the committee evaluated two types of lifts that would give access for all to the bimah. The lift chosen was a portable “wheel-o-vator” that could also be moved to the stage in the social hall. The side stairs leading up to the bimah needed some modification but after that the “wheel-o-vator” was installed. The committee also made sure that necessary changes to the restrooms were made as well as an automatic door was installed to the entrance, allowing for wheelchair access. During this time, the committee also purchased assistive listening devices and large print prayer books.²⁹

²⁶ CCAR Responsa. Disabled Persons. 5752.5

²⁷ In the 1990s both Rockdale Temple and the Wise Temple (both at the Plum Street Temple and the Center on Ridge Road) were making changes in their buildings to give access to all regardless of physical challenges.

²⁸ Minutes. Temple Sholom Board of Trustees. January 15, 1996.

²⁹ Minutes. Temple Sholom Executive Board Meeting. September 3, 1996.

The few hardworking members of this special committee not only made the necessary changes to allow everyone to be included in the life of Temple Sholom, but they also educated the congregation on the need for greater sensitivity. Although they were slow to begin the process of revamping the building for disabled accessibility, the members of Temple Sholom continued to educate themselves and make modifications to the building. This included lowering the public telephone, adding new and accessible water fountains and adding more accessible parking. In 2003, Temple Sholom was honored with the eight annual Cincinnati citywide Inclusion Network Leadership Award for religious inclusion.³⁰ This was a great milestone for the congregation that continues to work for the inclusion of all people in the synagogue.

In 1996, when Temple Sholom widened its doors it sought to be inclusive for groups beyond the physically challenged. At the 1996 Annual Congregational Meeting a proposal was made to change the Temple Sholom constitution, replacing the use of the term "family" with "household."³¹ This action was due to the congregation's realization that the community had undergone significant lifestyle changes, including the fact that unmarried couples lived together and that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Jews had increasingly become a part of the mainstream Jewish community.

This change to the constitution was the culmination of a discussion that had begun six years earlier. Unlike the accessibility issue, which was sparked by a need and a consciousness from within the congregation, the issue of including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Jews was initiated by Rabbi Walter in 1990, when he advocated,

³⁰ Source: www.inclusion.org

³¹ Minutes. Annual Congregational Meeting. June 5, 1996.

"affirming the sacred quality of each human life."³² In his High Holy Day sermon Rabbi Walter preached that "one's sexual orientation should never be the determining factor of one's destiny, any more than gender, race or religion should. We are, each of us, as God created us."³³ It was Rabbi Walter's insight and ability to guide the congregation in discussion over the next six years that led to the constitutional change.

Rabbi as Mentor

According to Rabbi Walter, one of the most rewarding experiences of his rabbinate has been the opportunity to mentor rabbinical students studying on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College. While there had always been a relationship between the students of Hebrew Union College and the members of Temple Sholom, it was during Rabbi Walter's tenure that the synagogue began employing students as rabbinical interns.³⁴ Beginning with Evan Goodman in 1993,³⁵ the congregation hired the first student to serve in the dual capacity role of religious school principal and rabbinic intern. In 1997, as Howard Ruben³⁶ the third student intern remained in his second year as religious school principal, Temple Sholom hired an additional student, Kenneth Chasen,³⁷ who would serve solely as rabbinic intern. The majority of Chasen's duties included service leading and rabbinic/pastoral interactions with the congregants. After this point, Temple Sholom hired all of its students as

³² *The Voice of Sholom*. October 1990.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ In the past fifty years there have been a number of students actively involved at Temple Sholom. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to incorporate all of their names. The names mentioned are done so in order to provide a context of what was happening during this time. In speaking with some of the interns during Rabbi Walter's tenure, they all felt that working with him at Temple Sholom was a rewarding learning experience.

³⁵ Rabbi Evan Goodman currently serves as rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel-Judea (BIJ) in San Francisco.

³⁶ Rabbi Howard Ruben currently serves as Senior Rabbi at Anshe Hesed Fairmont Temple in Cleveland, Ohio.

³⁷ Rabbi Kenneth Chasen currently serves as the Senior Rabbi at Leo Beck Temple in Los Angeles, California.

rabbinic interns to serve in a similar capacity to Kenneth Chasen. In 2001, beginning with rabbinical intern Jonathan Roos,³⁸ Temple Sholom received a grant from the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati to start an organization for young adults in the synagogue, which would be called *Kehillat Atid*. This grant was primarily used to make the rabbinic intern's salary competitive with other synagogues in Cincinnati. As a result, the creation and maintenance of *Kehillat Atid* became a focus for the rabbinical interns.³⁹

Rabbi Walter's influence has reached well beyond the students of Hebrew Union College. Through his interactions and hard work, Rabbi Walter has had some part in sending students from Temple Sholom to study and obtain degrees in Jewish studies, Jewish communal service and rabbinical school. This was due in part to his active participation in keeping college bound students tied to the congregation and the rabbi by taking the time to visit them. Beginning in 1995, Rabbi Walter instituted a new program at the congregation called "Rabbi on the Road." This program allows the Rabbi Walter to take several weeks in the fall to visit a number of students at various schools throughout the Midwest. After the visits, Rabbi Walter continues corresponding with the students by e-mail, which allows the students to keep in touch with one another as well as with the Rabbi.⁴⁰

In his twenty years of service, Rabbi Walter has led Temple Sholom to increase the warm and caring nature of the community by extending its doors to the physically challenged, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered population and young adult community. Rabbi Walter has also opened Temple Sholom's doors to the students of Hebrew Union

³⁸ Rabbi Jonathan Roos currently serves as Assistant Rabbi at Congregation Beth Emeth in Albany, New York.

³⁹ Personal interview with Rabbi Gerry Walter January 10, 2004.

⁴⁰ Minutes. Temple Sholom Executive Board Meeting. September 5, 1995.

College and has served as their mentor. He continues to keep Temple Sholom on the traditional side of Reform Judaism and in doing so enables the synagogue to remain an important and vibrant part of the Cincinnati Jewish community.

Summary and Conclusion

The Role of the Rabbi

2004 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Temple Sholom. Judaism holds the fiftieth year as the Jubilee year after the practice described in Leviticus 25:10-11, "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to your holding and each of you shall return to your family." For Temple Sholom this fiftieth year, this jubilee year, is time for all the congregants to return to their holdings and their family that they find in Temple Sholom. Looking back at the last fifty years, we can see just how far Temple Sholom has come and where it needs to go in the future.

Over the past fifty years, the congregation has given its rabbis the freedom and support that has enabled the rabbinical leadership to move the congregation forward. Rabbi Stanley Brav brought his superior leadership and organizational skills, which allowed the congregation to grow. He sought to form a close personal relationship with each family placing emphasis on meeting individual needs, which he fulfilled through being ever present for pastoral calls and life cycle events. His dedication to Hebrew marked a separation from the other Reform rabbis in Cincinnati and set Temple Sholom on the traditional side of Reform Judaism. His commitment to having a congregation in the northern suburbs paved the way for Rockdale Temple and Wise Temple to find similar suburban homes. He established education, for both children and adults, as a mainstay of the congregation. Even in a diminished capacity from his failing health he fought for increased congregational participation in worship and holiday observance. It

is significant to note that for the remainder of Rabbi Brav's life he continued his relationship with Temple Sholom until his death on November 9, 1992.

Under the rabbinate of Rabbi Donald Splansky the congregation's stake in education rose. Rabbi Splansky worked to increase the hours of religious school and instill a program for high school students. His commitment to youth led the congregation to support camp and Israel trips as well as work towards increasing the participation of young Jewish girls to the same level as that of their counterparts. He led the congregation through the trying times of the wars in Israel and brought the country to the forefront of the congregation's consciousness and demanded unwavering support from them. In the early 1980s he continued to educate the congregation about Israel, making them aware of distinctions between the Orthodox and Reform rabbinate. He also encouraged the building of Reform communities in Israel. Closer to home, Rabbi Splansky embraced the growing Havurah movement and many small, but active groups arose under the umbrella of Temple Sholom. He continued to steer Temple Sholom to the right, within the orbit of Reform Judaism, as he initiated the wearing of *kippot* and *tallitot* in the sanctuary. Partially due to his position as the first rabbi after Brav, and possibly due to the fact that Rabbi Brav remained part of the community until the late seventies when he moved to Florida, Rabbi Splansky had difficulty in making Rabbi Brav's congregation his own during its teen years. Despite the fact that he worked in the shadow of Rabbi Brav, Rabbi Splansky's competence and good intentions allowed Temple Sholom to move successfully into adulthood.

In 1984, Temple Sholom appointed Rabbi Gerry Walter the third rabbi of Temple Sholom. He had the benefit of being significantly removed from Rabbi Brav's tenured

and therefore, enjoyed more freedom in his rabbinate. Upon his arrival, he immediately sought to turn the congregation's focus to ritual and worship. Under his guidance, the Religious Observance Committee was formed which set the standard for congregational participation in religious proceedings at Temple Sholom. He continued to lead the congregation to the religious right of Reform Judaism by adding more Hebrew to the service, instituting the public recitation of the second and third prayers of the *Amidah* and incorporating some traditional choreography into the service. In addition, Rabbi Walter expanded the congregational calendar by adding a second day of Rosh Hashannah and by making the observance of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Purim, Passover and Shavuot public community wide observances. He also established a weekly adult Talmud study group allowing for serious study of traditional Jewish texts. These weekly Talmud study groups continue to the present day.

Taking advantage of the positive relationship with the Cincinnati Jewish community that Rabbi Brav had worked so hard to build, Rabbi Walter brought Hebrew Union College students into the congregation to serve as religious school principals and rabbinical interns. This enabled Temple Sholom to stay fresh and retain its connection to the larger Reform Movement experiencing first hand the trends and changes therein. Over the last ten years, Rabbi Walter has helped the congregation come to terms with modernity, opening its doors to the physically challenged and the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered populace in the Jewish community. After twenty years, Rabbi Walter continues to provide a dedicated and personal rabbinate for the congregants of Temple Sholom.

Social Action

Examining the history of Social Action at Temple Sholom, we find a very shaky beginning. In 1960, a small Social Action Committee was born. Initially, the Social Action Committee was called the Public Affairs Committee. Its purpose was to study social problems on behalf of the congregation and propose possible responses. The committee's first action was to lead a discussion on religion in the public schools. As a whole however, they remained ineffective through the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements in the 1960s. This to some extent was due to the Board's ruling that no one could express any controversial ideas or opinions in the Temple newsletter. Also in this decade the still young congregation, which was afraid to upset the larger community, said publicly that the Public Affairs Committee does not necessarily speak for the organization of Temple Sholom.

It was not until the 1970s that Temple Sholom began to completely embrace the ideas of the Social Action Committee. During this decade the group was called the Committee for Community Service. The group was successful in providing furnishings for Soviet Jewish immigrants and it participated in social, cultural and recreational programs for the mentally challenged in the greater Cincinnati area. With the onset of the 1980s, Temple Sholom remained dedicated to the plight of Soviet Jewry. At this time, with the help of the CCAR, they even managed to send Rabbi Walter to the Soviet Union and sponsor an entire family's immigration to the United States. Also during this time, the Committee for Community Service added two new programs to their agenda: feeding the hungry and establishing good interfaith relations. The most significant change in the Social Action Committee of the 1980s was to engage the youth of the congregation to

participate in these projects. Teaching social justice and values to children became an important aspect of this committee. By the mid 1990s, congregational support of the Social Action Committee had reached an all time high. This dedication to social action has continued to the present. One can see the most recent example of the centrality of social justice to Temple Sholom in the Board's decision to become the first Jewish member of the Amos Project, which is a group of congregations committed to living out their faith through public action.¹

Sacred Space

Temple Sholom found its first home in a converted church in Roselawn. Although the building fit into the new congregation's budget, it was not large enough to house their first Shabbat service or the entirety of the religious school. Because of the lack of space, Temple Sholom rented the local public school for classroom space. This ultimately became problematic, as the congregation and larger Jewish community had been involved in the struggle of the separation of church and state.

In 1955, the congregation undertook the project of finding new space. From this search, they acquired a piece of land in Amberley Village and created a space that was entirely their own with Judaism in its foundations. The initial building stage included the construction of a classroom wing and an auditorium/multi-purpose room, which also served as the sanctuary. The building remained in this form until 1967 when a formal sanctuary was built. The sanctuary was designed with a large *bimah* to accommodate the

¹ The Amos Project is an interfaith project comprised of congregations committed to living out their faith through public action. The organization sees as its mission the necessity of affirming the value and dignity of every human life as well as addressing critical systemic problems at their root causes. Since 1998, 37 congregations have joined the project and have secured Cincinnati Public Schools commitment to reduce all K-3 classes to 17-19 teachers per student. The project has spearheaded the creation of Cincinnati Reads to assure all children receive the reading assistance they require as well as challenged the Cincinnati Recreation Commission to establish and publicize new community based activities in areas where none existed before. Temple Sholom joined this project in January of 2004.

increase of participation in worship. The sanctuary also featured retractable walls allowing the room to double in size for High Holidays and other occasions when necessary.

This configuration served Temple Sholom well through two decades. Towards the end of the 1980s however, the congregation required more classroom space due to the growing religious school. In 1989, construction on four additional classrooms and new administrative offices were completed. The congregation had also planned to completely remodel the synagogue into an elaborate and modern facility, but these plans never came to fruition. The only changes to the building came in the form of accessibility and aesthetics. To make the temple accessible to congregants with physical challenges, the congregation installed a wheelchair lift at the bimah and remodeled the restrooms and entranceways. Most recently, the congregation has redone the entryway floors and installed new carpeting throughout the building. Currently there is a major renovation plan in the fundraising stage.

Financial Struggles

From the very beginning, Temple Sholom had a minimal budget. Collecting the \$11,000 necessary to buy the building on Ross Avenue left the congregation with little in its bank account. Within a year, as the congregation outgrew the building, it was time to fundraise again. The congregants raised \$38,000 to purchase the land in Amberley Village, but needed an additional \$200,000 for the building. Although the temple asked members to contribute 2% of their annual income toward this amount, they had already contributed to the Roselawn building and the land acquisition in Amberley Village. Money was still tight. Spring of 1957 did not find Temple Sholom any further along in

this capital campaign, thus forcing the Board of Trustees to reorganize the fundraising plan. At that point, almost a third of Temple Sholom members had not made pledges and a fifth of those who had made pledges had not paid, leaving the congregation with only half of the money needed to break ground for the new building. Temple Sholom was finally able to break ground after a single generous donation from David Frisch along with the acquisition of a bank loan.

In 1965, Temple Sholom undertook another fundraising campaign to construct a permanent sanctuary, library and a rabbi's study. Once again the congregation had trouble raising the necessary funds. Because of the congregation's self-assessment dues plan, in which each temple member fixed their own dues based on their income, the congregation ran on a minimal budget that did not allow saving for capital improvements. Thus, the congregation initiated an additional assessment on their membership that they designated specifically for the building fund. Even this did not generate enough money to break ground on the new project nor could a wealthy donor be located. The congregation was forced to secure a bank loan for the majority of the building costs.

During the 1967 War and Yom Kippur War in Israel the congregation fell into financial difficulty once again. It seemed that a significant portion of the congregants had been sending money to Israel instead of donating to the synagogue or paying their required dues. This trend was curbed by public admonishment by the president of the congregation.

In the 1980s Temple Sholom once again began to outgrow its building. In 1986, members of Temple Sholom voted to begin fundraising for an addition to the building in the amount of 1.2 million dollars. As history dictated, raising these funds would prove

difficult. Less than half of the projected amount was raised and the Board of Trustees had no other option than to reduce the size and cost of the addition to \$600,000. Once again, due to lack of congregational support, Temple Sholom turned to the bank for a mortgage and used the money they had previously raised for the initial mortgage payments.

Currently, Temple Sholom is in the midst of the Golden Anniversary Campaign with the goal of raising 1.8 million dollars. 1.2 million dollars will pay to repair, revitalize and rebuild Temple Sholom and \$600,000 will enhance educational programming. After six months, the campaign has only succeeded in raising \$425,000, thus continuing the trend of difficulty that Temple Sholom has had in raising funds from its membership.

General Conclusions

Having summarized Temple Sholom's history in the areas of rabbinic leadership, social action, sacred space and fundraising one can make some general conclusions. Temple Sholom is not entirely unique for a mid-sized congregation in the later half of the twentieth century so these conclusions can also provide information about the American Jewish experience as a whole. In giving free reign to its rabbis, Temple Sholom has shown that a mid-size congregation seeks a multi-faceted leader in its clergy. The rabbi should function not only as a spiritual and educational guide but as C.E.O., personnel manager and chief fundraiser. This differs from a large size congregation in that in addition to the rabbi, they tend to hire a designated C.E.O. and giving/development professional.

Temple Sholom's involvement with social action, as it moved from a place of resistance to eventually becoming a central component to the temple, mirrors the trend of American Reform Judaism. Due to its liberal leanings, the Reform Movement has been deeply involved in social concerns since its very beginning, reaching its peak in the 1960s with the issue of equality. Temple Sholom was behind this trend by almost twenty years. Temple Sholom reached its peak on the issue of social action in the 1980s over concern for Soviet Jewry. Currently, its attentions are turned closer to home but Temple Sholom's Social Action Committee is in a state that is significantly diminished from where it once was and where it could be.

Regarding sacred space, Temple Sholom struggles with an architecture that was designed in the 1950s and 1960s. Like most synagogues built at that time, the design emphasizes grandeur in worship and includes extremely large and impersonal sanctuaries and high *bimot*. As the focus of Reform Judaism shifted to education and added a multitude of programming and service options, the need for more classroom and open programming space increased. Those synagogues with a versatile and moveable floor plan could respond easily while others, including Temple Sholom, needed to expand existing structures to accommodate this need. The trend continues towards more personal worship, which Temple Sholom has addressed to some extent through the service in the round worship style and bringing the rabbi and soloist off of the *bimah* during services in the main sanctuary.

Temple Sholom's vision for its building includes: major renovations of the entryways to promote a more welcoming environment, the establishment of a small chapel to provide intimate services when desired, the enhancement of youth service

facilities to promote more gathering of young people, and the addition of a multipurpose activity room with moveable fixtures to provide space for any number of additional programs. This vision is consistent with the current trends of Reform Judaism and will enable Temple Sholom to function well as a center for Jewish communal life.

The difficulties Temple Sholom has encountered in its fundraising efforts are tell tale signs of the culture of its membership. A dedicated Sholomite has been a person who contributes his or her time to the congregation. Attendance has been cultivated as the most important way to support the synagogue. Honors and thank yous to those in charge of gatherings and committees are prevalent while monetary contributions are rewarded silently with plaques and publications. The Board of Trustees in consistently turning to the bank and lowering its expectations, has shown the membership that the temple can continue to survive and grow even without consistent member giving so that some might conclude that extra donations are unnecessary at all.

Recommendations for Another Successful 50 Years at Temple Sholom

Overall, Temple Sholom has been very successful in providing a warm and participatory place for the Jews of Cincinnati. Its dedication to learning Hebrew and its traditional worship style has prepared many children and young adults to enter the larger Jewish community. Temple Sholom should continue to fully embrace their clergy and give them the freedom to lead the congregation in a manner that expresses passion and a love for Judaism. Temple Sholom's growing involvement with and concern for the larger community exemplifies the mission of *or lagoyim*, a light to the nations, and will pave the way for the betterment of the relationship that Judaism has with America.

The vision for the synagogue building that the Golden Anniversary Campaign proposes is exactly what Temple Sholom needs. First though, some change needs to occur in the culture of congregants at Temple Sholom regarding giving. While volunteerism and commitments to attend synagogue functions are important, in order for the congregation to grow the members need to give of their livelihood as well. If the congregation is to survive and truly respond to the needs of modern Reform Jews, no compromises should be made on the vision for a new Temple Sholom. In order to move Temple Sholom into its next stage of life, all of the congregants need to step forward and take ownership of the congregation's future; for without the members, Temple Sholom would not have existed in the past and Temple Sholom will not exist in the future.

Appendix

Document 1

Rockdale Temple President's Report for 1953-1954 (January 24, 1954)¹

In my opinion one of the highlights of the year was the Special Congregational Meeting held December 1st, in compliance with a petition presented to me, and which in accordance with our Constitution made it mandatory to call the meeting. Over five hundred of our members were in attendance and a great many entered freely into the discussion at hand. The questions of the teaching of Hebrew, and the holding of mid-week sessions of the school were fully debated. It was my impression, and the opinion of those to whom I spoke that everyone seemed satisfied with the final decisions reached as the result of the voting. The intense interest manifested by such a very large percentage of our Congregation in a matter relating to Jewish Education certainly augurs well for the future of Reform Judaism.

¹ Minutes. Congregational Meeting. President's Report for 1953-1954. January 24, 1954.

In this report the president of Rockdale Temple, Warren J. Heldman, reflected on the events of the past year, namely the religious school debate and the subsequent leaving of Rabbi Brav from Rockdale Temple to form a new congregation in the northern suburbs of Cincinnati.

Document 2

Religious School Committee Report for 1953-1954 (January 24, 1954)²

A Special Congregational Meeting was called this Spring to discuss various phases of the Religious School program. Decisions were arrived at, which will cause some changes in our present set-up. These changes will be put into affect with the beginning of the new school year. From the point of view of your Religious School Chairman, certainly one aspect of this of this meeting was not gratifying. This wide spread interest among our congregants in this portion of our religious life must ultimately bring about a better understanding on the part of both parents and children regarding the goals of our school. Though we did not all agree upon each item discussed, there was sufficient common ground to assure the continuing and also the improvement of our school.

The Committee, as the representative of this Congregation, wishes to tender its thanks to Dr. Brav, who heads the administration of the School...it is with genuine confidence that we look forward to an even better year starting in the Fall.

² Minutes. Congregational Meeting. Religious School Committee Report for 1953-1954. January 24, 1954. In this report the Religious School Committee chair of Rockdale Temple, Alfred G. Schwab, reflected on the events of the past year, namely the religious school debate and the subsequent leaving of Rabbi Brav from Rockdale Temple to form a new congregation in the northern suburbs of Cincinnati.

Document 3

Resignation of Rabbi Stanley R. Brav from Rockdale Temple (July 1, 1954)³

July 1, 1954
Mr. Warren Heldman, President
Congregation Bene Israel
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Warren:

After most serious, heart-searching deliberation, I herewith submit to the Board of Trustees my resignation as Rabbi of Congregation Bene Israel, effective September 1, 1954.

My six years at Rockdale have seen a growth of membership and congregational activity, a blossoming of educational and organizational programs—for which my services were originally secured. I have enjoyed most cordial relationships with Dr. Reichert, officers, trustees and members, and count many hundreds of warm friendships among the men, women and children of the Congregation. I shall always be grateful for the privilege of teaching Judaism in one of the historic citadels of its American expression. My continued prayers shall be that the Congregation's future will equal and surpass its illustrious past.

In turning to a new field of rabbinical endeavor, I earnestly solicit the understanding and cooperation of Congregation Bene Israel. The call to help establish and develop a new Liberal Congregation in the northern suburbs of this city and to serve as its Rabbi is a spiritual challenge and opportunity I feel I cannot resist. All of us eager to encourage the growth of Progressive Judaism must welcome this enterprise with open arms and hearts. Most sincerely I invite Bene Israel's generous response—also Bene Yeshurun's—as the frontiers of our people's faith are advanced.

I look forward to the friendliest of associations in our new neighborly relationships. May God prosper us all and strengthen us to serve worthily in His vineyard.

Very Sincerely,
Rabbi Stanley R. Brav

³ Minutes. Special Meeting of K.K. Bene Israel Trustees. July 6, 1954.
Rabbi Brav submitted this letter of resignation to the President of Rockdale Temple, Warren Heldman, on July 1, 1954. It was presented to the Board of Rockdale Temple on July 6, 1954 and appeared in the *American Israelite* on July 8, 1954.

Document 4

Personal Letter From Rabbi Stanley R. Brav to the President of Rockdale Temple, Mr. Warren J. Heldman (July 8, 1954)⁴

Mr. Warren J. Heldman, President,
Rockdale Avenue Temple,
Cincinnati, 29, Ohio

Dear Warren:

May I hasten to express my appreciation for your phone call of Wednesday morning advising that the Board of Trustees of Congregation Bene Israel had unanimously voted, in accepting my resignation of September 1, 1954, to continue my salary, housing allowance and pension to one year from that date.

I consider this a most gracious and generous act of personal friendship, and of understanding cooperation in the work of advancing Liberal Judaism in which I will be engaged. I want to tell you, however inadequately, of my heartfelt gratitude, and my sense of pride in having been associated with men and women who would evidence such magnanimity and goodwill. Both for this action and for the good wishes expressed in your letter to the Congregation, I shall always be indebted.

I have already offered my counsel to Alfred Schwab with reference to any planning for Religious School in which I could be of some assistance. May I assure you and the Board that if there is any way in which I can be helpful, either prior to my August vacation or thereafter, I shall consider it a privilege if you will call upon me.

Looking forward to our continued friendship, and with reiterated warm good wishes, personally, and to the Congregation.

Most Sincerely,

Rabbi Stanley R. Brav

⁴Minutes. K.K. Bene Israel Trustees Minutes. September 9, 1954.

Upon Rabbi Brav's resignation from Rockdale Temple, he received word that the synagogue would continue to pay his salary, housing allowance and pension fund payments for the first year of his service to the newly formed congregation Sholom. He responded to this gesture by the above letter thanking the president and members of Rockdale Temple for their support.

Document 5

Letter to the Larger Jewish Community Announcing Temple Sholom as the New Liberal Congregation of Cincinnati (Summer of 1954)⁵

TEMPLE SHOLOM

THE NEW LIBERAL JEWISH CONGREGATION OF CINCINNATI

DEAR FRIENDS:

FOR TWENTY YEARS MANY HAVE PREDICTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW LIBERAL JEWISH CONGREGATION IN OUR CITY. YOU WILL WANT TO BE INFORMED THAT THIS "FELT NEED" IS NOW BEING REALIZED IN OUR TEMPLE SHOLOM.

SINCE WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN WHO IS ALREADY A CONGREGATIONAL MEMBER, THIS LETTER IS ADDRESSED TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. WE WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION TO DRAW ANYONE AWAY FROM ESTABLISHED AFFILIATIONS. WE DESIRE THE FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION OF ALL EXISTING CONGREGATIONS.

THE NEW CONGREGATION SHOLOM, CLOSE TO THE PRESENT CENTER OF JEWISH POPULATION, IS DESIGNED FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO JOIN IN A PIONEERING SPIRITUAL VENTURE,

- AFFIRMATIVELY JEWISH IN A LIBERAL-REFORM INTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL JUDAISM
- CONVENIENTLY NEAR LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG JEWISH FAMILIES OF OUR CITY
- OFFERING THE INTIMACY AND WARMTH OF A SMALL, FRIENDLY, DEMOCRATIC CONGREGATION
- WITH A POSITIVE, PROGRESSIVE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR ADULTS AS WELL AS FOR CHILDREN
- ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION IN WORSHIP WHICH RETAINS THE RICH EMOTION OF TRADITION, AND
- A TEACHING PULPIT RATHER THAN A PREACHING PULPIT, WITH THE RABBI CLOSE TO EACH FAMILY AND ITS NEEDS.

DR. STANLEY R. BRAY, WHO HAS WON SUCH AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION AS A POPULAR TEACHER AND PASTOR THESE SIX YEARS HE HAS BEEN IN CINCINNATI, WILL SERVE AS RABBI BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 1954. HE WHO ARE CALLING TOGETHER THE PLANNING COMMITTEE AND SEEKING OUT CHARTER MEMBERS, FEEL EXTREMELY FORTUNATE THAT THE NEW CONGREGATION WILL ENJOY RABBI BRAY'S EXCEPTIONAL SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP.

CHARTER MEMBERS WILL HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF ASSISTING IN MAKING MAJOR DECISIONS AND POLICIES. ALL INTERESTED ARE ASKED TO PHONE MR. OR MRS. ARNOLD L. BECK, JC 2035 / RE 8078, OR MR. OR MRS. LEONARD SELIGMAN, JC 7255. HOWEVER, SINCE THE EVE OF ROSH HASHMONAH IS SO CLOSE AT HAND (SEPTEMBER 27)

CONGREGATION SHOLOM WILL JOIN IN ITS FIRST SHABOS SERVICE ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, AT 8 P.M., AND WILL REGISTER CHILDREN FOR ALL GRADES OF ITS RELIGIOUS SCHOOL ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12.

THE UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDLINESS OF THE ENTIRE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS MOST EARNESTLY INVITED.

SINCERELY,

Arnold L. Beck
ARNOLD L. BECK
William Maxwell
WILLIAM MAXWELL
John Rosing
JOHN ROSING

Carl B. Rubin
CARL B. RUBIN
Leonard Seligman
LEONARD SELIGMAN
Harris Tash
HARRIS TASH

⁵ Temple Sholom Archives. This letter was distributed throughout the Jewish community in the summer of 1954, explaining Temple Sholom's goals, answering any major questions and reaching the unattached Jews of the Cincinnati community.

Document 6

Temple Sholom 1960⁶



⁶ This picture from 1960 shows what the building looked like prior to the Sanctuary and extended classroom wing.

Document 7

Sermon by Rabbi Donald M. Splansky (August 26, 1977)⁷

The wearing of a *yarmulke* (or, as we say in Hebrew: *keepah*) is not a matter of principle. If it were, I would have worn one for years during Sabbath services. It is a matter of custom only, and each Jew, including each rabbi, must decide on his own custom out of his own studies, search, and experimentation. The great architect of American Reform Judaism, Isaac Meyer Wise wrote on this subject in the American Israelite:

"It is a precious small business to allow such an insignificant matter as a hat to outlaw a Jew from the house of God...The Orthodox Jew may look upon it as a violation of his conscious to enter a synagogue bare-headed, but the Liberal certainly does not consider it a sin to keep the head [un]covered."⁸

...I have begun the practice for myself of wearing a *keepah* at services as an old ritual in which I find new meaning. Just as the ceremony of *Bar Mitzvah* began in medieval (not ancient) times and has generated new vitality in our own day, so too has the use of a *keepah* for many liberal Jews. I shall continue to wear one as a way of conspicuously identifying myself as a Jew at prayer and as a Jew who is a proud part of *K'lal Yisrael*, the community of world-wide Jewry...I hope that this old-new custom will be in no way offensive to members of Temple Sholom, and that I will be given the same option that is available to every member (man, woman, and child!)

⁷ Temple Sholom Archives. Donald M. Splansky. Sermon. August 26, 1977.

Rabbi Splansky's turn toward tradition in the 1970s is reflected in this sermon in which he explained to the congregation why he was going to stop wearing a robe and begin wearing a *kippah*.

⁸ The original text says "covered," however, this is a typo and should read "uncovered" in order for the argument to make sense.

Document 8

PROCEDURES FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES IN TEMPLE SHOLOM

(November 25, 1985)⁹

Reform Judaism stresses responsible, informed choice regarding religious observance. Though each individual must make decisions for himself/herself, as a congregation all of us share the responsibility of determining the nature of religious observances which take place in Temple Sholom or outside activities sponsored by Temple Sholom or its Auxiliaries. It is best that these be set down in writing so that all the members of our congregation may know, approve, and abide by them when participating in activities taking place in Temple Sholom.

I. Life Cycle Activities

A. Brit Milah and Baby naming

1. The ceremony of Brit Milah takes place on the eighth day of life of a male child. A mohel or a Jewish physician performs the actual circumcision. The ceremony usually takes place in the Temple, the home, the hospital, or a physician's office. If the child is ill or weak, the ceremony is delayed. A rescheduled ceremony does not take place on a Sabbath or holy day.
2. The ceremony of bestowing a Hebrew name upon a child takes place shortly after birth. When a Brit Milah occurs, the baby naming is part of the ceremony for a boy. Naming of a child may take place at regular Shabbat services or at an arranged time in the temple or in the home.

B. Consecration

1. Children of Temple Sholom members entering religious school for the first time take part in the special ceremony of Consecration. This ceremony takes place during the festival of Simchat Torah.

C. Bar/Bat Mitzvah

1. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony celebrates the religious coming of age of a Jewish child.
2. The ceremony should be identical for young men and young women. It should include reading and explanation of the Torah and Haftarah portions as well as leading the congregation in a substantial section of the religious service.
3. Current requirements of our religious school must be fulfilled, including regular attendance at worship services.
4. At least 2 years of attendance at religious school shall be required prior to the year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
5. Adults who have not celebrated a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony when younger are encouraged to become B'nai Torah.

⁹ "Procedures For Religious Observance in Temple Sholom". Temple Sholom Archives. Rabbi Walter and the Religious Observance Committee published the above procedures so that the religious observances and practices that took place in Temple Sholom would be consistent.

6. Families of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates are encouraged to plan celebrations which are in accordance with the solemnity of the religious occasion. Excesses which could overshadow the religious meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be discouraged.
7. Children who become Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to continue their religious education at Temple Sholom at least through the tenth grade and the ceremony of Confirmation. Ongoing participation in the religious life of Temple Sholom is strongly encouraged, including graduation from our Reform Jewish High School.
8. Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies take place at Shabbat morning services. Other times are only considered under exceptional circumstances.

D. Confirmation

1. The ceremony of Confirmation must take place each year on the festival of Shavuot.
2. Candidates for Confirmation fulfill a series of requirements including the mastery of academic material, participation in the religious life of Temple Sholom, and service projects for the well being of our congregation.
3. Students completing the 10th grade of religious school are eligible for the Confirmation ceremony.
4. The consecration of our Confirmands takes place as a special and meaningful religious service previous to the date of Confirmation.

E. Marriages and Weddings

1. Wedding ceremonies are performed in Temple Sholom for Temple Sholom members, staff, and their immediate families.
2. Weddings do not take place on Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first day of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, the first and 7th days of Pesach, Shavuot, Yom Hashoah, and Tisha B'Av.
3. The rabbi shall have final approval over the choice of appropriate music and readings for wedding ceremonies.

F. Divorce

1. Divorce is a difficult time for all parties concerned. Appropriate ceremonies and guidance in the spirit of Reform Judaism are available.

G. Yahrzeit and Yizkor

1. Yahrzeit shall be read on the sabbath of the week when the anniversary of death occurs.
2. Congregants may choose to have Yahrzeit observed according to the Hebrew or secular calendar.
3. All congregants will be informed of the exact date of yahrzeit for their loved ones each year.
4. Yizkor, the memorial service of remembrance, takes place on Yom Kippur, the concluding morning of Sukkot, and the concluding morning of Pesach.

II. Sabbath, Holy Day, and Festival Observance

A. Shabbat and Yom Tov

1. Temple Sholom maximizes the observance of Shabbat. Shabbat is a day of sanctity, set aside for worship, study and friendship.
2. There shall be no business meetings, committee meetings, fundraising activities or office activities on Shabbat or on holy days.
3. Maintenance set-up and kitchen work shall be postponed until after 3:00 p.m. on Shabbat and holy days, with the exception of life-cycle or holiday events for Temple Sholom members. These events may include set-up and kitchen activities as needed.

B. Length of Festivals

Temple Sholom follows the Reform custom of observing the biblical length of holy days and festivals. The following are the length of important holy days during the year:

Rosh Hashanah - 1 day
Sukkot - 8 days
Passover - 7 days
Shavuot - 1 day

Services for festivals and holy days will take place on the proper date.

C. There is to be no smoking in the temple on Yom Kippur.

D. Passover.

All food served in the temple during the Passover period shall correspond to the prohibition on the use of Chametz (bread and leaven).

III. General Considerations and Practices

A. Food

1. In accordance with Jewish Biblical law, pork, pork products and shellfish shall never be served in the temple or at temple functions.
 2. All food served in the temple during the Passover period shall correspond to the prohibition on the use of Chametz (bread and leaven).
 3. Visitors and caterers using the kitchen shall abide by Temple Sholom dietary rules.
- B. In accordance with the principles of Reform Judaism, women and men share equally in the religious responsibilities and privileges of our congregation.

C. Decorum in Worship Services

1. The use of kipah and tallit in the congregation is optional.
2. To maintain the decorum of our services, there shall be no filming or photographing of a service or life-cycle activity. However, arrangements for video-taping or audio-tape recording of life-cycle activities should be discussed with the rabbi for his approval.
3. Except for an emergency, congregants should not enter or leave the sanctuary when the ark is open, the congregation is standing, the Torah is being read, or the sermon is being delivered.
4. In consideration of maintaining a worshipful mood for others, parents should supervise their children in services.

5. The rabbi and the ritual committee will determine the level of participation by congregants and others in worship services and life-cycle activities at Temple Sholom.

IV. Rabbi and Pulpit

- A. The rabbi shall determine the proper procedures for life-cycle events in consultation with individual families.
 1. The rabbi shall not be expected to officiate at ceremonies where either the ceremony or the procedure involved would be contrary to the rabbi's convictions.
 2. No rabbi or other member of the clergy shall occupy the pulpit of Temple Sholom or officiate at life-cycle ceremonies in the temple without the express invitation of the rabbi of the congregation.
 3. Any life-cycle events for which others officiate during the absence of the rabbi of the congregation must correspond to procedures and standards set by the rabbi of the congregation.
 4. No arrangements of any kind nor scheduling of life-cycle activities shall be made by members without first consulting the rabbi for a firm commitment on the rabbi's calendar.

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