



HINEYMA TOV

HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE TOGETHER

The New International Northeast Region
of Women's League for Conservative Judaism
and
Its Sisterhoods

May 4 and 5, 2008

Compiled by Lois Silverman

**DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US
AND THOSE WHO WILL CONTINUE AFTER US.**

FOR 120 YEARS!

HINEY MA TOV

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Bette Siegel who help edit this publication;

The editors of the Women's League publication, *Beauty, Brains &*

Brawn—The New World Balabuste

from which the Region histories came;

and

To all those Sisterhood women who took the time to share their

Sisterhood's histories.

Todah Rabah!

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NY STATE REGION

The Sisterhoods of NY State Region are located along the site of the old Erie Canal System which was the first waterway built in the USA to open the western frontiers—then the Ohio Valley, Illinois, and Michigan. This system of waterways consisted not only of the Erie Canal but several canals including the Champlain, the Oswego and the Cayuga-Seneca. With the exception of Binghamton and Elmira, every major city in New York falls along the trade route established by the Erie Canal system, with nearly 80% of upstate New York's population living within 25 miles of the Erie Canal.¹ A similar statistic is true of Upstate NY's Jewish population.

Though most of the earlier Jewish immigrants settled in New York City, a few wandered beyond its limits. The Spanish-Portuguese were in Albany as early as 1658. One such settler was Asser Levy who is listed in records of 1661 as an owner of real estate in the trading post called Albany, NY;² he was even granted burgher rights which included that he be consulted when community decisions were made.³ Yet few Jews are chronicled in what was the colonial frontier before the establishment of the US republic and the building of the Erie Canal.

Following the War of 1812, improvements in maritime technology and transportation, particularly the use of steam, increased the number of Jews immigrating to New York City from Central Europe. This swelling Jewish population in New York City and the opening of the Erie Canal encouraged the more adventurous immigrants to seek a better life in the significant Jewish communities developing along the canal in cities such as Albany, Troy, Schenectady, Amsterdam, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Niagara Falls, and Buffalo, and smaller towns such as Herkimer and Auburn between 1820 and the Civil War; Ithaca grew around the Cayuga-Seneca.⁴ With the construction of the railroad on a route parallel to the canal, more Jewish immigrants, like immigrants of all ethnic and religious groups, pushed westward sharing the restlessness of the times and the urge for better economic opportunities

Along the canal and railroad lines, each city offered different opportunities. Troy became the worldwide center of machinery manufacturing. Schenectady, which was dependent mainly upon one industry, also progressed slowly in comparison with its neighboring city Albany; when the large forerunner of General Electric opened near the canal, more Jewish immigrants, especially from Germany, came and stayed. Utica became known for its textile mills. Syracuse became a center of the salt and chemical industries and grew rapidly as did its Jewish community. Rochester, which dedicated a synagogue in 1848, became a great industrial city and a center of the clothing industry. Buffalo outstripped most of the cities of NY state because of its rail and waterborne commerce and later because of its electric power and chemical industries.⁶

The story of each community is unique and yet there are common threads. At first Jewish immigrants were itinerant peddlers to the growing cities along the canal. These young men served the local farm communities by bringing wares from New York City. Over time, many peddlers brought their families to live in the communities which they served and became owners of small stores.⁷ They soon became numerous enough in each community to establish cemeteries, religious schools, and congregations.

The years between 1845 and 1860 saw many religious organizations being established in the cities along the Erie Canal. The first congregation in Schenectady was Sharai Shomayim, founded in 1857, largely by German Jews. Utica's Jewish community dates from 1847 with the first synagogue established in 1848. The first settlement of Jews in Syracuse probably predates 1839, and a religious organization was established there in 1846.⁸ Rochester dedicated a synagogue in 1848.⁹ Temple Beth El, which is still in existence and whose Sisterhood is affiliated with WLCJ, was the first synagogue founded between New York City and Chicago in 1847.¹⁰

The most important Jewish lay leader in New York state outside of New York City during the pre-Civil War period was Mordecai Manuel Noah, playwright, impresario, soldier, adventurer and diplomat.

In 1825, Noah saw a great opportunity to rescue the Jews from their worldwide oppressions by settling them in a new homeland on Grand Island, in the Niagara River opposite Tonawanda, now part of Buffalo. Noah persuaded a Christian friend to purchase over 2000 acres of land on the island to lay out a city which he named Ararat, in allusion to his own name. He then appointed himself its first Governor. In 1825 he went to Buffalo, then a little village of 2,500 people, to dedicate his new Israelite city. There were not sufficient boats to permit an actual crossing to the island and so the cornerstone was brought into an Episcopal church.¹¹ There a dedication ceremony took place, with Mr. Noah as governor delivering a long speech in which he invited world Jewry and American Indians, whom he believed to be the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, to settle in this new city of Ararat. No Jew ever settled on Grand Island; neither did any Native American. No house was ever built there, although a temporary monument which has since been destroyed was erected.¹²

Although the idea sounds preposterous today, Selig Adler, historian of the Niagara region's Jewish experience, pointed out that the plan was "not quite as chimerical" as it seemed. The terminus to the Erie Canal was close to Grand Island, an island which sits between two peaceful countries. Jewish communities worldwide might have contributed capital, settlers and labor; but there was little enthusiasm and much ridicule for this project from Jews and non-Jews.¹³

Jews of NY State have contributed much to their respective Jewish communities as well as to Judaism and their country.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.canals.state.ny.us/cculture/history/>

² http://www.wikisearch.net/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_the_jews_in_the_united_states__colonial_era_1.html#Up-State%20New%20York%20Settlements

Between that 1661 and the early nineteenth century there are no records of any other Jewish settlers in Albany; in fact there were not enough Jews there to form a congregation until 1838 or have a rabbi until 1846.

³ *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

⁴ Lance J. Sussman, Department of History, Binghamton University State University of New York, Binghamton, NY.

⁵ Rabbi S. Joshua Kohn, *The Jewish Community of Utica, 1847-1948*, America Jewish Historical Society, 1959.

⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁷ <http://www.uticaod.com/news/specialreports/fromfarawaylands/timeline.htm>

⁸ http://www.wikisearch.net/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_the_jews_in_the_united_states__colonial_era_1.html#Up-state%20New%20York%20Settlements

⁹ Rabbi Kohn.

¹⁰ "Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York," by James Napora, Master of Architecture Thesis. Found at Buffalo Central Library.

¹¹ *A History of the Jews in the United States* by Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, Ph.D. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 1971.

Scott Eberle and Joseph A. Grande in *Second Looks: A Pictorial History of Buffalo and Erie County*, state that bad weather kept him from holding dedication ceremonies on Grand Island.

¹² *A History of the Jews in the United States*.

Today the Ararat Stone is now a part of a permanent display at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society's Neighborhood presentation on Grand Island.

¹³ *Second Looks: A Pictorial History of Buffalo and Erie County*, by Scott Eberle and Joseph A. Grande. Donning Co., 1993, p. 85.

CONGREGATION SONS OF ISRAEL-DAUGHTERS OF JACOB, AMSTERDAM, NY

The Congregation Sons of Israel-Daughters of Jacob of Amsterdam, NY, was founded on April 24, 1887. The Jewish community in Amsterdam had already established another religious organization in 1873, Temple Israel, a Reform congregation, but Sons of Israel was founded by a group of Orthodox Jews. Initially the group was small and had no formal headquarters. Services were held in the homes of its members. The congregation rented halls for the High Holy days.

In 1908, a permanent home was purchased, a white house on Grove Street. Later, in 1914, the Congregation moved to a building on the corner of Grove and Liberty Street, the former Germanic Hall. Sons of Israel remained at this location for 60 years.

The religious development of the congregation followed the recognized pattern of countless American synagogues. Though it had been originally organized on traditional Orthodox foundations, over time it incorporated many more modern concepts. In 1945, the congregation joined the United Synagogues of America.

In 1976, Congregation Sons of Israel moved into its present home on Guy Park Avenue.

From the congregation's web site <http://www.uscj.org/empire/amsterdam>

TEMPLE SHAAREY ZEDEK, AMHERST, NY

The first permanent Jewish resident came to Buffalo about 1835. He was Lemuel Flersheim and came to teach German in the public schools. He was followed by several more men arriving from Germany, and they were followed by a group from Poland, many of whom entered the clothing and dry goods business. The opening of the Erie Canal enabled many new arrivals to travel to Buffalo and the Jewish population began to grow.

The first synagogue in Buffalo was Congregation Beth El, organized in 1847. This was followed by Temple Beth Zion, first an Orthodox congregation that later became the largest Reform congregation in Western NY.

Buffalo is home to Reform, Reconstruction, Conservative, Orthodox, and Lubavitch congregations. Some are the results of mergers and others are the results of separating congregations. Temple Shaarey Zedek was born in 1968 as the result of a merger between Temple Emanu-El, Temple Beth David, and Ner Israel. Temple Shaarey Zedek is proud to have had Rabbi Isaac Klein as its Rabbi until 1972 when he retired.

The Sisterhood of Temple Shaarey Zedek has been a part of the congregation since its beginnings as Emanu-El and Beth David. It has played an important leadership role in the synagogue with several past presidents of Sisterhood becoming synagogue presidents as well as holding other officer positions and committee chairmanships. The Sisterhood is a strong financial contributor to the annual operating budget and supplement the religious school and youth budgets. In fact the Sisterhood has made major contributions in the creation of a computer lab and the upgrading of the library as well as the room used for wedding participants. The Sisterhood operates the Judaica Gift Shop, provides gifts to *b'nai mitzvah*, and has helped with Torah restoration and silver repair. The kitchen is kept up to date and stocked with equipment as the result of the members fund raising efforts. The women of Sisterhood have also compiled and sold a cookbook and provided scholarship assistance for our college bound youth.

There are many dedicated Sisterhood board members who have become region officers. At present, the NY State Region's outgoing president, Nancy Bloom, and the incoming president of the new combined region, Rusty Zackheim, are members of Shaarey Zedek's Sisterhood. Outgoing NY State Region Vice Presidents Ellen Jadd and Carolyn Kershanbaum are from this Sisterhood as well.

CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM-CHEVRA SHAS, DEWITT, NY

1962 marked the culmination of a series of meetings dating back to 1960, when people interested in having a synagogue in the Syracuse area small enough to encourage younger members to participate started gathering. In July, 1962, thirteen families came to a meeting and structured an organization, appointed officers and started to develop a philosophy. They were from a variety of Judaic backgrounds: some from the local Conservative synagogue, some from the Orthodox or Reform synagogues and some unaffiliated. A series of organizational meetings took place and a board of trustees set up and committees formed. Most importantly, the goal was to have Jewish services where participation was by congregational members. And there was the unspoken requirement that everyone had to work.

The first service was Friday night, October 3, 1962, in the Fayetteville Municipal Building. The name Congregation Beth Sholom was adopted that year. The Sisterhood was formed in 1963, and Lois Schaffer was the first president. It soon became an indispensable arm of the congregation. The Sisterhood women cooked and baked for everyone's *simchat*, and their identity was tied to the kitchen. They also raised money, much of which was put back into the beautification of the congregation. In 1977 a merger with Chevra Shas changed the name to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. In 1993, the congregation expanded its second building to house all functions under one roof. During this time, Sisterhood had established a successful catering business and they gave a substantial donation to the synagogue to expand the kitchen and pay for many of the renovations.

The CBSCS Sisterhood, however, is not just women in a kitchen. It is responsible for many of the behind-the-scenes embellishments that make the synagogue a home. CBSCS was the first Conservative synagogue in the Central New York area to have completely egalitarian services. Women are regularly called to read Torah and lead the services. Sisterhood has encouraged more than one generation of women to take its rightful place alongside the men. With encouragement from Rabbi Daniel A. Jezer, the synagogue's rabbi emeritus, adult bar and bat mitzvah classes were created and most of the graduates have been women.

Every year, the Sisterhood holds a Chinese auction benefiting the religious school, the youth group, or some other Jewish organization. A Sisterhood Shabbat and a Torah Fund function are held yearly. The Sisterhood runs a Judaica shop with a wide variety of Jewish items available. The Sisterhood raises money through its rummage sales and its *mishloach manot* basket, which is made in conjunction with USY. The Sisterhood gives camp scholarships to the congregation's youth as well as supplying bar and bat mitzvah gifts. The Sisterhood also pays for the *kiddushim* as well as all the supplies and equipment for the kitchen.

The synagogue is proud to be the first congregation in the Central New York area to have a woman rabbi, Rabbi Rachel Ain, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and a member of Sisterhood.

Many Sisterhood women from the congregation have served as NY State Region officers including Lois Weiner and Bette Siegel who was region president for two terms.

TEMPLE BETH JOSEPH, HERKIMER, NY

In the early 1900s, as the Erie Canal flowed through upstate New York, the trains also followed the same route. Travelers, weary from their long and dusty journey found solace in the small, growing communities of Herkimer and Little Falls. Wealthy textile merchants, doctors and lawyers would travel to Richfield Springs and Sharon Springs, where Orthodox enclaves abounded. By the year 1915, the few Jewish families in the Herkimer area formed their first organization known as the Hebrew Aid Society. The aims were to promote social and religious activities for the community. One of the main objectives was to make arrangements for the conducting of High Holiday services in Herkimer.

In order to conduct services in a true and traditional manner, Torah scrolls were borrowed from synagogues in Utica. The members met in each other's houses. Later on, a Torah scroll was presented to the organization by Joseph Basloe, one of the original founders. By the 1930s, the Jewish community had grown, purchased land for a cemetery, and decided to form a new and stronger organization, based on the tenets of Conservative Judaism, a middle ground for all the area Jews. Temple Beth Joseph (named in memory of Joseph Basloe) was conceived and on February 7, 1938 a charter and corporation was consummated. The first permanent meeting place was in an office building on Main Street. In 1943, the wives of the original founders began their own Sisterhood and in 1945, affiliated with Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

As industry grew in the area, so did the Jewish population. By 1947, the number of families increased to the extent that the current facilities could no longer accommodate their needs. The descendants of Joseph Basloe donated the land of our current building and on Sunday, December 8, 1948, the cornerstone was laid. Ten years later, a wing was added to house classrooms for their growing youth and a few years after that, a library was added. Today Temple Beth Joseph continues to house a thriving Jewish community, on a prominent corner of Herkimer with its roots reaching out to all corners of the Mohawk Valley.

The Sisterhood was organized in 1938 with Ethel Golden as its first president. The constitution was approved in 1943. Meetings were held twice monthly and every woman paid ten cents at each meeting. This amount quickly rose to 25 cents.

Sisterhood's early contribution to the congregation was \$40 per month, and through the years the amount increased greatly. When the new temple building was dedicated, they furnished the kitchen and many other necessities.

Each year brought new plans and projects some of which are still being held. The group was active both with fund raising projects and working with community groups. It initiated bridge tournaments, card games, rummage sales, spring bazaars, bake sales, dinners, and the Tree of Life. They were active with packages for soldiers and in the sale of War Bonds.

From the beginning Sisterhood has been involved with the education of the children. They also ran many activities including the Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast, the Purim carnivals, Hanukkah dinners, Sunday School picnics and model seders.

Many women from Temple Beth Joseph have been active in the NY State Region. This includes Marion Pachman, Vicki Socolof, and Toby Maser who served as region president. Rochelle Cohen is the region's outgoing treasurer and will co-chair the next Region Conference.

Toby Maser is currently a Women's League trainer as well as a Transition Advisor for the Southern Region of WLCJ. Lois Silverman is currently WL's Internet Services Coordinator as well as being the computer layout editor for WL's *Ba Olam* and a member of the Strategic Planning Committee and Convention Committee.

SISTERHOOD OF TEMPLE BETH EL, ITHACA

Sisterhood of Temple Beth El, Ithaca, began as the Hebrew Women's Aid Society, November 18, 1918. In 1924, its minutes were amended to read that membership was open to "the wife of any resident Jewish man." In April of that year, the Sisterhood joined the National Council of Jewish Women, renaming their organization "Ithaca Section NCJW." In June 1931 the group reorganized as part of Temple Beth El and became known as the Women's Auxiliary. In 1940 the group affiliated with the National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America and became Sisterhood of Temple Beth El, which it remains today.

Sisterhood of Temple Beth El is a group of involved, dedicated women who, through their efforts and abilities, support the temple in a variety of ways, and is actively engaged in every aspect of temple life. The mission of the Sisterhood is to enhance Jewish life by supporting the religious school, sponsoring social programs and encouraging Jewish observance at home. Some of the special programs and activities include: membership brunches, activity groups, providing special receptions for the High Holidays and other occasions, *mishloah manot* for Purim, offering seminars on issues of concern to Jewish women, sponsoring holiday and artistic programs for the students in the religious school. The Purim Fundraiser brings together many members who do not, otherwise, participate in Sisterhood programs. They share time and effort, baking, packing and delivering the *mishloah manot* baskets

The Sisterhood supports Conservative Judaism and has a voice in national and global arenas through its affiliation with the Women's League for Conservative Judaism. In short, Sisterhood is a way for Jewish women of all ages to enrich their own observance of the religion while helping the temple community and finding lasting friendships with other Jewish women.

One noteworthy thing about this Sisterhood and its congregation is that the leaders remain active in synagogue life long after they have completed their terms of office.

The Sisterhood is a hard working group of women who come together to aid both the temple community and the Ithaca community at-large.

TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL, NIAGARA FALLS, NY

Temple Beth Israel was founded in 1898. Its Sisterhood started as the synagogue's Ladies' Benevolent Society, founded at the same time as the synagogue. Mrs. Moses Boff was the first president and served for sixteen years. From the beginning the membership has been concerned with the needs of the temple. While the economics of the area are difficult, and most youngsters leave for college, never to return home to live, the Sisterhood of today, its membership smaller each year, still supports temple functions. Its members remain at the core of all that is good and special at Temple Beth Israel.

TEMPLE BETH DAVID, ROCHESTER, NY

The Sisterhood of Temple Beth David affiliated with Women's League for Conservative for Judaism in 1954, and currently has 122 members who support the congregation's Hebrew School and youth activities. The prime mission of the Sisterhood is to support the temple.

The women of the Sisterhood conduct an annual Sisterhood Shabbat, host Hanukkah parties, and Tu B'Shevat seders. They also have joint programs with the Men's Club and provide food for breaking the fast after Yom Kippur. The Sisterhood's Annual September Paid-up Membership dinner is always big hit. It is organizing a *Bikkur Cholim* group to visit the sick, an important mitzvah, that is sure to bring comfort to those in the hospital or home-bound due to illness.

For years the Sisterhood has had a representative sit on the Women's Council at the Jewish Community Federation. Its representatives attend New York State Region Board meetings and Women's League Conventions where they meet with other Sisterhood Women and exchange ideas for programs and fund raisers.

Many women from this Sisterhood have held leadership positions in NY State Region including Florence Philips, Roberta Berson, and Annette Shapiro who all served as Region Presidents.

TEMPLE BETH EL, ROCHESTER, NY

The Sisterhood of Temple Beth El was founded on June 1, 1920, and it is the largest Sisterhood in the New York State Region.

Temple Beth El's Sisterhood is very committed to supporting our synagogue and members in any way we can. It is a vibrant grass-roots organization, relying on many women to join together to accomplish all that must be done. By approaching each year with a clean slate, the organization is open to new ideas and approaches, mixing successful repeat programs with fresh activities. In fact, the Sisterhood has received an award for an outstanding program from Women's League.

The Sisterhood's ongoing *kiddush* program has, over the past several years, brought new vitality to Shabbat, by providing a warm, inviting, and tasty end to the Shabbat service. The synagogue feels more of a family now, as many members remain after services to visit, talk about synagogue business, and eat. The kiddush program is a major funding source for Sisterhood, and has enabled it to substantially increase its activities.

In recent years the Sisterhood has introduced and strengthened its community mitzvah activities. The membership supports the local Ronald McDonald House with meal donations, the local Jewish Literacy Volunteers with volunteer readers and donated books, the Alternatives for Battered Women with donations, and the Jewish residents of area group homes with *mishloach manot*. Further Sisterhood members also participate in the synagogue's annual Mitzvah Day.

Our Sisterhood is a proud long-term supporter of Torah Fund, with 30 Benefactors and 1 Guardian.

Many region leaders have come from Temple Beth El including Region past presidents Rae Aiolo, Esther Robfogel (1946-48), and Phyllis Davidson (1962-64). Our current conference chair, Gail Finkelstein is a past president of the Sisterhood and will be the Region's Education Vice President.

WOMEN'S NETWORK OF CONGREGATION AGUDAT ACHIM, SCHENECTADY, NY

The cornerstone of the original synagogue, built in 1908, was recently found. In the capsule was a list of the original 180 members, the constitution printed in Yiddish in 1902, three newspapers publicizing the laying of the cornerstone, and membership lists of two women's organizations. They were not listed as sisterhoods; yet they were important enough to be included in this synagogue time capsule.

What was the role of women in those days? When the congregation joined the Conservative movement in 1931, the Sisterhood was officially recognized, and Rose Ferber, listed as the first president, was invited to attend Board meetings; it is not clear as to whether she was also given a vote.

In its early years, Sisterhood devoted itself to beautifying the synagogue, providing hospitality for the holidays, and supporting a growing youth program. It grew to become a strong force for women while increasingly serving as a major fundraising arm of the synagogue. One of its most successful ventures was the development of a catering program which funneled thousands of dollars into the synagogue. In 1971 it was the first sisterhood in the capital district to develop a *b'not mitzvah* program. In the early 1980s a leadership void led to the restructuring of the sisterhood into Women's Network, with a larger focus on women's changing issues and educational programs.

Women's Network has been a member of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism from the very beginning. In the early years sisterhood emphasized work with youth groups and fund raising to improve the synagogue facility. Early programs emphasized a focus on Jewish traditions and family living; many programs were original scripts performed and directed by synagogue members. Among the outstanding programs of the past were the organization of the first adult *b'not mitzvah* class in 1971—the first in the area—and a catering program which competed with the best caterers in the Capital District. The catering program began when sisterhood pledged \$50,000 to outfit a kosher kitchen in our new synagogue building. There have been a total of eighteen *b'not mitzvah* classes. This became a synagogue function and a *b'nai mitzvah* program when men entered the classes. In the early 1980s there was a crisis of leadership and for a year a committee explored the role of women in the synagogue and came up with the Women's Network concept and a renewed mission to become an important educational organization and an outlet for women's voices. During that year catering continued under the auspices of the board and the library and gift shop were maintained.

Women's Network is very proud of its award winning *Reyut* (friendship) program which provides concrete services to members of the congregation in time of crisis. This program, which has over 100 volunteers, received the Solomon Schechter Award in 1988. It has also maintained a monthly *Rosh Hodesh* group which was organized in 1981 and is still going strong. From year to year the program has varied from a study of women in the Bible to a search for spirituality and discussions of issues of interest to women to study of the week's *parsha*. This has become an important social milieu for those whose families are no longer at home.

From its beginnings, the organization has had an annual Donor Dinner with a meaningful program which provides funds for *reyut* and youth activities. It has had an annual Torah Fund program which is well supported, and it operates the gift shop, maintains the synagogue library, and sends packages two or three times a year to the congregation's college students. Women's Network has also hosted numerous Women's Seders.

Terre Foreman was Region President from 1996-1998. There were also many active region board members and vice presidents from the Sisterhood including Sadie Schneider who was vice president a number of times and Jessica Many who is currently the region Archivist.

TEMPLE ADATH YESHURUN, SYRACUSE, NY

Thanks to the Erie Canal's improving transportation and encouraging commerce, by 1867, there were three Jewish congregations in the growing Syracuse Jewish community. Soon after forty young men left the Society of New Beth Israel and began holding meetings in Tabors Hall. Most of these men had immigrated from Neustadt, Poland, a town situated just across the border from Germany. Coming to America from the same town, these men felt a certain commonality, which might have inspired them to worship together. After the first few meetings, the "Neustadters" rented Kauffman's Hall on Mulberry, now State Street. The shul whose formal name was the Congregation of Kadisha was then known in the community as the "Neustadter Shul."

In 1872, the congregation's trustees obtained a state charter under the name, Congregation Adas Yeshurun, which means "Congregation of the Righteous." One year after obtaining a state charter, the congregation purchased a house on Mulberry Street, a few doors away from Kauffman's Hall which became the group's first synagogue.

In 1922, when a larger structure was completed at South Crouse Avenue and Harrison Street, the congregation was incorporated as Temple Adath Yeshurun. Almost fifty years later, on June 20, 1971, the present temple was dedicated.

TAY takes particular pride that all of its religious leaders have been graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Their first rabbi, Joseph Hertz, was the first Conservative rabbi ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and was subsequently the chief rabbi of the British Empire. Rabbi Irwin Hyman is best known for his fifty years at TAY and creating the congregation's present religious and spiritual infrastructure. Rabbi Charles S. Sherman has served TAY passionately, faithfully and creatively since 1976. He was recently presented with an honorary doctorate from the JTSA for his dedication, in recreating and transforming the congregation in meeting the many challenges of the twenty-first century.

The TAY Jewish music program has been recognized for its vibrancy and authenticity. Some of the great voices of the American cantorate have and continue to occupy the TAY pulpit; several are footnotes to American Jewish history. Samuel Arlick, cantor from 1925 to 1948, is best known for his son Harold Arlen, a world-renowned composer who received his early training at TAY, and wrote the song, "Somewhere Over The Rainbow."

Minutes from the Ladies' Auxiliary meetings held just after the turn of the Twentieth Century, chronicle their generous work. This organization stemmed from the older Ladies Society that dated back to 1879. The first presidents were: Mrs. Isaac Shriber, Mrs. M. Fineberg, Mrs. Meyer Kallet, and Mrs. Isaac Markson. The Ladies's Auxiliary created imaginative fundraising projects to earn money for the synagogue and for charity. They held whist parties, raffles, Purim Balls, and bazaars.

Other minutes of the Ladies' Auxiliary show their generous time and effort donations ranging from \$100 to \$2,000 to the Hebrew school, decorating the inside of the synagogue, and each year providing treats on Hanukkah and Purim for the children. They adopted a Russian war orphan, and two years later, they adopted another child. They visited the elderly residents of the Jewish Home for the Aged. Funds were raised for hot lunches for the Yemenite children in Palestine. They also sent Passover matzos to Jewish prisoners in local New York penitentiaries.

During the post war years, the Sisterhood legacy continued in fundraising for the new building and sponsored various civic and religious groups along with being active participants in all congregation functions. In the middle to the late forties, the Ladies' Auxiliary changed its name to become the Sisterhood.

Because many women held jobs outside the home, an afternoon and evening Sisterhood were formed. Sisterhood membership in the afternoon group numbered 550 while membership in the evening group was eighty members. Together, these two groups held some major functions. They were the Mother-Daughter Banquet, the Donor Luncheon, the annual Bake Sale, the Antique Show, an Art Show and a Rummage Sale. In the early 1970s the fundraising events of the Sisterhood enabled them to donate \$10,000 annually to the temple. The money went specifically to the library, the kitchen and the *onegay shabbat* and support Saturday Junior Congregation luncheons. The Sisterhood runs the Judaica Shop and supports the Jewish Theological Seminary through Torah Fund. One of the major functions of the Sisterhood is participation in the Temple Youth Commission and it sponsors adult education and Hebrew classes.

On June 20, 1971 the not-quite-finished new building at Kimber Road held a ceremony to dedicate the new location. Mrs. Henry Rubinstein (Erna), the Sisterhood President kindled the *ner tamid* and then passed the lamp to several temple members who represented the various arms of the temple symbolizing the unity of the congregation.

Today, the Sisterhood continues most of the activities begun by their predecessors. The evening Sisterhood disbanded and those that could joined the afternoon group. To compensate for this, Sisterhood meetings are held on Sunday mornings and the Board meetings are alternately held on Wednesday mornings and Sunday mornings after morning minyan while Religious School is in session. The Rummage Sales continue and the Antique Show was replaced with a Fine Arts Show. Presently, Sisterhood has begun a Jewish Film Festival that continues during the year. It is offered free to the congregation and community.

Sisterhood has helped pay off the temple mortgage, contributed to roof repair, paving of the parking lot and put a canopy over the entrance to the main entrance. Sisterhood has replaced the temple carpeting and made the main *bimah* handicapped accessible. (Joyce Goldberg, a past president, designed the railings). Sisterhood has replaced many office and kitchen (ice machine, copiers, Xerox machines, *etc.*) necessities as well as paying for much of the air conditioning unit of the synagogue. In other words the Sisterhood helps with the temple upkeep. Donors continues to be the major fundraiser.

Through the years, many Sisterhood members have become leaders of the NY State Region. Rachel Hyman, Erna Rubinstein, and Ruth (Babe) Greenhouse served as President. Joyce Goldberg not only served as region president but also was a WL consultant, trainer, vice president, and editor of *Ba Olam*. Cheryl Patt was region president and now serves as a WL trainer and member of the Convention Committee; she has also been nominated to be WL's Recording Secretary for the 2008-2010 term.

TEMPLE BETH EL, TONAWANDA, NY

Nearly all the Polish families settling here before 1865 were Jewish. Most of these Jewish settlers before 1860 worked in the clothing business. Then came Jewish tobacco families from Germany who chose locations close to the busy harbor.

After the Civil War, in which many local Jewish men fought for the Union, Buffalo's Jews displaced earlier settlers on Franklin, Tupper, and Pearl and in the William-Clinton section. By 1890 they numbered 1,500. The city's first corporation counsel was Louis E. Desbecker, who opened the way for other Jews in local politics. As the city became industrialized, Jews moved farther north and east inside the city, and later to the suburbs as well. They prospered in real estate, manufacturing, banking, contracting, law and medicine.

Polish Jews founded the first congregation, Beth El Synagogue, on Pearl Street in 1848. German Jews formed the first Orthodox congregation, Beth Zion, at Ellicott and Clinton streets in 1850; it later became Reform Beth Zion.

The first Jewish congregation in Buffalo and the first one between New York City and Chicago was founded by twelve men on May 9, 1847, when a committee was formed to purchase land for a Jewish cemetery. The young congregation initially worshipped in the Beak Street home of Abraham Jacobs, one of its early presidents.

In June, 1848, the congregation became know as Synagogue Beth El. A year later, this religious organization began worshipping on the top floor of the Hoyt Block on the northwest corner of Main and Eagle. A building on the east side of Pearl Street north of Eagle was dedicated as the congregation's new home during an English language service on July 22, 1851.

After the commercial activity of downtown encroached upon the synagogue, the congregation purchased a site on the east side of Elm Street between Eagle and North Division Streets and constructed a modest brick house of worship. They dedicated their second building on August 15, 1874.

With many of the original members no longer active, changes began to occur within the congregation. In 1880 the first English sermon was preached and by the end of the century, men and women were allowed to sit together in the same pews.

The congregation purchased the site for a new and larger building from the Noye Manufacturing Company which was dedicated on September 10, 1911. It was designed by the architect Howard Osgood Holland.

The congregation worshipped in the building until the changing demographics of the congregation forced them to consider a new location. The congregation moved to their new site on Eggert Road at Sheridan 1961.

TEMPLE BETH EL, TROY, NY

During an interlude in Yom Kippur services in 1928 at Shaaray Tephila, observant Jews forged a vision of a congregation that would adhere to the traditions of Judaism yet be modern in spirit. In time, a group of families appointed Morris Simon as the new synagogue's temporary head with Dr. Julius Selzer as president. On April 23, 1929, fifteen men signed the certificate of incorporation for Temple Beth El.

In the early days of Temple Beth El, observances were held wherever appropriate space could be found. Members met for services alternately at Shaaray Tephila on Division Street and Beth Israel *Bikkur Cholim* on River Street, then subsequently at the YMHA at 87 First Street. As the synagogue began to assume its own character, crystallizing into an affiliated Conservative congregation, separate quarters were sought. A former Universalist church was acquired in October, 1930. This became Beth El's home for thirty-eight years.

In time, this building was expanded to accommodate a school at the rear of the synagogue on property acquired in 1937 through an anonymous donation. This endeavor was years in the making. Finally in 1952, a two-story building was completed.

A fire in 1968 destroyed the Fifth Avenue building. With the help of Troy policeman and firemen, members removed the Torah scrolls and these survived unscathed. Not as fortunate was the hand-painted family tree, hung at the top of the stairs to the sanctuary, which illustrated the lineage of temple members.

Once again, Beth El conducted its spiritual and institutional life in various locations. Services were held at the Jewish Community Center and at various rented spaces. High Holy Day services were held at the United Methodist Church, next door to the former synagogue building.

In May, 1971, ground was broken for the new synagogue and educational center on a site on Hoosick Street, Troy, formerly occupied by a Grand Union Market. The new building would be the first synagogue built in Troy in more than 100 years. The synagogue, designed by the architect Irving Paris, was dedicated on October 15, 1971.

The Sisterhood, also founded in 1929, is still in active operation. Its roster of presidents is a venerable history of dedication to the life of Beth El.

TEMPLE BETH EL, UTICA, NY

Temple Beth El, Utica, was founded in 1919, with Rabbi Reuben Kaufman, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary as its first rabbi. Soon after assuming his position, Rabbi Kaufman realized that a synagogue without an organized women's group was only half a congregation. So before the High Holydays of 1919 he called together thirty-eight women who became the charter members of the Ladies' Auxiliary with Mrs. David L. Cohen as its first president.

In 1921, the Ladies' Auxiliary of Temple Beth El affiliated with the Women's League of the United Synagogue. The first delegate from Utica to the 1922 National Convention of Women's League in Pittsburgh was Mrs. Reuben Kaufman. In 1923, Mrs. David L. Cohen was elected national treasurer of Women's League.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of Temple Beth El later changed its name to the Sisterhood of Temple Beth El. The organization's name was changed but not its basic purpose—to serve Temple Beth El.

One of the main functions of the Sisterhood was to develop and enhance congregation life. It provided a kosher kitchen raising the necessary funds through bake sales and auctions. The first supper cooked in the new kitchen was for the newly organized Men's Club in 1922. In 1925, the Sisterhood took charge of the first luncheon of the first State Conference held by the Council of Jewish Women.

Of course, even in those days, you couldn't keep the Sisterhood in the kitchen all the time. The Sisterhood sponsored the first community Seder in 1926. It purchased Bibles to present as gifts to the congregation's confirmants. They also sponsored programs with nationally known speakers.

In 1929, the cornerstone was laid for a new building costing \$205,000. Mrs. Lena Cone Galinsky, President of the Sisterhood, inserted into the cornerstone the history of the Sisterhood. Before the building was completed, the stock market crash of Oct. 29, 1929. The Sisterhood immediately stepped in to take on the some of the financial burden by sponsoring many of the cultural events, as well as the temple's library.

During the trying years of 1930-1945 the Sisterhood contributed more than \$25,000 to the coffers of the temple. In fact historians state that the Sisterhood was the major force in the financial stability of the congregation during this period.

In the 1940s, Sisterhood Past President Rita Markson became President of NY State Branch. Later Nettie Schwartz also served as Branch President as well as WL Vice President. Bert Resnikoff served as Branch vice president and Rita Manning as secretary. Lois Silverman was a member of the Sisterhood when she served as Branch President, WL Vice President, WL Program Chair, and WL Youth/School Chair. Branch conferences held in Utica were always considered among the best ever held in NY State.

CANADIAN SEAWAY REGION

In the early decades of the 20th century, a massive exodus of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, fleeing persecution in their homelands changed the face of the Toronto Jewish community forever. From 1900-1921, the Jewish population of the city grew from 3,000 to 35,000, and many of these newcomers were destitute. Struggling to survive, often unable to communicate in English, and crowded into city-centre slums, they suffered on many fronts.

In the late 1950s, Canadian Jews began to establish new congregations in the suburbs, and in the large communities, they amalgamated old and unsuccessful congregations, transforming them into major new religious communities. This process led to a new prominence of Jewish congregations in Canada. To keep pace with the increase in Jewish population, the number of synagogues in Canada grew over the years. But between 1935 and the 1970s, not only was there a statistical growth, but there was a new increased involvement of all members of the family.

In 1935, there were 152 congregations in all of Canada: 140 of these were Orthodox and mostly small; nine were Conservative; and three were Reform. By 1960, these numbers had increased to 206 congregations; almost half of these new synagogues identified themselves as either Conservative or Reform.

Every Conservative or Reform congregation was, in effect, a community with a synagogue-center cultural and education activities for the whole family, in addition to the ritual and religious life of a congregation. Each Conservative and Reform congregation had its own rabbi and almost all had their own schools and principals. In Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, some Conservative congregations even conducted day school programs on their own or jointly, with other Conservative synagogues in the area.

By coincidence, both Reform and Conservative rabbinical organizations of North America—the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Rabbinical Assembly—conducted their annual conventions in Toronto in 1966. The highlight of the RA's convention was the academic convocation that took place at Beth Tzedec Synagogue. Lester B. Pearson, the Prime Minister of Canada, accepted an honorary degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA) from its Chancellor, Dr. Louis Finkelstein, and so became an honorary alumnus of a prominent American Jewish institution of higher learning. Participating were scores of rabbis, former and present Canadians, were trained at the JTSA.

Jews are increasingly prominent in virtually every branch of the retail and wholesale trades. Some operate national chains, such as Tip Top Tailors, People's Credit Jewelers, and Reitmans. In Ottawa, the Loeb family, and in Toronto, the Wolfes (Oshawa Wholesale) have done much the same for IGA, a chain of smaller supermarkets.

In every Canadian city, Jewish builders and developers have helped to reshape the local skyline with modern, high-rise apartments, office buildings and suburban homes. By 1961, about one in seven Canadian Jews was a professional. Mr. Justice Bora Lasking, appointed in 1970 as the first Jewish member of the Supreme Court, was previously one of the country's outstanding academic lawyers. He is the author of widely read legal textbooks and has wielded great influence over an entire generation of Canadian law students.

Canadian Jews have also played a major role in promoting jazz, folk and rock groups and individual artists. Moe Koffman of Toronto is one of Canada's best-known jazz performers.

BETH EMETH BAIS YEHUDA SYNAGOGUE, DOWNSVIEW, ONTARIO

The congregation which now has 1,500 families began with 150 determined people who banded together with a common dream and \$500 in the bank. The group met first in a small house in the neighbourhood, then in upstairs quarters in a shopping plaza, and then in a tent at the future site of the building. In April, 1959, construction began on the first stage of Beth Emeth Synagogue which was ready for occupancy that September.

Two years later, close to 1,000 children and teenagers were involved in the congregation's programmes. In 1963, the Bais Yehuda Synagogue merged with Beth Emeth. The strength of the combined congregation allowed the organization to build the sanctuary, chapel, and additional classrooms the following year. In November, 1975, the Hebrew Men of England amalgamated with Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue.

The Sisterhood was founded in 1957, and it has been part of WLCJ since 1959. In the early years, the Sisterhood was a major fundraiser for the congregation. It held fashion shows, teas, bazaars, Broadway musicals, and many more events.

Today the Sisterhood still holds outstanding monthly programs on topics that are timely and of interest to both men and women as well as to the general community. A number of events raise money for Torah Fund. A women's *tefillah* group and adult *bar/bat mitzvah* classes are sponsored by Sisterhood. The congregation's rabbis also conduct weekly study groups. The Sisterhood received an award from Women's League for a successful leadership training program. Five years ago the Sisterhood started the first *Z'havah* group in

Canada. The Sisterhood has compiled four cookbooks, and its *Chesed* Knitters have collected about 500 pieces of hats, scarves, and blankets which have been donated to neonatal units, hospitals, cancer patients, Israeli soldiers, and nursing homes.

The women of this organization are committed to Sisterhood and enjoy being together and helping wherever they can. They support each other and the other arms of the shul. The members are talented with diverse skills making the Sisterhood successful in all that it does.

Three of its members have been President of Ontario Branch of Women's League and one WL Vice President. Its immediate Past President will be installed to the board of the new Region.

BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE, HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Beth Jacob Synagogue is a participatory, egalitarian congregation affiliated with the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism. It provides a warm gathering place and caring community for its members who come together to nourish their spirituality through worship, to increase their understanding through study, to educate their young, and to better the world through acts of loving kindness.

Its goal is to be an inclusive congregation that encourages all members to participate fully in congregational activities, to explore individual and communal growth, and to increase their familiarity with and knowledge of Jewish practices. The congregation is concerned with and responsive to the needs and welfare of its members, the Jewish community at large, and those in need in the general community.

OR SHALOM WOMEN'S LEAGUE SISTERHOOD, LONDON, ONTARIO

Or Shalom Women's League Sisterhood was originally two Sisterhoods—B'nai Moses ben Judah and B'nai Israel. Upon their merging fifty years ago, they became Or Shalom, a viable and working Sisterhood. It continues to play a very important role in the life of the synagogue. Programs about religious observances, Israel, holidays, and life cycle events all contribute to expanding knowledge and commitment to the Jewish community in London.

This group of talented women includes members of many ages working together to provide many essential services within the shul and the Jewish community. The Sisterhood works hard each year to publish a London Jewish Directory that lists the Jewish community members, their addresses, and phone numbers. Life cycle events are noted as well as announcements, calendar, greetings, all the organizations, and more.

The Sisterhood's Judaica shop has built up a fine reputation over the past few years. The shop strives to meet the needs of the community not just for the holidays, but for special events as well. Sisterhood also supports the synagogue's youth, both financially and spiritually. The *kiddushim* following services, as well as the special "*simcha*" *kiddushim* are all lovingly prepared by Or Shalom Sisterhood members. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes by dedicated women.

ADATH ISRAEL, NORTH YORK, ONTARIO

At the turn of the 20th century, Jewish immigrants from Romania, a small minority in the developing Jewish community of Toronto, sought the company of their *landsleit* (countrymen). Social gatherings led to their desire to pray together on the Holy Days and to establish a congregation of their own. To procure a *Sefer Torah*, a campaign of obtained donations of nickels and dimes from the new immigrants. This campaign encouraged the group to move from a room in a borrowed synagogue to rented quarters above a Turkish bath, and then to a room over a grocery store.

In 1903, a substantial increase in membership led to the formal election of the first president and secretary. The most important event of the year, however, was the acquisition of a cemetery far to the north of Toronto as it was at the time, on Roselawn Avenue.

After a brief period in rented premises, the congregation bought two "cottages" on Centre Avenue which continued to serve as the congregational home until 1911. In that year the Congregation proudly dedicated a new building on Bathurst near Dundas, the site where for thirty years, the First Roumanian Hebrew Congregation Adath Israel, as it was officially known, flourished. The popular name of the congregation was "The Roumainishe Shul."

During all these years the synagogue functioned as the busy centre of an active religious and social life where various important membership organizations were established. A warm feeling of friendship pervaded the membership fostered by bonds of family kinship and origin.

Rabbi Abraham Kelman was the synagogue's first full-time rabbi serving from 1939 until 1947. In September, 1947, the newly-ordained Rabbi Erwin Schild was engaged as the new rabbi of the congregation. At this time, the membership numbered about 150 families.

During the next few years the congregation's membership and activities increased. At the same time, the demography of the Jewish community changed considerably. The Bathurst Street building was not only too small, but also in the wrong location since the growing Toronto Jewish population was moving northward. In the early 1950s, the synagogue moved from downtown Toronto to its present location in North York. To signify a new era in its history, the congregation decided to shorten its name to "Adath Israel Congregation." In order to recognize the religious orientation of its membership, it proclaimed itself a Conservative synagogue and joined the United Synagogue of America.

Even before the first part of the building was completed, a period of explosive growth occurred. In 1957, the synagogue dedicated a new building with ample space for religious services, education of children and adults, social functions, and other congregational events and activities.

More growth of the congregation soon necessitated further building. In 1965 a substantial addition created more lobby space, school rooms, and the western portion of the building. In the 1980s, the shul embraced the newly renovated Alex Koenigsberg Conservatory. In 1999, an elevator and ramps were installed to make our synagogue more accessible to the physically challenged.

In 1989, when Rabbi Schild chose to officially retire from the pulpit, he was succeeded by the current rabbi, Rabbi Steven Saltzman, a dynamic religious leader and noted scholar and author.

The congregation has many vital committees, such as Brotherhood, Sisterhood, Club L'Chayim (55+), the Chesed Committee and Dynamic Singles. Numerous exciting social and educational programmes have been held over the years to meet the evolving needs of the membership, which currently is about 1,700 families. With the multitude of activities offered for children through seniors, there is truly something for everyone!

After 100 years of growth and achievements, Adath Israel Congregation looks confidently to the challenges of the future.

BETH TIKVAH, NORTH YORK, ONTARIO

On April 14, 1964, a small group of young families dedicated to traditional Jewish worship and concerned about the education of their children organized a congregation that would serve their needs. The founders chose as its name Shaarei Tikvah, after a synagogue in Amsterdam that had been razed by the Nazis. Within two years, this nascent congregation merged with another group, and Beth Tikvah was born.

Beth Tikvah Sisterhood has encouraged women from the congregation to participate in social action and community service activities for more than forty years. It is dedicated to the educational growth of the community through its programs such "Womensong, Exploring the Theme of Women and Power in the Bible," "The Supreme Value of Each Human Life: A test-based exploration of ethical dilemmas in the Israeli reality," and "What Everyone Needs to Know about Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer: Medical, Genetic and Jewish Perspectives."

Its members are involved in *tikkun olam* through many varied projects. In its first year, Beth Tikvah Sisterhood's "Chicks with Sticks" knitted more than 100 blankets for the Project Linus. Fundraising not only helps to sustain its own community but those outside through such programs as "Movies, Munchies and A Meal" with proceeds going to the Alzheimer's Society of Toronto. Some members volunteers with the Kosher Food Bank assisting with a variety of services. Sisterhood members make *shiva* visits, hoping to provide some comfort to families who have recently lost a family member. Others volunteer as community partners with the Baycrest Geriatric Health Care System in SPARK.

BETH DAVID B'NAI ISRAEL BETH AM, NORTH YORK, ONTARIO

The shuls, Sisterhoods, Brotherhoods are all closely knit. They have programs together especially in the winter. Beth David started in a tent and the present building was built in the 1950s. Beth Am joined Beth David B'nai Israel in around 1977 and became Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am. Membership varies between 1,500 and 1,150 families, which is the current membership. There are educational programs, speakers, and Hebrew classes.

Sisterhood is a very vibrant group, holding monthly board meetings and general meetings. The group utilizes speakers from within the Sisterhood as well as local speakers from every walk of life. The Sisterhood has study sessions. It also has donated thousands of hats and scarves to the homeless through various agencies. Twelve years ago the Sisterhood's Craft Group began making blankets for Project Linus which distributes them to children in hospitals and shelters; the group has contributed nearly 1,800 blankets so far. The annual fashion show in November is attended by 250-350 people. The Sisterhood is also involved in Passover and Hanukkah drives.

The Sisterhood commissioned a beautiful *parochet* (ark curtain) which now hangs in the Sisterhood Hall as a piece of art; the sheer beauty of the *parochet* with its meaningful Jewish theme was created and executed by the world famous Judaica artist, Temma Gentles. A strictly kosher Sisterhood kitchen is located off the Sisterhood Hall.

On Sisterhood Shabbat, the members participate in the service after which there is a luncheon where the speaker gives a *droscha*.

The Sisterhood is proud of having brought *Z'havah* into Canada, first to its shul and then successfully to Beth Emeth. *Z'havah* sets up its own programs.

BEIT RAYIM SYNAGOGUE, RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO

The history of Beit Rayim Synagogue Sisterhood predates Beit Rayim Synagogue. When the Richmond Hill Community Jewish Community Synagogue became Shaareh Haim in 1985, the Sisterhood was already active offering a variety of activities and programs. This tradition continues with the Beit Rayim Sisterhood. The synagogue is truly a House of Friends and the Sisterhood exemplifies that.

The Sisterhood offers opportunities for social activities, educational experiences, fundraising, and personal development through many different programs including workshops on various topics related to women and Judaism. Members are also offered religious activities, social events such as movie nights, craft sessions, guest speakers and cooking demonstrations. One innovation for this year included a program called “Rumble with the Rabbi,” an evening of discussion with the rabbi, Rabbi David Eligberg on the topic of “Defining Jewish Identity for Women in the 21st Century.”

In addition, the Sisterhood is pivotal in creating friendships among synagogue members and is welcoming to new members. Some of the goals of the Beit Rayim Sisterhood include fostering friendship among the women of the congregation, to further a woman’s Jewish education in the synagogue, in the home, and in the community, and to develop the personal growth of each member. Of course, there are opportunities to meet women from all over the Greater Toronto Area, the Region, and internationally through programs and conventions offered by the Women’s League for Conservative Judaism.

The Sisterhood is a committed group of women who come out to programs and participate in many ways. It is working on building on this core group and growing its membership over the next few years.

SHAAR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, THORNHILL, ONTARIO

Shaar Shalom has a vibrant Sisterhood which is pivotal in creating friendships among its members and welcoming its new members. The Sisterhood holds board meetings once every six weeks and general meetings as needed.

Sisterhood activities include social events such as theatre nights, speakers on various topics of interest, crafts, museum tours, and book reviews. Its members contribute to the congregation including raising fund for the Cayne Family Chapel. *Tikkun olam*—making this world a better place—is an important component in the Sisterhood’s program as is education for its members and for the congregation as a whole.

BETH TZEDEC CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Beth Tzedec Congregation is the largest Conservative synagogue in North America. Dedicated on December 9, 1955, the congregation is the 1952 joining of two of the oldest Jewish congregations in Toronto, Goel Tzedec and Beth Hamidrash Hagadol. In 1925, it officially enrolled in the Conservative Movement and gradually introduced certain changes such as family pews, a revised prayer book, English prayers, and the *bat mitzvah*.

With a number of groups within the synagogue offering programs for all age groups, Sisterhood addresses broader issues in the community including an annual blood donor clinic, Habitat for the Homeless, Elimination of Abuse against Women, and Out of the Cold Program. In partnership with the Men’s Club, Sisterhood contributes to the purchase of *chumashim* and High Holiday *siddurim* which are presented to *b'nai mitzvah* when they are called to the Torah.

Sisterhood has commissioned renowned artists to create articles of Judaica which it has donated for use by synagogue members. These include a *huppah*, silver candlesticks, and Torah mantles that are regularly used in the Hendeles Chapel and exhibited in the Reuben and Helene Dennis Museum in the synagogue. The Torah covers are also used in the main sanctuary during Sisterhood’s Shabbat Hanukkah services.

TUR MALKA: TWO CENTURIES OF JEWISH LIFE IN MONTREAL

By Leona Eliberg

When Canada celebrated its 125th birthday and Montreal its 350th, the Jewish community of Montreal commemorated 230 years with an exhibit entitled “*Tur Malka: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Montreal.*” Now close to its 250th anniversary, the Jewish community in Montreal continues its own proud and unique history and experience.

Eastern European immigrants to Montreal named their benevolent society *Tur Malka*, of the royal mountain. Taken from the Aramaic of the Babylonian *Talmud* referring to Jerusalem and its surrounding mountains, this name became synonymous with Montreal’s Mount Royal, located in the middle of the city.

The first Jews arrived in this area from England in 1768. In 1777, they established Canada’s first synagogue, Shearith Israel, today’s Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

When Ezekiel Hart was elected to the Quebec Legislature in 1807, French nationalists refused to allow him to take his seat because of the religious nature of the required oaths. In contrast, an 1831 bill in Parliament allowed Jews to register their own births and deaths, thus marking the beginning of the Jewish fight for full human and civil rights in Montreal and the Province of Quebec.

One of the earliest Jewish Montrealers was Moses Judah Hays, chief of police from 1849 to 1862, who installed the city’s first waterworks. Mrs. Clarence Isaac de Sola (nee Belle Maud Goldsmith) founded several organizations to assist Jewish working women. She served as president of the Victorian Order of Nurses and as a member of the Montreal Branch of the Women’s Press Club and the McGill Alumni Association. Rabbi Abraham de Sola, professor at McGill University and president of the Natural History Society of Canada was the first Jewish minister in North American to receive such a public appointment.

The ranks of the less affluent “down-towners” swelled between 1890 and 1911 with waves of immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe.

The area surrounding St. Lawrence Boulevard, between the French East End and the English West End, was home to immigrants of many ethnic backgrounds. The Jews of this area, known as the Main, became involved in many aspects of city life, promoting active trade unions and public education. They established Hebrew day schools and afternoon schools, the Jewish Public Library, and the Canadian Jewish Congress. In 1912, Abraham Blumentahl was the first Jew elected as alderman in Canada. In 1914, Louis Rubenstein, former Canadian, U.S., and world figure skating champion, was elected to the Montreal City Council.

The richness of the Montreal experience has always provided inspiration and material for artists of all genres. William Raphael is considered to be the first Jewish artist in Canada. Sarah Fisher, an international opera star, sang *Lakme* at the Monument National Theater in 1918. The Montreal Women’s Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1940 by Ethel Stark, violinist and conductor. Montreal poets and authors include A.M. Klein, Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton, Shulais Yellin, Ted Allen, Jerry Wexler, Saul Bellow, and Morechai Richler. Artists include Ernst Neuman, Louis Nuhlstock, Jack Beder, Sam Borenstein, A. Bercovitch, Harry Mayerovitch, Sylvia Ary, Moe Reinblatt, Ghitta Caiserman, and Rita Briansky. Dora Wasserman’s Yiddish Drama Group of the Sadye Bronfman Centre presents plays by Yiddish authors as well as translations from other languages such as the Yiddish translation of Michel Tremblay’s play, *Les Belles Soeurs* (The Sisters-in-Law).

Montreal is home to the third largest Holocaust Survivor group and has a recently refurbished world class Holocaust museum. The remnants of European Jewry which survived World War II, the large migration of the *Sephardim*, Jews from North Africa, and more recently, Jews from Ethiopia, Russia, and Argentina comprise the waves of immigrants to Montreal.

In addition, a large Hasidic community has grown in the *Outemont* section of Montreal. Each group adds to the diversity, complexity, and cultural complexion of Montreal Jewry. Montreal’s Jewish community is unique in its atmosphere and aura, where the past is treasured and the future is celebrated.

Eastern Canadian Branch received its charter in 1948 from National Women's League. The founding president was Myrtle Solomon and the dues were 50 cents. By 1954, there were fifteen affiliates in Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritime Provinces.

By 1956 Ontario received Branch status, and Beth El and Shaare Zedek joined the Eastern Canada Branch.

For a short period in the nineties, Eastern Canada Branch was merged with Ontario to become Canadian Seaway Branch, but in 1999 Montreal Women's League was established with Doris Magil as its President. It consisted of four Sisterhoods, Beth El, Shaare Hashomayim, Shaare Zedek and Shaare Zion.

Today Montreal’s three Sisterhoods support Torah Fund with many donations and take a keen interest in community and Women's League affairs.

SHAARE ZEDEK CONGREGATION, MONTREAL, QUEBEC

Shaare Zedek Congregation is a Conservative synagogue of about 600 families for fifty years at the present location. Sisterhood has played an important and active part from the very beginning, fundraising, conscience-raising, educating women, programming, and beautifying the synagogue building. For the past seven years, one of the Sisterhood's most successful ongoing programs is the monthly *Rosh Chodesh* service for women. The women conduct their own services, including reading Torah and delivering a *d'var Torah*; there is a pleasant breakfast following the services where discussions on varied topics of particular relevance to the new month are held.

Sisterhood is also in charge of a thriving Judaica shop where selected gift items are sold the year-round.

The library and monthly book discussions are also under Sisterhood's management and have been ongoing projects, open to all for decades. Weekly get-togethers with Cantor Sheni are very popular during which women learn liturgical melodies to enhance their knowledge of and their participation in the services.

Programs presented to the entire Congregation by Sisterhood have been of great variety from ballroom dancing classes to cooking classes to lectures of historical importance.

SHAARE ZION CONGREGATION, MONTREAL, QUEBEC

Shaare Zion Sisterhood has been in existence since the late forties and has seen many transformations over the years. Perhaps the most significant one is becoming an integral part of the services after the congregation became egalitarian in the year 2000. Women are now counted to the *minyan*, permitted to have *aliyot*, read from the Torah, and chant the haftarah.

During the last few years, the Sisterhood has been striving to make programs accessible to all age groups including: a mother-daughter self defence class; a mother-daughter book review; holiday recipe exchanges; knitting blankets for women's shelter; and delivering gift baskets to seniors. The Sisterhood is especially proud of its Tu B'Shevat women's seder which has become a yearly tradition amongst the members.

BETH EL, TOWN OF MOUNT, ROYAL, QUEBEC

The Sisterhood was founded fifty-six years ago. From that time to this, countless unsung heroines have given their time and energy to keep the organization on a firm footing.

The accomplishments of the Sisterhood have been many. It has built and equipped the synagogue kitchen and the superintendent's apartment. In addition the Sisterhood has financed and prepared the brides' room and redecorated the *bimah* in the main sanctuary. Its last major gift to the Beth El community was a magnificent stained glass window for the congregation's daily chapel.

Torah Fund is a priority for the Sisterhood. Members raise major funds for the Sisterhood's annual contribution in support of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

HINEY MA TOV

1
 Hi-nei mah tov u-mah na' - im she-vet a - him gam ya - had
 2
 Hi - nei mah tov she-vet a - him gam ya - had
 hi - nei mah tov she-vet a - him gam ya - had

Hiney Ma Tov *Hinei Mah Tou* can be sung as a round. The second group starts when the first group gets to the second verse.

הנה מה טוב ומה נעים	How good it is and how pleasant
(both lines, 2 times) שקבת אחים גם יחד	When brothers and sisters live together.
הנה מה טוב	How good it is
(both lines, 2 times) שקבת אחים גם יחד	When brothers and sisters live together.



We Are One