

History of Reform Judaism in San Antonio, Texas

1874 — 1945

by

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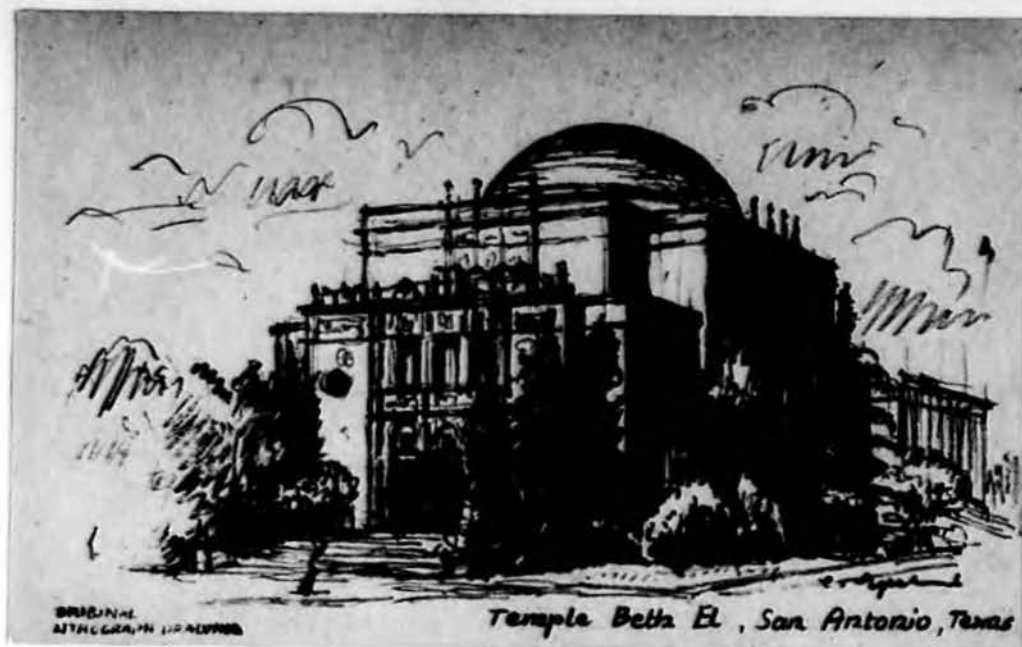
DEDICATED

To my beloved wife,
and to the zealous pioneers of
Congregation Beth-El
who have made this history.

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TEMPLE BETH-EL .

Within these walls

Keep holy time,

He's wholly Thine

Within these walls.

Within these walls

Let friendship spread,

Keep Thou the pledge

Within these walls.

Within these walls

Keep Thou the light--

Keep Thou the right

Within these walls.

Within these walls
Keep God enshrined,
In heart and mind,
Within these walls.

Within these walls
God spread the truth--
To age and youth,
Within these walls.

Within these walls
Keep holy time--
Keep Thou and Thine
Within these walls.

Jos.J.Sterne.

INTRODUCTION

On a shelf surrounded by miscellaneous books and paper stand 6 volumes of records. Though insignificant in appearance, yet they contain much information which, until this date, was available in no other source. It was the intent of the writer to excerpt a few facts from them in the course of his study of "The History of the Jews in San Antonio." However, the material therein proved so interesting and enlightening that the original thesis was temporarily abandoned and these volumes became the object of intensive research. The results of this research are herein presented with the fervent hope that "The History of Reform Judaism in San Antonio" will make its contribution to the deeper insight and understanding of the growth of Reform Judaism in America.

Chapter I

In the Beginning

Some seventy years ago, on Sunday, May 31, 1874,
¹
twenty-six men assembled at the Odd Fellow's Hall in San Antonio, Texas, to consider ways and means of erecting a House of Worship where they and their families could join together to continue the faith of their fathers.

At this time, San Antonio was little more than a frontier village; its population of inhabitants represented a mongrel assortment of adventurers left over from the Civil War, a majority of Mexicans, and a handful of pioneers who envisioned a successful business center. Among the latter were the founders of this Congregation, many of whom contributed materially to the growth of this present metropolis of 350,000, and many whose names are recorded solely in its minutes. Rich and poor alike, all were dedicated to perpetuating their religion.

It is quite apparent that even before this a group had met together to consider the problems involved, for this first recorded meeting was called "to take into consideration the plans submitted by Builders for the erection of a House

of Worship." The meeting itself, recorded in the beautiful handwriting of B. Oppenheimer who was elected Secretary, was not called a congregational meeting, but a "Meeting of subscribers to the Building Fund to erect a House of Worship." At this meeting a temporary President, L. Veith, was chosen and he presented to the group the plans which had been submitted thus far. After considerable debate the plans were not accepted and the Building Committee was instructed to obtain plans for "a Synagogue not to cost more than Eleven or Twelve Thousand Dollars in Coin." The Subscription Committee was instructed to ascertain "how much can be raised by loans among the members payable in Bonds of the Congregation, said Bonds payable at the option of the Congregation within five years and bearing interest at 7% per annum." The next meeting was then scheduled for the following Thursday evening and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Whether or not there had been a place where they had assembled for worship, in a residence or hall, cannot be ascertained, but it seems obvious from this report that previous meetings had been held and committees appointed.

Also, it is interesting to note that the funds for the erection of the House of Worship were not to come from

donations but from interest-bearing loans.

Just five days later, on Thursday evening, June 4, 1874, the scheduled meeting of Subscribers to the Building Fund was held at the residence of L. Zork. At this meeting, the Subscription Committee was urged to continue its work and to "solicit further donations both from Israelites and outsiders." The members present resolved to form themselves into a "Congregation with temporary organization," and proceeded to elect temporary officers, each elected by acclamation. A committee was then appointed to draft a Constitution and By-Laws, and the next meeting was scheduled for the following Sunday.

On Sunday, June 7, 1874, the "Meeting of Hebrew Congregation" took place. The Constitutional Committee gave its report (note the speed of its action) and the Preamble and first eight articles adopted as read or amended.

The Preamble clearly indicates the sincerity and dedication of the founders.

By-Laws of the Congregation Beth-El

Preamble

We, the subscribers, for the purpose of perpetuating the cause of Judaism in all its essential purity, and that we may cherish and promote its great and fundamental principle,--the rock upon which our undying faith is founded,--the belief in, and the worship of one God, have established this Congregation under the name and style of the "Congregation Beth-El", and for our government have adopted these By-Laws.

Article I

Officers:

The Officers of the Congregation shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Marshal and a board of Four Trustees.

Article II

Duty of President

It is the duty of the President to preside at every meeting, execute every law, sign all warrants on the Treasury, have charge of the official seal, appoint all committees, when not otherwise provided for, to sign all

official documents, and give the casting vote; and he shall by and under the advice of the Trustees, have the superintendence of all religious matters in the Congregation, and of the ceremonies, except as herein otherwise provided for, and shall preside at all meetings of the Congregation, and of the Board of Trustees.

Art. 3

Duty of Vice-President

The Vice-President shall exercise the powers, and perform the duties of the President in case of the death, resignation, absence or other incapacity of the President.

Art. 4

Duty of the Secretary

The Secretary shall keep the following books: a minute Book, in which he shall record in the English language the proceedings of the members at their meetings; a Ledger in which he shall keep the accounts of the members, proper books in which he shall enter the receipt and expenditures; and such other books as may be required. He shall issue all notices and bills, collect all monies, and turn same over to the Treasurer, countersign all warrants and orders signed by

the President, prepare the various reports and perform all other duties pertaining to his office, or which may be required of him by the Congregation.

Art. 5

Duties of the Treasurer

It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep a correct and faithful account of all receipts and expenditures; to pay all warrants signed by the President and Secretary, and to keep all books belonging to his office, which shall at all times be open to the inspection and examination of the Board of Trustees and the Finance Committee. The Treasurer shall not be deemed to have accepted the office, and shall not discharge any of the duties of the same, unless and until he shall first have given to the Congregation a bond, executed by himself and sureties; conditioned for the faithful performance of his duties, the form, amount of penalty and sufficiency of such bond to be approved by the Board of Trustees.

Art. 6

Duties of Marshal

The Marshal shall collect all bills issued to him by the

Secretary and immediately pay over to the Secretary all monies collected--serve all notices on members, and perform such other duties as may be required by the President. He shall receive as compensation for his services One Hundred Dollars per annum--and for the faithful performance of his duties he shall be required to give bond in such an amount as may be fixed by the Trustees.

Art. 7.

Election of Officers

Sec. 1: The Officers shall be annually elected for a term of one year, on a joint ballot, by the members of the Congregation.

Sec. 2: The said annual elections shall be held at the meeting room of the Congregation, not exceeding 15 days after the general meeting and no other business shall then and there be transacted.

Sec. 3: All elections shall be by Ballot and a majority shall elect any officer.

Sec. 4: The members of the Congregation shall receive at least five days notice in writing of the time appointed for holding the said elections.

Art. 8

Sec. 1: Vacancies in the Board of Trustees shall be filled by the President of the Congregation, by, and with advice and approval of the remaining Trustees.

Sec. 2: The office of any Trustee who shall absent himself from three successive meetings, shall, unless satisfactory excuses are given, be declared vacant by the Board of Trustees.

These first eight articles of the Constitution contain little that is out of the ordinary except perhaps in its provision for the office of Marshal, a paid employee who was to be elected by the Congregation and considered as one of the regular officers, and its limitation of the Trustees to four in number.

On June 9, 1874, at a meeting at the President's house, the remainder of the original Constitution was read and approved.

Art. 9

Duties and Powers of Trustees

The Board of Trustees shall have the entire charge, control, direction and management of the affairs of the Congregation, and shall adopt and carry out all measures and proceedings necessary to promote the interests thereof, unless otherwise herein provided. They shall keep accurate records of their proceedings and, of the Standing Committees annually, to the members at their meeting.

Art. 10

Charge against Officers, Members

In case charges are preferred by three members against an officer or member in the interval between the annual meetings, the Board of Trustees shall select a Committee of at least three at their first meeting thereafter, from the members at large, to investigate the same, which committee, shall examine witnesses for both parties, and shall admit the accused and accusers to be present, either in person or by counsel, and shall submit a report of the testimony had before them, together with their conclusions to the Board of Trustees, who, if the said charges be sustained by them, shall, within

10 days thereafter, convene a general meeting of the members of the Congregation, to consider and act upon the report of the said Committee. And the Board of Trustees upon receiving such report shall have power, by a three fourths vote, to suspend the accused, if an officer or employee, from office, until the decision and determination of the said charge by the members at such general meeting. And if the said accused be a member of the Congregation, he shall be liable to the fine and penalties in accordance with the statute in such cases made and provided.

Art. 11

Trustees not to be compensated

No Trustee shall receive any compensation for any services performed by him in any capacity for the Congregation, nor shall he be, directly or indirectly, interested or concerned in any profit or emolument derived from the business of the said Congregation.

Art. 12

Meetings of Trustees

The Board of Trustees shall meet once in three months, and may adjourn the said meetings from time to time. The

President shall call special meetings of said Board when requested in writing so to do, by three or more Trustees. In case of refusal or failure on the part of the President to call any such special meetings, within five days after the receipt by him of said written request, the officer next in rank, under the provision of these By Laws, shall have the like power.

Art. 13

Membership

Any person wishing to become a member of the Congregation, shall apply for that purpose in writing to the Board of Trustees, who, if the applicant be recommended by them, shall submit such election to the members at the next general meeting, for approval or rejection: but in no event shall such person exercise any of the rights and privileges, or enjoy the advantages and immunities of membership, until he has subscribed his name to the Constitution and shall have paid the fee for membership, as may be hereafter fixed by the Congregation.

Art. 14

Dues and Taxes

Sec. 1: The Board of Trustees, shall submit to the members, at every annual meeting, for their confirmation, or

other action, a report containing a detailed statement and estimate of money required for the ensuing year, with specifications of items and objects of expenditures, and the rate of assessment on the members thereof, for the raising of the same, and every member shall pay such taxes or dues, as shall be annually assessed or imposed in accordance with the provisions of this section.

Sec. 2: All assessments and taxes shall be due quarterly and payable in advance, commencing with the first day of May in every year; and a member failing to pay his dues or assessment for twelve months shall be declared in arrears, and shall forfeit all rights, privileges and immunities of membership, until the said arrears are paid.

Art. 15

Rights of Members

A member unless herein otherwise provided, shall have a right to vote in all questions at the meetings of the Congregation: he shall have all the rights and privileges of Divine Worship in the synagogue, with his family--excepting his children under the age of six years: his children may be confirmed and instructed thereof at rates to be hereafter

agreed upon and shall also have the right to be married by the minister of the Congregation, on obtaining a written consent from the President and on payment of the fees.

Art. 16

Special Meetings

Sec. 1: Special meetings of the members shall be called at any time by the Board of Trustees, or by the President on the written request of five members, and in case of refusal or failure on the part of the President to call said special meeting, within five days after the receipt by him of such written request, the officer next in power and rank respectively, shall have the right to call such special meeting, and in case of refusal or neglect on their part to call such meeting within three days after the receipt by them of said request, any three members signing such request shall have the right to call such meeting.

Sec. 2: The Secretary shall cause at least two days previous notice in writing of all meetings to be given to the members of the Congregation, and it shall be the duty of the Secretary, to notify each member of the nature of the business to be transacted at each special meeting.

Sec. 3: A quorum sufficient for the transaction of all business shall consist of Ten Members entitled to vote.

Art. 17

Ritual

The Ritual or service of the Congregation shall be in Conformity with the present reform service of the United States.

Art. 18

Order of Business

The order of services at all meetings of the members shall be as follows, but the order may be suspended by a vote of the majority:

1. Reading of the Minutes.
2. Election of Members.
3. Reports from Officers.
4. Reports from standing committees.
5. Reports from Special Committees.
6. Communications read and cited on.
7. Miscellaneous Business.

Art. 19

Rules for Transaction of Business

No question shall be stated unless regularly moved and

seconded, nor open for debate until stated by the President: and when a question is before the Congregation no motion shall be received.

Sec. 2: After any question has been decided, except one of indefinite postponement, any member who voted in the affirmative, may, at the same meeting move a reconsideration, but no debate on the main question shall be allowed unless so reconsidered.

Sec. 3: All questions unless herein otherwise ordered shall be determined by a majority vote.

Sec. 4: Every member shall have the privilege of speaking twice on the same subject, but not oftener without the permission of the Congregation, which shall be had without debate. When a member intends to speak, he shall rise in his place and respectfully address the chair, confine himself to the question, and avoid personalities. Should more than one rise at the same time, the President shall determine who is entitled to the floor--from whose decision in this case there shall be no appeal.

Sec. 5: No person shall be excused from voting unless personally interested in the decision, or by a majority vote of the members present.

Sec. 6: In all cases of ballot, the President may vote; in other cases he shall not vote unless the members are equally

divided on any question.

Sec. 7: Every resolution shall be reduced to writing, with the movers name attached thereto, which shall be recorded in the Secretary's Book.

Art. 20

Committees

After the general annual election, the President shall appoint the following committees:

A Finance Committee, consisting of three members,

A School Committee, consisting of three members,

A Ritual Committee, consisting of two members,

besides the Vice-President.

Art. 21

Duties of the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall meet at least twice in every year, and as often as the President shall call a meeting of the said Committee, and shall keep minutes of their proceedings. It shall be their duty to examine all the books and vouchers, and to audit the accounts of the Congregation.

Art. 22

School of Religious Instruction

Sec. 1: The school for religious instruction shall be under the supervision and management of the School Committee.

Sec. 2: It shall be the duty of said Committee to make all regulations necessary for the government of said school, and to visit the said school regularly at stated periods. They shall expend and disburse the monies appropriated by the Board of Trustees for the maintenance of the same.

Sec. 3: The Minister of the School shall be Superintendent of the school, and his duties shall be as follows:

He shall direct and regulate the course of studies for the different classes.

Sec. 4: The said Committee shall report annually to the Board of Trustees on the condition of said school, together with such recommendations as they may deem worthy of adoption.

Art. 23

Expulsion

Sec. 1: A member may be expelled for any or either of the following causes:

1st. For a violation of the By-Laws of the Congregation.

2nd. If he has been convicted of any criminal offense.

3rd. For gross misconduct.

Sec. 2: To expel a member, written charges and specifications must be preferred against him by three members, and a copy of such charges and specifications shall be forthwith served upon him. Such charges shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees, who shall take action thereon, as herein before provided.

Art. 24

Fines

Sec. 1: The President shall have power to impose the following fines:

Sec. 2: Any member leaving a meeting without permission of the presiding officer shall be fined one dollar, except in case his leaving shall break up a quorum, when he shall be fined five dollars.

Sec. 3: Any member who shall sign his name to a requisition to the President to call a meeting, and who shall fail to be present at the opening of such meeting, shall be fined five dollars, unless satisfactory excuses are given.

Sec. 4: The President shall have the power to fine any member for disobedience or disorder, in an amount not exceeding ten dollars for any one offense, and for continued disorder, such

member shall not be permitted to take part in the business of the meetings, and may be removed from the same by a majority vote of the members present. No appeal shall be taken from the decision imposing such fines, but the Board of Trustees may remit the same on petition.

Sec. 5: Any member disturbing the public worship or infringing on the regulations of the Board of Trustees, after having been duly notified to be fined twenty-five dollars.

Art. 25

Alteration of By-Laws

Any proposition to alter or amend the following By-Laws, or any or either of them, shall be submitted in writing, signed by at least three members, and read at the regular or special meeting of the Congregation, which said proposition shall lie over until the next regular or special meeting, when it shall require two-thirds of the votes of the members present for adoption.

In these articles, the following should be noted:

Art. 13--Membership

No one can enjoy the rights of membership "until he has subscribed his name to the Constitution and shall have paid the fee for membership." This article reveals a two-fold requirement for membership. (1) The member must subscribe to the Constitution, thus indicating his acceptance of the beliefs contained therein. Since the Preamble contains a certain formula of faith, this represents a creedal requirement. (2) The other requirement is financial. The member must pay a certain fee and there is no allowance for membership to indigents.

Art. 15--Rights of Members

This indicates that the President alone has the power to permit the minister to perform wedding ceremonies, and that even members must pay a fee to the Congregation for this service.

Art. 17--Ritual

This clearly reveals that from the very beginning the Congregation desired to affiliate and identify itself with the Reform Movement.

Art. 23--Expulsion

This provision was never applied in the history of the Congregation. The inclusion of any criminal offense as a grounds for expulsion is most unusual.

Art. 24--Fines

The practice of fining was sparingly used. There are only a few cases being on record, and these dealt only with absentee Trustees. There is no record of fining for misconduct.

On Wednesday evening, June 17, 1874, the entire Constitution was read and approved and a meeting was scheduled for the following Sunday.

The zeal and enthusiasm of the members had enabled them to make much progress, for in the course of three weeks a Constitution had been adopted; committees had been functioning and everything seems to have been going smoothly, yet for some strange reason (perhaps the heat) for two consecutive Sundays the meetings were postponed because of the small attendance. Finally, however, on July 5, 1874, the long awaited meeting took place and the first permanent organization was formed.

Officers were elected; a Building Committee was authorized to get bids for a synagogue and school rooms not to exceed \$12,000. A seal was ordered for the Congregation and a Resolution was passed that the Congregation join the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Isaac M. Wise, through a resolution, was authorized to represent the Congregation at the next meeting of the Union. Thus, from its very inception, this Congregation desired to become a part of the movement of liberal Judaism that was even then beginning to take shape. Of the forty-four Charter members,⁴ three were born in Russia or Poland, seven in the United States, two or three in Alsace Lorraine, and the remainder were natives of Germany, some of whom had been active in the beginnings of liberal Judaism there. Under these circumstances, the trend toward Reform was a natural development which met with little opposition.

Having decided to form a permanent Congregation, it was but natural that they began to face the problem of finding an immediate place to worship, at least for the High Holy Days, and so at a meeting in September, the Board was authorized to select a suitable place to worship and a Ritual Committee was appointed "to arrange the mode of worship." It is unfortu-

nate that there is no record of this first holiday service of the first permanent organization for the minutes stop there and continue Sept. 27, 1874, with no mention of what took place.

That there was a service, however, was indicated in the reports which were presented at this meeting. The expenses, \$11.00 spec., were far below the amount collected by the Marshal, \$41.50 spec. & 2.00 cy., for the holiday services. (The charter members were for the most part comparatively wealthy merchants. A barber and a peddler were included but the rest were wool merchants, wholesalers, distributors, bankers, and mercantile owners, who founded some of the largest and most prosperous businesses in this community.) Perhaps this was due to the fact that a Rev. M. Sniderman refused the donation of the Ritual Committee. Whether or not he was the first rabbi to officiate for Congregation Beth-El must remain a matter of speculation.

At this meeting a significant step was taken, for the Congregation adopted the "Ceremonies of the Minhag America, a portion of which means that we worship with our hats off." However, not only did they pass this resolution, but they added another which interpreted the wearing of a hat except by the minister or reader as a constitutional offence subject

to penalty. This resolution reads as follows:

"Resolved that hereafter at our prayer meetings we will enter our House of Worship with our hats off, and further that all visitors to our Congregation--except the minister or reader--be requested to keep their hats off or be considered as violating our Constitution and By-Laws, and subject them to the penalties as provided by our Constitution and By-Laws."

This resolution was adopted by a 16-5 vote. One of the negative voters, S. Moritz, a learned man who had previously offered his services to the Congregation as a Hebrew teacher, protested vigorously and demanded that his protest be recorded in the minutes. When we consider the fact as yet there had not been formed an orthodox synagogue, and there is no record of any type of orthodox service until 1885, this was indeed a drastic step which clearly worked a hardship on the few orthodox Jews there and marked a permanent barrier which would prevent them from entering the service and participating in its activities. This was to be beyond the shadow of a doubt a Reform Synagogue. Although there are records of various fines, there is none listed for the above cause.

In order to meet current expenses, an assessment of 75¢ was levied upon each member, (indeed a humble beginning.) The

assessment was increased by 50¢ per member at the next meeting, Nov. 15, in order to pay dues to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

After many bids were submitted and rejected, finally on Nov. 29, 1874, the Trustees were authorized by a congregational meeting to enter into a contract for building at a cost of \$12,300 according to the accepted plans and specifications submitted; the payments and financing thereof to be determined by the Board which, at its meeting two weeks before, had agreed to permit the Building Committee to make pro rata assessments from time to time on the subscribers to the Building Fund. The contractor was required to furnish security and accept as part payment the Bonds of the Congregation for \$2000 at 10% interest per annum, payable at the option of the Congregation within two years.

The building of this Temple was regarded as an obligation, not merely for the local community, but for all who were interested in the cause of Reform, for a committee of six prominent members was appointed to solicit subscriptions for the Building Fund in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

From Dec. 27, 1874, until May 22, 1875, all of the activities must have been carried on by committees for there is no further record of board or congregational meetings between

those dates. The committee to solicit out of town donations must have met with some success for their report was read, a vote of thanks extended to them, and they were reappointed to continue their work. The President reported on the progress being made on the construction of the building and the financing thereof, and it was resolved that the loans subscribed thus far be collected on or before June 15, and that mortgage bonds of the Congregation be issued as of June 15, 1875, payable at the option of the Congregation within five years bearing 7% interest per annum.

The action of the President in having authorized the lectures of a Rev. Alex Rosenspitz was approved and funds were allotted for them. A month later, an invitation was extended to Rev. Isaac M. Wise to visit San Antonio and dedicate the Synagogue--the visit not to begin before Sept. 1st. A communication of Rev. M. Greenblatt from Shreveport, La. soliciting correspondence in regard to his employment as minister was read and a reply sent to him stating that the Congregation could not consider entering any proposals until they were more fully organized and their building completed. At this meeting B. Oppenheimer was elected a representative to the Union Council in Buffalo, N.Y. on July 13, 1875.

At the election, which took place on July 11th, the same

officers were reelected by acclamation and just a few changes
6
made in the Board.

As the time for the dedication of the Temple drew near, the Congregation met once again (Aug. 22) and appointed a committee to handle all necessary arrangements. A wire was sent to Rev. Isaac M. Wise to ascertain positively whether or not he would be there for the occasion. An organist was to be engaged (this indicates the use of organ in the service) and a choir was trained for the purpose.

On Sept. 5, the last meeting was held before the evening of the great event. A committee was appointed to receive Rev. J. K. Gutheim of New Orleans, La., who was to deliver the dedicatory address, and a resolution was passed urging all Israelites to close their businesses in honor of this occasion.

"Resolved that the Israelites of San Antonio be respectfully requested to close their places of business during the dedication ceremonies and services at the Temple Beth-El from Friday Evening, Sept. 10, 1875 at 4 o'clock until Saturday Evening."

The Temple Dedication was a significant event. "The Congregation met pursuant to call at the Temple, when the key was formally delivered to the President and the doors thrown open, whereupon the dedicatory services were begun, conducted by Rev. J. K. Gutheim, assisted by Rev. Alex Rosenpitz."

For three days previous to this event, the following announcement was inserted in the San Antonio Daily Express:

San Antonio Daily Express
Sept. 8, 9 & 10

Dedication of the Hebrew Temple on Next Friday

The dedication of the Jewish Temple will take place next Friday evening according to the following:

Programme

The members of the Congregation and their families, as well as all the invited guests, will assemble at five o'clock P.M. precisely, and will be conducted to their seats by the Committee of Reception. At fifteen minutes past five o'clock, the doors will be closed and after this no one will be admitted. At half-past five, the presentation of the key of the Temple to the President by Miss Hannah Halff will take place, after which the ministers bearing the Scroll of the Law, preceded by ten young girls, and escorted by the President and Board of Trustees of the Congregation, will enter when the ceremonies will commence in the

FOLLOWING ORDER:

1. On arrival at the portals of the Temple, Rev. Alex Rosenspitz will speak Mah tovuh, Ohole'ho Yoacob, How goodly are Thy Tents, O Jacob, Thy Tabernacles, Oh Israel, Etc.
2. While the procession ascends the platform, the choir will sing "Lift up Your Heads Eternal Gates."
3. Introductory prayer by Rev. J. K. Gutheim.
4. Psalm C in Hebrew and English by Rev. Alex Rosenspitz.
5. En comocho bo-elohin, "There is None Besides Thee, Oh God", by the choir.
6. "Hear, O Israel", exhortation by Miss Johanna Koenigheim.

7. "Shema Yisroel and Echod Elohem", Hear Israel, Our God is One, by the choir after which the scroll of the law will be deposited in the shrine.

8. Lecho addonoi haggadulloh, "To Thee, O God, belongs Greatness and Might."

9. Prayer by Miss Minnie Frank.

10. Psalm XXIX in Hebrew, by the choir.

11. Oration by Rev. Dr. Gutheim.

12. Regular Friday evening service conducted by Rev. Alex Rosenspitz, during which Psalm XCII in the original will be sung by Rev. A. Rosenspitz. "Let Israel's God be Blessed" by the choir and the service be concluded by the beautiful hymn "God Of Israel We Adore Thee" by a quartette, after which the Congregation will be dismissed with the Aaronitic blessing.

Sept. 8th--same except last part shortened to Regular Friday Evening Services, conducted by Rev. Alex Rosenspitz, and "The Whole service and ceremonies will not last more than two hours."

Following the dedication on Saturday, this enthusiastic report appeared in the paper in prominent feature:

San Antonio Daily Express
Sept. 11, 1875

Yesterday afternoon, at 5 o'clock, according to direction in the published programme, large crowds of people from all quarters of the city began to press towards the Jewish Temple, fronting on Travis Square, to witness the dedication. The beautiful building was soon filled to the utmost capacity of its permanent seats and the aisles and all vacant spaces were filled with chairs to accommodate the ever increasing throng.

The Congregation present was composed indiscriminately of

Jews and Christians, Protestants and Catholics, and all joined reverently and devoutly in the solemn and impressive religious services of the hour. The only difference between them was that the Christians included mentally in their participation in the service, faith in Jesus as the Christ, while the Hebrews "looked for another." It was an honest and unavoidable difference, held on both sides in the utmost charity and good feeling. And this friendly intermingling of Israelites and Christians in the same public worship, so unusual, and yet so friendly, hearty, seemed to impress all thinking persons present as prophetically significant of a vast and glorious change for the better in the temper in which religious questions are discussed.

As showing the kindly feeling manifest upon the occasion, we may mention that the magnificent choir which did the splendid singing during the services was composed of Jewish ladies and gentlemen, and ladies and gentlemen from the Christian choirs and from the German singing societies. (A list and description of some of the singers was given.)

The Christian clergy of the city were given reserved seats near the pulpit and those who attended cordially greeted Dr. Gutheim at the conclusion of the service, in response to his elegant and touching greeting to the Christians in the exordium of his discourse.

The impression upon the audience made by all these things was profound and tender. We confess, that for ourselves, we were never more deeply impressed with the exceeding excellence and beneficent influence of friendship, brotherly kindness and charity, notwithstanding the most radical and irreconcilable differences of opinion in all our lives. We trust never to forget the lesson of yesterday.

The gentlemen of the press were given reserved seats, alongside the Christian clergy, and treated with the respect due their responsible calling.

We belong to that class of Christians who do not believe in the efforts sometimes made to convert Jews to the Christian faith. God has special charge of that wonderful people, as much so now, and in all their dispersions, as he had in the days of Abraham, Moses and David. Human wisdom cannot divine His purposes in regard to them, nor assist Him in His

counsels. Let a Jew be a true Jew and a Christian a true Christian and stand in their respective lots until the time of the "restitution of all things."

Then, on a separate page were inserted the following remarks:

Messrs. Oppenheimers and Berg won the audience at the Temple yesterday by their courtesies.

The singing at the dedication of the Hebrew Temple yesterday was charming. San Antonio is ahead of any city in the State in the cultivation of music.

The band of little girls, dressed in white, who marched into the Jewish Temple yesterday and formed facing the pulpit, acted their part admirably. The two who recited the prayers were models in the way of youthful elocution and fervor.

Rev. Mr. Rosenspitz, the officiating minister at the Jewish service yesterday, was very impressive in his manner of utterance.

Rev. Dr. J. K. Gutheim's discourse was printed in this copy of the paper. It was based on text of opening verses of sixteenth chapter of Isaiah beginning--"Arise, give light..."

Notice on Sept. 16

Dr. Gutheim's sermon as published in the Daily and Weekly Express has been called for by a great number of people. The Daily containing it is out, but we have a lot of Weeklies on hand. Send for them soon.

There were so many demands that it was reprinted in a weekly edition.

Thus, a little over a year after the first meeting, the Temple was erected and the Congregation had its home. This

was a year of achievement for the handful that had first met for "the purpose of perpetuating the cause of Judaism in all its essential purity, and that we may cherish and promote its great and fundamental principle, the rock upon which our undying faith is founded--the belief in and the worship of one God."

This marked the conclusion of the first part of the History of Temple Beth-El.

Chapter II

The Days of the First Temple

Just two days after the excitement of the dedication, the first congregational meeting was held in the Temple in order to distribute the pews. This meeting was well attended and the results gratifying. The manner of disposing of them, recommended by the Board, was adopted, namely: the pews were to be sold to members only. The prices thereof were to be determined by the Board according to their range and locality. They were to be sold at auction at a minimum fixed price, the bonus over the fixed price was to be paid in cash, the balance to be paid in 1, 2, 3 or 4 years in installments of 25% per annum at such times as fixed by the Board. Pews were to be subject to yearly assessment at their fixed value in order to meet current expenses. The auction immediately took place. Thirty-seven pews were sold with fixed prices ranging from \$150-\$500 and bonuses from \$5 to \$200. The highest total paid, including pew and bonus, was \$700. A total of \$12,345 was raised in this fashion, of which \$2160 was in bonuses or cash. Since there were 60 pews, there was still space available.

A few weeks later it was decided that a single man who desired to belong to the Congregation must pay \$25.00 before

signing the Constitution, whereas a married man had to pay \$50.00, but in cases of poor financial circumstances, this could be reduced to \$25.00. Both members and non-members could rent pews for one year at a price to be set by the Board. Thus, it seems that there were four types of Temple participation: 1. Membership without pew ownership or rental. 2. Membership with pew ownership, 3. Membership with pew rental, 4. Non-member with pew rental. All members had to sign the Constitution and pay the fee. The budget for the year 1875-1876 was set at \$3100 and included \$1800 for the minister and \$300 for the choir. It was also determined that $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the fixed price of pews be collected within 30 days (besides the bonuses) and the remainder by Dec. 24. This would give the Congregation sufficient cash to pay current expenses and part of its indebtedness. If the amount were paid in full in cash, there was a 7% per year discount and congregational bonds could be accepted as part payment of the remaining 75%. Rev. A. Rosenspitz was paid \$75 for music furnished (perhaps he had acted as Chazan). A pew was rented to M. Landeman for one year at \$25, certainly a nominal fee in lieu of the fixed prices.

At a subsequent meeting, the Board's recommendation of Rev. A. Rosenspitz as minister (with salary of \$1200 per year and duties including teaching of Hebrew twice a week and free

religious instruction) was rejected and a resolution of gratitude was to be extended to him and a copy of same inserted in the Israelite (apparently the publication was well known here.)

Whereas, the Rev. A. Rosenspitz during his sojourn among us as Religious Teacher has ardently worked to revive and foster the spirit of true religion and pure Judaism; and

Whereas, the said Rev. Gentleman officiated on the occasion of the Consecration of our new temple and on the following day of Memorial and Day of Atonement to our perfect satisfaction and edification, and

Whereas, his discourses both in English and German were such as to enlighten and instruct us in the divine, lofty and ideal precepts of our forefathers; therefore be it

Resolved, that the thanks of this congregation are due and the same are hereby tendered to the Rev. Alex Rosenspitz for his efforts in behalf of the promotion of the cause of religion among us; and be it further

Resolved, that as far as our acquaintance and experience reaches, we can and do hereby cordially recommend the said Rev. A. Rosenspitz as an able Minister and teacher and an intelligent Expounder of our faith and be it further

Resolved, that these resolutions be spread on the minutes, be published in the "American Israelite" and a certified copy of same be handed to the Rev. Gentleman.

Signed: Solomon Halff
Abe Michel
Dan Oppenheimer
A. B. Frank

The resolutions for Rev. Rosenspitz certainly in no way corresponded to the Congregation's rejection of him. Perhaps it can be understood if we note that his recommendation states his

ability to preach in German and English while the following ad, which was also to be inserted in the Israelite, states only a desire for English sermons.

Wanted by the Congregation Beth-El, San Antonio, Texas, (Minhag America) a minister capable of reading the prayers and preaching in English. Salary \$1800 coin. Applications with references to be directed to

B. Oppenheimer, Sec.

In spite of its early enthusiasm, the Congregation must have had trouble with its collections, for a Marshal was appointed, with a maximum salary of \$20 a month, to tend to these duties. Nothing of importance occurred for several months. The President resigned at one meeting; his resignation was tabled and at the next meeting he was presented with a gold headed cane and then continued to function. The Board appealed to the Congregation to investigate by various means the candidates who
7
had applied and to report back to them. Friday evening services were being held with L. Veith, one of the active laymen, serving as officiating minister. After four months of this (Feb. 13, 1876) the committee appointed to communicate with applicants "had not succeeded in obtaining a suitable one," and since the services were costing \$11.00 a week, the Congregation voted to discontinue Friday evening services until a "minister was elected." The choir and organist were notified of this decision. The Temple was closed on Friday evenings.

The desire to worship together was still manifest for in March 50 cy was appropriated for services rendered by a Rev. Benson and he was invited to continue the services the following Friday evening. Earlier that month, Rev. I. L. Mazer of Houston had been invited down to deliver a lecture with his expenses paid. That he performed this service was indicated by a resolution of gratitude sent him on April 22.

The Congregation, tired of this delay in securing a rabbi, finally in June appointed a committee with full authority to engage a minister, but the holidays passed with the ministerial position still unoccupied. The holiday services were conducted by lay readers, assisted by a volunteer choir. After a lengthy correspondence with Rev. Marx Moses of New Orleans, he came on trial during the latter part of October. However, on Oct. 24, 1876 an application of Rev. B. E. Jacobs was read and it was so impressive that he was elected unanimously for one year at \$1800. Rev. Moses was informed of this action and at last the matter seemed settled.

An appropriation was made for the choir and other financial arrangements were made to insure a year of progress. An additional levy of $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ of fixed value for current expenses was assessed.

An election was held on Jan. 30, 1877 and the officers

elected were to preside until the October election. At this same meeting, every member not owning a seat was assessed \$12.00 a year, in order that each might assume his full financial responsibility.

The new administration called a meeting in March to discuss the formation of a congregational school but the matter was tabled because of lack of attendance. At this meeting was recorded the first use of fines, four Trustees being fined for not attending.

Whether or not Rev. Jacobs ever came to San Antonio as scheduled cannot be determined. There is the record of the President being authorized to communicate with the President of the Shreveport Congregation in regard to Dr. Jacobs (Sept. 9, 1877) and then a record of his reelection here in Oct. 7, 1877 for 6 months but nothing more. That he served this latter term is clearly indicated by a notice given him Jan. 24, 1878 "That this Congregation does not intend to continue the services of a minister at the expiration of his engagement." However, his term must have been extended for on Jan. 28 he was granted a leave of absence "long enough to complete his object."

On April 9th the Congregation resolved to dispense with the services of a minister, but apparently his contract extended until the end of May, for on May 7th his name is again

brought up inasmuch as he was still absent without leave. It was voted to continue his pay until the end of the contract. Then on Sept. 8th a letter came from him offering his services for the holiday, which offer was declined. Thus the Congregation finished its relationship with its first official Rabbi and the approaching holidays found them once again without spiritual leadership.

The year 1877-1878 had not seen many significant changes. Some sort of Religious School work must have been done for a School Board was appointed and a resolution passed that non-members desiring to send their children had to apply to the Board.

In the October election the former President and Vice-Presi-
10
dent were reelected. Later on the members were told to pay their assessments or be stricken from the records. A 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % levy was imposed on the pews for current expenses. It was ruled that the \$12.00 fee for members not owning pews entitled them only to the rental of one seat and not an entire pew. Fines
11
were again imposed. The secretary had been suspended on charge of withholding dues; but he was later cleared of this charge by an investigating committee.

Thus at the annual meeting of the Congregation Sept. 27, 1878 things were at a standstill. The election of officers by

unanimous vote of the Congregation was postponed until the President should order such election. Since the President didn't call an election, the same officers continued for another year.

This year, too, was marked by little recorded activity. An assessment of only $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on pews for current expenses was levied. An application of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church for use of the Temple was declined, but they were offered the use of the school room in its stead. A delegate was again elected to the Union Convention and the Union dues were ordered paid (note their desire for affiliation even in view of their circumstances).

Finally in June 1879 a motion was passed authorizing the Board to secure a minister for \$1200 a year (note the reduction in salary offered.) A minister was not secured for the holidays, so once again laymen officiated and were assisted by a volunteer choir. An election was then held in September and the same
12
President elected.

The future of the Congregation brightened when on Nov. 9, 1879 Rev. Isadore Lewinthal (spelled here Loewenthal) was elected as minister for one year beginning on November 10th. Little did the Congregation realize that this would mark the beginning of a ten year relationship in which much progress was

made.

In order to make sure that the finances would be taken care of, eight recommendations were passed a month later. Of these three are most significant:

Art. 4. Pew owners only are considered members.

Thus membership and voting privileges were limited to those who could afford the minimum of \$150 for a pew.

Art. 5. Strangers, non-residents only are allowed to occupy seats free of charge. This prohibited residents who did not pay from occupying seats. Since there is no indication that this applied to the holidays only, we can assume then that even for the Friday Evening services a resident could not come in and worship unless he were a member, a seat or pew renter or unless unable to pay as indicated by the following article.

Art. 6. Parties not considered able to pay for pews or seats are to be admitted by invitation from the Board of Trustees.

The minimum yearly rental fee was not excessive considering that it was fixed (Art. 2) at 15% of the assessed value (one pew

is considered two seats,) nor were the terms of sale excessive as they were fixed payable at 10% annually (Art. 1): however, the principle of not permitting worship to residents unless they made some form of payment, is one which is contrary to the spirit of Judaism.

The first year's relationship must have proved satisfactory, a few members were added, a regular organist was engaged, and a School Board appointed.

At the annual meeting, Sept. 12, 1880, Lewinthal was re-elected for one year at a salary of \$1500. Another election took place with a new President coming into office, and the Union dues ordered to be paid. The Board, faced with a financial problem, was forced to raise the assessment on pew renters and pew holders to 20%, and borrowed \$500 to meet the current expenses until the money was collected. In order to obtain more members, the following resolution was passed:

"Whereas there are many of our Hebrew brethren residents in this city and vicinity not belonging to any Congregation, nor contributing toward the support or advancement of Judaism,

Be it therefore resolved that the minister and other officers of this Congregation shall not be permitted to attend to the religious wants of any Israelite residing

in this city six months, such as marriage, confirmation, who does not belong or contribute toward this Congregation, unless it is manifest to the Board of Trustees that such part or parties are unable financially to come within the above requirement."

Once again the Board took strict action and one which seems contrary to the spirit of Judaism, for this placed the Rabbi in the peculiar position of having to refuse his services as a minister to those residents who were not affiliated. (This resolution was never revoked but was later disregarded.)

Other resolutions passed during the year indicate some of the attitudes and customs of the time. For example, the resolution in regard to circumcision is revealing:

"Whereas there is the custom in vogue here of employing a gentile minister as Mohel, be it therefore resolved, that our minister be required to offer proper prayers at such Milah ceremony, if so requested by any contributor to this Congregation."

From this it can be observed that as early as 1880 the practice of employing gentile physicians at circumcisions was already established.

It seems rather clear that traditions were not too highly regarded here. And yet, the Board passed a resolution (following

the granting of a three weeks leave of absence to Rev. Lewinthal) that Sabbath service should be continued, and the Trustees should accept the responsibility of seeing that the required number of members attended. This indicates that they still regarded a minyon as a prerequisite to the holding of these services (also that the attendance on Saturday morning was not too satisfactory.)

During this year, on Feb. 21, 1881, a resolution was passed requiring the attendance of children on Sabbath morning, as well as on Sunday, and also requiring their attendance to the regular Saturday morning service following their school session. The parents were delegated with the responsibility of seeing that their children followed their teachers directly from the school to the Temple. Thus in 1881, the two day Religious School was established in San Antonio.

The next eight years contain little that is noteworthy:
14
new officers assumed their positions; the Congregation at one time resigned from the Union April 1884 (later rejoined October 1887): Rev. Lewinthal's salary was raised yearly till it reached \$2100 in 1884, at which figure it remained until he left.

On Sept. 20, 1885, additional assessments of \$25 to \$250 per member had to be made in order "that we uphold our religion in the City and maintain our institution where the children can be

taught that they are Israelites and where the poor can be cared for as Jews as they have always been in the past." At this same meeting the Constitution was revised. The Preamble was the same, but the articles were somewhat altered in number, arrangement and content.

Art. 1. included a section stating that "The mode of worship shall be according to the custom of American Israelites as adopted by this Congregation."

Art. 2. added that the term of office should be for one year with the election taking place in Tishre and that the President and Vice-President elect would not assume their offices until Succoth, whereas the other officers were to assume their positions as soon as qualified.

The President's duties now included the granting of "Permits for the solemnization of marriages for which he shall collect a fee of ten dollars from non-members, and he shall grant permits for free burial for indigent Israelites."

The Treasurer was now required to make a quarterly report.

The office of Marshal was eliminated and the secretary assumed his duties, being charged with the issuance and collection of bills and the seal of the Congregation was put in his care.

The office of Sexton was added. This person assumed responsibility for the care of the cemetery, granting permission for burial and selection of graves only on the President's approval. He was to be paid two dollars and fifty cents for each interment from the person ordering the burial, and in cases where they were indigent, from the Congregation.

Under Membership, it states that "any member of the Jewish faith" who desired to join the Congregation had to apply to the Board in writing, and purchase a pew in the Temple. Only pew owners were allowed to vote and hold office and obtain a family burial-plot.

Under Pew Renters (a new article), no pew owner could sell or rent his or her pew. Pew renters had the rights and privileges only of Divine worship, Sabbath School and single graves (no voting or hold of office!) The statement in regard to strangers only being allowed to occupy seats in Temple free of charge was incorporated in this article.

Under Fines: the section in regard to fining Board members for non-attendance and regular members for leaving meetings was omitted. A fine of \$25.00 could be levied for use of improper language at any meeting, and anyone guilty of misconduct could be reprimanded, fined, suspended or expelled by the Board, and if

any of these wrongs were committed by an officer, the Board could degrade him from office.

Under General Laws (a new article), (1) the annual meeting was scheduled between Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur.

(2) A quorum was set at ten members

(3) Every member present must vote: a refusal was counted as an affirmative vote.

(6) Children under five were not to be permitted in the Temple during Divine services.

A complete section was added on Burial Grounds, but because this whole matter became so involved, the author is omitting this entire subject from the thesis.

The section in regard to Rules for Transaction of Business was enlarged upon and Cushing's Manual was to be the authority in all cases of Parliamentary Law. The changes in style are not hereby noted as they are not of sufficient importance. The month before, Article 13 in regard to meetings was changed and it was unanimously voted that the annual meeting was to be held on the first Sunday in May.

In 1887, Rev. Lewinthal submitted his resignation, but withdrew it at the Board's request. He must have finally left in 1889, for in June of that year the Congregation advertised again for a minister.

The advertisement for a minister (June 9, 1889) read as follows:

"Wanted by Congregation Beth-El, Minhag America, San Antonio, Tex., a minister competent to lecture in English, conduct services with choir and teach Sunday School. Salary \$1800 per annum, traveling expenses paid to successful candidate only. All applications must be made in writing to S. Halff, Pres."

Though the requirements were more than before, the salary, too, was higher so that in spite of the warning that the traveling expenses of only the successful candidate would be paid, applications came immediately from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Louisiana and Mississippi. The following month (July 31), Rev. Moses P. Jacobson of Macon, Ga. was unanimously elected as Rabbi, and held the position until his resignation Sept. 2, 1891. During his period as minister, the regular procedure was followed. New officers
15
were elected, his salary was raised to \$2000 in 1890 and to \$2100 in May of 1891. Again a Christian church (Baptist) applied for the use of the Temple for several weeks on Sundays and Wednesdays, and this time the request was granted. In August of 1890 a precedent was set in that individual seats for the holidays were sold at \$5.00 apiece.

Upon Rev. Jacobson's resignation an ad was again inserted in the Israelite, and this time received an even better response, in no small measure due to the salary offered--\$2100 per year. Seventeen applications were received from fourteen states; New

York, Texas, Georgia, Rhode Island, Arkansas, Michigan, Maryland, California, Kentucky, Illinois, Mississippi, Connecticut, New Jersey and British Columbia.

Apparently there were many who appeared and gave trial sermons, for there was no action taken until Jan. 10, 1892 when Rev. Farber of Macon, Ga. was invited on probation. However, he withdrew his application and in February, Rev. Herman Elkins was invited "to visit our city." Things had come to such a stage that in March a special meeting was called and the question was presented "Shall this Congregation continue its organization?" The Congregation, by unanimous vote, decided to continue on, and at that meeting elected Elkins as its Rabbi, also by unanimous vote. Strangely enough, for almost a year, there is no mention of his name upon the records. Then, in April, 1893, an officer of the Board was appointed to confer with him because the Confirmation Class had been disbanded. However, nothing serious came of this for in May he was reelected for another year at the same salary. At that same April meeting, a new office was created, that of Shammas and Collector" with the duties of "Collection of dues, under the direction of the Secretary and Treasurer--acting as usher, and to look after the details of the Temple. In case of deaths, he shall see to funeral arrangements, procure markers, if necessary, etc." The salary for this position was to be \$15.00

per month.

An interesting note was made on the Board meeting of May 13, 1893. "Sec. 6 provides that strangers only are allowed to occupy seats in Temple free of charge and the Secretary is instructed to notify such Yehudim who are in the habit to visit the Temple and not being members, that unless they rent or buy, are requested not to visit the Temple." This is the only reference to the enforcement of that article in the entire history of the Congregation.

Elkins continued in office from 1892 until June 30, 1897, at which time the office of Rabbi was declared vacant. At first his¹⁶ relationship with the officers and Board was amicable, but later¹⁷ there was some friction between him and the succeeding officers. In 1896, the first year in which it is noted that a coronetist was engaged to play for the holidays, a resolution was passed "That several lectures of late and especially the lecture on Saturday, March 21st by Rev. Elkins are distasteful to this Congregation and that the Secretary be instructed to notify Rev. Elkins to dispense with Saturday morning services hereafter."

On May 3, 1896, the Board recommended that the Congregation decline to elect a Rabbi for the coming year and further that the Congregation appoint a committee to recommend such financial measures "as will aid the Congregation in maintaining its existence."

At the meeting which followed, their recommendations were¹⁸
tabled and an election held which resulted in new officers.
However, eleven days later, the election was reconsidered and¹⁹
the old officers reelected. At this meeting it was decided to
reassess pew holders in order to raise funds, and not to reelect
the Rabbi. Then, in the June meeting to elect a Rabbi, Elkins
was again elected this time at a salary to be determined by the
Board. At the Board meeting that followed, his salary was set
at \$500 per year, (obviously an attempt to force resignation)
but at the Congregational meeting in October it was made \$1500
ending June 30, 1897. In August a motion was passed, "No
personal or accusational lectures shall be permitted from the
pulpit, and the Committee on Ritual is requested to enforce this
rule." (If this record book could tell what lay between the lines,
it would be most interesting!) Finally at the annual meeting in²⁰
May, 1897, an election again took place; new officers were elected;
a motion was unanimously passed to declare the office of Rabbi
vacant as of June 30, 1897 and the Board was empowered to procure
a Rabbi at \$2100 per year. Thus ended a very stormy five year
period between Rabbi, Board and Congregation.

The matter of obtaining a new Rabbi was not long delayed, for
early in September Rabbi Samuel Marks of Leavenworth, Kansas was
elected to serve from September to June, 1898, at a salary of

\$175 a month. This was the beginning of a splendid relationship, one which lasted for 37 years, (23 in which he served as active minister, the remainder as minister emeritus) and one which produced a rapid growth and development. Within a year's time his salary was raised to \$2400, and so many members were added that the building became too small to seat them. According²¹ to a report in the Israelite (Nov. 17, 1898) Rabbi Marks soon began to advocate the building of a new Temple and a Subscription Committee began its efforts to raise the necessary funds.

²²
The only records of the first few years tell of elections and a request of the Board for the Ritual Committee "to confer with Dr. Marks and ask him to confine himself to our regular Ritual and Service on Friday evenings to last one hour and holidays two hours; also to shorten the musical program on Friday evenings and holidays." There were gifts and resolutions presented to various teachers who rendered service in the Religious School, one of which was awarded to Mr. Sam Eldridge, present Secretary of the Congregation for 38 years, who was teaching as far back as 1894. June 23, 1901 the Congregation met to reincorporate itself and received a charter under the name of "Congregation Beth-El, object of said organization to maintain and support a Temple for the worship of God and a school for the religious instruction of Jewish children, and to

maintain proper burial grounds,--said corporation to exist 50 years." The present Treasurer was one of the members of the Board in this original charter.

In 1902, a large portion of the funds being available, the building was begun. Previous notice of this had been inserted
23
in the Israelite. While work was being done on the Temple (since it was built on the same site, thus necessitating dismantling the old) the Congregation met in the Baptist Church (April 1902) except for the Pesach holidays, which were observed at the Harmony Club. The work of the Religious School went on with vigor, for we note for the first time that the Sabbath School Committee was instructed to have at least one member of the Committee at every session, ordered to formulate rules and regulations to govern it, and permitted to employ two teachers at \$5.00 per month apiece during the season.

The election of that year was without event and the new administration then began to make plans for the coming fiscal year and for the Temple Dedication to take place September 18, 1903. As part of the former, they created a new position of janitor and collector and called a special meeting to allot seats. For the latter they invited Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston to assist in the dedication.

The dedication ceremonies this time were not as elaborate

as those which took place for the first Temple. Rabbi Marks had to leave town because of illness and so Rabbi Cohen officiated. It was planned to have a formal dedication in October, but there is no account of this ever having taken place (both newspapers and Congregational records were examined.)

The following is the brief report of the dedication:

San Antonio Daily Express
Sept. 10, 1903

Informal Dedication at Temple Beth-El

Informal dedicatory ceremonies were held at Temple Beth-El Synagogue Friday night. Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston officiating in place of Rabbi Marks who is in Colorado for his health.

The ceremonies consisted of the placing of two rolls of the law in the tabernacle and a dedicatory sermon by Rabbi Cohen. The text of the sermon was Isaiah 54:2 "Enlarge the place of thy tent."

The sermon was in the nature of a congratulation and inspiration to the Congregation. The public dedication of the Synagogue will take place some time in October...."

Thus for twenty-eight years the Congregation assembled for worship in its first Temple. During the course of these years, it grew from a handful of pioneers, into a good-sized Congregation (the actual number is not known, but since there were over sixty pews each accommodating four persons, besides extra chairs, and these proved insufficient, there must have been between seventy and one hundred members.)

The course which the Congregation followed during these years was similar to that of its founders. It remained strictly Reform. It expanded the policy of discouraging non-member participation by refusing them both the privilege of worshipping in the Temple and the services of the Rabbi.

The affairs of the Congregation remained in the hands of a relatively few people as there were only five Presidents throughout this period, and all of these served on previous or later Boards for many years. It was the dedication and sincerity of this small group that was responsible for its growth and development throughout this difficult beginning.

Chapter III

In the Days of the Second Temple

The Temple having been dedicated, the Congregation began to meet and worship there. Although the beginning was slightly tempestuous (an unpleasant incident occurred between Rabbi Marks and the Board) the rest was comparatively peaceful. Normal elections were held. The finances were in difficult shape as they owed over \$11,000 and could not afford to put in a steam-heat system which would only cost \$1,500. Nonetheless, the Rabbi was re-elected from year to year, with a raise granted him to \$2,700 in May 1906. The following November 1906 the Board, apparently annoyed at some of the Rabbi's deviations in the services, passed the following resolution that "the Rabbi be notified to conduct services strictly according to the Union Prayer Book, any innovations that he may desire to introduce must first be brought to the attention of the Ritual Committee for their approval." At this early stage, it seems they had become Reform traditionalists. The Secretary was also asked to notify the Rabbi that "the display in the Temple of a card announcing the name on the anniversary of a deceased member is unusual and objectionable, and the Board requests that it be not repeated."

The year 1907 saw no significant changes. At the Annual

Meeting the election was held. It was noted that the Congregation had added 18 new members, and that its net income was only \$6,469. From the Union dues of \$90.00, we can guess that the membership was approximately 90. An indebtedness of over \$9,000 was still confronting the membership. The committees were appointed and the Religious School Committee chairman filed the first report on record. There it is noted for the first time that in the building of the Temple, the Religious School was given little consideration. This year there were six classes (five teachers, 1 principal - total salaries \$360) and the discipline was poor because two classes had to be taught in the vestry room with no partition to separate them, and in cold weather three or four classes had to meet there. There were no school desks, tables or blackboards provided for them. In spite of these adverse conditions, the report states that there was a decided improvement in the school - "the children are making progress both in biblical history and Hebrew - all we need to further improve attendance at the school is the cooperation of the members of the Congregation." This lack of attention to the Religious School was characteristic of the Congregation. For many years the choir budget was almost three times that of the Religious School.

For the holidays in 1907, seats were sold to residents at \$12.00, and an usher (one of the members) was employed at rea-

sonable compensation.

The Congregation apparently did not take any immediate action on the Religious School situation, for in the report of the Sabbath School Board of the first quarter ending November 1907, a request is again made for partitions and desks. It is noted here that the conditions of discipline had improved and as high as 90 children were enrolled, but attendance had been very poor. Most progress was noted in the Hebrew classes.

In September of 1908 we learn that the membership of 128 (a net increase of 11) was at a standstill because of the lack of seats. There were more applications than seating capacity. The Religious School was progressing nicely. A significant change in the Constitution was made: Article 13, in regard to purchase of pews, was to be eliminated and in Article 16 "Owner" was to be changed to "Renter." In this manner the old system of pew ownership was abolished and after this, set fees or dues were instituted. The constitutional article concerning the secretary was also amended so that the secretary was not to pay any assessment or dues, was to receive an additional salary to be determined by congregational vote at its Annual Meeting, and was to be assigned²⁷ a pew without charge. The regular election was held and the indebtedness of the Congregation was listed at \$7,950.

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of 1909 reveal that the indebtedness had been reduced to \$6,950, that the membership was 129, and that the estimated income from dues was \$7,906. Nine new members were added, but eight old members were lost due to resignations, removal from the city and death. The same officers and board were elected, as was the Rabbi (for a two-year period at a salary of \$2,700).

In March 1910, at a Board meeting, a committee was appointed to see that, when a member died, a suitable person be obtained to sit up with the corpse at congregational expense. It was also decided that no Annual Meeting should be called for May of that year, that if the trustees should see fit to call one later they could do so, and that the same officers should be held over!

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At the Annual Meeting of May 17, 1911, an election was held and Rabbi Marks was reelected for three years at a salary of \$3,000. This was the first time in the history of the Congregation that a rabbi was elected for this duration.

During those three years nothing significant happened. From a report of the Building Committee in 1911, it can be deduced that although the pew ownership system had been abolished, pews were still assigned. The report stated the need for repairs and enlargements. Many more members could have been added, but

they refused to be assigned the upstairs pews. A committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of selling the Temple. (This was in 1912. It was not sold until 1924.)

In 1912 the Congregation went farther into debt by installing a \$1600 steam heating system. A combination janitor-collector was employed in order to attempt to increase collections. The
29
officers were again reelected.

In 1913 at the Annual Meeting the officers were reelected and the membership was listed at 145.

The Annual Meeting in 1914 resulted in the election of new
30
officers, the reelection of the Rabbi at the same salary (but a committee was appointed to collect contributions amounting to \$250 as a special gift in reward for 16 years of service), and an interesting Religious School report showed that the largest attendance had been 84, the lowest 45, "the chief complaint being lack of cooperation of the parents in sending their children and insisting on the children being present and preparing their lessons."

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The officers that were elected in May 1915 faced a grave financial problem. Although the membership had risen to 169, the net income from dues had decreased by over \$350; thus the indebtedness was still unpaid and the current expenses were

higher than income. A month after their election they took drastic action, raising all dues from 20% to 30%. Those who refused to pay were ordered suspended.

The results of this increase were not apparent, for at the Annual Meeting in 1916, more congregational bonds were issued. The officers were reelected and once again took a firm stand upon the subject, authorizing the secretary to continue to send bills including the raises to everyone. A few weeks later the Board unanimously recommended the following Constitutional Amendment, which if passed would have given them sweeping powers, viz:

Article 15- "It shall be the duty and in the province of the members of the Congregation at its Annual Meeting to elect all its officers including the Rabbi of the Congregation, but it shall be the duty and in the province of the Trustees to determine the length of time such officers and the Rabbi shall serve the Congregation, and the amount of salary or recompense to be paid said officers and Rabbi from and after their election."

At a special meeting of the Congregation to consider this amendment it fell short of gaining the necessary two-thirds affirmative votes by only two votes.

The officers and Board were adamant in regard to the raise in dues and accepted many resignations of those who refused to

pay the increase, with the result that the Annual Meeting in 1917 found the Congregation with a net loss of 11 members. The regular election was held, and new officers and board were³³ elected.

Once again the Board demonstrated its dictatorial trend, for, on November 9, 1917, it voted to sell the Temple for \$75,000 much against the objection of S. C. Eldridge, the Secretary, who insisted that the Congregation should first be consulted. His word was not heeded, for three days later it was almost sold without a congregational meeting. Due to some legal technicalities, however, the deal was not consummated.

On March 10, 1918, the Board called a special meeting to discuss some matters with the Rabbi concerning some statements he had made from the pulpit regarding the hospitality of members toward Jewish soldiers, and concerning the publication of an article on Anti-Prohibition in the papers which had been done without the consent and approval of the President and Board of Trustees. The resolutions passed at this meeting were an affront to the freedom of speech which is supposed to belong to a rabbi.

Resolutions of Board:

WHEREAS, Rabbi S. Marks, did on Friday evening March 8, 1918

at the evening services, make remarks concerning the hospitality of the members of his congregation about entertaining Jewish soldiers, and then read refusals only of the members to entertain the soldiers at the last Holidays, and spoke on said occasion in such a manner as to convey the impression that the members of his congregation were lacking in hospitality; and

WHEREAS, these remarks have offended many of his congregation, and this matter has been reported to the Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi S. Marks did recently publish an article on Anti-Prohibition in the Daily Light without the permission or approval of the President and Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, said article has subjected the members of the congregation to adverse criticism by other members of the community; and

WHEREAS, said article is susceptible of being construed as contrary to the purposes of our Government in its preparation for this war; and

WHEREAS, this adverse criticism of said article being published at this time has been referred to the Board of Trustees for their consideration; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi S. Marks was duly called before the Board of Trustees for an expression on his part, and has disclaimed any wrong intention or wrong doing in these matters; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees after due consideration and deliberation have concluded that the injuries complained of were due to the remarks and the published article of Rabbi S. Marks, and that the same could have been avoided by the Rabbi first consulting and conferring with the President and Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, the Rabbi knows that the best of feelings have existed between him and the President and the Board of Trustees, and that it was his privilege and duty to have conferred with them before acting on matters of importance concerning the congregation.

BE IT RESOLVED, FIRST: That the Board of Trustees hereby

declare that Rabbi S. Marks is at fault both in his uncalled for remarks concerning the hospitality of his congregation and his publications especially of the Anti-Prohibition article at this time without first having obtained the approval of the President and Board of Trustees.

SECOND: That said acts of Rabbi Marks are hurtful to the welfare and advancement of Congregation Beth-El.

THIRD: That a repetition of these or similar acts will not be condoned by this Board of Trustees, and that a copy of these resolutions be sent to Rabbi S. Marks."

The Board also decided (February 10, 1918) that every third Friday the services should consist of prayers and musical selections only. The lecture should be replaced by a social evening in the vestry room. A Social Committee was then appointed to take charge of this.

The only references to the fact that this country was at war consisted of a committee being appointed to investigate, along with other established committees in the community, the possibility of establishing a YMHA for Hebrew soldiers, and a decision that all Jewish soldiers were to be admitted to the holiday services without charge.

In May of that year it is noted that the Religious School had been changed from Sunday to Saturday morning to enable the children to attend services (apparently the two-day school had been abolished). A reference is made to the Service Flag which had been dedicated and included as of this meeting thirty-seven
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names. New officers were elected and the Rabbi reelected by

three votes.

The following year was a trying one to the Congregation. The flu epidemic had a dire effect on the Religious School and Temple; both of them had to close for several weeks and much work was required to get them functioning normally again. The Annual Congregational Meeting found a net gain of six members (185) and a loss in income of over \$200. The expenditures were more than the income.

Despite this financial situation, it was decided to obtain an associate rabbi, and a committee was appointed to make the selection subject to the Congregation's approval. The maximum salary was set at \$3,000. The Board was authorized to solicit bids for the sale of the Temple, but was cautioned to refer the matter back to the Congregation before taking any action. A³⁵ regular election was held.

Apparently, this spurred the Rabbi on to increased effort, for in October the Board voted him \$250 extra for his outstanding work.

The Annual Meeting in May was a most productive one. The results of the year's work were noted with satisfaction. Membership for the first time passed the 200 mark (223) and could have gone higher had there been more seating space available. The income from dues alone (\$9,689.40) more than covered the ex-

penditures and the total indebtedness was reduced to \$2,200. The Sabbath School Report showed that much progress had been made. The total enrollment was only 84 (due, I am told, to the fact that some parents would not let their children write on the Sabbath), but the attendance and participation were excellent. Confirmation services were held and one Bar Mitzvah took place (both confirmation and Bar Mitzvah services were held throughout the years of the Congregation. Earlier (1892) if a boy was Bar "Mitzvahed," he was not confirmed, and there were some boys who were not Bar "Mitzvahed," but were confirmed. The Bar Mitzvah boy took private instructions from the Rabbi).

The President's recommendation of the unassigned pew system already approved by the Board was adopted for a year's trial by the Congregation, and has been in use since that time.

So well pleased were they with the year's results that the officers were reelected, and Rabbi Marks was reelected with a \$300 bonus. The Congregation decided at that meeting to allot up to \$500 for expenses that might occur in the selection of an associate rabbi.

The Board wasted little time in making its choice, for a month later a meeting was called and Rabbi Sidney Tedesche of Springfield, Ohio, was elected as Associate at a salary of \$5,000 (Rabbi Marks only received \$3,000).

Rabbi Tedesche appeared at a Board meeting in August and asked that the Board should decide on the division of duties of the Rabbis, that the position of principal of the school be eliminated and that he, in cooperation with the Religious School Board, be given the privilege of selecting the teachers, all of whom were to be paid for their services.

At this meeting an exceptionally large number of committees
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were appointed. A few weeks later the Board met and accomplished quite a few tasks. They adopted the recommendation of the Membership Committee and its advisory committee, raising almost all of the dues in order to meet the increased budget. They passed a resolution that "all members of Congregation Beth-El should observe the New Year and Day of Atonement by keeping their places of business closed on said holidays," and decided that the Rabbis should not issue Memorial cards soliciting donations, but should leave such donations to voluntary action on the part of the membership.

Rabbi Tedesche proved to be most satisfactory, and as Rabbi Marks was then almost seventy years of age and in ill health, the Board in September 25, 1920, after reading a report of the President who had conferred with him, passed a resolution recommending his retirement on pension.

A special meeting was called to consider the matter, and the following resolution was adopted:

WHEREAS, our beloved Rabbi Dr. Samuel Marks has expressed his willingness to be relieved of his duties as acting rabbi on account of ill health and recognizing his loyalty to Congregation "Beth-El" and its members and the faithful performance of his duties as rabbi for the past 22 years,

BE IT RESOLVED: That Dr. Samuel Marks be retired by our congregation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that he receive a pension of \$250.00 per month for the three years, beginning November 1, 1920, and ending October 31, 1923. For the subsequent years thereafter during his life time he is to receive such pension per month as may be agreed upon by the Congregation "Beth-El" at each annual or special meeting.

His pension after said October 31, 1923 is in no event to exceed \$200.00 per month.

In consideration of the payment of said pension it is understood that Dr. Marks shall continue to abide by the rules and regulations of this congregation - his residence to remain in San Antonio, Texas, with such leave of absence as he may desire at any time, to be agreed upon with the President, and in his absence, the Vice-President, and in the absence of both officers, the majority of the Board of Trustees, and to be furnished him in writing in due form by the secretary.

Dr. Marks shall hold himself in readiness to officiate as rabbi in the Temple or elsewhere, when the services of a rabbi are required. However, he shall only be permitted to officiate when the regularly appointed rabbi of said Congregation "Beth-El" is not available, such authority to officiate to be evidenced in writing, signed by the secretary of said congregation.

That Rabbi Marks was pleased with this arrangement is evidenced by his reply:

To the Officers and Members
Congregation "Beth-El"
San Antonio, Texas

Ladies & Gentlemen:

It is with no small pleasure and slight degree of pride to

me, that the congregation has elected me as an honorary member for life and retire me as active rabbi of your beloved congregation for life.

I have received your very kind and considerate offer of retirement presented through your representative, Mr. Isadore Strauss, a copy of said communication is hereto attached and made a part of this my reply to same.

I accept the conditions therein placed upon me and shall retire as your active rabbi under the terms and conditions therein stated. I understand that this is to be binding, both on my part and the congregation when it is duly approved by the congregation.

I desire to convey to you my profound feeling of thanks and gratitude for this act of the congregation and assure you, that as long as I live, I shall always respond to the welfare of our congregation.

Sincerely,

Samuel Marks

At this meeting important changes were made in the By-Laws concerning the election of the Rabbi. These amendments had been suggested in September by the Board.

1) "Or Associate Rabbi" was added to the first section stating the time of election of the Rabbi.

2) The congregation could elect a Rabbi "or Associate Rabbi" for one year "and no more."

3) A new section was inserted: "The congregation may retire any Rabbi or Associate Rabbi for any length of time and on such conditions and compensation as shall be determined by a vote of the majority of the members present at such special or annual meeting of said congregation."

During remainder of that fiscal year, the Board occupied itself in considering appeals and refusals of the raises in dues. In some cases adjustments were made when necessary, but for the most part the Board took a firm stand, telling the members to pay

the amount requested or be adjudged delinquent and suspended.

The progress in this first year of Rabbi Tedesche's affiliation was rapid. A very successful Ladies' Auxiliary (the beginning of the Sisterhood) was started by him with Mrs. I. A. Victor chairman. The Annual Meeting in May 1921 reveals that the membership was increased to 252 (attributed in part to the labor of the membership committee). The income from dues amounted to \$15,297.30 (still an indebtedness of \$2,200). The Religious School Report was satisfactory, and everyone seems to have been pleased. An election took place,³⁸ and the meeting was adjourned. The unsigned pew system must have temporarily answered the seating problem, for the membership had greatly increased and there is no mention of further limitation due to lack of seating capacity.

The following year (1921-22) proceeded without event. Three weeks after the Annual Meeting a car was purchased for the Rabbi's use. In the middle of the year \$300 was allotted to cover the expenses of six teachers and the Rabbi to the Jewish Chautauqua Society meeting in Dallas. The Board again asked merchants to close on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. An allocation of \$50 was made for a lecture given here by Rabbi Solomon Freehoff. The Annual Meeting revealed that the membership had increased to 272 and the income to \$16,700. Rabbi Tedesche was elected at \$6,000³⁹ and a regular election took place.

The Congregation was evidently so pleased with Rabbi Tedesche's

service they again amended the By-Laws so that the limitation of one year's term for the election of the Rabbi was eliminated, and the length of time was to be determined by the vote of the Congregation at the meeting when the election takes place.

In September of this year, the position of superintendent of the Religious School was restored and her salary was set at \$15 a month, the teachers at \$10 per month. In October this was changed to \$4.00 per week and \$2.00 per week respectively. It was also recommended that a house be rented for the use of the Religious School. In December of that year the possibility of selling the Temple was again investigated and a committee appointed to begin soliciting funds for a new building.

The Annual Meeting, May 1923, revealed a net increase of only five members and a slight decrease in income from dues. Rabbi Tedesche was elected for two years at a salary of \$7,500⁴⁰ per annum. The election marked the beginning of a new president who was to serve for many years. The Constitution was revised as follows:

Art. 1, Sec. 2 - changed to "The mode of worship shall be in accordance with the ritual adopted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations."

Art. 7, Sec. 3 - omit the words "And Pew Renters."

Art. 14, Sec. 5 - following section to be cut out: "The Sexton shall receive for his fee the sum of \$2.50 for each interment made from the persons ordering the burial, and from indigent Israelites no fee to be charged."

Art. 15, Sec. 2 - Duties of Trustees: "To fix the dues of the members."

Art. 15, Sec. 5 - to read: "The Board of Trustees shall meet monthly, the second Wednesday in each month, six officers constituting a quorum."

Art. 16, Sec. 1 - Membership - omit the words, "And rent a Pew in the Temple."

Sec. 2 - "Members upon payment of \$50.00 shall be allotted such portion of a burial lot as designated by the Cemetery Committee."

Sec. 5 - omit the words "Only members paying \$24.00 annual dues and upward are entitled to vote."

Sec. 6 - Referring to Pew Renters, eliminated.

Sec. 8 - omit sentence: "Upon his election he shall sign the constitutional by-laws and thereby become entitled to all the rights and privileges of a member" and substitute: "Memberships are not transferable." (This revision eliminated the creedal requirement for membership.)

Sec. 9 - This section, referring to the resignation of membership, was eliminated, having been incorporated in Sec. 3.

Sec. 10 - "A member, his wife, his sons under 21 years of age and his unmarried daughters shall have the right of interment in the cemeteries of the congregation in lots designated by the Cemetery Committee according to Sec. 2 of this Article."

Sec. 11 - omitted, referring to widows covered in Sec. 16.

Sec. 12 - omitted, referring to Pew Renters.

Art. 17, Sec's. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, referring to Pew and Seat Renters, omitted.

Art. 18 - "Assessments" changed to "dues."

Sec. 1 - omitted.

Sec's. 2 and 3 - change the words "Assessments" and "Taxes" to read "Dues."

Art. 19 - "Fines and penalties" - cut out Sec. 1.

Sec. 2 - "Any member who shall be guilty of any conduct unbecoming a member of the congregation shall, upon

conviction thereof, be reprimanded, suspended, or expelled as the Board of Trustees may determine."

Sec. 3 - omitted, referring to fines to be assessed for leaving meeting.

Art. 20 - Burial ground.

Sec's. 1 and 2 omitted.

Sec. 3, changed to read as follows: "Resident Israelites who are not members may be allowed single graves upon the payment of such sum as the Trustees may determine."

Art. 21, Sec. 2 - "General Laws" - "Forty members required for quorum.

Sec's. 3 and 5, referring to rules of meetings, omitted.

To the first section of the By-Laws (regarding the duties of the Rabbi) add: "The election of the rabbi shall be for such term as designated by the majority of members present at the meeting not exceeding three years and his employment to begin November 1st of the current year."

Section of the By-Laws, referring to marriage fee, to read as follows: "If married in the Temple, subject to the consent of the President."

Regarding the Sections 3 to 22 of the By-Laws, which refer to parliamentary rules at meetings: these Sections should be stricken out and in place of it Sec. 3 should read: "Roberts' Rules of Order shall be the standing authority on all questions of parliamentary rules and laws."

A few weeks later a collector was appointed with a salary of \$85.00 a month, the ownership of the car was given to Rabbi Tedesche and a two-months' leave of absence was granted to him, effective July 1st, during which time Rabbi Marks was to officiate.

This leave of absence was never used, for a few weeks later he was given permission to lecture in New Haven, Connecticut, and two weeks after that he resigned to accept a pulpit there.

The Board accepted his resignation with regret (for his short term was most successful in every way), and immediately hastened to secure another rabbi. Of the five most favorable candidates, ⁴¹ Rabbi Ephraim Frisch of New York was selected, and, at a congregational meeting of September 23rd, was elected at \$7,500 per annum. Since he would not arrive until on or about December 1st, a lay reader, Mr. L. N. Lee, officiated for the holidays and refused compensation for his services. Rabbi Marks, who apparently had also served during the holidays, was voted \$50.00 extra for his work, since his salary of that date according to the previous agreement was to be fixed at only \$200.00. At a special meeting in November, called at the petition of many members, the original resolution was changed and his salary maintained at \$250 per month the rest of his life. The remainder of the resolution remained as it was.

At Rabbi Frisch's first meeting with the Board, December 17, 1923, he was asked for suggestions and requests, and he gave them without hesitation. He asked for more prayer books and song books, and was granted this request. He suggested that Saturday morning services begin at 10:30 and that young married men serve as ushers, each man serving for a period of sixty days. This was adopted and a Chairman of Ushers appointed at that meeting. Rabbi Frisch requested more books and supplies for teachers and was granted an appropriation of \$150.00. He suggested that a bulletin be printed twice a month and was told to discuss the matter with the

Sisterhood (who paid for the first few editions). Likewise, he suggested moving pictures be shown in the Sabbath School at least once in every three weeks, and was authorized to go ahead and procure them. Thus, the relationship between Rabbi and Board was on firm footing from the beginning.

In February the dues were raised once again and a secretary was employed on a part-time basis. In April 1924, Seder services were held for the older members.

At the congregational meeting it was revealed that the membership was now 280. Out of \$4,535.00 asked in dues increase, only \$1,535.00 was gained. A committee was appointed to plan the 50th Anniversary Celebration. The bids for the sale of the Temple proved unsatisfactory. The following constitutional amendments were approved:

Sec. 1 - "Board of Trustees" changed to "Board of 15 Trustees."

Sec. 5 - Board shall meet monthly and "six members shall constitute a quorum" to be changed to "a majority of the officers and trustees shall constitute a quorum."

Sec. 1 - "Any proposition to alter, amend or repeal the foregoing constitution and by-laws, or any part thereof, shall be laid before the Board of Trustees, for at least 30 days, and if such change be recommended by a two-third vote of the members of the Board present, then such proposition so approved by the Board of Trustees, shall be laid before the special meeting of the congregation, called for such purpose which said meeting may make such change as in its judgment it may deem best."

Sec. 2 - "Any such proposition shall require a two-thirds vote of members present for adoption. Thirty days not intervening between the introducing of the two motions and the annual meeting of Congregation Beth-El which takes place May 4, 1924, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to have the motions read and discussed at the annual meeting and then after thirty days had

elapsed, sometime thereafter to have a meeting of the congregation called, if deemed necessary, to vote upon the said amendments in accordance with our constitution and by-laws."

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After this an election took place, and fifteen trustees were elected. Rabbi Frisch was reelected for one year at \$7,500 per annum.

The rest of the records of 1921 are concerned with the sale of the Temple building (minus organ and Temple fixtures) at \$100,000, not to be occupied before January 2, 1926; the purchase of the new lot for \$15,250; and the progress of the Building Fund.

On December 26, 1924, a board meeting selected the architects (Simon and Senter, Malcolm Simon being a Temple member) and the President appointed twenty-one members to constitute the Building Committee, which was given authority to take all necessary steps for the building of the Temple and Community House, reporting back to the Trustees only on matters which needed their approval.

The Menger Hotel was the scene of the Golden Jubilee Dinner on December 29, 1924. For that occasion Rabbi David Lefkowitz and Rabbi Henry Cohen (Rabbi Frisch's father-in-law) were the guest speakers.

This occasion not only celebrated an historic landmark, but gave impetus to the project of the new building.

At the Annual Meeting it was revealed that the Congregation had shown a net increase of over 40 members and that it now had reached and surpassed the 300 mark by 23. The election

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was by acclamation, but the reelected president accepted office only on condition that this election signify the Congregation's pledge to support the building project.

The Subscription Committee revealed that it had received \$97,345.00 in pledges, of which \$20,626.82 had already been collected. The Board was authorized to proceed with the building, but not to obligate the Congregation for more than \$50,000.

A few weeks after this, the Board again imposed a substantial raise in dues. The objections to this were very strenuous, and since the architect's bids exceeded the limits imposed, a special congregational meeting was called August 2. There being no quorum present either at that or the following called meeting August 5 (the heat is intense in August and many members leave town), an informal discussion resulted in the recommendation that the bids be suspended and the time when the Congregation would have to vacate its structure (January 1, 1926) be extended for six months (a year's extension was granted) and that all building matters be referred to a special meeting in the fall. The subject was not discussed at the Board meeting in September. This meeting, however, did approve a Religious School budget of \$1,752.00 which included the salary of a principal, eleven teachers, a librarian, twelve motion pictures, books, and miscellaneous items.

At the October meeting called to settle the building matter, The Board was authorized to contract for the building and part

(basement) of the Community House, provided that the cost of this should not exceed pledges and assets by \$20,000, for which sum the Board could arrange a loan.

The Board went ahead as it was instructed. A supervisory committee of seven was appointed to check the future progress of the building, and on December 9 the grounds were consecrated.

The most noteworthy event in this involved process of fund raising occurred on Tuesday, March 9, 1926. A group of men gave a congregational dinner in order to obtain permission to construct the entire community center. The letter of invitation read as follows:

To the Members of Temple Beth-El:

On February 16th the Board of Trustees met and your President laid before them the present condition of our building program. This contemplates the building of the Temple and the basement of the Community Center.

Under the authorization for an indebtedness not to exceed \$20,000.00, we do not have sufficient money to provide the Temple with proper ventilation and the proposed plan for the Sunday School is entirely inadequate. If we were to finish the Community Center at the present time, it would mean a saving of at least \$8,000.00 and it should be done by all means and give our young people the chance to which they are entitled. A very reasonable offer of financing has been made to us, by which we would incur an indebtedness of \$75,000.00 to be paid off during a long period of years. However, in order to meet this, our income would have to be increased eight to ten thousand dollars, and it would mean an increase of 50% in the dues of our membership. After thorough discussion the Board of Trustees unanimously voted in favor of it and it was decided to have a community supper in order to lay this before the entire membership; give everyone an opportunity to express himself and to bring this to a final termination.

The undersigned members of the Board volunteered to give this community supper and to ask every member of this Congrega-

tion and his lady to be their guests at the Gunter Hotel on Tuesday, the 9th inst., at 7:30 P.M. If you are in favor of this, then be there to help us. If you are opposed to it or do not understand it, then be there to give us an opportunity to explain it and we believe just as every member of the Board present at the meeting voted to increase his or her dues we shall obtain a united and unanimous cooperation if you will come to this supper as our guest and give us an opportunity to lay the matter before you.

The contractor must have immediate advice what we propose to do. Therefore this is urgent.

The ballroom of the Gunter has a seating capacity of only 400. Therefore, it is necessary that we have your reservation at once, and you will please phone your reservation by the 5th inst. to either of the following ladies: Mrs. J. Frost (C 3932), Miss Stella Levison (T 209), Miss Hannah Hirshberg (W 1129), Mrs. L. S. Karren (W 2933W).

Let us have a rousing and enthusiastic meeting and show the proper spirit of cooperation. Our Sisterhood has taken charge of the supper.

Sincerely,

Morris Stern
M. Goldsmith
E. M. Goldstein
Dr. A. A. Brown

J. D. Oppenheimer	Emil Frank
J. J. Sterne	J. Seligmann
Joe Frost	Nat Washer
Sid Katz	Morris Block
D. J. Straus	

The dinner had successful results, as the Board was authorized to incur an indebtedness of \$75,000 and go ahead with full construction. The dues were to be raised sufficiently to insure a \$5,000 yearly increase in income to cover this additional expenditure.

The Annual Meeting in May revealed that while the membership had dropped to approximately 295 (because of suspensions and resignations of those who refused to pay their increases) the net income from dues had risen to almost \$20,000. The same officers and trustees were elected by acclamation and the

official vote of the Congregation approved the total indebtedness of \$75,000 above assets and funds subscribed for the building. At this meeting an important constitutional amendment was made, changing Article 16, entitled "Membership," from "Any member of the Jewish faith wishing to become a member..." to "Any person wishing to become a member...."

Thus, the membership was opened to Jew or non-Jew (a membership was later granted to a non-Jew whose wife was a Jewess).

Work continued on the building throughout the year, the Board borrowing \$150,000 in order to clear all the old debts incurred in the building of the first Temple, and to have funds to meet the expenses of the new building (this sum was covered by the subscriptions and sale of old building).

Finally after much planning, the Temple dedication took place. It was as elaborate as the dedication of the second Temple was simple. It began on Friday night and was concluded on Sunday morning. The rabbinical participation was well taken care of, five out-of-town rabbis¹⁴⁴ and three local rabbis sharing these duties. The Friday night program included a Processional, the lighting of the Perpetual Light, Presentation Ceremony, Union Prayer Book Service, Opening and Closing Prayer, three addresses, two hymns, miscellaneous solos including one by the Conservative Cantor, and various numbers by the regular choir supplemented by a special quartette and Ladies Augmented Choir (12 women of the Congregation trained by Mrs. L. L. Marks).

The Saturday morning services included only three addresses, one solo and a Memorial and Gift Consecration Ceremony in addition to the regular Union Prayer Book Service. This was followed by a luncheon in honor of the visiting rabbis.

The Sunday morning service included an Opening Prayer, Dedication Hymn, Scriptural Reading, Solo, Presentation Ceremony, Consecration Prayer and Special Pageant, presented by the High School Department with Epilogue written by Mrs. Ephraim Frisch.

The dedication ceremonies were well attended by Jew and non-Jew. The newspapers gave the event excellent publicity - one edition carried almost a full page devoted to the occasion, including pictures of the interior and exterior of the Temple and Community Center.

The dedication completed, the Congregation moved from its old home to its new, thus marking the end of "The Days of the Second Temple."

This chapter in the history of the Congregation was a pleasant one in contrast to the stormy unsettled periods which marked the history of the first Temple. The main problems were financial. Three Rabbis (one still serving at the end of the period) and nine Presidents served for this twenty-four year span. Their relations with one another and with the Congregation were most amicable (with few exceptions), and led to steady progress. The Congregation was able to leave the old Temple and enter the new with a membership of approximately

390, a Religious School of 200, and a thriving Sisterhood and Youth Organization to assist in all phases of the program, spiritual, educational, social, as well as financial. This was a far cry from the early beginnings.

Chapter IV

In the Days of the Third Temple

The new Temple and Community Center which the Congregation now occupied was and is one of the most beautiful in the country. The total cost thereof was a fraction of its worth. Had the same type structure been erected in a metropolitan center it would have cost between \$700,000 and \$800,000. The architectural and artistic qualities must be seen to be appreciated, but its size can be ascertained from the following facts. In the Temple proper there are over 1000 seats downstairs and 200 in the balcony (with provision for the erection of two side balconies seating between 300 and 400 people.)

One of the two rooms on either side of the Temple auditorium was furnished by the Sisterhood in honor of its President (now converted into a chapel) and the other by the Congregation in honor of its President.

The Community Center contains eleven class rooms, two offices, an auditorium seating 300, a stage, library, large basement dining hall and kitchen. Between the Temple and Community Center is a lovely Patio where services are held in summer, and Succoth and other festive occasions are observed.

Thus the Congregation's new home was ample for its needs and

growth. The Congregation expressed its gratitude to Morris Stern, the man who had made this house of worship possible, by electing him as their President once again, which office he held until 1930. They expressed their confidence in their Rabbi by electing him for three years. At a special meeting called for this purpose his salary was set at \$7500 for the first year and \$8500 for the second and third. During this period a Men's Club was started, (later failed and was reorganized in 1940-41) the Religious School expanded, and the Sisterhood continued to make substantial contributions to the Temple as did the Temple League. A full time secretary and a custodian and assistant custodian were employed.

The constitutional changes were as follows: provision was made for a Nominating Committee to be appointed 60 days in advance of the Annual Meeting, with the obligation of posting a list of nominees 30 days ahead of the meeting. Duties of the Committees were listed; cemetery privileges were defined; no charge was posted for Rabbi's services to members, though he was forbidden to officiate for non-members without the consent of the President; and non-members were to be allowed seats free of charge except on Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. The latter marked a definite change in policy toward non-members.

In 1930, a new President was elected, and the Rabbi re-

elected for three years at \$8500. The membership was 386 at this time, 36 new members had been taken in, but the Board had suspended many regular members for non-payment of dues.

The two year period which this President served was one of the most difficult confronting the Congregation. Because of the depression many members could not pay their bills, and on December 31 a professional collector was employed. For the fiscal year the expenditures were almost \$1500 more than the income. Neither the Temple League nor the Sisterhood were able to make their financial contributions. Thus the entire budget was reduced in every possible manner: Religious School, Choir, etc., all received a reduced budget.

In January 1932 the Rabbi voluntarily reduced his salary, and the Choir was discharged as of February 1 (a volunteer Choir taking its place.) In the annual report of 1932 it was revealed that the Sisterhood had contributed over \$1500 in the course of the fiscal
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year. A new President was elected to continue the struggle, with a building payment of \$24,000 coming due.

This year 1934-1935 saw the departure of two people much beloved by the Congregation, and responsible in no small measure for its growth; Rabbi Marks and Mrs. Ephraim Frisch being laid to rest.

Although the year was again a difficult one, toward the end

conditions began to improve. Rabbi Frisch's salary was set at \$6600, and the Congregation paid tribute to the fine work of its officers by reelecting them once again.

The indebtedness was reduced by \$5500 in spite of a decline in membership to 326 in this year. Thus the officers continued their financial struggle successfully, and the new
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officers assumed their positions with a brighter prospect ahead. A constitutional amendment was adopted creating the new office of second Vice-President.

The report of the annual meeting in May 1937 showed continued progress. The membership had increased to 356, and except for the poor Friday evening attendance at services everything was satisfactory. The same officers were reelected.

In March of 1938, a leave of absence until October 1, 1938 was granted to Rabbi Frisch because of illness. In the interim the Board examined the possibility of obtaining an Associate Rabbi. On May 1, 1938 the Board was authorized to take steps toward procuring an Associate Rabbi, and on May 25 Dr. David Jacobson was elected by the Board as Associate Rabbi as of August 1. Dr. Jacobson remained as an Associate until June 1, 1942, when at a special meeting he was elected as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El and Rabbi Frisch was elected as Rabbi Emeritus. The following resolution was adopted at this meeting:

WHEREAS, Rabbi Ephraim Frisch has served as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El of San Antonio continuously for over eighteen years, and has rendered faithful and devoted service to the Congregation and has been an inspiration and a source of comfort to its members and the community at large, and has, through his leadership and service as Rabbi, caused the Congregation to grow in numbers and in strength and in prestige and to become a vital force for good in the cultural and religious life of its membership and its community, and

WHEREAS, in his ministrations to the Congregation and in the performance of the religious and communal duties as the Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, Rabbi Ephraim Frisch has given in full measure of himself, his energies, talents and abilities in fostering and promoting the best interests of Temple Beth-El and he has earned the reward of leisure and the opportunity to devote his time and his talents to the pursuit of such activities and studies as he may desire and choose, free of the obligations and responsibilities and burdens attendant upon the position of Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, and

WHEREAS, the membership of Temple Beth-El, fully appreciative of his services to their Congregation and of his contributions to the spiritual and communal life of the Congregation, and of his continuing interest in the welfare of Temple Beth-El, and its members, believe it fitting and proper that Rabbi Ephraim Frisch be retired as active Rabbi of Temple Beth-El and that he be elected Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth-El for life so that he shall be free to engage in such activities as he may desire and wherever he may desire,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

In consideration of Rabbi Ephraim Frisch releasing Temple Beth-El of its obligations to him under the existing employment arrangement and of his agreeing not to accept permanent appointment as Rabbi of any other Congregation, that Rabbi Ephraim Frisch be and he is hereby retired as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, effective July 1, 1942, and that he be and he is hereby elected Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth-El for life and that Temple Beth-El pay to him so long as he shall live the sum of \$333.33 per month, payable on the last day of each month, commencing the last day of July 1942; and that he be and he is hereby relieved of all duties as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El.

Further be it resolved that the President of Temple Beth-El be and he is hereby authorized and directed to communicate to Rabbi Frisch this action of the Congregation by sending or delivering to him immediately two true copies of this resolution, signed by the President and attested by the Secretary, with the request that if all of the terms and conditions of this resolution are agreeable to Rabbi Frisch, that he note his acceptance by signing one of the copies at the place thereon indicated for acceptance, and that the copy so signed by Rabbi Frisch shall be returned to the President or to the Secretary of Temple Beth-El not later than June 15, 1942, and that such returned copy be made part of the minutes of this meeting.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Dr. David Jacobson be elected as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El for the period beginning July 1, 1942 and ending May 1, 1943, at the salary of \$350.00 per month.

In August of 1944, Dr. Jacobson entered the Naval Chaplaincy on leave of absence. Since that time William Sajowitz, a senior student at the Hebrew Union College has served as a temporary replacement.

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From May, 1938 till May 1945, under various officers the membership has grown to over 500, and the indebtedness has been completely paid off. Thus, for the first time in the history of the Congregation it possesses a Temple free of debt, and large enough to accommodate its growing membership for many years to come.

The conclusion of this Chapter will have to be written by someone else in the future. The period of its history thus far has revealed a gradual development of a more democratic spirit. The Board has been enlarged and the Constitution revised in such manner as would indicate a desire to obtain participation by a larger

number of members. The privilege of worshipping in the Temple has been extended to non-members, new ceremonials adopted, and every effort has been to be of service to the membership and Community, including an Institute of Judaism Open Forum, hospitality for military forces, etc. The Congregation suffered badly through the depression but has emerged with even more vigor and spirit to continue its devotion to the cause of Judaism.

Chapter V

Conclusion

High on a hill in a lovely section of San Antonio, a beautiful building stands majestic and serene. This is not just another building, but a Beth-El, a House of God. It is so impressive in its appearance that there are few people who pass by who do not pause to gaze at its splendor. Thousands of people have not only seen the building from the outside, but have entered its sacred walls, to worship there. Few there were, however, who knew of the many years of hardship and struggle that led to its erection—years that dated back not merely to the inception of this building, but to a gathering of pioneers, who assembled more than seventy years ago.

It was the primary purpose of this thesis to collect some of the information which would enable the reader to perceive the history of this growth and development. Naturally because of the limitation of time and material the whole story could not be told, but at least there is enough that one can trace certain trends or characteristic attitudes which run consistently throughout its seventy years. From a study of these one can gain an insight to the secrets of its successes and failures, and proceed in the future with the benefit of the past as a guide.

It is the opinion of this writer that the history of this

Congregation does not differ greatly from that of other Southern Reform Congregations and that the following conclusions and suggestions could be applied to the majority of them.

(1.) This Congregation has at all times been a Reform Congregation. From its very inception it clearly identified itself as such. In its customs and ceremonies it has followed the pattern established by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and by the body of graduates of the Hebrew Union College, both of which organizations they have continually and adequately supported. In its ritual and liturgy it has strictly adhered to the Union Prayerbook, rebuking at times those Rabbis who deviated from it.

(2.) This Congregation owes its existence in no small measure to the constant devotion of a few families, such as the Oppenheims, Halff, Franks, members of which have labored in its behalf since the first meeting of the subscribers to the Building Fund. The Temple was not just a hobby to these families, but it was an essential part of their existence. While it is true that others have made substantial individual contributions in one form or another, (Mr. Morris Stern, who was in large measure responsible for the building of the present structure; Mr. Jonas Frost who brought the Congregation through the years of depression; Mrs. L.L.

Marks who for over thirty years served as director and member of the choir; Mr. S. C. Eldridge, secretary of the Congregation since 1907; and Miss Sophie Bodenheimer who was principal and teacher in the Religious School for over thirty-five years; and many others) yet when one considers the long span of the history of the Temple, it is the contributions of these families in both financial and leadership capacities, which stand out the most.

(3.) The financial security or insecurity of the Temple is in no way reflected in the interest of the members of the Congregation. There were times when it seemed that the Congregation would not be able to maintain the expense of even its worship service, yet the interest and enthusiasm at these periods was no more or no less than those of its periods of greatest prosperity. The only time that the Congregation showed signs of genuine interest was when the issue of retiring or hiring a Rabbi was concerned.

(4.) The Sabbath attendance waxed or waned as the interest in the person or message of the Rabbi waxed or waned. At no time did the Congregation develop the habit of attending services in large number for prayer, but rather the size of the Sabbath crowd seemed to depend upon the personal drawing power of the individual Rabbi.

(5.) The Board of Trustees throughout its history, devoted a minimum of 90% of its attention to the financial affairs of the Congregation. It very rarely concerned itself with the spiritual, social and educational program of the Temple. These programs were determined by the financial budget and little opportunity was presented for their expansion. Many faithful members who had contributions to offer along these lines were suspended for non-payment of dues.

(6.) Only in the last few years has the Congregation begun to encourage a more representative group as Board members. For many years the complete control of the Temple has been in the hands of a limited group. Perhaps it was because this group alone displayed their interest, or perhaps no one else showed interest because they were not given an opportunity to participate. Whatever the cause may be the result is the same.

(7.) The youth program, both educational and social, has not received either the financial or moral support which it deserves. At certain periods, due to individual efforts on the part of certain Rabbis or leaders, the program received more emphasis, but by and large there has been a consistent lack of enthusiasm on the part of both the Board and Congregation toward such a program.

(8.) A like response, or lack of it, has marked the attempts at organizing long-ranged adult educational and social programs. All of the auxilliary organizations--Sisterhood, Men's Club and Temple League--at one time or another achieved a moderate success

along these lines, but there has not developed any consistently successful program along Jewish lines.

Thus the fruits of today are the direct and inevitable products of yesterday's seeds.

The Congregation possesses a debt-free Temple and Community Center of which it can justifiably be proud, and it has a secure financial organization. The vast majority of its members share this pride in their Temple and in the fine name and relationship which the Jew has established in this community. However, they have not availed themselves of the full use of the Temple nor acquainted themselves with the background which would justify this pride in their heritage.

Now that the financial problem rests securely, it is time to concentrate on the other problems which because of the years of neglect are in dire need of attention. The process of democratization of the Synagogue must be expanded. Officers and Board members must be elected not for their family or financial connections, but for the zeal and enthusiasm which they have evidenced through their work in its behalf. (The selection of Mr. Sidney Berkowitz as President for the past two years is evidence of progress along these lines.) Emphasis must be placed on the development of a full and consistent educational, spiritual and social program for young and old. As part of

this program, effort should be made to encourage a sincere and regular attendance at the worship services with the concentration centered upon the worship and not solely upon the Rabbi. Family participation and tradition of generations serving in the Temple must be revived so that there will be a continuous process of trained and devoted leaders, all filled with the spirit of dedication that can best result from such a background.

The Charter members, who started this Congregation, were imbued with a genuine love of Judaism which gave them the inspiration and strength to lay the foundations of Temple Beth-El.

The continuation of Beth-El's growth and development, and the influence of Reform Judaism in San Antonio will be in direct proportion to the revival of this zeal and devotion in the present generations. May this effort meet with success and Beth-El become a true House of God, where the spirit of God is manifested in the words, deeds and lives of its members.

FOOTNOTES

1. Twenty-six men were present at first meeting:

L.Veith	A.J.Kem
Sam Mayer	D. Marx
F. Mayer	L. Moritz
H. Michel	L. Frank
M. Halff	L. Moke
S. Halff	M.Koenigheim
L. Zork	S.Koenigheim
H. Frank	A.Koenigheim
A. Oppenheimer	S. Deutsch
B. Oppenheimer	A.A.Wolff
Moses Oppenheimer	E.Moke
A.B. Frank	H.L.Berg
L. Mandelbaum	S.Moritz

2. Election June 4, 1874

L.Zork - President
M.Koenigheim - Vice President
B. Oppenheimer - Secretary
Sam Mayer - Treasurer
Each elected by acclamation

3. Election July 5, 1874 - First permanent Organization.

Sam Mayer - President
L. Zork - Vice President
B. Oppenheimer - Secretary
Sol Deutsch - Treasurer
L. Moritz - Marshall

Board of Trustees

M. Goldfrank
M. Koenigheim
A. Michel
M. Halff
and President

4. The forty-four Charter Members:

Louis Zork	Samuel Mayer
B.Oppenheimer	A.Michel

Daniel Marx
A.B.Frank
E. Moke
A. Halff
L. Mandelbaum
Sol Deutsch
T.H. Phillipson
A. A. Wolff
A. Kern
Simon Frank
A. Sulnon
M. Koenigheim
Louis S. Berg
Henry L. Berg
S. Koenigheim
Max Goldfrank
H. Frank
B. Schwarz
Moses Oppenheimer
Dan Oppenheimer

Solomon Halff
Samuel Moritz
Ferdinand Mayer
L. Veith
A. Kahn
Lazarus Frank
Josef Treuer
S. Frank
L.M. Michael
A. Sichel
B. Moke
A. Koenigheim
M. Haas
Adam Joseph
M. Morrison
Henry Michel
Phillip Sulzbacher
A. Zork
A. Morris
Max Mayer

5. December 27, 1874 - Committee to solicit subscriptions for Building Fund in New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Committee consisted of:

B.Oppenheimer
A.B. Frank
M. Halff

A. Oppenheimer
A. Koenigheim
S. Deutsch

6. Election July 11, 1875

S.Mayer reelected President, and following were re-elected by acclamation:

L.Zork - Vice President
B. Oppenheimer - Secretary
S. Deutsch - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

M.Koenigheim
M. Goldfrank
A.Michel
M. Halff
and President

H.L.Berg appointed Secretary pro-tem

7. Communications of Rabbinical Applications
November 28, 1875

Rev. F. Saener - Memphis, Tenn.
H. Lowenthal - San Francisco, Calif.
M. L. Levy - San Jose, Calif.
W. Weinstein - Meridian, Miss.
S. Gutman - St. Joseph, Mo.
M. Greenblatt - Shreveport, La.
L. Lowinsohn - Augusta, Ga.

8. Election January 30, 1877 - To hold office until October 1877 election.

A. Michel - President
A. B. Frank - Vice President
M. Haas - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

M. Halff
S. Frank
Dan Oppenheimer
A. M. Cohen

9. March 18, 1877 - Fines were levied on those Trustees A. M. Cohen, Simon Frank, Mayer and Halff for not attending.

10. Election October 7, 1877

Sam Mayer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
Sam Moritz - Secretary
M. Haas - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Dan Oppenheimer
A. M. Cohen
S. Halff
B. Schwarz

11. April 3, 1878 - B. Schwarz, A. M. Cohen, S. Halff fined \$5.00 for absence.

12. Election September 28, 1879

S. Mayer - President
L. Veith - Vice President

A. Sichel - Secretary
B. Schwarz - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

A.M. Cohen
D. Oppenheimer
A. B. Frank
S. Halff

13. Election September 12, 1880

S. Halff - President
L. Veith - Vice President
A. Sichel - Secretary
B. Schwarz - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

D. Oppenheimer
S. Frank
S. Mayer
H. B. Frank

14. Election September 25, 1881 - All by acclamation.

S. Halff - President
S. Frank - Vice President
A. Sichel - Secretary
A.M. Cohen - Treasurer
B. Schwarz - Sexton

Board of Trustees - By acclamation too.

D. Oppenheimer
A.B. Frank
M. Oppenheimer
J. Efron

Election September 24, 1882 - All by acclamation.

S. Halff - President
S. Newman - Vice President
A. Sichel - Secretary
A.M. Cohen - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

L. Wolfson
J. Efron
D. Oppenheimer

S. Schram

Election October 14, 1883 - By acclamation

Dan Oppenheimer - President
Moses Oppenheimer - Vice President
A. Sichel - Secretary
Dan Morse - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

S. Mayer
M. Koenigheim
S. Wolfson

Election October 26, 1884

Dan Oppenheimer - President
L. Frank - Vice President
L. Frank - Secretary
Dan Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

M. Oppenheimer
Sam Mayer
A. B. Frank
M. Koenigheim

Election September 20, 1885

Dan Oppenheimer - President
Sam Mayer - Vice President
L. Frank - Secretary
Dan Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Oppenheimer
A.B. Frank
M. Koenigheim
S. Deutsch

Election October 10, 1886

D. Oppenheimer - President
Sam Mayer - Vice President
Laz. Frank - Secretary
Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

H.B. Frank
M. Oppenheimer
M. Koenigheim

L. Deutsch

Election October 16, 1887

Dan Oppenheimer - President
S. Mayer - Vice President
L. Frank - Secretary
Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

H. B. Frank
M. Koenigheim
F. B. Frank
L.W. Wolfson
S. Moritz

Election October 1888 - Same officers and Board

Election March 31, 1889

S. Halff - President
S. Wolfson - Vice President
S. Moritz - Secretary
S. Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

D. Oppenheimer
S. Deutsch
A. A. Wolff
S. Mayer

15. Election June 15, 1890

S. Halff - President
L. Veith - Vice President
S. Moritz - Secretary
Dan Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Sam Mayer
A. A. Wolff
M. Friedman

16. Election May 26, 1891 - Same officers unanimously
elected except Dan Marx - Treasurer.

Board of Trustees

S. Wolfson
D. Oppenheimer
A. A. Wolff
M. Friedman

17. Election May 21, 1893

Sol Halff - President
L. Veith - Vice President
Dan Marks - Treasurer
A. Wolf - Secretary
C. R. Levy - Sexton

Board of Trustees

Dan Oppenheimer
Friedman
S. Wolfson
A. Levy

Election August 25, 1894

Dan Oppenheimer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
A.A. Wolff-Secretary
Dan Marx - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

A. Levy
M. Friedman
Sol Halff
S. Wolfson
C.R. Levy - Sexton

Election June 16, 1895- same officers elected.

Board of Trustees

S. Halff
S. Wolfson
A. Levy
M. Friedman

18. Election May 3, 1896

Jake Straus - President
Emile Blum, Jr. - Vice President
Julius Oppenheimer- Secretary Treasurer
Isidor Strauss - Secretary

Board of Trustees

F. Meyer
S. Wolfson
E. Hertzberg
Ike Sichel

19. Election May 14, 1896

D. Oppenheimer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
J. D. Strauss - Secretary
J. Oppenheimer, Sr. - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Sol Halff
Mr. Friedman
L. Wolfson
A. A. Wolff

20. Election May 5, 1897

F. Mayer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
J.D. Strauss - Secretary
Julius Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

D. Oppenheimer
M. Friedman
S. Halff
S. Wolfson

21. American Israelite - November 17, 1898

"The Congregation Beth-El has decided to build a handsome new Temple and has already taken steps toward this end. Rev. Samuel Marks has been earnestly advocating the building of a new Temple for some time and preached an eloquent sermon recently in behalf of the project. At a business meeting of the Congregation the following Committee is to get subscriptions - M. Friedman, J.D. Strauss, Alex Joske, A.B. Frank and Nat Sulzbacher."

22. Election May 8, 1898 - Same officers elected.

Board of Trustees

M. Friedman
D. Oppenheimer
E. Blum
S. Halff
S. Wolfson
A.S. Wolff

Election May 7, 1899

F. Mayer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
J.D. Strauss - Secretary
J. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

M. Friedman
Dan Oppenheimer
E. Blum
S. Wolfson
A.A. Wolff
A. Jose
Sol Halff

Election May 13, 1900 - Same officers and trustees.

Election May 26, 1901 - Same officers except for
E. Sichel - Secretary

Board of Trustees

M. Friedman
D. Oppenheimer
N. Washer
S. Halff
E. Longinni
M. Halff
E. Blum

23. American Israelite - May 1, 1902

"A San Antonio Texas Congregation Beth-El will erect a new Temple during the coming summer. The Temple will cost not less than \$25,000 and will be one of the handsomest places of Jewish worship in the South. The erection of this building has been made possible by the undefatigable effort of Rabbi Samuel Marks and the liberality of San Antonio Jewry.

It is intended that the work on the new Temple should begin about May 1st."

24. At a Board Meeting of October 25, 1903, the President stated that Dr. Wilson, Rabbi Marks' physician, had informed him that Rabbi Marks was ill and in need of at least a full year's rest. It was the decision of that meeting that the President was to see Rabbi Marks and find out his true condition.

At a Board Meeting of November 1, 1903 the application of Rabbi Marks for an indefinite vacation was acted upon as follows; a letter was sent to him advising him that he would be given a vacation for the remainder of the term to September 1904, and that his salary would be reduced to \$100 per month during this period. It was stated that it would be necessary to seek a Rabbi for this interim period.

On November 5, 1903 the Board met to consider a letter of Rabbi Marks requesting a three month leave of absence with full pay. Their decision was to reply that his action "leaves us in doubt as to your real needs and intention in the premises and forces us to decline action of the proposal you have made." And, that since it would be impossible to obtain a Rabbi for three months, their first offer remained the same.

25. Election May 7, 1905

N. Washer - President
L. Veith - Vice President
Emanuel Cohen - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Abe Cohen
I. Lang
M. Friedman
Dan Oppenheimer
M. Halff
Alex Joske
Jake Wolff

26. Election May 12, 1907

Alex Joske - President
Abe Cohen - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Dan Oppenheimer
Alex Halff
Jake Wolff
I. Lang

27. Election June 15, 1908

J.D. Oppenheimer - President
H. L. Halff - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J. Wolff - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Alex Joske
I. Lang
O. Berman
A.B. Frank
E. Longini
Abe Cohen
Alex Halff

28. Election May 7, 1911 - Officers reelected

J.D. Oppenheimer - President
M.L. Oppenheimer - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
Jake Wolff - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

E. Longini
Abe Joske
D. Berman
A. H. Halff
Sam Harris
I. Lang
Abe Cohen

29. Election May 1, 1912 - Officers reelected

Board of Trustees

O. Berman
E. Longini
Alex Halff
Sam L. Harris
Abe Cohen
F. Mazer
Alex Joske

30. Election May 3, 1914

Max Oppenheimer - President
O. Berman - Vice President
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary
Jake Wolff - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

J. Oppenheimer, Sr.
J.D. Oppenheimer
Alex Halff
Chas. Livingston
W.W. Sanger
Sam Harris
J. Strauss

31. Election May 11, 1915

O. Berman - President
Alex Halff - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary (after contest)
Jake Wolff - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

J.D. Oppenheimer
S. L. Harris
I. Strauss
H. Leopold
E.M. Goldstein
J. August
Chas. Livingston

32. Election May 14, 1916

O. Berman - President
Alex Halff - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
Jake Wolff - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

J.B. Oppenheimer
J. August
Sam Lewin
John Kemp
I. Strauss
E.M. Goldstein
H. Leopold

33. Election May 13, 1917 - By acclamation

A. H. Halff - President
Sam Lewin - Vice President
Jake Wolff - Treasurer
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

Board of Trustees

John Kemp
H. Leopold
Nat Goldsmith
Max Steifel
Morris Block
I. Strauss
D. J. Strauss

34. Election May 5, 1918

A. Bergel - President
Sam Lewin - Vice President
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

Board of Trustees

Armond Halff
Abe Adler
A. H. Halff
J. Kemp
I. A. Victor
Arthur Beck
I. Strauss

35. Election May 4, 1919

D.J. Strauss - President
Morris Stern - Vice President
J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

Board of Trustees

J. Kemp
Morris Block
J. Strauss
A. Bergel
Mrs. M. Baumblatt
Sam Lewin
Irvin Stone

36. Election May 1, 1920

D.J. Strauss - President
Sam Lewin - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

J. Kemp
Morris Block
Mrs. Sarah Baumblatt
I. Strauss
Morris Stern
Sol Saper
A. Bergel

37. Following Committees appointed:

Ritual, Choir, Finance, Cemetery, Ladies Auxiliary
to the Cemetery Committee, Supply and Repair of
House Committee, Auxiliary to same, Sabbath School,
Sick Committee, Auxiliary to same, Membership
Committee, Advisory Committee to same - Social
Committee, Committee to Analyze Rabbinical Pension
Plan.

38. Election May 1, 1921

D.J. Strauss - President
H. Halff - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

A.H. Halff
Morris Block
I. Strauss
J. Kemp
Nat Goldsmith
Morris Stern
E.M. Goldstein

39. Election May 7, 1922

D.J. Straus - President
A.H. Halff - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

Morris Stern
J. Kemp
A.H. Halff
Nat Washer
Morris Block

40. Election May 6, 1923

Morris Stern - President
Nat Goldsmith - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

D. J. Strauss
E. M. Goldstein
Morris Block
Mrs. L. Goodman
J. Kemp
Max Blum
W. L. Schlesinger

41. The five candidates selected were:

Rabbi S. Gupp - Providence, Rhode Island
Rabbi H. Franklin - San Jose, California
Rabbi Ephraim Frisch - New York
Rabbi S. Kory - Vicksburg, Mississippi
Rabbi Mendel Silber, New Orleans, Louisiana

42. Election May 4, 1924

Morris Stern - President
J. Frost - Vice President
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Board of Trustees

J. Kemp	Sid Katz	Emil Frank
Dr. A.A. Brown	Nat Washer	Mrs. Baumblatt
J.J. Stern	N. Welsch	Sam Stern

H. Leopold	Mrs. L. Goodman
Sylvan Lang	Mrs. O. Berman
I. R. Stone	Jack Gugenheim

43. Election May 3, 1925

Morris Stern - President
J. Frost - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

44. Rabbi Henry Cohen - Galveston, Texas
Rabbi Walter G. Peiser - Austin, Texas
Rabbi Martin Zielonka - El Paso, Texas
Rabbi David Lefkowitz - Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Henry Barnston - Houston, Texas

45. Election 1930

J. Frost - President
Sid Katz - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

46. Election 1932

I. Sichel - President
Sylvan Lang - Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

47. Election 1936

Sylvan Lang - President
Nat Goldsmith - 1st Vice President
J. Karotkin - 2nd Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

48. Election 1938

Nat Goldsmith - President
J. Karotkin - 1st Vice President
Sid Katz - 2nd Vice President
S.C. Eldridge - Secretary
J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Election 1940

J. Karotkin - President
Sid Katz - 1st Vice President
Louis Scharlack - 2nd Vice President
S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

J.D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Election 1942

Sid Katz - President

Fred Straus - 1st Vice President

Herman Glosserman - 2nd Vice President

S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Election 1943

Sid Katz - President

Sidney Berkowitz - 1st Vice President

Jack Pitluk - 2nd Vice President

S. C. Eldridge - Secretary

J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Election 1944

Sidney Berkowitz - President

Jack Pitluk - 1st Vice President

Perry Kallison - 2nd Vice President

S.C. Eldridge - Secretary

J. D. Oppenheimer - Treasurer

Election 1945 - Same officers reelected

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Board and Congregational Minutes of Temple Beth-El

Interviews with members of the Congregation

San Antonio Daily Express

The American Israelite