

משכן ישראל

CONGREGATION
MISHKAN ISRAEL



1840 — 2015



RABBI'S PREFACE

As David Ben Gurion noted in 1948, “We Jews must never live in the past, but the past must live in us.” Indeed the past of Congregation Mishkan Israel is filled with a richness, dedication and commitment to Judaism and its living values. While we had completed an intensive review of our congregational history on our 150th anniversary, now at our 175th, we wanted to once again take the measure of how well we have done over the last quarter century. Have we been true to that legacy which we inherited, built upon it and are we prepared to pass it forward to those who will come after us?

In order to analyze the records of the last 25 years and to objectively tell the story, we hired Ms. Shari Rabin who was completing her PhD in American Jewish History at Yale. What you will find here are the results of her study. It is presented in these pages with respect and love for the families of this congregation who have joined us on our historic faith journey and for those who will continue into the future.

I would like to thank all those who have spent this year, 2015 organizing and helping to make the many events and celebrations so special. This book was especially the results of our overall chairs, Lina Lawall and Sarah Greenblatt as well as our president Alan Lakin, our Executive Director Jennifer Levin Tavares, Roberta Friedman, Elin Brockman, Joan Shapiro, Dana Astmann, Cynthia Astmann, Harold Shapiro, David Cohen, and Steve Bortner, all of whom added their professional expertise and advice.

— Rabbi Herbert Brockman

INTRODUCTION

By Shari Rabin

As one of the most famous men to grace the bima at Mishkan Israel said, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Martin Luther King Jr.’s hopeful prophecy about the workings of history, six years after he spoke at Mishkan Israel, has in many ways been born out in the activities of its members over the past 175 years. Mishkan Israel has responded to changes not only in the community and society but also to the interpretation, understanding and practices of Reform Judaism. From a small group of mostly German Jews to a diverse community welcoming people of multiple races, faiths and sexual orientations; from being immigrants to aiding immigrants, first Russian Jews, later Soviet Jews and non-Jews from war-torn lands; from Ahavot Achim to the Sisterhood to the Brotherhood of Men and Women; from the Civil War to World Wars; from the War in Vietnam to the War on Terrorism; from a single room in New Haven to a spacious temple in Hamden; from word of mouth to the World Wide web Mishkan Israel has endeavored to bend its local and global impact toward justice.

The years since 1990 have marked an exciting new phase of this history. Under the leadership of Rabbi Herbert Brockman, the congregation has stayed true to its core values while expressing them in new ways. In the introduction to the history written at the celebration of Mishkan Israel’s 150th Anniversary, Professor Beth Wenger noted that Mishkan Israel’s founders would not have recognized their congregation in 1990. (Professor Wenger was a Yale graduate student in 1990.) While this is still largely true in 2015, the re-introduction of traditional practices means that more of its worship and activities would be familiar to them. They would also recognize the close-knit community open to change, although they might be surprised to learn that this led Mishkan Israel toward Classical Reform, then away from it and then back in some ways to the Congregation’s roots. The arc of the moral universe may bend toward justice, but the path that it takes can certainly have some surprising twists and turns. As Mishkan Israel moves toward its third century, it is incumbent upon the leaders and members to determine what path to follow and how best to embody the spirit and tenets of Reform Judaism.

HISTORY 1990–2015

By Shari Rabin

In 1990 Mishkan Israel marked its 150th anniversary by commissioning a comprehensive history entitled *Congregation and Community: The Evolution of Jewish Life at Congregation Mishkan Israel*. In that volume, historian Beth Wenger described “interfaith programs, political activism, and community involvement” as the core of Mishkan Israel’s activities from 1840 to 1990.¹ In the twenty-five years to follow this would continue to be the case, as under the leadership of Rabbi Herbert Brockman, many of the rhythms of congregational life at Mishkan Israel remained regular. Friday nights in the sanctuary, marked by hopeful prayers and inspiring sermons. Sundays at the Temple filled with enthusiastic, if sometimes rowdy, religious school students. A calendar studded with social events, guest speakers, interfaith activities, and social justice advocacy, encouraged opportunities to meet friends and improve the world. Mishkan Israel continues to foster community and an ethical orientation among its members, as it has for decades, even as it has been transformed in some ways that were already evident in 1990 and in other ways that would have been unthinkable earlier.

RABBI HERBERT BROCKMAN

Rabbi Herbert Brockman has continued the legacy of his predecessor, Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg, who passed away in 1995. Rabbi Brockman continues to encourage concern for social justice, although his motivation is more explicitly a deep investment in traditional Jewish sources.² Among the most urgent causes he championed in the early 1990s was the resettling of Jews in the United States following the fall of the Soviet Union. This was, he argued in the congregational bulletin at the time, “the largest [Exodus], save for the original one.”³ Mishkan Israel had supported Russian Jewish immigrants around the turn of the nineteenth century and they were to do so again at the end of twentieth. Members sponsored seven families, finding them apartments and jobs and introducing them to Jewish life in America. Two families, the Braylyans and the Gluzbergs, thanked the congregation in 1990: One family member said; “From the first moment of our arrival you [were] with us. You surrounded us at the New York airport with smiles and greetings and we realized that we were not lonely in our new country...You returned [to] us pride of being Jews.”⁴ Mishkan Israel became so proficient at this work that it published a primer on how to sponsor a Russian family and subsequently helped a Bosnian Muslim family to resettle in 1993 and an Iraqi family in 2013.⁵



Rabbi Herbert Brockman

Mishkan Israel's attention to and concern for the United States' role in the broader world was manifested in diverse and sometimes controversial ways. Rabbi Brockman has proven to be a committed Zionist, encouraging congregants to buy Israel bonds and travel to the Jewish state. In 1990 he led forty-two congregants on a ten-day trip to Israel in honor of the congregation's sesquicentennial. During the trip, the group donated a Torah scroll to the Reform settlement Mizpeh Har Halutz that could be used for future Mishkan Israel *b'nai mitzvah*.⁶ Even as he supported the state of Israel, Rabbi Brockman has been an outspoken advocate for religious pluralism and for dialogue with Palestinians. In 1993 he faced criticism for inviting the Deputy

Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Dr. Riyad Mansour, to speak at the temple. At the time he insisted, "We must confront the claims of the Palestinians head on ... Now is the time to take risks for peace."⁷

Rabbi Brockman has also encouraged the congregation to enrich the local community through interfaith activism and service. In 1990, after a conversation with Meir Lakein and Becky Sunshine, then graduate students at Yale, Rabbi Brockman helped establish a community garden on the land behind the synagogue. The Peah Project, as it was called, is inspired by biblical demands to leave the corners of fields for the poor, widows and strangers to gather. Mishkan Israel families studied the relevant laws and, along with partners from the community, worked in the garden, growing vegetables for the soup kitchens in New Haven.⁸ In 1991 their work was acknowledged with the Irving J. Fain Certificate for Social Justice Programming from the Union of American Hebrew Congregation (UAHC, and after 2003 the Union for Reform Judaism, or URJ).⁹ Still in operation today, the Peah Project donates a ton of vegetables to soup kitchens every year.¹⁰ It epitomizes Rabbi Brockman's belief that "Our Jewish ethical system compels us to be concerned with the plight of the poor and homeless and to do something to improve their lot."¹¹ Through the Peah Project and a range of other endeavors such as Life is Delicious, Abraham's Tent, and food and clothing drives, Mishkan Israel's members, entered the 1990s studying, gardening, and improving the larger community.

1990–2000

On the morning of Tuesday, October 26, 1993, staff and members driving to Mishkan Israel were confronted by three eight-foot swastikas and an anti-Semitic slogan that had been spray-painted on the side of the synagogue. Even as Jews in Connecticut and elsewhere achieved unprecedented acceptance and success by the late twentieth century, there continued to be such isolated cases of anti-Semitic vandalism. This was most prominently highlighted in a 1987 U.S. Supreme Court case involving synagogue vandalism, *Shaare*

Tefila Congregation vs. Cobb, in which it was held that Jews were entitled to claim racial discrimination.¹² Mishkan Israel had experienced vandalism at the congregational cemetery before, but this was part of a new and frightening outbreak of such graffiti throughout the State. In the aftermath of the attack, counselors from the Yale Child Study Center were available to help families cope with the incident. Local faith communities and politicians quickly reached out to support the congregation. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro told the *Hartford Courant* at the time, "These acts are deplorable because they are intended to evoke a painful and horrific chapter in the history of the Jewish people."¹³ New security measures, including the installation of motion detectors, an upgrade to the alarm system, and the placement of a layer of protective glass outside of the stained glass windows¹⁴ were undertaken at the synagogue to protect against future attacks.

This troubling act of hatred, nevertheless, could not dampen the dynamism being created inside the Ridge Road building. In 1990 then congregational president Dr. Jerome M. Serling noted the increasing diversity within Mishkan Israel, as well as the challenges that it posed:

*We have members of families who have been with us many years and who follow classic reform patterns of observance. We have members from orthodoxy and from conservative backgrounds. We have many Jews-by-choice and mixed marriages. There is wide diversity in age groups. Also, members come from all parts of the country. Even the geographic diversity in the Greater New Haven community can be a problem — for example, it makes it harder for youngsters to get together socially.*¹⁵

This diversification continued steadily, as the congregation also included more members of color, gays and lesbians, disabled and elderly congregants, and divorced families.¹⁶ Most visible was the increasing presence of interfaith families. In 1990 the National Jewish Population Survey reported an intermarriage rate of fifty-two percent, fueling considerable national concern about the fate of American Jewry. In its aftermath, the Reform movement and other Jewish communities wavered between inclusion and boundary-making.¹⁷ At Mishkan Israel, Rabbi Brockman declined to perform interfaith marriages, but insisted at the 1992 Annual Meeting: "Every effort should be made to draw such families back to Judaism." The congregation created an Outreach Committee in 1994 and implemented a "Stepping Stones" program for children of unaffiliated interfaith families.¹⁸

The leadership of Mishkan Israel worked steadily to better serve its changing population, in part by embracing technological advances. In 1992, a committee first requested donations of computer equipment "to better communicate with [Mishkan Israel's] members, teach its students and manage its business functions." The congregation installed accounting software, began accepting credit card payments over the phone, and gradually purchased more computers for use by employees and religious school students. In the late 1990s Mishkan Israel launched its first website, hosted through the UAHC, which featured directions to the synagogue, maps for visitors, and a list of internal phone extensions.¹⁹ These innovations were implemented by its newly hired Administrator, Jennifer Levin-Tavares, who continues to serve as the Executive Director of Mishkan Israel. Around this time, the congregation's membership peaked at 720 families, with nearly 300 religious school students. Nonetheless, like many other liberal Jewish congregations, Mishkan Israel



Life is Delicious

faced significant financial challenges. Nearly half of all members received dues and religious school abatements. Income from educational tenants was not always stable. As a result, the congregation struggled to pay its significant dues to the UAHC.²⁰

Board members responded to these challenges by working to increase the congregational endowment, by engaging the services of investment advisors, by undertaking fundraisers, and by steadily increasing dues.²¹ In addition to the issue of URJ dues, there were also ongoing

maintenance problems that needed to be addressed at the three-decades-old synagogue building. In 1999, through the efforts of a capital campaign, \$2 million was raised to undertake a limited number of repairs to the building, including an update of the lounge and library.²² The following year, the congregation took an additional step toward stabilizing its income, when the Mishkan Israel Nursery School was founded. The State Certified pre-school provided much needed early childhood education options and helped to attract younger families to the congregation.²³

After a decade of growth and change, Mishkan Israel began the year 2000, as did the rest of the nation, bracing for the possibility of devastating computer malfunctions. Members were offered tips for Y2K preparation. The social action committee checked on vulnerable or concerned members after the New Year.²⁴ Mishkan Israel began the new millennium by embracing new developments, technological and otherwise, and by adapting to face the new challenges that came with them.

CHANGING RELIGIOUS TIDES

In the years following its 150th anniversary, Mishkan Israel continued to mark its history in various ways. Among other efforts, the congregation continued its relationship with its previous building on Audubon Street in New Haven, which had been sold to the City of New Haven in 1965. In 1997 the Congregation joined in the celebration of the building's centenary. The building is home to the ACES/Educational Center for the Arts, which proposed major renovations to accommodate its needs. Concerns arose that the building's historic stained glass windows would be destroyed in the course of the proposed renovations. In 2001, Mishkan Israel was able to negotiate with the City of New Haven to safely remove, photograph, catalogue, crate and store the windows in the basement of the Ridge Road building for the future use of the congregation. Some of the windows have been restored and incorporated into the synagogue's chapel ark doors, sanctuary entry doors, and the memorial plaque installation in the main hallway, thus incorporating visual reminders of Mishkan Israel's history directly into its everyday life.²⁵

The newly installed windows looked out on forms of congregational worship very different from what had been practiced on Audubon Street. In 1995 Mishkan Israel adopted the gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer* siddur in the hopes that "men and women in our congregation will experience a broader understanding of the qualities of the divine that is more inclusive of all people and all worshippers."²⁶ The organ and professional choir were increasingly limited to the High Holiday services, changing the texture of regular worship and preserving these musical forms for special occasions. As Cantor Gordon explained in 1997, "The use of guitar, the congregational choir, the guitar ensemble, and the new prayer book (with its emphasis on ease in congregational singing)" were all intended to encourage intimacy, passion, and immediacy rather than "stentorian tones descending upon a worshipfully awed congregation."²⁷

These moves toward greater inclusivity and involvement were part of a larger ideological shift away from the "Classical Reform" that had guided the Congregation in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Focused on English-language worship and ethical monotheism, Classical Reform eschewed many traditional elements of Jewish life, including head coverings (kipot) and prayer shawls (tallitot). By the close of the twentieth century, however, these and other traditions were being re-introduced at Mishkan Israel through the efforts of Rabbi Brockman, the ritual committee, and other involved laypeople.²⁸ At least initially, not everyone was pleased. Rabbi Brockman remembers that when he introduced *bakafot*, dancing with the Torah during the holiday of Simchat Torah, some congregants turned their backs, declaring it a pagan ritual.²⁹ He acknowledged in 1999, "I have heard from congregants over the years about a sense of 'loss,' of 'alienation' from the ways of Classical Reform."³⁰

Changes continued apace, however. Bar and bat mitzvah, which had previously been subordinated to the Confirmation ceremony, became increasingly central to the lives of congregants. Young people now undertook social justice projects as part of the rite of passage and more adults, including Jews-by-choice, undertook adult *b'nai mitzvah* training. Many others took classes in traditional topics such as Hasidism, Kabbalah, Hebrew, and the Talmud.³¹ These developments were encouraged by Rabbi Brockman, whom the Board of Trustees unanimously granted tenure in 1997. In subsequent years, the Board affirmed the Rabbi's continued leadership of and influence on the Congregation by twice raising the mandatory age of retirement. In 1998 Cantor Jonathan Gordon left the congregation, and in the years to come Rabbi Brockman worked with nine different interns, cantors, and rabbi-educators, including Rabbis Sonya Starr, Rena Judd, and Allison Adler.³² In 2008, the congregation welcomed Cantor Arthur Giglio, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Cantor Giglio has been instrumental in encouraging members of the congregation of all ages to share their musical talents at Friday evening, High Holiday, and special services. Together the Rabbi and Cantor have ensured that an increasingly diverse congregation found meaning in a Jewish life that was traditional but progressive, inclusive, text-based, but flexible.

MISHKAN ISRAEL IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

September 11, 2001 represented a profound spiritual challenge for Mishkan Israel. The terrorist attacks in Manhattan — only 85 miles away — directly affected many congregants. Congregational President, Roberta Friedman, recalled that “Our healing and prayer service, our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services - all were filled to overflowing with congregants and members of our community who joined together in grief and fear, seeking comfort and caring.”³³ At the 2002 annual meeting Rabbi Brockman described the year as “the most challenging he has had.”³⁴ During the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, two Mishkan Israel members were among the fallen soldiers: Captain Benjamin Sklaver, 32 years old and engaged to be married, was killed by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan in 2009, and Private First Class Eric Soufrine, 20 years old, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan in 2011.³⁵

Following the terrorist attacks, the Congregation not only mourned, but also acted to strengthen its security measures, consulting with officials from the town of Hamden, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Anti-Defamation League, and the UAHC. Roberta Friedman wrote at the time, “our world has changed and we must accept our new reality.” A Security Committee was formed in April 2002, and soon after, a financial security assessment was imposed on the Congregation to meet the expenses of various upgrades to the building’s safety features. This led to the closing of office doors, lockdown drills, security cameras, High Holiday tickets assigned to specific people, and a more visible police presence at the synagogue.³⁶ Mishkan Israel members were acutely aware of their own security and of America’s wars in the Middle East, as well as the ongoing conflict in Israel. In response to the second Palestinian intifada, between 2001 and 2004 religious school students raised money for a Magen David Adom ambulance, which was described “as a way to support Israel in a non-belligerent way,” reflecting the ambivalence of many toward Israeli policy.³⁷ This did not abate as the 2006 war in Lebanon and continuing tensions in Gaza and the West Bank kept Israel in the news and in congregational conversations.³⁸

In this context of war and strife, Mishkan Israel members became even more interested in spirituality as a source of comfort and inspiration. In the late 1990s the Congregation, like many others in the Reform movement, had begun reciting the *mi sheberach* prayer by influential Jewish musician, Debbie Friedman, but in the 2000s congregants sought more opportunities for personal reflection and creative worship.³⁹ An ad hoc committee was formed to create a meditation garden and members participated in a meditation service during Yom Kippur, which congregant Gina Novick described as, “a change of pace from the rhythm of the main services [that allows] me to reconnect with others in the midst of an otherwise somber day.”⁴⁰ Congregant spirituality was often expressed in traditional Jewish forms. In the mid-2000s, for example, a *hevra kadisha* was established to facilitate the tradition of *shemirah*, watching over the bodies of the Jewish dead. Around the same time, a group of congregants that had been meeting for Saturday morning bible study established an independent, participatory *minyan*, expanding congregational worship beyond Friday nights and *b’nai mitzvah*.⁴¹ Congregants participated in these programs to varying degrees, finding comfort and satisfaction in a flexible relationship to ritual and tradition.⁴²

The new millennium was marked not only by devastating warfare and enhanced spirituality, but also by an intensification of social and technological changes. Even as many in the larger Reform movement and in American Jewry proved ambivalent, at Mishkan Israel the inclusion of LGBT people, interfaith couples, and women was relatively uncontroversial. Rabbi Brockman had been an early advocate for AIDS sufferers in the Jewish community and offered a sermon on “Homosexuality and Judaism’s Challenges and Opportunities” as early as 1992, just two years after the Central Conference of American Rabbis affirmed, “that heterosexuality is the only appropriate Jewish choice for fulfilling one’s covenantal obligations.”⁴³ By 2000, however, the Reform movement had affirmed rabbinic ordination and marriage for gay Jews, and Mishkan Israel seamlessly followed suit. In the early 2000s Rabbi Brockman testified at the Connecticut General Assembly in support of marriage equality, and performed the first same-sex Civil Union in the Temple sanctuary before gay marriage was legalized in the State in 2008.⁴⁴

Mishkan Israel further acknowledged the changing demography of American Jews by re-configuring membership dues, adding categories for single parents, for those under age 35, and for students and youths. The participation of interfaith families also continued to grow. In 1989 just over one in five new members had been interfaith families. By 2003, when the congregation began tracking relevant data, 20% of all members were in an interfaith family while 5% were Jews by choice. Within a decade, the percentage of interfaith families at Mishkan Israel had increased by half and the percentage of converts to Judaism had doubled. By 2005, almost half of all children in the religious school came from two-religion homes. Separate programming for interfaith families evolved as those families became comfortable and accepted within the congregation.⁴⁵ A parallel development occurred with women. In the early 1990s as more women worked outside the home and volunteer hours diminished, the Sisterhood was phased out. However, in 2004 the Brotherhood welcomed women as members, and re-named this vital part of synagogue life, The Brotherhood of Men and Women. This was an uncommon organizational development among American synagogues, but Mishkan Israel members saw it as a way to “bring our organization into the 21st century and better reflect the needs and feelings of Temple members.”⁴⁶

Even as Mishkan Israel included a greater diversity of people, its membership sank to a low of 556 families in the aftermath of 2008 global financial crisis. In the years that followed, the Board of Trustees made a concerted effort to closely control expenses, and by 2014, the Congregation was slowly returning to financial health, aided by rebounding membership, which rose to 590 families.⁴⁷ The continued expansion of the Internet helped the Mishkan Israel administration better communicate with its members, first through a Yahoo group e-newsletter and later through email bulletins and a Facebook page. On Rosh Hashanah of 2014 services were live-streamed on the Internet for the first time.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Rabbi Brockman has continued to provide the congregation and the community with steady moral and spiritual leadership, deepening its commitments to social justice and interfaith activities. Rabbi expressed his opposition to the U.S. wars in the Middle East and, on Israel, continued to advocate for a two-state solution and oppose the growing Jewish settlements in the West Bank.⁴⁹ Among other endeavors, beginning in 2010, he invited New Haven’s Interfaith Cooperative Ministries to join Mishkan Israel’s long-time

annual Martin Luther King, Jr. commemorative service. The next year, upon the celebration of his 25th anniversary at the Congregation, a *New Haven Register* article declared him “Everybody’s Rabbi.” Imam Abdul Hasan told the *New Haven Register* that Rabbi Brockman is “always trying to make peace between [Jews and Muslims],” while Rev. William Goettler said, “[Rabbi Brockman] been really effective in inviting people not only into conversation but into action.” Rabbi Brockman has served on the boards of numerous community organizations, is a lecturer at Yale Divinity School and a fellow at Yale’s Morse College, and in 2014 he received an honorary doctorate from Albertus Magnus College.

CONCLUSION

The Mishkan Israel of 2015 is more inclusive than it was in 1990 and more engaged with elements of traditional Judaism. The Classical Reform of its past has been replaced by a new Reform that creatively incorporates older forms and new innovations in meaningful ways. The Congregation has been shaped by the advent of the Internet, the age of terror, and global economic crisis. And yet it has continued to be guided by concern for social justice, interfaith activism, and historical memory. It certainly helps that nearly half of the congregation has belonged for twenty-five years or more.⁵⁰ It remains true, as president Jerome Serling argued in 1990, that the “pessimism” about American Jewish life found elsewhere “is not reflected here.”⁵¹ By the early 2000s, Mishkan Israel crafted a mission statement declaring its purpose to be “sustain[ing] a belief in God and the Torah” and “improv[ing] our local and global society” through “worship, study, inspiration, support and assembly.”⁵² In various measures and in a variety of ways, these principles have guided Mishkan Israel for much of its history and continue to do so today. As the congregation celebrates its 175th anniversary, it again turns to the past to understand its multi-faceted and hopeful present and future.



Rabbi David Saperstein, the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, speaking at the 2015 Martin Luther King, Jr. service



Cantor Arthur Giglio

ROBERT E. GOLDBURG PEACE AND JUSTICE SPEAKERS, 1991–2010

1991	Howard Fast	<i>Being a Jew in the World Today</i>
1992	Christopher Hitchens	
1993	Seymour Melman	<i>War, Peace, and Their Economic Consequences</i>
1994	Arthur Miller	Opening of new play, <i>Broken Glass</i>
1995		<i>Music that Changed the World</i> Isidor Offenbach musical service
1996	Leonard Weinglass	<i>Life, Death and Justice: Beyond Morality</i>
1997	Kamal Abde-Malek and David Jacobson (Brown University)	[No title]
1999	Rabbi Ron Kronish	[No title]
2000	Robert Berdon and Leslie Brett	<i>The Rights of Gays and Lesbians</i>
2002	Linda Greenhouse	<i>There Are No Angels There</i>
2003	Rachel Leah Jones	<i>500 Dunam on the Moon</i>
2004	Ron Kronish and Issa Jaber	<i>Is Arab-Jewish Co-existence in Israel Still Possible? The Answer is Yes!</i>
2006	Wilbert Ridean	<i>Southern Lynching: Alive and Well</i>
2007	Attorney Elizabeth Gilson	<i>American Justice: Detained & Delayed</i>
2010	Christine Romero	Documentary Film Producer/Editor, <i>God’s House</i>
2012	Rabbi Howard Mandell	Board Chair, Southern Poverty Law Center <i>Demystifying the 613 Commandments</i>
2013	Bruce E. Wexler, M.D.	<i>The Teaching of Hatred in the Middle East: A Study of Israeli and Palestinian Textbooks</i>
2014	Rev. Marilyn B. Kendrix	<i>What the Lord Required</i>

CMI PRESIDENTS

1990–1992	Herb Hershenson	2004–2006	Mark Sklarz
1992–1994	Kenn Venit	2006	Matthew Nemerson
1994–1996	Ruth Ostfeld	2007–2009	Steve Bortner
1996–1998	Gary Sklaver	2009–2011	Allan Hillman
1998–2000	Merle Berke-Schlessel	2011–2013	Lina Lawall
2002–2004	Joan Lakin	2013–2016	Alan Lakin

NOTES TO 2015 UPDATE

1. Beth S. Wenger, *Congregation and Community: The Evolution of Jewish Life at Congregation Mishkan Israel, 1840-1990* (Hamden, CT: 1990), 61.
2. “R.E. Goldberg, 78, Connecticut Rabbi,” *Obituary*, *New York Times*, July 14, 1995.
3. *CMI Bulletin*, April 1990
4. *CMI Bulletin*, June 1990.
5. *CMI Bulletin* September-December 1992, March 2006; Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 21–22; On this phenomenon, see Jonathan Miller, “Resettling Soviet Jewish Families,” *CCAR Journal* (Fall 1990); *CMI Bulletin*, April 1990, January 1990. Annual Meeting, June 4, 1990, June 6, 1993; Interview with Rabbi Brockman.
6. “Congregation Mishkan Israel Celebrates its 150th Anniversary with a Trip to Israel!!! February 10-20, 1990” *Flyer*, *Mishkan Israel Records*; “Anniversary Trip to Israel is Significant for Hamden Group,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, April 26, 1990; Annual Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1990.
7. On Mishkan Israel’s previous relationship with Zionism, see Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 35-6, 40-1; *CMI Bulletin*, 1994; “Board Historical Moments,” 11/96; See *CMI Bulletins*, 1990, 1992; 1996; 1998 (teachers trip); 2000; 2008; 2014; *CMI Bulletin*, January-June, 1993; Stannard, “Everybody’s Rabbi,” Josh Kovner, “PLO Leader Speaks at Synagogue,” *New Haven Register*, May 17, 1993.
8. This project was initially under the leadership of Israel Zelitch, a member who worked in agriculture for the state of Connecticut.
9. *CMI Bulletin*, December 1991.
10. *Jewish Ledger*, December 27, 1990; *CMI Bulletin*, November 1990, December 1991, January-June 1993; *Minutes of Annual Meeting*, June 11, 1995.
11. *CMI Bulletin*, January 1994.
12. *Shaare Tefila Congregation v. Cobb*, 481 U.S. 615; 107 S. Ct. 2019; 95 L. Ed. 2d 594; 1987 U.S. LEXIS 2053; 55 U.S.L.W. 4629; 43 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. (BNA) 1309; 43 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P37, 020. Date Accessed: 2015/06/02. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.
13. Amy Ash Nixon, “Swastikas, Anti-Semitic Slogans Painted on Hamden Synagogue,” *Hartford Courant*, October 27, 1993.
14. *Ibid*; Beth Israel Synagogue in Wallingford also was painted with a Swastika and there were similar occurrences in West Hartford and Greenwich. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 12, 1994; Interview with Rabbi Brockman; Jonathan S. Tobin, “Vandals strike again,” *New Haven Jewish Ledger*, October 29, 1993. *CMI Bulletin*, October-December, 1993.
15. *CMI Bulletin*, April 1990.
16. Interview with Rabbi Brockman. A survey of 10 congregations in mid-Atlantic council of UAHC reported “Somewhat surprising is the large percentage of Reform congregants who are either single or without children...increasing numbers of elderly members...significant numbers of couples cohabit without formal marriage, postpone childbearing, never have children.” Marc Lee Raphael, “Reform Jewish Congregants and Inter-marriage, 1998,” *CCAR Journal* (Summer 2000): 49-55; “Board Historical Moments,” 4/00; Jennifer Levin-Tavares, “Strategic Planning Revised; *CMI Bulletin*, May 1993, April 1994, May 1994, Fall 1996
17. Sidney Goldstein, “Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey,” *American Jewish Year Book* 92 (1992): 77-173; Peter Steinfelds, “Debating Inter-marriage and Jewish Survival,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1992. J. J. Goldberg, “Interfaith Marriage: The Real Story,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1997.
18. “Strategic Planning Revised.” On earlier discussions about interfaith marriage, see Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 28-9; See Marc Lee Raphael, “Reform Jewish Congregants and Inter-marriage,” *CCAR Journal* (1998). Interview with Roberta Friedman, July 25, 2014; Annual Meeting Minutes, June 8, 1992; Annual Meeting Minutes, June 11, 1995; *CMI Bulletin*, 1994; Interview with Rabbi Brockman.
19. *CMI Bulletin*, September-December 1992; Board Historical Moments, 3/93, 12/98, 2/99. *CMI Bulletin*, December 1998, 1999; In 2004 a broadcast and group e-mail policy was adopted and in 2007 there were discussions about whether congregational deaths should be reported via a special email list. “Board Historical Moments,” 3/04, 3/07. On these issues see Richard A. Hirsch, “The internet and Clergy Communication” *CCAR Journal* (Summer 2000).
20. Jennifer Levin-Tavares, “Strategic Planning Revised;” Annual Meeting Minutes, June 10, 1991; “It was pointed out that for the first time in memory, we’re in good standing with the UAHC,” Annual Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1990; Behind in dues, “Board Historical Moments,” 5/66; 5/91; 10/94; Interview with Rabbi Brockman.
21. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 14, 1998; June 13, 1999; June 5, 2005; June 1, 2007; June 7, 2013.
22. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 14, 1998; *Generations: A Newsletter of the Congregation Mishkan Israel Capital Campaign*, July 1999, November 1999, Winter 2000.
23. *CMI Bulletin*, 2000; Annual Meeting Minutes.
24. *CMI Bulletin*, December 1999; David Tewksbury, Patricia Moy, and Deborah S. Weis, “Preparations for Y2K: Revisiting the Behavioral Component of the Third-Person Effect,” *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 54, Issue 1 (March 2004), 138–155.
25. *CMI Bulletin* 1997; Account by Roberta Friedman, April 7, 2015; Interview with Roberta Friedman; “President’s Message,” *CMI Bulletin*, 2001; “Board Historical Minutes,” 06/02. This issue had been a concern as early as 1967, *ibid*. 1/67, 2/67.
26. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 12, 1994; *CMI Bulletin*, September-December 1995.
27. *CMI Bulletin* 1997, Music remained an important part of congregational life, however. Various musical services were put together over the years, ranging from the whimsical rock Shabbat to the lay choir to the professional choir hired once a year beginning 1993 to perform the Isidor Offenbach Musical Service.
28. Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 40;
29. Conversation with Rabbi Brockman, April 7, 2015.
30. *CMI Bulletin*, 1999.
31. “Restoring Mitzvah To the Traditions Of the Bar Mitzvah,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1998; Annual Meeting, June 14, 1998. *Bulletin*, 2002, 2003; “Board Historical Notes,” 1995. There was also Rosh Hodesh group and course on Pirkei Avot. In 1995 sixty adults attended a history of Reform Judaism class, fifty attended a Hasidism class and thirty-one attended a Hebrew class.
32. It was offered earlier, but bylaws required ten years of service. “Board Historical Moments,” 11/94, 6/97; *Minutes of Annual Meeting*, June 7, 2013, Interview with Rabbi Herbert Brockman, July 9, 2014. *CMI Bulletin*, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2004; “Board Historical Moments,” 6/98, 10/01, 1/04, 4/04, 3/08, 5/08. Sonya Starr, Yelena Gurin-Cohen, Shoshannah Lash, Reena Judd, Dana Brozinsky, Laura Baum, Martin Levson, Alison Adler,
33. *CMI Bulletin*, November 2001.
34. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 2, 2002
35. Ed Stannard, “Hamden Soldier Killed in Afghanistan,” *New Haven Register*, October 4, 2009; Michelle Tuccitto Sullo, “Family, friends, say good-bye to Woodbridge soldier killed in Afghanistan,” *New Haven Register*, June 19, 2011.
36. *CMI Bulletin*, 2001, 2002, 2005; Interview with Rabbi Brockman.
37. *CMI Bulletin* 2004.
38. For instance, the bulletin advertised a “Benefit Concert for Civilian Victims of the War and Violence in Israel, Lebanon & Gaza” September 10, 2006, *CMI Bulletin*, 2006.
39. *Minutes of Annual Meeting*, June 9 1996
40. *CMI Bulletin*, 2007.
41. *CMI Bulletin*, 2004; “Board Historical Moments,” 5/01, 8/01, 3/02, 10/02, 3/03, 4/04, 5/04, 12/06, 5/07. This was common in the larger Reform movement as well. See Peter S. Knobel and Daniel S. Schechter, “What Congregants want in Worship: Perceptions from a CCAR Study,” *CCAR Journal* (Winter 2006). Steven A. Moss, “Finding Spirituality through Meditation,” *CCAR Journal* (Fall 1992). *CCAR Journal* (Summer 2012, Special Issue on Judaism, Health and Healing). *CMI Bulletin*, 1998, 2003, March 2004; Interview with Rabbi Brockman;
42. *CMI Bulletin*, 2008.
43. *CMI Bulletin*, May 1990, December 1992; “Homosexuality and the Rabbinate,” *CCAR Resolution*, 1990.

44. “Same Gender Officiation,” CCAR Resolution, 2000; “Resolution in Support of Marriage Ruling,” CCAR Resolution, 2004. CMI Bulletin, 2002; Interview with Rabbi Brockman. Robert D. McFadden, “Gay Marriage is Deemed Legal in Connecticut,” New York Times, October 10, 2008.
45. “Strategic Planning Revised.” Interview with Roberta Friedman, July 25, 2014; Interview with Rabbi Brockman. “Board Historical Minutes” 10/89; 3/05, 10/07.
46. CMI Bulletin, September–December 1995, 2004. “Board Historical Moments,” 10/94.
47. The city of New Haven itself struggled in the years following World War II, losing around 25% of its population of 164,000 between 1950 and 2000 as manufacturing and industry left the city. Kirk Johnson, “As New Haven Changes, Hope Comes in Peaks and Valleys,” New York Times, August 27, 2001; “Strategic Planning Revised”; Annual Meeting Minutes, June 10, 1991; June 1, 2007; June 6, 2008. “Board Historical Moments,” 4/05; Annual Meeting Minutes, June 14, 1998; June 13, 1999; June 5, 2005; June 1, 2007; June 7, 2013.
48. In 2004 a broadcast and group e-mail policy was adopted and in 2007 there were discussions about whether congregational deaths should be reported via a special email list. “Board Historical Moments,” 3/04, 3/07. On these issues see Richard A. Hirsch, “The internet and Clergy Communication” CCAR Journal (Summer 2000); CMI Bulletin, 2004; “Board Historical Moments,” 93. Rabbi Brockman from the pulpit, Wednesday, September 24, 2014.
49. Rabbi Brockman gave a sermon on “Hamas: Is it Always Possible to ‘Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself,’” on March 24, 2006. CMI Bulletin, 2006. See also, *ibid.*, November 2001, 2003; Interview with Rabbi Brockman; Interview with Roberta Friedman.
50. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 1, 2012
51. Annual Meeting, June 4, 1990.
52. Annual Meeting Minutes, June 11, 1995. “Board Historical Moments,” 11/99; CMI Bulletin, 2003



Rabbi Brockman, Cantor Giglio, and Adult Choir

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PREFACE TO 1990 BOOK

Like the ancient tabernacle in the wilderness, Congregation Mishkan Israel, our “tabernacle” of Israel, was founded 150 years ago for the purpose of preserving life — the life of Judaism and of the Jewish people. Our first families, who came to New Haven from Bavaria, had the choice of either casting off the yoke of their ancient faith and assimilating into a new identity, or preserving their tradition while infusing it with a new life. They chose the latter path and history confirms their decision. First of all, a century and a half later, we are still building on the foundation our first families created. Even more significantly, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jewish hegemony was able to pass naturally from Europe to an already well established American Jewish community.

Implicit throughout the history of Congregation Mishkan Israel, we find what Abraham Joshua Heschel called “the insecurity of freedom.” Assimilation was a strong temptation to Jews after centuries of persecution and forced isolation. The history of our synagogue is an uneven record of the attempt to deal with the ambivalence that arose from this temptation. From an Orthodox institution to a compromise with a growing liberal lay body, to identification with “classical Reform” to a renewed search for roots in tradition, Mishkan Israel, like Reform in general, has had a dynamic, turbulent history. But through it all, our forebears persisted, determined to continue as Jews. And it is to that determination that we pay tribute in this volume.

In preparing this work, we were fortunate to have our records intact. With the exception of the years 1840–1849, the minutes of which were destroyed in a fire, our material is part of the New Haven Colony Historical Society collection. Through the enormous, devoted efforts of Hannah Chaikind, these materials were identified and catalogued. Building on the past writings of Rollin Osterweis, this present volume was prepared.

It represents the combined effort of Beth Wenger, a doctoral candidate in the History Department at Yale University, and a dedicated History Committee of the congregation. The committee, chaired by James Henchel, labored hard and long in preparation for the observance of the sesquicentennial. Each one must be thanked: Joseph Alterman, Jean Alterman, Mitchell Baser, Jay Brown, Hannah Chaikind, Saul Friedler, Herbert Hershenson, Estelle Heil, Gertrude Langsam, Henry Langsam, Isidor Offenbach, Alan Postman, Alberta Roseman, Jerome Serling, Hermine Swimmer, Barbara Wareck, Margaret Weisselberg, Robert Weisselberg.

Martha Sue Weisbart and Lorraine Roseman, overall chairpersons of the congregation’s yearlong celebration, were constant sources of enthusiasm and support for this project.

In addition, invaluable contributions were also made by Elin Brockman, Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg, Cantor Jonathan Gordon, Greta Puklin and Valerie Tuckell. Saul Friedler and Robert Weisselberg put together the form for the final presentation and Hannah Chaikind selected the photos for both this work and for the pictorial exhibit that hangs in the congregation’s social hall. Credit also goes to Werner S. Hirsch for the use of several photos that enhance this presentation. We are indebted to all who undertook an enormous challenge and saw it to completion.

The 150th History Committee decided from the very beginning that this work should reflect honestly the changing historical landscape against which Congregation Mishkan Israel developed. At the same time the task was to bring to the members a written record of the many accomplishments with which we have been so blessed.

We believe that both of these goals were accomplished. We can see in this volume — and appreciate — a fascinating microcosm of Americana and American Jewry. We believe that this effort should inspire us to strive even further into the future and we hope that we have ensured our vital record for generations to come.



Herbert N. Brockman
Congregation Mishkan Israel
June 1990 | Sivan 5750

INTRODUCTION

One hundred and fifty years after its founding, Congregation Mishkan Israel occupies a modern building in a suburban neighborhood of Hamden, Connecticut. The immigrant Jews who established the congregation in the early 1840s would hardly recognize the Mishkan Israel of 1990. Today’s impressive temple structure and contemporary practice of Reform Judaism bear little resemblance to the small worship services that took place over local Jewish stores in mid-nineteenth century New Haven. Mishkan Israel began as a place where immigrant Jews could practice their faith and experience ethnic solidarity. As the city’s first Jewish communal institution, it was also the place where New Haven Jews struggled to adapt their Jewish heritage to the new conditions of American life. Aspiring to become full-fledged Americans while maintaining Jewish tradition, Mishkan Israel founders laid the groundwork for a thoroughly American brand of Judaism in New Haven. The history of Mishkan Israel, like that of Reform Judaism in America, is one of ongoing change and development. In the last century and a half, successive generations of Mishkan Israel members have reshaped their religious community as they reformulated their identities as American Jews. While the congregation’s history reveals the particular concerns and pivotal events affecting New Haven Jewry, it also represents a chapter in the broader history of Jewish life in America.

AT THE BEGINNING

The creation of Congregation Mishkan Israel marked the beginning of Jewish communal life in New Haven. Although Yale’s President Ezra Stiles recorded the arrival of the first Jewish family in 1772, significant numbers of Jews did not begin settling in the city until the mid-nineteenth century. In 1840, approximately fifteen or twenty Jewish families lived in New Haven. Part of a large immigration wave from Central Europe, the city’s first Jews came primarily from Bavaria but also from other German states and the Austrian Empire.¹ In Germany, Jews had tasted the hope of emancipation during the Napoleonic period only to see their expectations dashed by 1815 as German states rescinded newly granted rights and reinstated restrictive legislation. The Bavarian government taxed Jews heavily, imposed quotas on marriage and population growth, and limited areas of Jewish settlement. By the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of Jews chose to improve their situation through emigration and most opted to make their new homes in America. Between 1825 and 1875, the American Jewish population grew from 5,000 to 250,000. Like Jewish immigrants throughout the country, New Haven’s first Jews came to America seeking economic opportunity and freedom from restrictive legislation. Beginning as peddlers and petty traders, they soon found a comfortable niche in America’s expanding commercial economy. New Haven Jews prospered in business and manufacturing; by the 1870s, the city supported several successful Jewish businesses and a Jewish population of one thousand.²

To his Excellency, Roger S. Baldwin,
Governor of the State of Connecticut.

Whereas a Proclamation has been handed to us, directed to the "Jew's Synagogue" to request said Congregation to unite Thursday the 28 of Nov. in public worship & thanksgiving a special meeting of *קונסברי ישיבת ישראל* (Mishkan Israel) was called to respond to the said proclamation & the following resolutions were unanimously adopted.

Resolved: That we will in compliance with the proclamation of his Excellency governor Roger S. Baldwin of this state assemble on Thursday 28 of Nov. 1844 in our Synagogue to unite our fervent prayers & supplications with our Christian brethren to thank the heavenly father for his temporal & spiritual blessings.

Resolved: That Sejmon Waterman Esq. & Nathan Spangou be appointed a committee to convey to his Excellency the Governor Roger S. Baldwin the expression of our highest respect, love, & obedience to law and to invite his Excellency to our place of worship on said day of thanksgiving.

Go in at a special meeting.

S. Waterman Esq.

S. Spangou Esq.

Acceptance of Governor Roger S. Baldwin’s invitation for the “Jew Synagogue” to celebrate Thanksgiving on Nov. 28, 1844

EARLY YEARS

In its early years, Mishkan Israel suffered more from internal dissension than external pressure. Members from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds quarrelled over ritual practice and synagogue governance. In 1846, the congregation’s differences motivated a majority of members to withdraw and establish a new synagogue which they named Mishkan Sholom. The founders of Mishkan Sholom have been labelled reformers as compared to the “orthodox” Jews who remained Mishkan Israel members. However, differences between “orthodox” and “reform” did not accurately reflect the issues dividing the congregation. Like many nineteenth-century communities, New Haven Jewry consisted of immigrants from various Central European provinces. German and Polish traditions differed considerably and most immigrants preferred to practice familiar rituals; minor deviations in prayer, melodies, and customs often led to secessions. The clash between *Minbag Ashkenaz* [German rite] and *Minbag Polin* [Polish rite] was probably the primary factor in the break-up of Mishkan Israel. Varying attitudes toward the institution of reforms also played a role in the partition. Yet, mid-nineteenth century reforms were modest and unsystematic, usually involving little more than changes in dress and decorum. While congregational records from this period are not extant, the evidence suggests that New Haven Jews experienced many of the same conflicts that divided synagogues throughout the country.⁸



Brewster Building, southeast corner of State and Chapel Streets, New Haven. First floor rooms served as synagogue 1846–1856

In 1849, only three years after the secession, the breach was healed. Perhaps because the city’s Jewish population could not support two synagogues and because ideological differences were not great, the two groups reunited under the original Mishkan Israel name. It is difficult to determine precisely what progress toward reform occurred during the three-year schism. In 1846, Mishkan Sholom had invited Max Lilienthal, a

leading Reform rabbi, to speak at its dedication. While he could not attend, Lilienthal sent his younger colleague, Isaac Mayer Wise, to deliver the address before New Haven’s newest Reform congregation. Wise later became the leading spokesman for American Reform Judaism, but he had been in this country only a few weeks when he visited New Haven. Wise probably had little effect on the development of Reform in the community. He spoke at Mishkan Sholom’s dedication and was equally willing to address the Mishkan Israel

congregation. In his memoirs, Wise spoke highly of New Haven Jewry and was particularly impressed with Leopold Waterman, a strong advocate of Reform and one of the leaders of Mishkan Sholom. In later years, Mishkan Israel could boast that it received one of the earliest visits from the pioneer of American Reform Judaism. His presence, however, did not indicate a great triumph for Reform. The progress of Reform Judaism at Mishkan Israel was a gradual process, guided by the needs and desires of its members.⁹

Like most Reform congregations at mid-century, Mishkan Israel followed traditional practices of worship and observance. In 1849, when the two congregations reunited in a rented hall on the corner of State and Chapel streets, Mishkan Israel insisted upon strict adherence to Jewish law. Members engaged a *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] to provide kosher meat for the community, elected a regular Torah reader, and discussed the construction of a *mikveh* [ritual bath]. Men and women sat separately during services according to traditional prescription. Prospective members were investigated to determine if they were of good character. Once accepted, all synagogue members were expected to observe Sabbath and dietary laws; any reported violation subjected a member to investigation by the congregation and carried the risk of fines and expulsion. Fines were also imposed for unexcused absences from synagogue meetings.¹⁰ Such strict measures demonstrate not only the traditional bent of early New Haven Jews but also the tremendous difficulties they encountered in attempting to monitor and enforce religious observance in a voluntary American congregation.

While maintaining traditional observance, Mishkan Israel instituted reforms designed to render its worship more respectable and acceptable by American standards. Some New Haven Jews may have been introduced to the nascent Reform movement in Europe, but few were ideologically committed to religious reform. The desire to acculturate to American norms of religious behavior combined with some familiarity with German Reform provided the impetus for gradual changes at Mishkan Israel.¹¹ The reforms centered around issues of decorum. Members were instructed not to pray out loud or sing ahead of the cantor. Anyone lacking a pleasant voice was requested not to disturb the congregation by singing off-key. Mishkan Israel urged its members to “solemnize the services, in quiet devotion, without unruly behavior and disorderly shouting back and forth.” Children sat separately from their parents during services, expected to remain “still and quiet.” Any infraction of these rules was punishable by fines ranging from twenty-five cents to one dollar. The congregation abolished all practices that it considered inconsistent with dignified religious behavior.¹²

During the early 1850s, Mishkan Israel was a small community that observed Jewish tradition, gradually Americanized, and struggled to stay afloat. The closely-knit congregation strived to fulfill the life-cycle needs of its members according to Jewish law and custom. For the community’s children, Mishkan Israel established a school “where our children can be taught our religion and the ancient language in which the same was written.” By 1853, the synagogue Board requested an instructor with knowledge of English as well as German and Hebrew.¹³ When a congregant died, Mishkan Israel helped pay certain funeral expenses and legislated that “a Watch should be established by the Trustee at the cost of

the congregation.” In 1853, a women’s group calling itself Ahavas Achos (Sisterly Love) assumed some of these responsibilities. Composed of Mishkan Israel members, Ahavas Achos performed the traditional functions of *Bikkur Cholim*, visiting the sick, and *Levayat Hamet*, attending the dead.¹⁴ Mishkan Israel, still a financially unstable institution, often limited services to dues-paying members. The congregation’s *shochet* was prohibited from selling kosher meat to non-members unless they paid a fee to the congregation. Mishkan Israel members caught buying meat for non-members could be expelled from the synagogue. These harsh measures were instituted because the congregation had limited means to provide the many services necessary for Jewish life. Still, Mishkan Israel was consistently willing to offer assistance to local Jews unable to pay the required fees. Aspiring to “take care of its own” while remaining fiscally solvent, mid-century New Haven Jewry remained an intimate community.¹⁵

The intimacy of the Mishkan Israel community did not assure harmony within the congregation. The ethnic and religious differences that precipitated the synagogue’s 1846 schism persisted long after the two groups reunited. In 1855, the congregation experienced its final secession. Members who preferred Polish custom and resisted Mishkan Israel’s modest reforms withdrew permanently from the congregation. Establishing B’nai Sholom synagogue, the seceding group built a small congregation that survived until the late 1930s. The break allowed Mishkan Israel to pursue more rigorous reforms and observe German traditions without objection from a dissenting minority. While Mishkan Israel members continued to disagree on matters of ritual practice and synagogue governance, they settled future disputes within the congregation rather than by secession.¹⁶

COURT STREET SYNAGOGUE

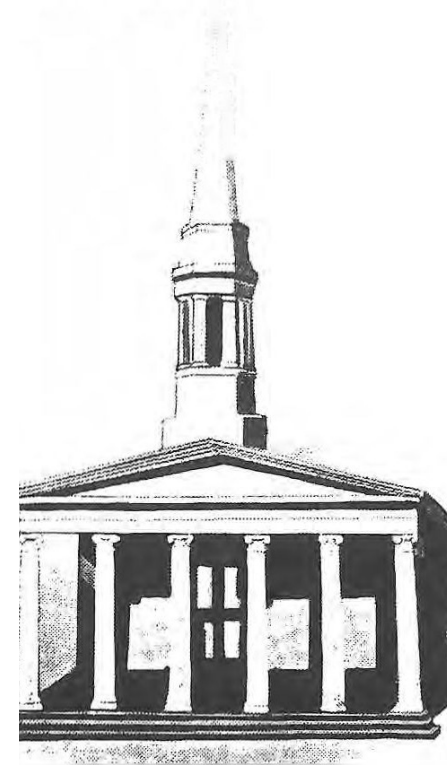
Mishkan Israel acquired its first permanent synagogue building in 1856 with funds received from the will of New Orleans philanthropist, Judah Touro. Upon his death, Touro left thousands of dollars to Jewish institutions throughout the United States. The five thousand dollar bequest to Mishkan Israel enabled the congregation to purchase the Third Congregational Church on Court Street, which would be its home for the next forty years. In its new location, the congregation retained traditional practices of worship and seating, but included modest reforms such as an English language sermon. Mishkan Israel became especially concerned with projecting a dignified, non-parochial image before the New Haven community. Congregational leaders made it known that “the Synagogue is at all times open to visitors of every class and denomination.”¹⁷ In an elaborate ceremony described as “imposing and unusually interesting” by the *New Haven Register*, Mishkan Israel dedicated its new house of worship. Several city dignitaries and Christian clergymen attended the dedication of the Court Street Temple and the event received significant press coverage. The ceremony included a decorous procession in which Rev. B. E. Jacobs, Mishkan Israel’s clergyman, brought the Torah to the ark accompanied by synagogue officers. As the *Register* reported:

Behind them came a procession of boys and girls, bearing wreaths and bouquets of flowers — the girls dressed in white, and the boys wearing sashes of blue ribbon. Arriving at the ark, the procession made seven circuits, during each of which a psalm was chanted by the minister and the choir; bells tinkled, and at times, short interludes were played upon the melodeon.¹⁸

The dedication, which combined Jewish ritual with elaborate American ceremony, was an early indication of Mishkan Israel’s willingness to express Jewish tradition in the language of modern American religion.

The Civil War presented Mishkan Israel with its first serious opportunity to demonstrate patriotism and commitment to the New Haven community. During the war, American Jewish loyalty generally divided along regional lines and Jews could be found in both Union and Confederate camps. Although a few prominent rabbis spoke out on both sides of the slavery issue, most Jews consciously resisted giving the impression that a specifically Jewish position existed on the matter. Nineteenth-century Jews consistently championed non-sectarian politics and were wary of the evangelical religious fervor that underlay the radical abolitionist movement. Given these considerations, it is not surprising to discover that New Haven Jews were not extremely outspoken in the slavery debate.

Yet, the small Mishkan Israel community did its part to demonstrate loyalty to the cause. Three Mishkan Israel members actually served as soldiers in the ranks of the Union army. Congregants cooperated by reciting special prayers for Union success and for a speedy resolution to the conflict. Mishkan Israel women rolled bandages and volunteered in the local New Haven hospital which had been transformed into a military hospital during the war years. When Lincoln was assassinated, the congregation immediately organized a memorial service and “draped its facade in black.” The Civil War was not a pivotal event in Mishkan Israel’s history, but it did allow Jews to express their patriotic sentiment and establish a reputation in the New Haven community.¹⁹



Court Street Temple, New Haven, 1856–1897

East Cliff Lodge, Ramsgate
24th Dec. 1857.

To, The President & Secretary
of the Jewish Congregation
Newhaven
U.S. of America

Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 6th Instant which has been brought under the notice of the Committee of Deputies of the British Jews, and they empower me to thank you most cordially for your zealous co-operation in the unhappy case of the Mortara Family -

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful serv^t. servant,

Moses Montefiore
President

Appreciation expressed by world-renowned Sir Moses Montefiore for Mishkan Israel's contribution to the efforts to recover young Mortara in 1858

PARTICIPATION IN WORLD JEWRY

While planting roots in the local community, Mishkan Israel remained aware of its responsibilities to American and world Jewry. A founding member of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, Mishkan Israel participated in the first venture to organize American Jews on a national level. The Board was created in the wake of the 1858 Mortara Affair which involved the forcible baptism of a Jewish child in Bologna, Italy. The incident elicited international Jewish protest and convinced many American Jews of the need for a collective Jewish voice. The Board of Delegates ultimately did not become a unifying body for American Jewry, but in its first year regularly informed the New Haven community about international Jewish affairs. Mishkan Israel prided itself on steadfast concern and support for fellow Jews. The congregation contributed generously to charities and organizations working on behalf of world Jewry. In 1858, congregants received a letter of thanks from Moses Montefiore in recognition of their “zealous co-operation in the unhappy case of the Mortara family.” Mishkan Israel had earlier supported Montefiore’s efforts on behalf of Palestinian Jewry and participated in the Board of Delegates’ relief campaign for Moroccan Jews. As they strived to become full-fledged Americans, Mishkan Israel members remained consistently interested and involved in the Jewish world.²⁰

Closer to home, Mishkan Israel entered a period of growth and consolidation within the walls of its new Court Street synagogue. The 1850s and 1860s brought a series of increasingly radical reforms and ritual changes to the young congregation. In the late fifties, Mishkan Israel’s reforms began with the introduction of a choir, the delivery of English language sermons, and a requirement that the clergyman dress in a robe when leading services. Even as it introduced modest changes, the congregation retained some traditional practices. When they acquired the Court Street building, congregational leaders commissioned the construction of a women’s gallery, supporting the custom of seating men and women separately during services. In the early 1860s, the congregation accelerated the pace of change and instituted more far-reaching reforms. Mishkan Israel eliminated the practice of separate seating in 1864, introducing the family pew. A year before the temple had installed an organ, making musical accompaniment a regular part of worship. Isaac Leeser, the leader of the Reform traditionalist camp, expressed his disappointment at “the spirit of unwise reform” prevalent in the New Haven community. Despite Leeser’s objections, the traditionalists were losing ground within the American Reform movement. The changes at Mishkan Israel reflected those being instituted in Reform congregations across the country. Early reforms were motivated primarily by a desire to accommodate to the American environment and create a dignified forum for Jewish worship. As German Jews grew more prosperous and acculturated, they sought a brand of Judaism consonant with American norms of religious behavior.²¹

Although the congregation modernized ritual and synagogue practices during the fifties and sixties, Mishkan Israel had yet to exhibit a strong ideological commitment to religious reform. In 1869, one impatient observer reported that Mishkan Israel members were still struggling over questions of reform. He told the *American Israelite*:

I am sorry to say the congregation is far behind the times, being about three-fourths orthodox; not violent 'tis true, but still they do not come within reach of true reformation. Liberal prominent gentlemen have been endeavoring to effect some reform among them with some success, and I may soon be able to announce the change of Divine Service, &c., from the orthodox to the reformed method.²²

While this commentator's testimony may not be wholly trustworthy, his report reflects the conflicts and dissenting opinions that accompanied the introduction of even the most modest reforms.

RABBI JUDAH WECHSLER, 1873–1878

The Reform movement's national leaders blamed the halting progress of reform on the lack of unified ecclesiastical authority and rabbinic leadership. Isaac Leeser lamented that in America, "[e]ach congregation makes its own rules for its government, and elects its own minister, who is appointed without any ordination." Mishkan Israel was a prime example of Leeser's characterization. Like most congregations, Mishkan Israel initially had no official religious leader. During its first sixteen years, the community relied on its own members to conduct worship, read Torah, and supervise all services necessary for Jewish communal life. From 1856 until 1873, Mishkan Israel engaged three different clergymen who served the congregation as cantor, teacher, and sometimes also as secretary and *mobel* [circumciser]. These men were not rabbis but had some training in Jewish ritual practice. Ordained rabbis did not begin arriving in the United States until the 1840s and even then their numbers were few; Europe remained the undisputed center of rabbinic authority. As late as 1860, Mishkan Israel found it necessary "to correspond with a foreign rabbi ... to recommend to this congregation a competent man as cantor, preacher, and teacher." Lacking both a strong spiritual leader and a firm allegiance to the Reform movement, Mishkan Israel relied upon the tastes and desires of congregants to determine standards for ritual and reform.²³

Mishkan Israel's ideological commitment to Reform grew stronger when the congregation hired its first ordained rabbi. Rabbi Judah Wechsler arrived in New Haven in 1873. Born and trained in Europe, Wechsler had studied under Rabbi Seligman Baer Bamberger, one of the most prominent Orthodox rabbis of the period. Abandoning Orthodoxy in favor of the Reform movement's progressive outlook, Wechsler became an ardent enthusiast of American Reform. He believed that Orthodox Judaism would not survive on American soil, confidently proclaiming that "our orthodox brethren will discover this before long." During Wechsler's five-year tenure, Mishkan Israel instituted significant ritual changes. While the rabbi's passion for the Reform movement undoubtedly hastened the pace of change at Mishkan Israel, it was the congregants who accepted, supported, and encouraged reforms.²⁴

By the mid-1870s in congregations throughout the country, "the modest tendency toward reform became an irreversible tide ... there were few congregations in America in which substantial reforms had *not* been introduced."²⁵ Mishkan Israel typified the national pattern, dramatically increasing its tempo of religious reform in the 1870s. Under Wechsler's leadership, the congregation abolished the celebration of second-day holidays, organized a coeducational Sabbath school, and even allowed the school's female confirmands to read from the Torah. Mishkan Israel officially adopted Isaac Mayer Wise's new Reform prayerbook. Wise had designed *Minbag America*, literally "American rite," to provide Reform congregations with a standard form of worship, specifically geared to the needs of American Jews. When opened from the right, the book offered traditional prayers in the original Hebrew, but if opened from the left, it provided a complete English or German translation of the entire service. A work of moderate Reform, *Minbag America* suited the needs of Mishkan Israel members who still enjoyed traditional worship but were becoming more comfortable with ritual and linguistic change. Rabbi Wechsler introduced late Friday night services to Mishkan Israel where he delivered lectures on topics of Jewish interest. The late Friday services were instituted to accommodate the growing number of congregants who worked on Saturday mornings when Sabbath services were regularly held. In 1876, Mishkan Israel admitted a Christian woman to its synagogue choir. Not an uncommon occurrence in Reform congregations, the inclusion of non-Jews in the choir symbolized that Jews had abandoned old-world separatism and parochialism. By focusing upon the spiritual essence of Judaism and replacing outdated rituals with contemporary practices, Rabbi Wechsler hoped to create a modern, living Judaism at Mishkan Israel. Like Wise, he encouraged his congregation to adopt the motto, "Let there be light," in affirmation of wholehearted commitment to Reform and Progress. Wechsler championed Mishkan Israel's accomplishments and claimed that his congregation had united in pursuit of true reform.²⁶

COMMUNITY SERVICES

By the 1870s, the Mishkan Israel community had not only revamped its ritual practices and established a solid footing in the ranks of the Reform movement, but also created several Jewish organizations beyond the synagogue. Ahavas Achos, established in 1853, continued to perform valuable religious services for the New Haven Jewish community, including leading the drive to build a new *mikveh* in the city. The organization later changed its name to the Daughters of '53 and redefined its programs in keeping with shifting Jewish communal needs. Jewish men looked to the B'nai B'rith Horeb Lodge, founded in 1856, for interaction with fellow Jews. Modelled after nineteenth-century fraternal societies which did not welcome Jews, the Horeb Lodge promoted social, educational, and communal projects within a Jewish context. A female analog of the B'nai B'rith lodges was the United Order of True Sisters (UOTS). New Haven Jewish women established the fourth national UOTS chapter in 1863, known in its earliest years as the Jochebed Lodge. Not to be excluded from the spirit of organization, young Jewish men founded the Knights of Jerusalem (KOJ) in 1871, a secret society modelled after the

Greek letter fraternities of the period. In addition to these enduring associations, the Mishkan Israel community created several short-lived literary and social Jewish societies. By the 1870s New Haven Jews had built a number of thriving Jewish organizations which, while not officially linked to the synagogue, were created and populated primarily by Mishkan Israel members and played an important role in the lives of congregants.²⁷

The 1870s also witnessed Mishkan Israel's first great strides in interfaith activities. More than other developments in the congregation, the campaign for full participation and recognition within New Haven's religious community was the work of Rabbi Wechsler. He insisted that "no unfriendly word to others differing with us on religion should be uttered in this temple, but union and harmony should be advocated." Wechsler was a member of the city's United Ministerial Association and consistently boasted of the "great kindness" shown to him by New Haven clergymen. "I am on the most friendly terms with all Christian ministers of this city," he proudly claimed. Wechsler invited other religious leaders to synagogue functions and, in 1876, took part in a pulpit exchange which allowed him to preach at a local Methodist church. Rabbi Wechsler derived great personal satisfaction from his involvement in interfaith activities. Moreover, he was thoroughly convinced that Jews would be accepted and more highly regarded only when they stopped isolating themselves from the community and allowed other Americans to see that Judaism was a vibrant, progressive, and modern religion.²⁸

While Mishkan Israel prospered during Rabbi Wechsler's tenure and generally supported his campaign for greater reforms, Wechsler may have grown too radical for the congregation. The rabbi possessed a sometimes difficult combination of enormous self-confidence, little patience for any remnants of traditionalism, and unshakable dedication to the principles of Reform Judaism. He claimed without reservation that "my life has been devoted to the cause of reform and progress within the pale of Judaism." Mishkan Israel members advocated the institution of reforms but were not ready for sweeping changes. In 1878, Rabbi Wechsler resigned his post and accepted a position that better suited him in Minnesota. It is possible that Wechsler simply envisioned a more rapid schedule for reform than Mishkan Israel congregants were willing to accommodate.²⁹

RABBI LEOPOLD KLEEBOG, 1878 — 1893

Perhaps because of their desire to temper the pace of change, Mishkan Israel members chose a more moderate Reformer, Leopold Kleeberg, as their next rabbi. Born and educated in Germany, Kleeberg received a university doctorate as well as rabbinic training. He had studied under the prominent Orthodox rabbi, Azriel Hildesheimer, but quickly adapted to Reform after his arrival in America. Kleeberg had served twelve years as a rabbi in Louisville, Kentucky, before coming to New Haven. In his fifteen-year tenure at Mishkan Israel, Rabbi Kleeberg attempted no drastic changes. The synagogue enlarged its sanctuary and installed a new organ, but made few alterations in ritual practice. A conservative among Reformers, Kleeberg delivered weekly sermons in German despite the fact that a growing number of his congregants were American born and English speaking. He did build a

following within the New Haven community and was, for example, invited to address the Normal Bible School on the topic of the Chosen People. Kleeberg's wife, who died shortly after the couple's arrival in New Haven, probably enjoys a more lasting reputation than her husband. An internationally-known poet, Minna Kleeberg is remembered today by the large monument that towers over her grave in the Mishkan Israel cemetery. Mishkan Israel experienced a period of relative stability and tranquility under Rabbi Kleeberg's leadership, but his personal conservatism only partially explains the lack of dramatic reforms. Until the 1890s, congregants showed little interest in pursuing more far-reaching changes in ritual practice. Perhaps Mishkan Israel members needed time to adjust to the major reforms instituted during the 1870s or perhaps they were preoccupied by events transpiring outside the synagogue walls.³⁰

INFLUX OF EAST EUROPEAN JEWS

Rabbi Kleeberg's tenure at Mishkan Israel coincided with the first influx of East European Jewish immigrants to New Haven. Facing economic privation, anti-Jewish legislation, and sporadic violence, thousands of Jews left Russia for the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1880s, Russian Jews began arriving in New Haven and as in most American communities, easily outnumbered the Germans within a few years. Between 1878 and 1912, the New Haven Jewish population swelled from one to twenty thousand, primarily as a result of East European immigration. The arrival of Russian Jews presented a host of communal and economic challenges to Mishkan Israel. The new immigrants were generally poor, uneducated, and also possessed very different notions of Jewish identity from the Germans. While the Germans firmly maintained that Jews differed from other Americans only in terms of religious preference, East Europeans were products of a vibrant Jewish subculture. A politically charged group, Russian Jews supported socialism, communism, and (most troublesome to the Germans) Zionism. Some were staunch atheists while others were resolutely orthodox. Reform Judaism never gained a following among Jews in Eastern Europe. Suddenly confronted with a group of Jews so different from themselves, Mishkan Israel members faced an unprecedented challenge.³¹



Max Adler (1840–1916), long-time leader at rapidly growing Mishkan Israel and in New Haven manufacturing

New Haven's German Jews took it upon themselves to provide for the needs of East European immigrants. In the early 1880s, one observer reported that while, "the number of Russian Jews in this city is small, we find plenty to do in caring for their wants." Almost immediately after the first Russian Jews arrived in New Haven, Mishkan Israel members

established the Hebrew Benevolent Society, a charitable organization which offered financial assistance to new immigrants. Max Adler, a future synagogue president, and Rabbi Kleeberg opened their homes to Russian families until alternate living quarters could be arranged. Praising New Haven Jews for the charitable welcome extended to their coreligionists, the *New Haven Union* reported:

*The lady members of Dr. Kleeberg's family and Mrs. Max Adler, with the Jewish Benevolent Society, will look after their [the Russian immigrants'] immediate wants, two tenements have already been secured, one on Bradley and the other on Franklin Street, in which the two families will be domiciled and cared for until able to earn a living.*³²



Bernard Shoninger (1828–1910), prominent manufacturer of organs and pianos and one of the earliest synagogue leaders

The women of Mishkan Israel played a large role in assisting new immigrants, both informally as indicated above and through their own organizations. The congregation's "ladies' societies" helped raise funds and provide food and clothing for Russian Jews. In later years, the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood also devoted its energies to charity work. Mishkan Israel not only offered financial aid to Russian Jews, but also provided education. In the Court Street Temple, congregants organized English classes for immigrants and their children.³³

While German Jews spared no effort to assist the East Europeans, their goal was to "civilize" and "Americanize" the new immigrants as quickly as possible. Mishkan Israel members feared the growing numbers

of East Europeans as much as they desired to help them. Regarding Russian Jews as culturally and socially inferior, congregants worried that the large immigrant presence might threaten their own security and produce an anti-Semitic backlash. Through education and training, German Jews hoped to effect a speedy improvement in immigrant dress, manners, and values and to encourage a rapid departure from Orthodoxy. The congregation endorsed a program "to provide the children of our Russian coreligionists with proper religious instruction" and insisted that "something be done ... to educate them and inculcate into their young minds a more modern creed of ethics."³⁴ Despite their sometimes misguided intentions, Mishkan Israel members did provide important services and support for new immigrants. In only a few years, immigrants would no longer require German assistance, for they quickly created their own thriving community with self-sustaining charitable, religious, and social organizations. In time, Germans and East Europeans found common ground and worked cooperatively in Jewish communal endeavors. By the mid-twentieth

century, some American-born children of East European immigrants began joining Mishkan Israel.

During the 1880s, Mishkan Israel members expended greater effort in assisting new immigrants than instituting reforms within the congregation. It was not until the early 1890s, during the final years of Rabbi Kleeberg's term, that the congregation once again became embroiled in matters of ritual reform. The issue that sparked most heated debate within the Mishkan Israel community was the question of Sunday services. Since the 1870s, when the first American rabbi initiated the practice of holding Sunday services, Reform leaders had been arguing over the relative merits of allowing Sabbath worship on Sunday. Proponents of Sunday services offered a pragmatic argument: increasing numbers of American Jews spent their Saturday mornings at work, leaving synagogues empty. In order to fill their pews, congregations would have to accommodate members by offering an alternative service on Sundays. Poor attendance at Saturday morning services had plagued Mishkan Israel since the 1870s. However Rabbi Wechsler, despite his radicalism on other matters, remained a staunch opponent of the Sunday service. He instituted late Friday night worship at Mishkan Israel which he championed as a preferable solution to the problem.³⁵



Lewis Osterweis (1836–1916), an early leader at Mishkan Israel and a manufacturer of cigars

1885 — 1893

After Wechsler's departure, Mishkan Israel members repeatedly entertained the notion of instituting Sunday services at the congregation, encouraged in part by the growing acceptance of the practice within the Reform movement. In 1885, a group of prominent Reform leaders gathered in Pittsburgh to formulate a definitive set of principles and guidelines for the American Reform movement. The document they produced, known as the Pittsburgh Platform, represented the clearest articulation of Reform ideology to date. At the Pittsburgh conference, Reform leaders put forth a somewhat ambivalent position on the question of Sunday services. They declared the importance of the historical Sabbath "as a bond with our great past and the symbol of the unity of Judaism the world over," but also maintained that "there is nothing in the spirit of Judaism, or its laws, to prevent the introduction of Sunday services in localities where the necessity for such services appears, or is felt." The Reform movement had hesitantly sanctioned Sunday services and after the

Pittsburgh conference a growing number of American congregations adopted the practice. While the majority of temples never conducted Sunday services, the issue emerged as a major source of conflict in many congregations, including Mishkan Israel.³⁶

By 1892, Mishkan Israel was embedded in a serious dispute over the issue of Sunday services. The debate had reached a feverish pitch and some members were even considering withdrawing from the congregation. In March of 1892, the *New Haven Register* placed the Sunday service controversy at Mishkan Israel on the front page of its evening edition. Quoting Aldermann Sonnenberg, a strong advocate of Sunday services, the *Register* reported:

There are three Jews whom I have in mind who are ready to give \$2,000 towards a new temple for Sunday worship. In the Court Street temple there are quite a number who would be glad to worship on Sunday ... Such a church would grow rapidly, and we would in a little while have the leading Jewish church. The enterprise would be greatly favored by the young people. At present but few young men attend at Court Street. The congregation is mostly women. But few of the business men, either young or old, can attend on Saturday. They cannot give up their business. Then if a change was made we would be brought more in harmony with the people of the city who kept Sunday. Now we are considerably secluded by ourselves.

Siegwart Spier, the secretary at Mishkan Israel, expressed an opposing view. Explaining that congregants had ample opportunity to attend Friday evening services or Rabbi Kleeberg's Sunday lectures, he denounced the movement for Sunday services. Spier claimed, "You will find very few Jews who favor any such change ... It is not demanded and would be much in conflict with the history of the Jewish church." The debate over Sunday services did not divide exclusively along the lines of age. Maier Zunder, a leading figure in both the New Haven and Mishkan Israel communities, was sixty-three years old and an avid proponent of Sunday worship. Zunder never spoke of secession, but defended Sunday worship as a pragmatic necessity which involved no betrayal of Jewish identity or tradition.

A change of day would not affect our religion in the least. It would not make us Christians. A large share of the Jews cannot attend services on Saturday. Their business interferes... I am heartily in favor of the change of day for our church, and wish it might be brought about in this city. It will probably not come right away, but the tendency is growing in its favor.

Inevitably, Zunder's prediction proved to be the most accurate. The controversy never resulted in secession, but the debate plagued the congregation for years to come. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mishkan Israel finally resolved to institute Sunday services, although the practice lasted for only a brief period.³⁷

A closer look at the conflict surrounding Sunday services reveals that Mishkan Israel members had developed new concerns about their synagogue that extended beyond the proposal to change the day of worship. One Mishkan Israel member, discussing the need for Sunday services and the possibility of secession, added that if a new synagogue were established, it "would have a smart, English speaking pastor." "Many of our children," he explained, "are not familiar with German and the service should be in English." The Sunday service controversy reflected congregants' increasing desire to modernize Jewish practice. The Mishkan Israel congregation had grown highly acculturated, not to mention largely American born and English speaking. In 1892, when the Sunday service debate reached its peak, the sixty-year-old Rabbi Kleeberg still delivered weekly sermons in German. Beneath the raging debate over Sunday services lay clear indications that many Mishkan Israel congregants wanted to update their synagogue practice. In 1893, Rabbi Kleeberg retired and Mishkan Israel inaugurated another period of rapid reforms and ritual changes.³⁸

RABBI DAVID LEVY, 1893 — 1913

The first signs of change at Mishkan Israel were evident in the congregation's choice of a new rabbi. David Levy, who assumed the pulpit after Kleeberg's retirement, was Mishkan Israel's first American born religious leader. Educated at Isaac Leeser's short-lived Maimonides College in Philadelphia, Levy had grown up with American Reform Judaism and become one its most ardent and radical proponents. His rabbinic career began at the prestigious Beth Elohim congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. After fifteen successful years at Beth Elohim, America's oldest Reform congregation, Levy arrived in the New Haven community. Levy introduced a series of sweeping reforms and ritual changes almost immediately after assuming the Mishkan Israel pulpit. With the full support of the congregation, he dispensed with all elements of German in the service. He delivered sermons in English and replaced German readings with English prayers. In Charleston, Rabbi Levy had composed his own prayerbook, *Service of the Sanctuary*, which became a regular part of worship at Mishkan Israel. Under Levy's leadership, the congregation modernized the religious school and finally resolved to institute Sunday services. Both literally and figuratively, Rabbi Levy brought Mishkan Israel into the twentieth century and satisfied the congregation's desire for modernization.³⁹

As it approached the new century, Mishkan Israel not only modernized ritual practices but also updated its facilities. Having celebrated a fiftieth anniversary and reflected upon its own progress and development, the congregation decide to acquire "a new home commensurate with the position of dignity it occupied." David Levy led the drive for a new synagogue building and preached the merits of the venture from the pulpit. Expressing the need for larger quarters and a more centrally-located synagogue, the 190 families of Mishkan Israel supported the campaign for a new temple. Recognizing "the necessity of securing a more



Mishkan Israel, corner of Orange and Audubon Streets, New Haven, 1897–1960

commodious temple, with improved school facilities,” the congregation “unanimously voted that the present building in Court street be sold and that a new edifice be erected.” The project required significant capital investment and consumed the congregation’s energies and financial commitments for the next several years. Unlike the Court Street Temple which had previously been a church, Mishkan Israel’s new synagogue was designed specifically as a place of Jewish worship. The congregation purchased a downtown lot on the corner of Audubon and Orange Streets and commissioned the construction of a temple to meet its needs and tastes. The groundbreaking was begun in 1895, the cornerstone laid the following year, and in 1897 Mishkan Israel formally dedicated its new temple. Designed to be one of “the most stately shrines in the East,” the Orange Street Temple embodied the congregation’s quest for dignity and grandeur. Synagogue architecture was a matter of great importance, symbolizing Jewish status and announcing full entry into the community of American religions. The New Haven press took note of Mishkan Israel’s new building and described at some length its magnificent design.

The Temple itself is built of red pallet brick, trimmed with East Haven and Long Meadow Brownstone. Terra Cotta trimmings in orange patterns add much to the effect of the elaborate exterior ... The style of architecture is that of the Spanish Renaissance ... Two great towers, or rather minarets, rise 84 feet on each side of the doorway in front. A broad flight of fourteen steps leads up to the wide vestibule, whose roof is supported by four large carved pillars and whose floor is inlaid with rich mosaic... The pulpit is bordered at each of its four corners by a large marble column which gives a substantial effect to the whole structure.⁴⁰

The ceremonies celebrating the new temple were almost as decorous as the building itself. When the cornerstone was laid, David Levy delivered a moving address in which he chronicled the history of Mishkan Israel and New Haven Jewry. The actual dedication was performed in dramatic fashion:

Rabbi Levy read the first four verses of Genesis and as he came to the third verse ‘And God said, “Let there be light” and there was light’ — the whole building from floor to ceiling shone forth with a sudden brilliancy.



Lillie Lyons, confirmand of 1899

At the dedication, Levy was joined by two of the most prominent Reform rabbis in America, Joseph Silverman and Emil Hirsch. The presence of Rabbi Hirsch, who had already emerged as *the* leader of the Reform movement’s radical contingent, was an indication of the increasingly radical inclinations of the congregation and its rabbi. Celebrating the progressive outlook of Reform Judaism, Hirsch proclaimed that “God speaks to us as He spoke to our fathers of old. Our religion is a living one, and things that live grow.” Levy and the invited guests extolled the new edifice, its congregants, and the promise of Reform Judaism.⁴¹

In its new elaborate temple, Mishkan Israel continued a rapid pace of reform. Levy had eliminated all traces of German before the move to Orange Street, but congregants demonstrated an eagerness to continue the process of linguistic acculturation. The congregation began using English rather than German to record the minutes of synagogue meetings. In 1909, when Mishkan Israel was searching for a cantor to help with High Holy Day services, Board members agreed to hire him only “providing that he can read Hebrew and English fluently, with distinct enunciation.” Like other Reform congregations at the opening of the twentieth century, Mishkan Israel had entered a period of what is today called “classical” Reform. Reform Judaism’s classical period refers to the Americanized practice, break with tradition, and overall radicalism that characterized the era. During these years, Mishkan Israel joined the many congregations which abandoned the wearing of head coverings and prayer shawls during services. Having instituted the confirmation ceremony as early as the 1860s, the congregation now began to discuss the possibility of replacing the bar mitzvah celebration with confirmation alone. In 1907, the synagogue Board reexamined its policy regarding conversion. The Board decided to accept non-Jews as congregational members providing that “the applicant voluntarily renounces the Christian faith and professes a knowledge and acceptance of the Jewish faith and is willing to appear before the Board of Trustees and acknowledge his act as his own free will.” The Board’s decision indicated an abandonment

of traditional conversion procedures that required circumcision and immersion in a ritual bath. In keeping with its progressive outlook, Mishkan Israel asked only that a convert pledge faith and commitment to Judaism. The opening decades of the century also saw Mishkan Israel apply for membership in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the national organization representing Reform congregations, and adopt its standard prayerbook.⁴² Most strikingly, Mishkan Israel definitively rejected all claims to a Jewish national identity, renounced the traditional hope for Messianic resurrection in the land of Israel, and firmly declared America the one and only homeland of American Jews. David Levy expressed the collective mood at Mishkan Israel:

*We are not Hebrews, that is, we do not know that we are descended from them. The Hebrew is an archeological race and we are Jews. We are not again a distinct nationality, that is, we do not look forward to the restoration of Palestine. We belong to the nation in which we were born and live. I, for example, am an American. We are a distinct community bound together by ties of a common religious faith.*⁴³

By the first decades of the twentieth century, Mishkan Israel had announced a firm commitment to Reform Judaism and clearly formulated its notion of American Jewish identity.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Interfaith relations were an important element of Mishkan Israel's definition of proper Jewish behavior. Yet, like Reform leaders of the period, the congregation grappled with the boundaries of Jewish exclusivity. The question of intermarriage forced the congregation to determine the limits of its reform impulse and ecumenical spirit. On a national level, Reform leaders had long debated the movement's stance on mixed marriage. While most classical Reform rabbis consistently opposed lending rabbinic sanction to the practice, the intermarriage issue sparked considerable discussion and disagreement. In 1909, the Central Conference of American Rabbis attempted to resolve the matter with a statement declaring, "that mixed marriages are contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should therefore be discouraged by the American Rabbinate." Four years later, Mishkan Israel was forced to come to its own decision.⁴⁴

In 1913, Rabbi Levy appeared ready to officiate at a mixed marriage involving a Mishkan Israel member. Congregational minutes record simply that, "Rev. Levy asked permission of the Board to unite in marriage Miss Frieds, daughter of one of our members, to Mr. Reed, son of Samuel Reed a gentile."

Decidedly reluctant to approve mixed marriage in their congregation, Board members shied away from rendering a definitive decision on the matter. Instead, they chose to solicit opinions from four leading American Reform rabbis. The two months that transpired while Mishkan Israel awaited the rabbinic replies effectively resolved the immediate problem, for the couple married elsewhere if at all, and their names never reappear in the minutes.

When the responses finally did arrive, they revealed an almost unanimous disapproval of mixed marriage. The Mishkan Israel Board seems to have received the answers it had wanted and refused to sanction intermarriage within the congregation. More significant than the specific incident, the debate over interfaith marriage reflected a process of self-definition within the Mishkan Israel community. Having just completed a period of thoroughgoing reforms, the congregation was limiting the extent to which it was willing to revise Jewish practice and thus establishing its own parameters for proper religious behavior.⁴⁵

The intermarriage issue not only challenged the limits of radicalism at Mishkan Israel, but also contributed to a serious cleavage between the congregation and its rabbi. The incident revealed the tensions that had emerged between Rabbi Levy and the congregation. By the time Levy requested to officiate at the marriage, he had already lost the support of synagogue leaders. Had Mishkan Israel Board members had full confidence in Levy, it



Confirmation class of 1902 with Rabbi David Levy

is unlikely that they would have independently sought rabbinic advice elsewhere. While it is difficult to ascertain the precise causes of disaffection, congregational minutes offer some clues. When Levy arrived at Mishkan Israel in the 1890s, congregants were eager to update and Americanize synagogue practice; they supported and encouraged Levy's innovations. But like Rabbi Wechsler, Levy may have pushed the congregation toward a degree of radicalism that it was not willing to accept. For example, in addition to his support of mixed marriage, Levy appears to have eliminated Torah reading from worship services. In 1913, the Board found it necessary to request him to remove the Torah from the ark and "read it in hebrew as well as in english and ... announce beforehand the chapter so that the congregation may follow him." In the 1890s, Levy met the congregation's needs, bringing a youthful, thoroughly American Judaism to Mishkan Israel. By 1913, Rabbi Levy was almost sixty years old and some congregants may have wanted a younger man leading the synagogue. Whatever the specific causes of dissension, which undoubtedly involved personal antagonisms as well as varying attitudes toward reforms, Levy and the congregation had arrived at an impasse. In 1913, before his term had expired, Rabbi Levy left Mishkan Israel under the premise of "voluntary retirement."⁴⁶



Louis Mann

RABBI LOUIS MANN, 1913–1923

Louis Mann, who became the congregation’s rabbi for the decade following Levy’s departure, served Mishkan Israel during a period of comparative stability and continued expansion. American born and educated, Mann earned both college and graduate degrees before receiving rabbinic ordination at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Since Louis Mann assumed the pulpit in 1913, Mishkan Israel has never been without a rabbi ordained at Hebrew Union College. During Mann’s tenure, congregational meetings were filled with discussions of seating assignments and financial allocations rather than heated debates over the introduction of new reforms. Mishkan Israel had

experienced twenty years of rapid change, both demographically and religiously, and appeared to have arrived at a comfortable position within the Reform movement and the New Haven community. During the 1910s and 1920s, the congregation prospered financially and enlarged its scope of programming. The synagogue not only offered religious services, but was also a regular meeting place for Jewish social, cultural, and philanthropic organizations. During the World War I era, Mishkan Israel became an active center of Jewish life while improving and expanding relations within the New Haven community.

Jewish education at Mishkan Israel had begun in the 1840s in a rented schoolroom equipped with two stoves, two blackboards, and a few benches. The Sabbath school had grown larger and more sophisticated in the years before Rabbi Mann’s arrival, but Mann hastened the modernization of the congregation’s educational program. In 1917, Mishkan Israel added a four-year high school course to its religious school curriculum. According to one report:

Mishkan Israel has the distinction of having the first high school and normal school department in the country. Over 50 congregations in all parts of the country have written for advice and help. Dr. Mann has been called to various large cities to explain the ‘New Haven experiment.’⁴⁷

In 1922, Rabbi Mann represented the Central Conference of American Rabbis at the annual convention of the National Education Association. The “New Haven experiment,” designed to secure the ongoing Jewish commitment of students, encouraged graduates to join the congregation immediately after completing the school program. The religious school was a source of great pride at Mishkan Israel and also a responsibility that the congregation took very seriously. As one member explained, the school “is recognized as the most important branch of Temple life.” Mishkan Israel’s religious school was always open to children of non-members. The Board felt a particular responsibility to offer its services to New Haven Jews affiliated with no other Jewish religious or communal organization. In order to assure that all interested families could send their children to the school, Mishkan Israel adjusted individual tuitions according to the means of the parents. As the school continued to grow, the decisions made about its curriculum and organization reflected the changing values of the congregation.⁴⁸

MISHKAN ISRAEL AND YALE

Under Rabbi Mann’s leadership, Mishkan Israel cultivated a relationship with the Jewish community at Yale University. As early as the 1870s, Rabbi Wechsler had monitored and reported the number of Jewish students enrolled at Yale. Yale students participated regularly in synagogue services. In 1882, one skeptical observer remarked that they came to the congregation only because “there is a Yale College law that compels all students to attend divine services at least once a week.” Despite that commentator’s cynical assessment, Yale Jews did associate with the congregation voluntarily. Reports from the 1890s indicate that several students worked as teachers in the Mishkan Israel religious school. In 1912, a group of Yale students who wanted to create a Jewish organization gathered at Mishkan Israel to discuss their plans. The following year, the congregation donated one of its Torah



Cemetery chapel built in 1911, Whalley Avenue, New Haven

scrolls to the university's small Jewish community. The Yale Corporation acknowledged the gift with a certificate thanking the congregation for its "generous gift of a Saphor Torah [sic] or scroll containing the Mosaic Laws." Rabbi Mann was a Ph.D. candidate at Yale while serving as Mishkan Israel's rabbi; after receiving his degree in 1920, he became a lecturer in Comparative Ethics at the College. Rabbi Mann consistently encouraged and supported the congregation's involvement with the university community. In 1934, after Mann had left New Haven to take a position in Chicago, he was invited back to Yale as the first rabbi ever to speak from the university's pulpit at Battell Chapel. Long after Mann's departure, Mishkan Israel continued to be involved and concerned with Jewish life at Yale.⁴⁹

INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES

By the second decade of the twentieth century, Mishkan Israel had established a reputation as a leader in interfaith relations. Actively concerned with demonstrating its ecumenical spirit, the congregation continued to promote community involvement. The synagogue Board gladly accepted a 1913 invitation to send congregants to a lecture series sponsored by St. Paul's Church. Congregational minutes reveal that Mishkan Israel regularly co-sponsored programs, lectures, and celebrations with other religious organizations in the city. Non-sectarian holidays, such as Thanksgiving, were especially popular times for the congregation to emphasize its common bond with other faiths. In 1915, for example, Mishkan Israel celebrated Thanksgiving by hosting an ecumenical service in cooperation with several local churches. The following year, as part of the congregation's Community Betterment Series, Rabbi Mann delivered an address at the Dixwell Avenue Colored Church—an early indication of Mishkan Israel's commitment to promoting not only interfaith but also interracial harmony. Like so many of its activities in the early twentieth century, Mishkan Israel's ecumenical and communal endeavors grew stronger and more sophisticated in future decades.⁵⁰



Recognition of military service of Dr. Simon Bretzfelder Kleiner, scion of two prominent Mishkan Israel families, 1919

World War I was a pivotal event spurring the pace and tenor of community service at Mishkan Israel. Like Jews throughout the United States, Mishkan Israel members were eager to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism during the war. In 1914, before America had entered the conflict, Mishkan Israel joined a national effort to encourage the peaceful resolution of fighting in Europe. Responding to President Wilson's request that all citizens

observe a day of prayer for peace, the congregation combined its observance of Succoth with a peace service. Once the United States entered the war, congregants pledged their wholehearted efforts to the cause. During the war, at least thirty Mishkan Israel members served in the armed forces. Immensely proud of their patriotism, the congregation paid tribute to the soldiers in a special ceremony. In 1918, members gathered in the Mishkan Israel sanctuary to dedicate an American flag honoring the Mishkan Israel soldiers. In addition to sermons and speeches pledging Jewish loyalty to the cause, congregants also performed practical services for the war effort. The Mishkan Israel Sisterhood lent its full energies to the task, purchasing Liberty Bonds and organizing sewing circles. Sisterhood members gathered every other week to sew garments for the Red Cross. "The zeal with which our members are working," explained one Sisterhood member, "shows we are all believers in 'preparedness.'" In order to speed the Red Cross sewing work, Mishkan Israel installed additional wall plugs and lights in the temple. During the war, the congregation also changed the time of Friday evening services to accommodate Jewish soldiers stationed at a nearby New Haven naval base. World War I provided Mishkan Israel members with an opportunity to demonstrate actively their belonging and allegiance as American citizens.⁵¹

WOMEN IN MISHKAN ISRAEL

For Mishkan Israel women, like women throughout the country, participation in the war effort helped spark a movement for greater representation within the temple. During the war, Sisterhood women developed organizational, leadership, and financial skills along with a growing sense of self-confidence. The experience gained during the war, as well as feminist ideas popularized in the suffrage movement, combined to encourage women's demands for rights within the congregation. Mishkan Israel women had always taken an active but behind-the-scenes role in synagogue affairs. Until 1904, women were not permitted to attend the temple's annual meetings. In that year, congregational minutes report, "A novelty of this year's meeting consisted in a general invitation to the ladies of the congregation to appear, who attended in goodly numbers and took deep interest in the proceedings." By the 1920s, Mishkan Israel women wanted to be more than a "novelty" in the workings of their congregation. As active participants in the synagogue, women demanded to be granted full status as members. The temple Board answered their demands in 1922 by voting that "wives, adult daughters, and sisters of members ... be admitted to full membership." Two months later, the synagogue Board further resolved that "women, whether members or not, shall be eligible to appointment on any committee or to the Board of Trustees of the Congregation." Immediately after the resolution was passed, Rose Osterweis became the first female member elected to the Mishkan Israel Board.⁵²

The admission of women to the Board was not welcomed by all congregants. Two years after the decision, the Board considered an amendment to revoke women's right to serve on the Board of Trustees while allowing them to remain eligible for synagogue membership. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the proposal indicated that some congregants did not support women's newly acquired rights. The Board flatly refused certain demands made

by Mishkan Israel women. In 1913, women requested representation on the Sunday School Board, but the synagogue voted to “defer action on the request for the present.” The Sisterhood had also asked that its president be granted a permanent appointment on the Board of Trustees. The Board denied that request, explaining that the Sisterhood president would be allowed to appear at Board meetings whenever the need arose. Like most American Reform congregations, Mishkan Israel did not fully recognize women’s religious and political rights within the synagogue until years after the 1960s women’s movement. Nevertheless, the Sisterhood effected important changes during the 1920s. Not only did Mishkan Israel women succeed in gaining rights as congregational and Board members, but they built the Sisterhood into a thriving organization. As a body, the Sisterhood not only worked to serve the congregation’s needs, but also sponsored programs that directly addressed women’s issues. In the 1920s alone, Sisterhood women organized seminars and lectures on controversial topics from birth control to feminism.⁵³

BROTHERHOOD

In 1922, Mishkan Israel celebrated its twenty-fifth year in the Orange Street Temple. The occasion marked not only the anniversary but also the final payment of the mortgage on the building. Headlines in the *New Haven Register* declared, “Jewish organization is free from debt for the first time in history.” Describing the successes of the temple, the article reported that, “the Congregation has [never] been in a more flourishing condition, morally, educationally, spiritually, and financially than it is at the present time.” Indeed, the interwar years brought unprecedented prosperity, increasing membership, and an expansion of programming to Mishkan Israel. Yet despite its prosperity, Mishkan Israel faced growing apathy and stagnation within the congregation. The synagogue maintained a large membership but had difficulty bringing congregants to the temple. In Reform congregations throughout the country, the interwar years brought growing concerns about the scarcity of men in the synagogue. Many Reform leaders complained that the temple had become the province of religious professionals and women. Men took positions as officers and financial managers, but women significantly outnumbered men in synagogue attendance. Attracted by expanding business and social options, the male laity played a less active role in religious life. As Abba Hillel Silver, a leading Reform rabbi, explained, the “essential work of the liberal synagogue was largely in the hands of women and ecclesiastics.” In 1923, the national Reform movement organized the Federation of Temple Brotherhoods in order to give men a greater role in synagogue affairs. Hoping to replicate the success of the Sisterhoods, the Brotherhoods gave men the opportunity for synagogue-centered activities other than religious services. Mishkan Israel’s men previously looked to the B’nai B’rith lodge or other fraternal societies for comradeship and social interaction. The Brotherhood offered them a chance to socialize as well as participate in community and congregational projects—all under the auspices of the temple. The Mishkan Israel Brotherhood quickly became a successful organization, promoting a wide range of educational and cultural programs. One of the Brotherhood’s first and most enduring projects was its sponsorship of a Mishkan Israel Boy Scout Troop. In addition to the Brotherhood, Mishkan Israel established other temple auxiliaries designed to attract a broader spectrum of members.⁵⁴

YOUNG PEOPLE’S SOCIETY

In 1920, a young people’s society was created to stimulate youth participation. The Society organized social events and educational programs for the congregation’s younger generation. It also published its own magazine, the *Observer*, which included advertisements for dances and socials, humorous pieces, as well as informative articles. The *Observer* articulated the ideology of American Reform, championing the harmonious relationship between Judaism and Americanism. The magazine’s articles discussed political and religious topics and celebrated both Jewish and American heroes, from Judah Halevi to George Washington. As the New Haven Jewish community grew larger, with more social opportunities available outside the synagogue, Mishkan Israel realized that it must provide extra-religious activities to interest and attract members. The religious school’s motto, “no missing link from six to death,” accurately reflected the congregation’s expanding programming during the interwar years.⁵⁵

EARLY ANTI-ZIONISM

The 1917 Balfour Declaration, announcing British support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, forced Mishkan Israel to reassert its position on Zionism. The congregation had always been a staunch opponent of political Zionism, renouncing all claims to Jewish national identity.

The Balfour Declaration may have softened the opposition, but Mishkan Israel members held fast to their anti-Zionist position. In 1918, the congregation was asked to contribute to a fund for the restoration of Palestine. While it did not flatly refuse the request, the Board indefinitely tabled the issue. Four years later, Mishkan Israel received a letter from Keren HaYesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, asking the congregation to allow a Keren Ha Yesod representative to speak from the temple pulpit. At the urging of Rabbi Mann, the synagogue Board unanimously refused to lend support to a pro-Zionist speaker. The request was denied so that “our congregation might continue to be an outstanding protest against Zionism in all its forms.” Although Mishkan Israel remained a vocal and ardent opponent of Zionism, some members may have begun to feel a degree of sympathy for the movement. While the Board of Trustees refused to contribute any funds to the cause, the Sisterhood voted in 1921 to send a small donation to Palestine. Perhaps a slight shift in Zionist sentiment was underway as early as the 1920s, but the movement was barely detectable, for most Mishkan Israel members remained squarely in the anti-Zionist camp.⁵⁶

RABBI SIDNEY S. TEDESCHE, 1923–1929

In 1923, Rabbi Mann left Mishkan Israel to accept a rabbinic position at Chicago’s prestigious Temple Sinai. After ten years in New Haven, Mann appeared ready for new challenges and later rose to some prominence in the national Reform movement and the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation. Rabbi Sidney Tedesche assumed the Mishkan Israel pulpit after Mann’s departure and served the congregation for six years. Tedesche led the temple through

its most peaceful and stable period. Freed from debt and having already broadened its spectrum of programs, Mishkan Israel held an even course for the remainder of the 1920s. While congregational leaders still worried about poor synagogue attendance and religious apathy, the temple continued to expand its membership and activities. Rabbi Tedesche left the congregation in 1929, before Mishkan Israel faced the religious and financial challenges of the Great Depression.⁵⁷

RABBI EDGAR E. SISKIN, 1929–1948 (MILITARY LEAVE 1943–1946)

Mishkan Israel enjoyed less than a decade of prosperity before joining the many congregations throughout the United States that struggled under the hardships of economic depression. In the first year of the Depression, the congregation appealed to its members to help the growing number of unemployed workers. A 1930 synagogue bulletin inquired, “At the present time there are in New Haven men and women out of work. Have you any work which might afford the unemployed some relief?” As the Depression grew more severe, Mishkan Israel became concerned with its own survival in the face of the economic crisis. By 1931, Mishkan Israel was again in debt and requesting money from congregants who could no longer afford large synagogue contributions. Alfred Nadler, the congregation’s president, sent a letter to all members asking them to try to give the standard High Holiday donation. In a candid discussion of financial distress, Nadler explained,

*As you know the Congregation is in debt. The Board of Trustees requests the annual contribution. We appreciate the present financial difficulties and undoubtedly our budget will demand a larger appropriation for charity.*⁵⁸

By 1933, fiscal distress had reached a critical level in the congregation. So many members had asked the temple to lower or waive their annual dues that the finance committee convened a special meeting “to consider the effect of the request for reduction of dues on our budget.” Mishkan Israel was forced to lower dues requirements as congregants’ incomes plummeted. Even with a reduction in dues, the temple experienced a precipitous drop in membership. Like so many congregations during the Depression, Mishkan Israel curtailed programs and lowered salaries to save money. In 1932, the congregation decided to economize by not mailing its annual report to members. Rabbi Edgar Siskin, who occupied the pulpit during the Depression years, accepted reduced pay as did other temple employees.⁵⁹

COMMITMENTS DESPITE GREAT DEPRESSION

The financial crisis required Mishkan Israel to confront some difficult issues regarding its religious school policy. The school had prided itself on admitting children of non-members, but when many parents could not afford tuition during the Depression years, Mishkan Israel reconsidered its standards for enrollment. In 1933, in the midst of the congregation’s deepest distress, the Board discussed the possibility of prohibiting non-members who could not pay tuition from sending their children to the religious school.

The discussion provoked serious objections and the congregation never instituted the restrictive policy. Synagogue and religious school leaders firmly defended Mishkan Israel’s obligation to provide Jewish education to all interested community members. “We owe a responsibility to the community in which we live,” insisted one Mishkan Israel member. “We cannot deny the privileges of our School to any sincere person who is committed to no other communal organization.” Not only did the school institute significant tuition reductions, but it also arranged transportation to school for children whose parents could otherwise not afford to send them. The decision to keep the religious school accessible to all New Haven Jews was motivated both by a deep commitment to provide Jewish education and a pragmatic recognition that the school was “the chief source of Temple membership.” By the 1930s, the religious school numbered over two hundred students, many of whom were children of non-members. The school grew so large that by 1937 the congregation had to create a school annex in a building adjoining the synagogue in order to accommodate the students, classrooms, and library.⁶⁰



Farewell reception for Rabbi and Mrs. Edgar E. Siskin, 1948

The Depression brought a spiritual as well as a fiscal crisis to Mishkan Israel. Synagogue leaders expressed great concern that the “increase in our members is at a standstill.” Even those who remained members showed little interest in synagogue activities. In 1931, Mishkan Israel considered a proposal to reinstitute Sunday services “as a means to stimulating Temple attendance.” Unlike the discussion over Sunday services in the 1890s, this suggestion reflected not a desire for modernization but a state of desperation. While the congregation overwhelmingly defeated the motion to reinstate Sunday services, members continued to worry about the pervasive lethargy that characterized synagogue life. Like many congregations (both Jewish and Christian) during the Depression, Mishkan Israel suffered from spiritual malaise and stagnation. Groping for some means to invigorate the synagogue, Board members criticized the “coldness” of services and attempted to make them more warm and welcoming. They also encouraged young couples and students to participate more actively. Congregational minutes from the Depression years are filled with anxious reports about declining interest in religious life. For all the efforts of the Board and Rabbi Siskin, the Depression took its toll at Mishkan Israel, producing a mood of despondency and religious apathy.⁶¹

Despite the financial strains and malaise brought by the Depression, Mishkan Israel remained committed to and involved with Yale's Jewish community. In 1933, when the congregation faced critical debt, members voted to contribute fifty dollars to help create a Hillel on campus. Although a Yale Hillel was not officially established until 1941, Mishkan Israel's Rabbi Siskin remained at the forefront of the campaign to build a thriving Jewish community on campus. Ordained at Hebrew Union College at the age of only twenty-one, Siskin served Mishkan Israel until 1948, with a leave of absence during World War II when he served in the U.S. Navy as a marine chaplain. While occupying the Mishkan Israel pulpit, Siskin (like Rabbis Mann and Tedesche) earned a Yale doctoral degree. He later became the first rabbi appointed to the Yale faculty and served as an assistant professor of anthropology. Siskin's close relationship with the university community facilitated his campaign to bring Yale its first rabbi. In 1935, Siskin encouraged a former Hebrew Union College classmate, Maurice Zigmond, to enroll in Yale graduate school and pay for his studies by serving as a counselor for Jewish students. While Rabbi Siskin promoted Jewish life on campus, the Mishkan Israel Sisterhood worked to fulfill the social and religious needs of the Yale Jewish community. Sisterhood women regularly sponsored dances, invited students to their homes, and organized an annual congregational seder. Even during the worst years of Depression, Mishkan Israel maintained and strengthened its ongoing relationship with Yale University.⁶²

The Depression also did not detract from Mishkan Israel's community involvement and interfaith activities. In 1932, the congregation managed to contribute to the National Conference of Christians and Jews and to send Rabbi Siskin to the Conference seminar in Washington, D.C. The economic crisis moderated by the late thirties, allowing Mishkan Israel greater flexibility in programming. In 1938, the congregation embraced the opportunity to participate in the celebration of New Haven's tercentenary. As a host of the festivities, Mishkan Israel welcomed Connecticut Governor Wilbur Cross to speak from its pulpit. Praising the contributions of New Haven's Jewish citizens, Cross explained that "special significance is attached to the fact that this commemorative service is taking place in the oldest Jewish congregation in the state." Mishkan Israel remained proud of its standing in the New Haven community and its positive relationship with other religious bodies. By the thirties, the congregation was secure enough within the religious community to ask that its own interests be represented. In 1938, Rabbi Siskin contacted the interfaith committee of the New Haven Council of Churches to request that his fellow clergymen publicly denounce Nazi atrocities against Jews. The committee responded positively to his call.⁶³

Mishkan Israel's vocal protests against Nazism had begun long before Siskin's request that New Haven churches unite in opposition to Hitler. Germany's persecution of Jews deeply troubled Mishkan Israel members who had always celebrated their German-Jewish culture and heritage. In a 1933 High Holiday letter, Rabbi Siskin told congregants:

We are at the close of one of the most unhappy years in Jewish history. During the past year, a great Jewish community has been uprooted from its adopted homeland. The Jews of Germany have been made the victims of a calculated plan of extermination.

In 1934, the congregation sent a telegram to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to urge adoption of the Tydings Resolution which denounced "the discriminations and oppression imposed by the Reich upon its minority groups including its Jewish citizens." During the thirties and forties, Mishkan Israel actively opposed Nazism and aided Jewish emigration efforts. Once Hitler's extermination plan was revealed and the United States was embroiled in war, the tenor of protest grew even stronger. Religious programs, ecumenical activities, and political protests were organized to express Mishkan Israel's outrage against Hitler and the Nazi regime.⁶⁴

RADICAL REFORM REMAINED FIRM

The thirties witnessed a return to tradition in many Reform temples, but Mishkan Israel remained a firm advocate of radical Reform. While the congregation clung steadfastly to classical Reform practice, a few modest changes were introduced. In 1933, Rabbi Siskin requested that only Jewish singers be employed in the choir. Four years later, the Board reiterated the importance of an all-Jewish choir as a means to stimulate interest in the synagogue and intensify the spiritual character of religious services. Concerned with apathy and no longer battling against Jewish separatism, some members began to see the merits of Jewish exclusivity at least within worship services. The congregation also demonstrated a renewed interest in the Hebrew language. In 1937, the religious school added an extra half-hour of Hebrew instruction to its curriculum. Three years later, the school required that students pass a Hebrew reading exam in order to enter the confirmation class.⁶⁵

ZIONISM

By far the most striking change at Mishkan Israel was a slight moderation in Zionist opposition. The Columbus Platform, issued by the national Reform movement in 1937, had offered unprecedented support for both political and cultural Zionism. In a dramatic shift from its previous position, the Reform movement supported, "the obligation of all Jewry to aid in [Palestine's] upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life." By the 1930s, many Reform Jews had become sympathetic to the Zionist cause, although the issue remained a source of great controversy within the movement. As a rule, Mishkan Israel remained firm in its opposition to Zionism. A 1934 law clerk working for Justice Louis Brandeis, an ardent Zionist supporter, offered an intriguing report about a visit between the Justice and Rabbi Siskin. According to the clerk, Siskin's congregation "was largely non-Zionist, but the rabbi was open to persuasion." While the clerk could not determine if Siskin had been persuaded, Mishkan Israel congregants certainly had not made any dramatic move to the Zionist camp. The perceptible shift at Mishkan Israel was from outright protests against Zionism to increasing ambivalence and grudging recognition. The congregation became non-Zionist rather than anti-Zionist. During the thirties, when Mishkan Israel was informed of meetings being held by the Jewish National Fund, Emergency Campaign for the Settlement of German Jewish Refugees in Palestine,

and Keren HaYesod, it did not flatly refuse their invitations. Instead, the message delivered was simply, “Members of the Board may attend if they so desire.” Mishkan Israel’s strident anti-Zionism waned in the 1930s, but not until after the State of Israel was established did congregants unite in support of the Zionist cause.⁶⁶

CENTENNIAL

In 1940 Mishkan Israel celebrated its centennial, marking the occasion with a week of commemorative programs. As a milestone event in the life of the congregation, the centennial provided congregants with an opportunity to define their collective values and commitments as they reflected upon their history. The celebration involved those institutions and individuals most important to Mishkan Israel’s development and self-perceptions. Yale University kicked off the festivities with the opening of a Judaica exhibit containing material about Yale and New Haven Jewry as well as a special Mishkan Israel display. Later in the week, the congregation invited the New Haven mayor, local church leaders, and rabbis to a “Community Night” celebration. “The history of Mishkan Israel has been marked by a spirit of brotherliness with other churches and civic groups in New Haven,” explained Bernard Rogowski, the congregation’s president, as he welcomed guests to the program. The event emphasized Mishkan Israel’s position within the city and affirmed its strong bond with New Haven’s other religious institutions. In honor of the occasion, Connecticut Representative James Shanley delivered a congratulatory speech before Congress and President Roosevelt sent a letter paying tribute to the Mishkan Israel community. Two former Mishkan Israel rabbis, the president of Yale, city dignitaries, and leading Jewish leaders all came to praise the congregation’s “thoroughly American interpretation of Judaism.” Other centennial programs included Sabbath services, an elaborate banquet at the Hotel Taft, and a luncheon and pageant sponsored by the Sisterhood. As part of the celebration, the religious school staged a play that opened with the Biblical period and ended with Jewish life in America; in the final scene the congregation joined students in singing “America, The Beautiful.” The Mishkan Israel Centennial was thus not only a reflection upon the past, but also a blueprint for contemporary Jewish identity, priorities, and aspirations.⁶⁷

By its one-hundredth year, Mishkan Israel was firmly committed to liberal Judaism and modern Jewish practice. Almost every facet of synagogue programming reflected the congregation’s progressive outlook. In the early 1940s, the congregation maintained its high level of interfaith activities. Mishkan Israel not only co-sponsored an Interfaith Institute, but also participated in an exchange program in which Plymouth Church and Mishkan Israel congregants attended each others’ worship services. In 1941, Mishkan Israel initiated radio broadcasts of its Friday evening services. Having considered the possibility of broadcasting services in the 1920s when the practice was adopted by some Reform congregations, the congregation finally resolved to capitalize on the medium of radio as a means of public relations and outreach to unaffiliated Jews. The congregation’s liberal pursuits were not confined to ritual innovations and ecumenical programs but

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 19, 1940

Dear Rabbi Siskin:

I congratulate you and the congregation of the Temple of Mishkan Israel on the happy occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of its founding.

The continuous existence of your synagogue through a full century bears ample evidence of its worth to the community it serves. And the world never had greater need than at the present time to strive to attain the ideal set forth by the grand Old Testament Prophet Micah: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God".

I trust, therefore, that the celebration will be an enjoyable event and one that will inspire all who participate with new zeal to exemplify in modern terms the ancient teachings of Israel.

Very sincerely yours,



Rabbi Edgar E. Siskin,
Temple of Mishkan Israel,
Orange and Audubon Streets,
New Haven,
Connecticut.

President Farnklin Delano Roosevelt congratulates Mishkan Israel uon its centennial

also included heightened political awareness. Sisterhood women, for example, publicly endorsed the campaign for legalized birth control in Connecticut in 1941. One Sisterhood woman explained, “It is felt that at such a crucial time women should be more informed about Birth Control Legislation.” In the Sisterhood as well as other branches of the synagogue, political activity became a regular part of Jewish life at Mishkan Israel.⁶⁸

RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

One political matter that greatly concerned Mishkan Israel members was the issue of religion in the public schools. By no means a new development in the 1940s, American Jews had long participated in the battle to rid public education of religious content. Mishkan Israel members began sending their children to city schools in the mid-1800s. In the early years of public schooling, the children spent the morning hours at public school and then received Hebrew, German, and religious instruction at the congregation’s school in the afternoons. In 1853, Mishkan Israel members expressed concern over a new city regulation that required students to attend public school for a full day. While they initially worried about the effects of the new law on Jewish education, members quickly put aside their reservations in favor of the great benefits of public schooling. Almost without exception, American Jews became unwavering and passionate supporters of public education.⁶⁹ It was not the full day of public schooling that troubled Mishkan Israel members but rather the inclusion of religious education as part of the curriculum. Like most American Jews, Mishkan Israel members championed the separation of church and state. Maier Zunder, one of the congregation’s most prominent nineteenth-century members, served twenty-four years on the New Haven Board of Education where he battled tirelessly to remove religious instruction and prayer from the city schools. Despite Zunder’s efforts, the debate over religion in the public schools persisted and was still very much alive in the 1940s. Shortly after the centennial celebration, New Haven school officials entertained a proposal to allot each denomination an equal amount of time for religious instruction within the public school program. Mishkan Israel vigorously opposed such a plan, invoking the American principle of separation of church and state. In a letter to an East Haven school official, Rabbi Siskin firmly declared that “to make use of public school facilities for sectarian purposes is a potential threat to the basic Church-State relationship in this country.” At a 1946 New Haven Council of Churches meeting, Mishkan Israel delegates announced, “Our representatives oppose any kind of religious education in the schools. Mishkan Israel feels that religious education belongs in another sphere than our public schools.” Not surprisingly, both Rabbi Siskin and his congregants expressed their objections not in terms of Jewish interests but in defense of American principles.⁷⁰

WORLD WAR II

The celebration of American values reached new heights after the outbreak of World War II. The Second World War surpassed any other event in mobilizing and uniting the efforts of Mishkan Israel members. The large number of troops involved in the conflict and the deep emotional response to direct attack on the United States elicited strong reactions and support throughout the country. For American Jews, World War II also represented a battle against Hitler’s Jewish persecution abroad and an opportunity to demonstrate patriotism at home. A deeply personal event for the Mishkan Israel community, the war involved family members or friends of almost every congregant. By 1943, over seventy Mishkan Israel men and women were serving in the armed forces. Members who remained at home lent their full energies to the war effort and brought the congregation to an unprecedented level of community service activity.

Expressions of patriotism and loyalty to America were never more fervently or frequently articulated by congregants than during World War II. On Memorial Day 1942, Mishkan Israel sponsored its first major public ceremony in support of the American war effort. In the presence of the New Haven mayor, local military officials, and war veterans, the congregation conducted a “Service of Patriotic Dedication.” At the service, congregants dedicated an American Flag and Honor Roll listing the then forty Mishkan Israel soldiers serving in the military. Boy and Girl Scout troops marched in silent procession and joined members in singing the national anthem. The purposely elaborate and moving ceremony was designed not only to allow congregants to honor their soldiers but also to demonstrate to the community the extent of Jewish commitment and patriotic sentiment. In a letter sent to all members urging participation in the service, Rabbi Siskin implored:

May I stress the importance of this occasion. It is no less than your duty to attend. Naturally, you will want to honor the forty young men of our congregation now in service. It is equally important that you be one of a large congregation participating in patriotic exercises such as are appropriate on this Memorial Day week-end. Let Mishkan Israel take its place with all other New Haven religious and civic institutions in honoring those who are serving and have served America in time of war.⁷¹

A year later, congregants gathered again for the dedication of a new Service Flag. Mishkan Israel scrupulously recorded and monitored the growing number of members conscripted into military service. The new flag contained seventy stars in honor of the seventy Mishkan Israel men and women serving in the armed forces at that juncture. Echoing Rabbi Siskin’s plea to congregants, the Sisterhood and Brotherhood stressed the importance of the congregation’s ongoing public demonstrations of patriotism:

*By attending you will indicate just how whole-hearted is the support which a Jewish congregation, our own Mishkan Israel, is rendering in behalf of our country. In these days, it is our inescapable duty to present to the community the true picture of our participation in the war effort.*⁷²

During the thirties, American Jews had witnessed a growing level of anti-Semitism in the United States while they learned of Hitler's extermination plan overseas. When war broke out, Jews throughout the country were especially careful to avert any charges of Jewish disloyalty. While Mishkan Israel members joined in the patriotic spirit of the war years, they remained ever-conscious of the special need to demonstrate Jewish devotion to the American cause.

World War II motivated more than ceremonies and programs reiterating Jewish patriotism. Just as they had in World War I, Mishkan Israel members performed practical services for the war effort. In 1943, the congregation arranged to schedule all synagogue activities on only five days of the week. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the temple closed completely in compliance with the national effort to conserve fuel. The congregation also cooperated in food rationing, suspended dues requirements for members in the military, and planted victory gardens in undeveloped plots of land in the Mishkan Israel cemetery. The "buddy project," instituted by the Brotherhood and Sisterhood, maintained personal contact with each Mishkan Israel member in the service. Through the temple servicemen's committee, congregants visited local hospitals each week, bringing food and cigarettes to wounded soldiers.⁷³

Beginning in 1943, Mishkan Israel discontinued regular congregational seders in order to host a special "servicemen's seder" each Passover for the duration of the war. Jewish soldiers stationed at nearby army and naval bases were invited to the temple for the combination Seder and social event. Reporting the success of the first Seder, Rabbi Siskin explained that "seventy men, mostly cadets ... were present. At the Seder we read the traditional responses and lustily sang the old Passover songs. Afterwards, the boys danced with the girls of the Congregation who had been their dinner partners." In response to the program, Rabbi Siskin received several letters from the parents of soldiers, thanking the congregation for allowing their children to celebrate Passover. Mishkan Israel did its best to care for the social as well as the religious needs of local servicemen. The temple also sponsored a Valentine's Day dance where Jewish soldiers spent the evening with female congregants.⁷⁴

INTERIM RABBIS

As the war escalated, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations urged its rabbis to join the military as chaplains. Responding to the plea, Edgar Siskin requested a leave of absence from Mishkan Israel in order to serve as a U.S. Navy chaplain. The congregation supported Siskin's decision, granting him the leave, publicly honoring his service, and agreeing to pay the difference between his rabbinic and military salaries. During Siskin's absence, Mishkan Israel engaged two interim rabbis. Rabbi Abraham Klausner served the congregation for one year before he, too, volunteered for military service. Mishkan Israel then hired Robert Goldberg to occupy the pulpit until Siskin's return. (Goldberg later

became Siskin's permanent successor and remained at Mishkan Israel for over thirty years.) Throughout his military service, Siskin communicated regularly with the congregation. His letters, published in the temple bulletins, reported on the war effort and discussed the Jewish situation in Nazi-occupied Europe and in Palestine.

Siskin's participation in the armed forces symbolized for congregants the extent of Jewish contribution and loyalty to the American cause.⁷⁵

POST-WAR YEARS

When Siskin returned to his rabbinic duties at the conclusion of the war, he encouraged the congregation to reaffirm its commitment to Reform Judaism. At a special meeting of the synagogue Board, Siskin urged the congregation to hire more professional staff, search for larger synagogue facilities, and place itself at the forefront of the American Reform movement. The Board responded positively to Siskin's plea and agreed to wholehearted pursuit of "progressive Judaism." In the late forties, Mishkan Israel defined its mission as "the teaching of Jewish religious and cultural values and the integration of the living faith of Judaism into the American scene." The congregation emphasized Reform Judaism's liberal and progressive outlook and strived to create programs relevant to contemporary American Jewish life. By 1947, the congregation had organized an adult education series which covered current events and discussed Jewish responses to the changing political and social climate. In ritual matters, Mishkan Israel remained firmly devoted to classical Reform practices, even as many American Reform Jews grew more sympathetic to traditional customs. In 1946, a Mishkan Israel congregant requested that his son be permitted to wear a *kippah* [skull cap] and *talis* [prayer shawl] at his Bar Mitzvah. Faced with a serious challenge to its synagogue norms, the Mishkan Israel ritual committee ruled that Bar Mitzvah boys wishing to "wear either or both a talis ... and a cap" would be allowed to do so. However, the committee insisted that, "It is also to be thoroughly understood that neither the Rabbi nor the congregants shall wear a cap or a talis." As traditional customs crept into Reform Judaism, Mishkan Israel compromised but did not abandon its classical Reform practices.⁷⁶

The congregation joined its rabbi in emphasizing the need for larger quarters in which to pursue its commitment to progressive Judaism. With a growing membership, a large school, and an expanding list of programs, Mishkan Israel had outgrown its Orange Street Temple. The synagogue Board first considered building a Community House "to provide an inviting atmosphere for our Temple groups—especially for our young people." For years, congregants discussed various expansion plans, debating whether to construct an annex, a community house, or build a completely new temple structure. No new synagogue property was purchased until the mid-1950s. However, the congregation did acquire a permanent parsonage for its rabbi in 1947. In the same year, Mishkan Israel also legally incorporated itself, having discovered with some surprise that a century of congregational life had transpired without formal incorporation.⁷⁷

The post-World War II era witnessed the close of one chapter in Mishkan Israel’s history; opposition to Zionism softened in the thirties, faded more rapidly during the war, and virtually disappeared after the Holocaust and establishment of Israel. During the crisis of war and Holocaust, Mishkan Israel congregants sent letters to U.S. government officials, urging abrogation of the 1944 British White Paper which restricted immigration to Palestine. In 1947, Mishkan Israel allowed a Zionist speaker to occupy its pulpit, although the event required some careful planning and negotiation. The Board agreed to permit a Hadassah representative to address the congregation, “with emphasis on the humanitarian position of Hadassah in Palestine and their [sic] philanthropic endeavors.” Rabbi Siskin informed anxious synagogue members that the Hadassah speaker “will avoid any controversial subject” and focus exclusively upon “the humanitarian and social service point of view.” Even as late as 1947, political Zionism was not enthusiastically embraced by all congregants, but supporters of the Zionist cause had grown more numerous and vocal. Shortly after the birth of the State of Israel, Zionism ceased to be a controversial and divisive issue within the Mishkan Israel community.⁷⁸



Rabbi Goldberg

**RABBI ROBERT E. GOLDBURG,
1948–1982**

In 1948 Edgar Siskin resigned his post after more than eighteen years on the Mishkan Israel pulpit and accepted a new position in Glencoe, Illinois. In their search for a new rabbi, congregants remembered the services that Robert Goldberg had offered during Siskin’s military leave. The Mishkan Israel Board invited Rabbi Goldberg to return to the temple on a permanent basis, citing the “many telephone calls and general sentiment... expressed by members of the congregation.”⁷⁹

Goldberg embodied the Reform movement’s commitment to progressive Judaism and social justice. He represented a new generation of

Reform leaders, unabashedly pro-Zionist and politically outspoken. Although Goldberg acknowledged that at Mishkan Israel “there are those... who do not share my feelings of happiness at the establishment of the Republic of Israel,” he openly declared his Zionist allegiance to the congregation. In his installation address, he explained to congregants that enthusiasm for the Jewish State in no way compromised his commitment to Jewish life in America.

*[O]ur future and the future of our children is inexorably bound to this nation, the United States of America, to which we acknowledge our only political allegiance and loyalty. It is here that we must fashion our destiny.*⁸⁰

In that same address, Goldberg also candidly revealed his intention to use the pulpit as a tool in the quest for social and political justice:

*This pulpit will be dedicated to freedom not alone for the oppressed in foreign lands and colonies, but for those in our own Nation who suffer discrimination, prejudice, and hatred because of Race, Color, Religion, or political creed.*⁸¹

From the first, Rabbi Goldberg presented himself as a rabbi whose religious convictions could not be confined to the synagogue alone. During Goldberg’s more than three decades as the congregation’s rabbi, Mishkan Israel reached a new level of social and political activism.

Some congregants immediately objected to Rabbi Goldberg’s outspoken brand of liberal politics. Regardless of whether they supported his views, several members believed that the rabbi should avoid political controversy. Congregants had begun to question the potential consequences of Goldberg’s activism even before he assumed the pulpit. Concerned about his involvement in the 1948 Wallace presidential campaign, one congregant insisted that the synagogue Board “dissuade Rabbi Goldberg from even lending his name to any political activity so that when he takes our pulpit he will be able to do so with the Congregation’s respect and regard which he now commands.” Faced with the first of many such complaints, the Board voted to allow Rabbi Goldberg to express his opinions freely and act according to his own judgement. In matters of ritual and sermon, the Board also insisted that “the Rabbi be free to plan the service as he sees fit.” In years to come, the Rabbi’s outspoken brand of political activism aroused many objections and precipitated more than a few controversies. Despite some divisive and heated arguments, the temple Board consistently defended his right to a free pulpit.⁸²

Rabbi Goldberg spurred the congregation to heightened political activity, but he alone did not create the spirit of activism that characterized Mishkan Israel in the fifties and sixties. In 1954, the temple created a social action committee to give expression to the “progressive content of Judaism.” The committee quickly became one of the busiest and most vocal branches of synagogue life. Committee members organized educational programs as well as political resolutions and protests. Social justice had long been a hallmark of the American Reform movement, but the campaign reached new heights in the post-war era. In congregations throughout the country, rabbis, lay members, and national leaders expressed renewed interest in implementing prophetic teachings through political activism. In 1948, the national movement created a Social Action Committee with a full professional staff. Typifying and surpassing the national trend, Mishkan Israel congregants demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to social justice. On the local level, the congregation resolved to work for “mutual understanding and respect among all groups in the city” and “eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination.” Mishkan Israel members also protested McCarthyism and fought for civil rights, consistently emphasizing the harmony between Jewish values and democratic principles. A 1959 resolution drafted by the social action committee proclaimed, “We are unalterably committed to the principles

of equality which underlie our Jewish heritage and the American democratic process. This principle demands full civil rights for all Americans regardless of color, creed, or national origin.” By the late fifties, Mishkan Israel had already emerged as a leading voice in the civil rights and social justice movements.⁸³

CONGREGATIONAL CHANGES

During the 1950s as congregants championed democratic principles, they began to look more critically at their own synagogue practices. Members came to recognize that certain long-standing temple procedures and regulations were both inequitable and discriminatory. Mishkan Israel policy had allowed the most senior members of the congregation to obtain preferable seating. While the temple modified its seating arrangements and discussed abandoning assigned pews during the 1920s, not until 1952 did Mishkan Israel finally implement a free seating policy. Free seating represented an attempt to reduce injustice and class stratification within the temple walls. To avoid emphasizing economic inequalities and to raise the level of dignity, the congregation also abolished public collection of money during High Holy Day services. In 1955, Mishkan Israel informed congregants that the “procedure for collection [of] the New Year Offering will be changed ... There will be no ‘passing of the basket’ on Rosh Hashanah. However, a basket will be provided in front of the Temple where members may drop in their ‘New Year Envelopes’ if they neglected to send their contributions by mail.”⁸⁴



Ridge Road, Hamden, 1960 —

The democratization of congregational life also required new policies of synagogue governance. Mishkan Israel had granted women temple membership in the 1920s, but had yet to extend full voting rights to female congregants. In the early fifties, the congregation complied with the “recommendation of the Executive Board of the Sisterhood” and accepted an amendment to “include the wives of members into full Temple membership including the right to

vote.” The Sisterhood had also waged a thirty-year campaign to make its president a full voting member of the synagogue Board. In 1958, the congregation revised the by-laws to allow both the Brotherhood and Sisterhood presidents to serve and cast ballots as Board members. In order to distribute power more evenly among congregants, Mishkan Israel changed the structure of the Board of Trustees. Not only were four new positions created on the Board, but the congregation ruled that no Trustee could serve more than four consecutive years. The changes implemented during the fifties did not remove all inequities within the congregation, but they did represent an important first step toward eliminating class distinctions and gender discrimination.⁸⁵

As always, Mishkan Israel remained an active participant in the New Haven religious community. By the post-war era, interfaith programming was ensconced as a standard part of synagogue life. In 1953, the congregation co-sponsored a lecture and discussion series along with Trinity Church and the Unitarian Society. Attempting to address the shared interdenominational concerns of contemporary life, the series focused on marriage and family relationships. By the 1950s, New Haven’s religious landscape had grown to include several synagogues, Jewish philanthropic agencies, as well as an active Jewish community center. Participation in the city’s religious community required Mishkan Israel to work with other Jewish as well as non-Jewish organizations. The congregation made a concerted effort to maintain good relations with its coreligionists despite ideological differences among various Jewish groups. At a 1956 synagogue Board meeting, congregants debated whether to continue their participation in the Bureau of Jewish Education. Members expressed some concern that the “Bureau is Conservative and Orthodox oriented.” At the conclusion of a lengthy discussion, Board minutes report that “[f]or community public relations it was decided to continue our membership with the Bureau of Jewish Education.” Its concern with appearances notwithstanding, Mishkan Israel succeeded in building a mutually satisfying relationship with New Haven’s other Jewish organizations.⁸⁶

HARRY SEBRAN, FIRST FULL-TIME CANTOR

By the early fifties, Mishkan Israel counted over seven hundred families on its membership roll and had expanded synagogue programming to meet the demands of a growing population. No longer a small, intimate community, the congregation created new organizations to give its members a sense of belonging and commitment. A club for synagogue couples, for example, emerged to “fulfill some of the social needs” of congregants as well as “further Temple community life and attempt to help new and old members feel the warmth of Temple friendship.” The sharp increase in membership and synagogue activities required more professional staff. In 1951, the congregation engaged the services of Harry Sebran as its first full-time cantor and youth director. With membership and programming reaching new heights, Mishkan Israel could, no longer postpone its search for additional synagogue facilities. The religious school, faced with an unprecedented “baby-boom” enrollment, desperately needed larger quarters to accommodate its student population. Since the mid-forties, congregants had recognized the need for more space, discussed various plans for physical expansion, and searched for new property without success. Finally, in 1955, Mishkan Israel purchased a plot of land on Ridge Road in Hamden in order to provide the necessary facilities for its growing congregation.⁸⁷

RIDGE ROAD TEMPLE

The acquisition of the Ridge Road property answered the congregation's need for larger quarters, but decisions made regarding construction produced an enduring controversy within the Mishkan Israel community. The original plan was first to build a Religious Education Center on the site and only later construct a new sanctuary so that the congregation could relocate on the Ridge Road property. However, through the efforts of certain Board members, the plan evolved into the immediate construction of an elaborate new temple, complete with classroom facilities and a sanctuary. The project required enormous capital investment and placed great strains on temple finances. Although Mishkan Israel launched a major fundraising drive, the campaign produced poor results. Moreover, while construction of the new temple began in the late fifties and Mishkan Israel moved to its new Ridge Road location in 1960, the Orange Street Temple was not sold until 1965. The burden of two properties combined with construction costs placed Mishkan Israel in serious financial straits. By the mid-1960s, the debt had grown so severe that the congregation was unable to pay its annual dues to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Despite the synagogue's fiscal distress, the ground consecration and dedication ceremonies took place in grand fashion, with leaders from the New Haven community and national Reform movement in attendance. When Connecticut Governor Abraham Ribicoff delivered the keynote address at the consecration and Norman Cousins spoke at the dedication, both praised the accomplishments of the Mishkan Israel community. The building itself, designed by architect Fritz Nathan, was modern and spacious; from the sanctuary's stained glass windows to the statue of Moses in the center of the foyer, the Ridge Road Temple stood as an artistic and contemporary expression of Jewish tradition. In style as well as substance, the new synagogue suited the practical needs and aesthetic demands of the congregation.⁸⁸



Sanctuary of the Ridge Road synagogue, with Rabbi Goldberg and Cantor Sebran on bimah

For all the enthusiasm surrounding the new Ridge Road Temple, discontent about the Board's handling of construction and finances endured. Several congregants resented having to shoulder increased financial burdens when they had not been involved in the building decisions. Because of the poor success of the fundraising drive, the Mishkan Israel Board established an assessment committee to determine new dues requirements for members. The dramatic increase in membership dues only exacerbated existing antagonisms. In the mid-sixties, some Mishkan Israel congregants withdrew from the synagogue and were instrumental in establishing a new Reform temple in Orange. (The new

temple was initially opposed quite vigorously by Mishkan Israel, but the two congregations eventually built a relationship of mutual respect.) Other congregants displeased by Mishkan Israel's power structure remained members, but an undercurrent of dissatisfaction lingered within the community. The conflicts surrounding the new temple reflected the changing climate of congregational life. Like so many synagogues of the period, Mishkan Israel had outgrown its smaller facilities and opted to relocate on the suburban frontier. The congregation's increasing size had produced a parallel growth in bureaucracy while efforts to insure a more inclusive and democratic synagogue government had been only partially successful. Mishkan Israel struggled to balance the needs of the individual congregant with the demands of managing and financing a large organization. Fifteen years and several bitter conflicts passed before the congregation arrived at a workable compromise.⁸⁹

RABBI GOLDBURG AND CONTROVERSY

In 1958, Mishkan Israel voted to grant Rabbi Goldberg life tenure, declaring him the "permanent Rabbi of the Congregation without further elections to that office." A majority of members supported Goldberg and wanted to "retain a man of such fine qualifications" on a permanent basis. However, a group of dissenting congregants opposed Goldberg's election and challenged the proposed slate of synagogue officers at the congregation's annual meeting. While the efforts were unsuccessful, the incident revealed the deep cleavages plaguing the congregation. Not only in 1958, but again in 1966 and 1972, discontented members proposed alternate slates of officers in an attempt to disempower Rabbi Goldberg and the Board members who supported him. Severe antagonism toward the Board and its fiscal policies along with strong opposition to Rabbi Goldberg's outspoken brand of liberal politics combined to create discord within the congregation. Rabbi Goldberg's ever-increasing level of political activism angered some members who did not share his views and did not want the pulpit to become a vehicle for political protest.⁹⁰

Goldburg remained quite candid with members in declaring his intention to fight openly and unrelentingly for social justice. "I cannot pretend neutrality," he told the congregation. "I am no neutral in the war for racial justice or the elimination of poverty. I am no neutral in the war in Vietnam ... I would like to be liked by all, but not at the price of integrity." In 1964, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a resolution to "reaffirm the rabbi's right and obligation to exercise political responsibility as a citizen and as a moral teacher."⁹¹ Rabbi Goldberg accepted that obligation wholeheartedly and insisted unconditionally upon a free pulpit. In a clear formulation of his philosophy about the role of the rabbi, Goldburg declared:

The pulpit must be free and no rabbi can teach or achieve much unless he wins the support and encouragement of his congregation. But this does not mean there should be no controversy or dissent. What it does mean, on the contrary, is that conformity is deadening, and that a rabbi who is all things to all men, who tries to please everyone, fails in his responsibility. For it is his obligation to speak to a congregation and not for it.⁹²

From the time Goldberg accepted the Mishkan Israel pulpit, the congregation was never free from dissent and disagreement. Yet despite bitter conflicts, the Mishkan Israel community consistently supported Rabbi Goldberg—by granting him life tenure, assuring him a free pulpit, and tolerating his often unpopular opinions.

Rabbi Goldberg understood from personal experience that “involvement with social justice does involve controversy and conflict.” In the 1950s, he had vocally protested McCarthyism and often been labelled a communist. While participating in a 1962 civil rights march in Georgia, Goldberg was arrested along with Martin Luther King, Jr. and other clergy. He opposed the Vietnam war “with every fibre of my being” and endured repeated accusations of subversive disloyalty to America. His liberal “crimes,” too numerous to list, earned him a file at the House Un-American Activities Committee as well as a 205-page FBI dossier. Picketing Goldberg during a 1967 Thanksgiving ecumenical service, the Connecticut Committee against Communism distributed parts of the FBI dossier to passers-by and left copies on car windshields in the Mishkan Israel parking lot. Vandalism and picketing were always a possibility at Mishkan Israel in the mid-1960s as Goldberg placed the congregation at the forefront of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam movements. Through Rabbi Goldberg’s efforts, nationally renowned activists from Martin Luther King to Stokely Carmichael spoke from the temple pulpit. Discussing the controversy that seemed to accompany his every action, Goldberg explained simply, “I think that anyone who assumes religious obligations to speak the truth ... must do it.”*



Seven presidents of Mishkan Israel unveil a plaque listing all lay leaders and presidents, 1975. From left: George Weinstein, Jack D. Barnston, Alan L. Schiff, Paul R. Press, Bertram Frankenburg, Sr., Lester R. Hershman, Maurice Ullmann

strenuously objected to the congregation’s decision to allow Stokely Carmichael to speak at a synagogue sponsored program. A highly controversial figure, Carmichael elicited strong reactions from congregants who believed that “we should not allow someone in this Temple who advocates [sic] civil disobedience and espouses anti-Semitism.” By 1967, the Board had received notice that “many members ... felt the Social Action Committee was too liberal in civil rights.”⁹⁴

In the mid-sixties, the Board received many letters and complaints about the Rabbi’s public activism and the constant political content of sermons and synagogue programs. One congregant wrote a letter to Rabbi Goldberg “in which she complained that the pulpit had been used with an overemphasis on civil rights and race relations.” The 1966 challenge to the proposed slate of synagogue officers came with protests of “too much civil rights” at the temple and opposition to “the rabbi... and what he stands for.” Many members

SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA

Despite the string of objections, Mishkan Israel remained an enthusiastic participant in the political arena, not only because its rabbi was an activist but because members themselves demonstrated wholehearted commitment to the social justice movement. Rabbi Goldberg had been instrumental in igniting the flames of political activism but the Mishkan Israel community sustained the fires. In the summer of 1961, Mishkan Israel publicly announced support for the burgeoning civil rights movement. In a statement mailed to government leaders, congregants applauded “Rev. Martin Luther King and all the courageous ‘Freedom Riders.’”



Cantor Sebran, President Paul Press, The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rabbi Goldberg, Oct. 20, 1961

Synagogue leaders and congregants collectively resolved to fight discrimination and inequality. A 1964 temple resolution urged all members to combat prejudice in their personal and professional lives and boycott any organization with discriminatory practices. Entitled “A Call to Racial Justice,” the proclamation exhorted congregants “to help achieve racial justice [by making] certain your own home, office and business are free of any taint of racism or prejudice.” As the civil rights crusade gave way to the anti-Vietnam movement, Mishkan Israel created a draft information service to counsel and advise congregants. Opposing injustice at home and abroad on both Jewish and secular fronts, Mishkan Israel made its collective voice heard from the civil rights and anti-Vietnam movements to the struggle for Soviet Jewry.⁹⁵

Congregants and their rabbi viewed the quest for social justice as a quintessentially Jewish responsibility. “As Jews whose brothers have been victims of racism during the Nazi tyranny,” declared a 1961 Mishkan Israel resolution, “we cannot look with indifference at the age-old and manifold violations of basic human dignities inflicted upon American Negroes.”⁹⁶ Not only the legacy of the Holocaust but also the prophetic teachings of Judaism motivated the congregation’s outspoken activism. Rabbi Goldberg consistently defined the struggle for social justice as an expression of prophetic morality. As the “Call to Racial Justice” so clearly articulated:

*[W]e who every Passover relive the role of the slave and who still recall that the ghetto was first invented to segregate Jews, have a special commitment. Jews are committed by faith and fate, by theology and history, to eradicate every trace of racism. The synagogue, the institutionalization of Jewish ideals, must not be a passive participant in the struggle.*⁹⁷

In 1965, as Mishkan Israel celebrated its 125th anniversary, headlines in the *New Haven Register* read, “A Congregation that Thrives on Controversy.” By the mid-sixties, congregants embraced that characterization as an integral part of Jewish identity at Mishkan Israel. Some members continued to object to the Rabbi’s outspokenness and to resist the congregation’s active participation in the political arena. However, as an institution, Mishkan Israel had internalized political activism and ongoing controversy as part of its Jewish mission and self-definition.

The congregation strived to translate its ideological commitments into synagogue programs and policies. The temple’s newly-created nursery school was organized as an “integrated school [welcoming] both Jewish and non-Jewish, white and negro” students. Looking to offer its services to the community, the synagogue Board appointed a committee to investigate whether the “physical, financial, or human facilities of Mishkan Israel might be used during the summer for an integrated summer program for children.” The congregation had established a reputation for lending community organizations and church groups the use of its building. During the 1965-66 school year, the North Haven Department of Education was without adequate facilities and Mishkan Israel volunteered the Ridge Road Temple classrooms; the only stipulation given was that no Christmas decorations or prayers would be permitted. Mishkan Israel opposed religion in the public schools as a matter of principle, not simply because the classes were taking place in its building. Congregants objected with equal force to the inclusion of Chanukah celebrations in the public school curriculum. Promoting integration and community service while adhering to strict separation of church and state, Mishkan Israel worked to implement its collective values and commitments.⁹⁸

BROADENING OF ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRAMS

During the late sixties and seventies, Mishkan Israel expanded its staff and revised its system of leadership and government. Arthur Yolkoff succeeded Harry Sebran as Mishkan Israel’s cantor and youth director in 1965; five years later, Charles Lippman arrived as the congregation’s first assistant rabbi to be followed by Bruce Cohen in 1973. (After leaving Mishkan Israel in 1976, Cohen moved to Israel, where he founded Interns for Peace, a community-based organization working to bring Arabs and Jews together.)⁹⁹ The increase in professional staff reflected the growing demands of the large Mishkan Israel community and also allowed Rabbi Goldberg greater flexibility, including a one-year sabbatical.

Faced with the changing needs and demands of members, the temple not only hired more staff, but also instituted new policies and procedures. Rabbi Goldberg remained a source of controversy at Mishkan Israel and long-standing conflicts again erupted at the 1972 annual meeting. A dissenting group initially petitioned the proposed slate of officers, eliciting heated debate and a passionate speech from Rabbi Goldberg. However, unlike previous conflicts, the 1972 meeting marked the beginning of compromise and rapprochement within the congregation. The opposing groups reached an agreement which involved the inclusion of new members as officers as well as changes in the size and structure of the Board of Trustees.

PEACE AND JUSTICE SPEAKERS, 1967–1990

Peace and Justice Speakers

- 1967 Harrison Salisbury *Report from Hanoi*
- 1969 Howard Zinn *The Crisis in American Liberalism*
- 1970 Robert Jay Litton *On Confronting Atrocity*
- 1971 George Wald *Therefore Choose Life*
- 1972 Daniel Ellsberg *The Invisible War*
- 1973 William L Shirer *Reflections on the Vietnam War*
- 1974 David McReynolds *Time for Amnesty at Home, Peace in Indo-China*
- 1975 Julian Bond *What’s Next?*
- 1976 Alger Hiss *The United Nations Yesterday and Today*
- 1978 Michael Reisman *Peace in the Middle East: A Requiem*
- 1979 Tom Wicker *An Evening with Tom Wicker*
- 1980 William Sloane Coffin Jr. *An Evening with Bill Coffin*
- 1981 Victor Navasky *Naming Names*

Robert E. Goldberg Peace and Justice Speakers

- 1982 Jack Geiger *What You Don’t Know About the Bomb Won’t Hurt You*
- 1983 Jacobo Timerman *Argentine Experience*
- 1984 Arthur Hertzberg *Morality and Foreign Policy*
- 1985 Seymour Melman *The Economic Consequences of Militarism*
- 1986 Ramsey Clark *America Ober Alles*
- 1987 Christopher Hitchens *Reaganism and Its Current Crisis*
- 1988 William Sloane Coffin Jr. *For the World to Survive*
- 1989 Peter Gould and Stephen Stearns *A Peasant of El Salvador, a play*
- 1990 Paul Robeson Jr. *The Gorbachev Revolution: Reclaiming the Faith*

The agreement did not eliminate all dissension but did create a more inclusive and democratic synagogue government. In the early 1970s, Mishkan Israel also instituted a new dues policy which furthered the democratization of congregational life. The “Fair Share” dues system allowed members to assess their own dues requirements according to established guidelines rather than be subject to an amount prescribed for them by a synagogue committee. The modifications in policy and government not only answered the needs of congregants but helped soften years of discord within the Mishkan Israel community.¹⁰⁰

Mishkan Israel informed members about current events and met their changing needs through temple programming. Always a leader in attracting prominent artists, writers, and activists, Mishkan Israel welcomed a host of nationally renowned speakers to its pulpit. In 1967, Rabbi Goldberg instituted an annual Peace and Justice Service which brought timely and influential speakers to the congregation. The social action committee also included new areas of concern within its program agenda. By 1976, the committee not only focused

on civil liberties and Soviet Jewry, but also on topics ranging from world hunger to women’s rights to Israeli politics. In addition to ongoing concern with contemporary social and political issues, Mishkan Israel made a concerted effort to address changes occurring within the congregation. By the late seventies, the temple had stepped up its family programming, organizing groups for widowed and divorced members, Jewish singles, and single parents. For Mishkan Israel members who preferred smaller, more intimate gatherings for worship and discussion, *Chavurot* were created under the auspices of the temple. Rabbi Goldberg established regular downtown lunch meetings for businesspeople and professionals in order to reach congregants with busy career responsibilities. Responding to the needs of the congregation’s growing senior citizen population, the Mishkan Israel Brotherhood arranged a limousine service to provide older members with transportation to temple services and programs. Determined to remain a vital and relevant institution, Mishkan Israel designed its activities around the contemporary concerns and needs of members.¹⁰¹

BAT MITZVAH PROGRAM

The feminist and women’s rights movements influenced congregational life in areas from ritual practice to synagogue government. In 1967, Mishkan Israel first considered instituting Bat Mitzvah celebrations in the temple. Rabbi Goldberg believed that “a girl who was willing to go through the same training as a boy should not be discriminated against” and the ritual committee also recommended “the Bat Mitzvah program ... for those girls who fulfill the requirement.” Synagogue leaders did not immediately sanction Bat Mitzvah celebrations, initially suggesting that girls only be permitted to read Torah at Junior Congregation. Not until 1972 did the congregation “endorse [the] principle of Bat Mitzvah” and fund additional teaching and tutoring for girls.¹⁰²

In the early seventies, Mishkan Israel also hired its first female religious leader, Barbara Ostfeld, as a part-time cantor. “It was my pleasure,” announced one Sisterhood woman, “to boast that Mishkan Israel does believe in women’s liberation and that we have engaged a woman cantor.” Nevertheless, Mishkan Israel women remained dissatisfied with their role in the synagogue and grew more vocal in their demands and protests. In 1972, women strenuously objected when the congregation nominated only one Sisterhood woman to the Board of Trustees. “Women are not happy doing menial tasks at the Temple,” declared the Sisterhood, “In other words they no longer want to do the dirty laundry or be considered second class citizens of their congregations.” In 1976, Alberta Roseman became the first woman to serve as president of Mishkan Israel, an indication of the Sisterhood’s successful lobbying efforts and the growing recognition of women’s rights within the congregation. By 1983, synagogue leaders plainly asserted, “At Mishkan Israel we hold that men and women are equal.”¹⁰³



Alberta Roseman, first woman president, 1976–1978

SOME TRADITIONS REINTRODUCED

Like other Reform congregations in the sixties and seventies, Mishkan Israel gradually reintroduced some traditional customs that had been abandoned during the era of radical Reform. Still unshakably committed to Reform principles, the congregation strived for balance between modern practice and Jewish tradition. In 1962, one Mishkan Israel couple requested Rabbi Goldberg to wear a *kippah* while performing a wedding ceremony; the Board gave Goldberg freedom “to use his own disgression [sic] in this matter.” Some Mishkan Israel members more strenuously opposed any hints of traditionalism. A concerned congregant told fellow Board members, “We have been accused of having ‘Creeping Conservatism’ and our reputation in the community has been tarnished inasmuch as on Sunday at the Jewish Center, our basketball team had members wearing yarmulkas.” He assured Board members that the head-covered players were only “fill-ins.”¹⁰⁴ While some members remained firmly committed to radical Reform, the congregation gradually adopted certain traditional customs. In the 1970s, Mishkan Israel voted to place *mezuzot* on all doors of the Ridge Road Temple. The Sisterhood requested that any group using the synagogue be prohibited from bringing pork products or shellfish into the building; the Board voted to apply those standards to temple auxiliaries but not to outside organizations. Mishkan Israel retained classical practices longer than many Reform congregations. Only in the last three years has the temple introduced *Gates of Prayer*, a more modern liturgy than the *Union Prayer Book* previously used in the temple. The growing sympathy to traditional customs has not deterred Mishkan Israel from supporting innovative practices, such as television broadcasts of holiday services and programs. In addition to ritual modifications, Mishkan Israel expressed a new “enthusiasm for spoken Hebrew.” In part a response to the creation of Israel, the congregation urged teachers and students to increase Hebrew proficiency and included Israeli and Yiddish folksongs in the curriculum. In recent decades, Mishkan Israel has joined other Reform congregations in accommodating new customs within the boundaries of Reform practice and ideology.¹⁰⁵

MARK J. PANOFF, ASSOCIATE 1976–1982; RABBI 1982–1986

The 1980s have brought important changes to the Mishkan Israel community. Rabbi Goldberg retired after more than thirty years on the pulpit, closing a long and eventful chapter in the congregation’s history. To this day, Mishkan Israel is identified by the political activism of the Goldberg years. Reflecting on his tenure at Mishkan Israel, Rabbi Goldberg recalled, “There were times my job was on the line.” But despite the controversy “the congregation seemed to go along whether it agreed or not ... They came to listen and began to think and talk. That’s what I wanted them to do.” As a farewell gift to their rabbi, Mishkan Israel congregants established an endowment to continue the annual Peace and Justice Service that Goldberg had created. The Service not only honors Rabbi Goldberg’s personal values and contributions, but insures the congregation’s ongoing commitment to social awareness and political activism.¹⁰⁶



Mark J. Panoff

Upon Goldberg's departure in 1982, Mark Panoff took over as Mishkan Israel's rabbi, followed in 1986 by Herbert Brockman, who serves today as rabbi of the congregation. Rabbis Panoff and Brockman have encouraged and sustained the spirit of innovation at Mishkan Israel. The congregation has also benefitted from the services of Jonathan Gordon, the temple's cantor since 1981. In addition to his cantorial duties, Gordon served as school director until 1988, when Kinneret Chiel took over as religious school principal. With more members in non-traditional family arrangements, the congregation has worked to keep its activities relevant and meaningful. The changing needs of Mishkan Israel members are addressed through

singles programs, continuing education, and adult Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations. In an effort to build a more inclusive synagogue community, the congregation also sponsors outreach programs to interfaith couples and Jews by Choice. In 1984, Lorraine Roseman, a Jew by Choice, was elected president of Mishkan Israel. In the 1980s, enthusiastic support of Israel is coupled with critical assessments of Israeli politics and culture. As Reform Jews, Mishkan Israel members have been especially concerned with Israel's refusal to accept the legitimacy of non-Orthodox groups. In 1983, Rabbi Panoff told congregants:

*We need to raise our voices on behalf of Reform Judaism in Israel. Our love and commitment to Israel cannot blind us to the fact that the Reform movement in Israel needs our moral and political support and our financial assistance.*¹⁰⁷

Closer to home, Mishkan Israel has worked to build a satisfying relationship with other Jewish groups in the New Haven community. Through jointly-sponsored events with local Conservative and Orthodox synagogues, the congregation has established a "dialogue with other branches of Judaism" and pledged "mutual respect for the rights of all Jews."¹⁰⁸

RABBI HERBERT N. BROCKMAN, 1986 –

Interfaith programs, political activism, and community involvement remained at the center of Mishkan Israel's activities in the eighties. The ecumenical spirit has touched even the youngest congregants; in 1986, Mishkan Israel kindergarten students shared a model Passover seder with guests from the Church of the Redeemer. On a more solemn note, Mishkan Israel sponsored a medical ethics forum and organized an ecumenical service "for people with AIDS, their families, and others who wish to join in a community service of spiritual healing." Still on the cutting edge of contemporary issues, Mishkan Israel delegates joined other Jewish and Christian organizations marching under the Pro-Choice banner at the 1989 Washington rally. The congregation recently became the anchor family for the

Orlovs, a Soviet Jewish family, helping them settle in the New Haven community. Rabbi Brockman has emerged as a strong leader in both interfaith and political activities. From delivering a sermon honoring Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Dixwell Avenue Church to condemning Colonel Oliver North's criminal behavior, Brockman upholds the long tradition of outspoken activism at Mishkan Israel. Citing the congregation's "dedication to social action and justice," he recently led the campaign to make Mishkan Israel classrooms available to the New Haven Urban Youth Center, a program designed to help disadvantaged and problem children from the inner city. In a fitting prelude to Mishkan Israel's 150th year, Rabbi Brockman explained, "A Temple exists to serve its members, first of all, but it should be a light to the community as well."¹⁰⁹



Rabbi Herbert N. Brockman

150 YEARS OF VITALITY

Upon its sesquicentennial, Congregation Mishkan Israel stands only a few miles from its 1840 birthplace in downtown New Haven, but the congregation's internal development far exceeds its physical movement. In the last 150 years, Mishkan Israel has undergone dramatic changes in ritual practice, attitudes toward Zionism, and political behavior. At the same time, the congregation has consistently maintained a high level of interfaith activity, community involvement, and interest in national and international affairs. Both benefitting from and contending with rabbinic leaders, Mishkan Israel congregants have shaped their community through years of struggle and commitment. The essential goals and purposes of the congregation have endured throughout a century and a half of transformation and development. Successive generations of congregants have rebalanced the scales of tradition and change as part of their ongoing reconstruction of Jewish identity in each age. Yet, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, today's Mishkan Israel members still seek to translate Jewish tradition into a modern and meaningful language. Through 150 years, Congregation Mishkan Israel has abided by the Reform movement's most basic tenet — that Judaism must evolve in order to remain vital.

NOTES

- 1 Ezra Stiles, *Itineraries*, Vol. 3, Reel 1, Roll 6, pp. 218-19, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Maier Zunder, a prominent Mishkan Israel member, offered this estimate of New Haven's Jewish population. Maier Zunder, "The Cornerstone Laid," *Morning News* 13 March 1897. The city's Jewish population was not officially recorded during these years. For a summary of Jewish population growth in New Haven, see Dan A. Oren, "The Populations of New Haven," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 5, eds. Werner S. Hirsch and Renee Kra (New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1988), pp. 153-54.
 - 2 German Jews had reason to expect gradual improvement in their status when significant reforms were introduced following the French Revolution. However, the defeat of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) resulted in political regression and renewed restrictions upon Jews. The complex history of Jewish emancipation in Germany is beyond the scope of this essay. For an excellent discussion of the topic, see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 104-105, 236; Oren, "The Populations of New Haven," p.153.
 - 3 Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 79- 209.
 - 4 Deed of Purchase, 28 August 1843, Box 40, Folder A, Mishkan Israel Archives, MSS# B54 , Whitney Library, New Haven Colony Historical Society, New Haven, Connecticut (hereafter, MIA).
 - 5 Connecticut, Public Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut (May 1843), Chapter XXXIX, p.41.
 - 6 In an 1879 article published in the *New Haven Union*, Maier Zunder listed several meeting places that preceded the congregation's first official synagogue. The group may also have met at the home of Michael Milander, the congregation's first lay Torah reader. For a reprint of the *Union* article with an introduction by Werner S. Hirsch, see "The Amazing Zunder," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 5, pp. 33-38; see also Rollin G. Osterweis, "Mishkan Israel 1840-1960: Its Places of Worship," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 2, ed. Barry E. Herman (New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1979), pp. 104-105.
 - 7 "Carrying the war into Africa," *Columbian Register*, 13 May 1843, p. 2. From 1840 until 1845, the *New Haven Register* was published as the *Columbian Register*.
 - 8 Some accounts give the name Shaar Sholom, Gate of Peace, as the name of the new synagogue. *New Haven Palladium*, 28, 29 August 1846. Almost every history of Mishkan Israel characterizes the 1846 schism as a clash between orthodox and reform. See, for example, Osterweis, "Mishkan Israel 1840-1960," p. 105. Although congregational minutes from this period have not survived, there is evidence that the division between Polish and German tradition persisted long after the 1849 reunification of the synagogue. *Jewish Messenger*, X, 9 August 1861, p.21. For a useful discussion of similar conflicts in other American Reform congregations, see Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1840-1870* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976), pp. 101-104,-and his "The Reform Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 85-87.
 - 9 Isaac Mayer Wise, *Reminiscences* (New York: Central Synagogues of New York, 1945), pp. 27-28; *New Haven Palladium*, 29 August 1846; Rollin G. Osterweis, "New Haven Jewish History," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 2, p.19. For more on Isaac Wise, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 238-45, 261-67, 276-79
- Leopold Waterman and his brother Sigmund were outspoken liberals, recognized nationally as well as in the New Haven community. While Leopold's career was abbreviated by untimely death, Sigmund Waterman became well known in Reform circles. In 1851, he emerged as a staunch opponent of the Swiss-American commerce treaty (1850) which limited trading rights to Christians. For more on the Watermans, see Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), pp. 31,37-38,102-103; Guido Kisch, "Two American Pioneers in New Haven," *Historica Judaica*, Vol. 4, 1942, pp. 16-27; a copy of Kisch's article can also be found in Box 1, Folder C, MIA.
- 10 After the reunification, the congregation met in the room that Mishkan Sholom had rented when it seceded. Early minutes record the paramount concern with strict observance of Jewish law. Mishkan Israel Board minutes 5 August 1849,18 December 1849,29 September 1850,27 April 1853, Box 1, Folder E, MIA. [Unless otherwise indicated, all references to minutes indicate the regular Board of Trustees and congregational meetings.] For an example of the detailed investigation of a member suspected of violating dietary laws, see minutes, 5 April 1852, *ibid*.

My thanks to Werner Hirsch who generously shared with me his preliminary translations of certain Mishkan Israel minutes.
 - 11 Traditional practices were the norm even within German states that encouraged religious reform. The Bavarian government supported Jewish reform efforts in the early nineteenth century, but sharply reversed its position by the 1830s. Bavarian officials prohibited rabbis from attending the Reform synods in the 1840s. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 103-104.

A discussion of the German and American influences upon the growth of Reform Judaism can be found in Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 159-65.
 - 12 Minutes, 18 August 1850, 21 April 1850, 7 July 1850, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
 - 13 *Israelite*, I, 17 November 1854, p. 150; Mishkan Israel established a school for its children as early as 1849. Minutes, 2 December 1849, 23 April 1852, 27 February 1853, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 4 January 1852, 1 February 1852. Ahavas Achos was later renamed the Daughters of '53. A copy of its constitution has been transcribed by Celia Lerner, "The Ahavas Achos Constitution," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Sarna (New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1978), pp. 17-20.
 - 15 Mishkan Israel required that a membership list be hung in the butcher shop to insure that only dues-paying members be allowed to purchase kosher meat. Minutes, 13 July 1851, 23 April 1852,26 April 1857, Box 1, Folder E, MIA. The congregation did not deny its services to New Haven Jews who were financially unable to pay membership dues or other fees. See, for example, minutes 3 July 1855, *ibid*.
 - 16 *Occident*, XI (March 1854), p.598; *Jewish Messenger*, X, 9 August 1861, p. 21.
 - 17 *New Haven Register*, 10 July 1856.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 12 July 1856.
 - 19 For a detailed discussion of Jewish involvement in the Civil War, see Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); see also Jonathan Sarna's editorial remarks in his *The American Jewish Experience* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), pp. 60-61; Rollin G. Osterweis to Harold Press, 16 December 1971, Box 1, Folder C, MIA; *Jewish Messenger*, X, 17 October 1861.
 - 20 The 1858 Mortara affair was named for the Jewish child, Edgar Mortara, forcibly removed from his parents in Bologna, Italy. When Papal authorities discovered that he had been secretly baptized by a Catholic servant, they placed the boy in a convent to be raised as a Christian. The incident provoked an international dispute and worldwide Jewish protests. The Mortara affair was a precipitating factor in the formation of the Board of Delegates. Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 215-18; Allan Tarshish, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859-1878), in *The Jewish Experience in America*, Vol. 3, ed. Abraham J. Karp (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1969), pp. 123-39.

The letter from Moses Montefiore, 24 December 1858, can be found in Box 43, Folder D, MIA; for examples of other relief efforts supported by Mishkan Israel, see minutes, 20 January 1850, 14 November 1858, 25 December 1859, 9 January 1859, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.

Mishkan Israel attended the founding meeting and joined the Board of Delegates in 1859 but resigned from the organization less than a year later. While the minutes offer no explanation for the withdrawal, many American congregations feared the Board might interfere in internal synagogue affairs and give the impression that American Jewry represented a political body. Tarshish, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites," p.128. Minutes, 13 November 1859, 1 January 1860, 8 April 1860, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
 - 21 *Occident*, XV, (July 1857), p.200; Minutes, 2 March 1856, 27 April 1856, 11, 18, 25 May 1856, Box 1, Folder E, MIA; Jonathan D. Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Temple Mishkan Israel," in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol 3, eds. Barry E. Herman and Werner S. Hirsch (New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1981), pp. 101-102. For an excellent discussion of the history of mixed seating, see Jonathan Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue*, pp. 363-94.

- 22 *American Israelite*, XV, 19 March 1869, p.2. The writer signs his name, “Joe M. R.”
- 23 Isaac Leeser quoted in Abraham J. Karp, “Overview: The Synagogue in America,” in *The American Synagogue*, pp. 7-8; minutes, 5 August 1960, 19 April 1857, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
- 24 *American Israelite*, XXVI, 3 March 1876, p.5; Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” p. 102.
- 25 Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue, p.174.
- 26 *American Israelite*, XXI, 8 August 1873, pp. 5-6; Ibid., XXVII, 10 November 1876, p.6; Ibid., XXII, 5 June 1874, p.5; Ibid., XXI, 26 September 1873, pp. 5-6. *Minbag America*, considered a moderate Reform effort relative to other prayerbooks of the period, was available with either a German or an English translation. For more on *Minbag America* and other Reform prayerbooks, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 253-55.
- 27 On Ahavas Achos, see Lerner, “The Ahavas Achos Constitution”; Arthur Chiel, “Looking Back,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 19, 26 October 1972; Harvey N. Ladin, ed., *100th Anniversary, Horeb Lodge #25*, (New Haven:1956); Sadie S. Platow Ratner, “United Order of True Sisters, New Haven Number 4, 117 Years of Sisterhood and Beneficence,” in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 3, pp. 50-63; Arthur Chiel, *A Chronicle of Eight Decades: K.O.J.* (New Haven:1974); for an example of other small Jewish associations, see *Occident*, XXIV, (October 1866), p.334-335. Both the New Haven Jewish Historical Society and New Haven Colony Historical Society hold archival collections on these organizations.
- 28 *American Israelite*, XXI, 26 September 1873, pp. 5-6; Ibid., XXII, 5 June 1874, p.5; Ibid., XXVI, 4 February 1876, p.5. Wechsler wrote regularly to the *American Israelite*, offering detailed accounts of his own efforts and the general progress within the New Haven Jewish community.
- 29 A cursory review of Wechsler’s correspondence to the *American Israelite* reveals that he had great confidence in his own abilities; Arthur A. Chiel, “Looking Back,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 20 July 1972; For more on Wechsler, see Jonathan Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” p.102.
- Sarna maintains that Mishkan Israel’s reforms came in peak periods of revolution followed by periods of stability. I have found his analysis to be both accurate and helpful in describing the pace and mood of reform at Mishkan Israel.
- 30 *Jewish Messenger*, LXXIX, 19 June 1896, p.5; Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” p.103; Chiel, “Looking Back,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 20 July 1972; *New Haven Register*, 22 February 1892.
- Minna Kleeberg is a fascinating literary figure who wrote poetry about Jewish and women’s issues. For more on Minna Kleeberg, see Judith A. Schiff, “Minna Kleeberg—A Poet for all the World,” in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 5, pp. 71- 86.
- 31 Oren, “Populations of New Haven,” p. 153. The encounter between German and East European Jews represents an important chapter in American Jewish history. For a discussion of the major issues, see Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 300-344; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 292-93.
- 32 Arthur A. Chiel, “New Haven “ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XII (1972) p.1025; *American Israelite*, XXVIII, 6 January 1882, p. 221; *New Haven Union*, 6 February 1882, copy available in Box 43, Folder G, MIA.
- 33 The efforts of Mishkan Israel’s women are recorded sporadically in congregational minutes, see minutes, 4 April 1897, 24 December 1899, 29 June 1900, Box 3, Folder A; for efforts to educate and Americanize Russian Jews, see minutes, 24 April 1892, 1 May 1892, Box 2, Folder B, MIA.
- 34 Report of Nathan Meyers to the Mishkan Israel Board, 1894, Box 36, Folder A; minutes, 10 December 1899, Box 3, Folder A, MIA.
- 35 Kaufmann Kohler, a leading Reform spokesman, first instituted Sunday services in 1874 at Chicago’s Temple Sinai. By 1891, Kohler had reversed his position on the matter and become an opponent of the Sunday service movement Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.290-91; Wechsler expressed his preference for late Friday night rather than Sunday services in the *American Israelite*, XXII, 5 June 1874, p.5.
- 36 Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.291. The text of the Pittsburgh Platform and some of the discussion at the conference is reprinted in W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources until 1948* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), pp. 31-36.
- 37 *New Haven Register*, 16 March 1892, p.1.
- 38 Ibid.; Arthur Chiel draws a similar conclusion in “Looking Back,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 27 July 1972.
- 39 *Jewish Messenger*, LXXIX, 19 June 1896, p.5; Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” pp. 103-104; Mishkan Israel instituted Sunday services sometime around 1900 but debated their feasibility and necessity until the practice was finally discontinued. For discussions about Sunday services, see minutes, 16 December 1900, Box 3, Folder A; minutes, 24 May 1908, 28 June 1908, 13 December 1908, 12 December 1909, Box 3, Folder B. As late as 1915, Mishkan Israel reported a seventy thousand dollar debt from construction of the Orange Street Temple. Not until 1922 did the congregation pay off its mortgage on the building. Report from Max Adler to Mishkan Israel (1915), Box 32, Folder B, MIA; *New Haven Register*, 12 March 1922, p. 9.
- 40 Osterweis, “Mishkan Israel 1840-1960,” p.108; *Jewish Messenger*, LXXIX, 19 June 1896, p.5; *New Haven Register*, 13, 14 March 1897; Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” p.103. Several press accounts, a congregational history composed for the dedication, and many other documents relating to the celebration can be found in Box 32, Folder E, MIA.
- 41 *New Haven Register* 30 January 1896; *ibid.*, 13, 14 March 1897; on Hirsch, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 270-76.
- 42 Minutes, 14 July 1909, 1 July 1910, 12 December 1909, 14 December 1913, Box 3, Folder B; on conversion, see minutes, 28 October 1907, Box 3, Folder B, MIA; for more on classical Reform, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 264-95.
- 43 Statement by David Levy at the synagogue dedication, 16 March 1897, Box 32, Folder E, MIA; see also *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 16 March 1897.
- 44 On the question of mixed marriage in the Reform movement, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 264, 290; the resolution and accompanying discussion about intermarriage at the 1909 meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis is reprinted in Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, pp. 257-58.
- 45 Minutes 1 April 1913, 6 May 1913, 3 June 1913, Box 3, Folder B, MIA; the rabbinic replies are reprinted in Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” pp. 104-105, 107.
- 46 Minutes 4 March 1913, Box 3, Folder B, MIA. In his final years at the congregation, Levy seemed to be both ill and absent for long periods of time. Levy’s departure was less than amiable, accompanied by some hostile rumors and accusations. The synagogue Board went so far as to investigate whether he had stolen certain items belonging to the congregation. See minutes, 2 December 1913, 13 January 1914, 4 November 1918, 9 December 1918, *ibid.*; Sarna, “Innovation and Consolidation,” pp. 104-105.
- 47 *New Haven Register*, 12 March 1922, p. 9.
- 48 Minutes, 2 December 1849, Box 1, Folder E; minutes, 11 November 1916, Box 3, Folder B; Mishkan Israel Bulletin, (hereafter, bulletin) 4 October 1917, Box 16, Folder B; minutes, 28 April 1937, Box 5, Folder B, MIA; Arthur Chiel, “Looking Back,” *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, 4 May 1972.
- 49 *American Israelite*, XXIII, 11 December 1874, p.5; *ibid.*, XXVIII, 6 January 1882, p.221; Report of School Committee, 24 April 1892, Box 36, Folder A; minutes, 14 December 1913, Box 3, Folder B; certificate issued to Congregation Mishkan Israel from the Yale Corporation, 19 January 1914, inserted in Minute Book, p. 240, Box 3, Folder B, MIA; Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 100, 106, 114.
- 50 Bulletin, 25 November 1915, 13 January 1916, Box 16, Folder A; minutes, 2 December 1913, Box 3, Folder B, MIA.
- 51 Bulletin, 1 October 1914, Box 16, Folder A; Program for Dedication of Service Flag, 31 May 1918, Box 33, Folder G; Sisterhood minutes, 30 March 1917, 11 April 1917, 4 October 1917, Box 48, Folder A; minutes, 8 July 1918, 1 October 1918, Box 3, Folder B, MIA.
- 52 Minutes, 8 December 1904, Box 3, Folder A; minutes, 5 June 1922, 2 October 1922, 28 December 1922, Box 4, Folder A, MIA.
- 53 Minutes, 11 December 1924, 18 December 1924, Box 4, Folder A; minutes, 2 December 1913, 14 December 1913, Box 3, Folder B; minutes, 4 April 1927, 9 September 1929, 3 October 1929, Box 4, Folder B; Sisterhood minutes, 10 December 1922, Box 48, Folder B; bulletin, 26 January 1922, Box 17, Folder A, MIA.
- The Mishkan Israel Sisterhood and the New Haven chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women shared many of the same members. As their programming grew more sophisticated, the two organizations divided their duties in order to avoid duplication. By 1920, the NCJW took on most communal charity work while the Sisterhood confined its efforts to “duties of the Temple only.” Sisterhood minutes, 8 April 1920, 4 November 1919, 10 November 1919, Box 48, Folder A, MIA.

- 54 *New Haven Register*, 12 March 1922, p.9. As Michael Meyer explains, “Not only did women predominate at services, but nationally Sisterhoods outnumbered Brotherhoods in chapters and individual membership by more than three to one.” Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p.306. On Reform congregations in the interwar years and the creation of Brotherhoods, see Karp, “The Reform Synagogue,” pp. 96-97; minutes, 5 November 1923, 4 February 1929, Box 4, Folder A; for more on the Brotherhood’s ongoing sponsorship of the Boy Scout Troop, see Box 42, Folder J, MIA.
- 55 For copies of the *Observer*, see Box 38, Folder H; Box 33, Folder J, MIA.
- 56 Minutes, 11 February 1918, Box 3, Folder B; minutes, 20 January 1922, Box 4, Folder A; Sisterhood minutes, 14 March 1921, Box 48, Folder B, MIA.
- 57 For more on Rabbi Mann’s activities after leaving Mishkan Israel, see Deborah Dash Moore, *B’nai B’rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 138, 142; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 308,355.
- 58 Alfred Nadler to Mishkan Israel congregants, 7 September 1931, Box 32, Folder C, MIA.
- 59 Bulletin, 6 March 1930, Box 18, Folder A; minutes, 7 November 1932, 6 February 1933, 6 March 1933, 3 April 1933, 4 May 1933, Box 5, Folder A, MIA.
- 60 Minutes, 9 November 1933, Box 5, Folder A; minutes, 28 April 1937, Box 5, Folder B; religious school committee minutes, 11 January 1934, 15 February 1934, Box 36, Folder B; bulletin, 4 November 1937, Box 19, Folder A, MIA; *New Haven Register*, 22 August 1937, 3 November 1937; *New Haven Journal-Courier*, 23 August, 1937.
- 61 Minutes, 5 November 1931, Box 4, Folder B; minutes, 11 December 1931, Box 5, Folder A; minutes, 19 October 1936, 20 December 1936, 15 February 1937, Box 5, Folder B, MIA. For a discussion of the pervasive “spiritual lethargy” in U.S. congregations during the Depression, see Robert T. Handy, “The American Religious Depression, 1925-35/” *Church History*, vol.29, no.1 (March, 1960), pp. 3-16.
- 62 Minutes, 2 October 1933, 7 May 1934, Box 5, Folder A; Sisterhood annual report, 1930, p.10, Box 43, Folder A; bulletin, 11 April 1935, Box 18, Folder C, MIA. Oren, *Joining the Club*, pp. 108, 110, 386.
- 63 Minutes, 6 February 1932, 6 September 1932, Box 5, Folder A; minutes, 14 November 1938, Box 5, Folder B; bulletin, 22 April 1938, Box 19, Folder A, MIA; *New Haven Register*, 20 April 1938.
- 64 Edgar Siskin to Mishkan Israel congregants, 15 September 1933, Box 32, Folder C; minutes, 5 February 1934, Box 5, Folder A, MIA.
- 65 Minutes, 11 December 1933, Box 5, Folder A; minutes, 15 February 1937, 30 August 1937, 6 May 1940, Box 5, Folder B, MIA. Only one year after instituting the required Hebrew exam for admission to the confirmation class, the school reversed its position and made Hebrew optional. Apparently, the new Hebrew requirements had caused “distress” for teachers and “indifference” from students. Minutes, 10 February 1941, Box 5, Folder B, MIA.
- 66 The Columbus Platform, which replaced the Pittsburgh Platform as the dearest expression of Reform principles and ideology, is reprinted in Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, pp.96-100; see also his selections on the discussion of Zionism within the Reform movement, *ibid.*, pp. 144-158.
- Nathaniel L. Nathanson, “Mr. Justice Brandeis: A Law Clerk’s Recollection of the October Term, 1934,” in *Critical Studies in American Jewish History: Selected Articles from the American Jewish Archives* Vol. 3 (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1971), p. 116; minutes, 5 February 1934, Box 5, Folder A, MIA; for further discussion of the increase in traditional practices and changing attitudes toward Zionism in the Reform movement, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 320-34.
- Interestingly, Rabbi Siskin has since become an ardent Zionist. He now lives in Israel and works with the Jerusalem Center for Anthropological Studies.
- 67 A complete account of the planning and celebration of the Centennial can be found in Box 32, Folders O-Q; Box 33, Folders A-F, MIA.
- For information on the Yale exhibit, see Box 32, Folder P; Bernard Rogowski, Address of Welcome, 5 December 1940, Box 33, Folder A; Julian Morgenstern to Congregation Mishkan Israel, 3 December 1940, Box 33, Folder E; Representative James A. Shanley, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 87, No. 16, 30 January 1941, pp. (A)359-60, copy located in Box 33, Folder C; President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Edgar Siskin, 19 November 1940, Box 33, Folder D; for a complete schedule of centennial programs, see *Centennial Volume*, Box 33, Folders B, C, MIA.
- 68 Minutes, 7 January 1941, Box 5, Folder B; minutes, 5 January 1942, 3 November 1941, Box 6, Folder A; minutes, 5 December 1927, Box 4, Folder B; on radio broadcasts in Reform congregations, see Jick, “The Reform Synagogue,” pp.98-99; Sisterhood minutes, 6 February 1941, 5, 9 March 1942, 11 May 1942, Box 48, Folder E.
- 69 For two excellent discussions of Jewish reactions to religion in the public schools, see Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 91-101 and Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp.89-121.
- Max Adler was among the first Mishkan Israel children to take advantage of public education. Chiel, “Looking Back,” Connecticut Jewish Ledger, 31 January 1974; for concerns about the proposal for full-day public schooling, see minutes, 2 January 1853, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
- 70 For more on Maier Zunder, see Barry Herman, “Maier Zunder: New Haven’s First Jewish School Board Member,” in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 1, pp. 10-15; Edgar Siskin to John MacPartland, 16 February 1943, Box 43, Folder G; minutes, 6 May 1946, Box 6, Folder A, MIA.
- 71 Edgar Siskin to Congregation Mishkan Israel, 27 May 1942, Siskin’s emphasis, Box 33, Folder G, MIA; for copies of the program for “Service of Patriotic Dedication,” see *ibid.*
- 72 Letter from Sisterhood and Brotherhood to Mishkan Israel Congregation, 31 January 1943, *ibid.*
- 73 Bulletin, 27 January 1943, Box 19, Folder C; minutes, 8 March 1943, 7 February 1944, Box 6, Folder A; Sisterhood minutes, 9 March 1942, Box 48, Folder E, MIA.
- 74 Minutes, 8 March 1943, 20 April 1943, 1 May 1944, Box 6, Folder A; Edgar Siskin, 26 April 1943, Box 33, Folder H; for copies of invitations to the servicemen’s seder and Valentine’s Day dance and letters from soldiers’ parents, see Box 33, Folder H; bulletin, 18 January 1944, Box 20, Folder A, MIA.
- 75 Minutes, 8 March 1943, Box 6, Folder A; bulletin, 27 August 1943, Box 19, Folder C; for Siskin’s letters to the congregation, see the synagogue bulletins in Box 19, Folder C; Box 20, Folder A, MIA.
- 76 Minutes, 13, 20 May 1946, Box 6, Folder A; *New Haven Register*, 4 September 1946, copy located in Box 37, Folder G; for a review of Mishkan Israel’s adult education programs, see Box 42, Folder N; minutes, 11 March 1946, Box 6, Folder MIA.
- 77 Minutes, 21 February 1946, 16 March 1947, 3 June 1946, Box 6, Folder A; “An Act Incorporating the Congregation Mishkan Israel,” Senate Bill No. 17, Special Act No. 91, Box 6, Folder B, MIA.
- 78 Minutes, 3 January 1944, Box 6, Folder A; minutes, 13 October 1947, 8 December 1947, Box 6, Folder B, MIA.
- 79 Minutes, 8 January 1948, Box 6, Folder B, MIA.
- 80 Robert Goldberg, installation address, 17 September 1948, p. 2, Box 33, Folder L, MIA.
- 81 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
- 82 Minutes, 13 April 1948, 10 December 1951, Box 6, Folder MIA.
- 83 Minutes, 25 May 1954, Box 7, Folder A; bulletin, 26 March 1956, Box 20, Folder B; minutes, 8 December 1959, Box 7, Folder B, MIA; for more on the national Reform movement’s commitment to social justice in the 1950s and 1960s, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp.364-368.
- 84 Because of by-law regulations, families of pre-1896 members were permitted to retain their assigned seats. Minutes, 4 April 1921, 5 November 1923, Box 4, Folder A; minutes, 14 May 1952, Box 6, Folder B; bulletin, 8 September 1952, Box 20, Folder B; minutes, 2 June 1955, Box 7, Folder A, MIA.
- 85 Minutes, 11 December 1950, 16 April 1951, 13 May 1951, Box 6, Folder B; for examples of the Sisterhood’s repeated attempts to gain a position on the Board, see minutes, 4 April 1927, Box 4, Folder A; minutes, 27 November 1939, 29 April 1940, 4 November 1940, Box 5, Folder B; minutes, 8 January 1948, Box 6, Folder B; for changes in the Board of Trustees and the admission of Sisterhood and Brotherhood presidents, see minutes, 3 February 1958, Box 7, Folder B, MIA.
- 86 Minutes, 14 December 1953, 15 October 1956, Box 7, Folder A, MIA.

- 87 The couple's organization at Mishkan Israel was originally called the "Sunday Niters", but later changed its name to the "Mr. and Mrs. Social Club." Letter from Victor Goodman, president of Mr. and Mrs. Social Club, to members, n. d., Box 47, Folder N; minutes, 13 May 1951, 19 February 1951, Box 6, Folder B; minutes, 8, 15 August 1955, Box 7, Folder A, MIA.
- 88 A critical analysis of the Mishkan Israel community which explores this issue in great depth is Paul Vincent Boulian, "Symbolization in Organizational Life," (Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University School of Management, 1974), pp.38-107; for fundraising efforts, see minutes, 27 November 1956, 17 December 1956, 12 August 1957, Box 7, Folder A, MIA.
- In 1960, Mishkan Israel went so far as to consider conducting bingo games in the Orange Street Temple and using the revenues to alleviate the debt. However, congregants decided that such a practice would be "contrary to the teachings of liberal Judaism." Minutes, 5 December 1960, Box 7, Folder B; the Orange Street Temple was finally sold to the Redevelopment Agency of New Haven. Minutes, 26 October 1965, Box 8, Folder A; Joseph Silva, president, Mishkan Israel, to Herman Davidson, president, New England Council UAHC, 12 February 1964, Box 8, Folder A, MIA.
- For information on the ground consecration, dedication ceremonies, and other material relating to the Ridge Road Temple, see Box 34, Folders A-G3, MIA.
- 89 For a further discussion of the dues assessments and withdrawals from the congregation, see Boulian, "Symbolization in Organizational Life," pp. 41-43; Mishkan Israel initially objected to the formation of the new Reform temple (Temple Emanuel) and protested its acceptance by the UAHC. By 1967, Mishkan Israel had come to terms with the new congregation. Minutes, 6, 12 September 1966, 10 October 1966, 10 April 1967, 12 June 1967, Box 8, Folder A, MIA.
- 90 Minutes, 27 October 1958, 23 November 1958, Box 7, Folder B, MIA; for a lengthy analysis of the motivations, attitudes, and circumstances surrounding the three major public challenges to Rabbi Goldberg and the Board, see Boulian, "Symbolization in Organizational Life," pp. 38-107.
- 91 "Rabbi's Message," bulletin, September 1966, Box 20A, Folder A, MIA; CCAR Resolution reprinted in bulletin, November 1964, *ibid.*
- 92 Robert Goldberg, "Judaism: A Personal Perspective," 19 November 1976, p.2, Box 30, Folder P, MIA.
- 93 *New Haven Register*, 21 November 1965, Features section, p.2; *ibid.*, 17 September 1981, p. 38; minutes, 11 December 1967, Box 8, Folder A; minutes, 13 October 1969, Box 8, Folder B; "Rabbi's Message," bulletin, September 1966, Box 20A, Folder A, MIA; for more on the picketing tactics of anticommunist organizations and the FBI dossier file, see Elliot B. Gertel, "The Rabbi Robert Goldberg Years — A Critique of a Philosophy of Humanist Judaism," n. 1, MSS#B79, Whitney Library, New Haven Colony Historical Society.
- 94 Minutes, 15 April 1963, Box 7, Folder B; minutes, 19 May 1965, 14 November 1966, 13 February 1967, Box 8, Folder A; open letter from Irwin Schiff to Herbert Levy, 15 November 1966, Box 30, Folder H, MIA.
- 95 Minutes, 7 June 1961, 19 August 1963, Box 7, Folder B; "Call to Racial Justice," included in minutes, 13 April 1964, Box 8, Folder A; bulletin, May 1964, Box 20A, Folder A; for examples of the constant concern with both Jewish and non-Jewish political issues, see synagogue bulletins Box 20A, Box 21, MIA.
- 96 Resolution, 2 June 1961, included in minutes, 7 June 1961, Box 7, Folder B, MIA.
- 97 "Call for Racial Justice," included in minutes, 13 April 1964, Box 8, Folder A, MIA; also reprinted in "A Congregation that Thrives on Controversy," *New Haven Register*, 21 November 1965, Features section, p. 2.
- 98 Minutes, 12 January 1968, 8 April 1968, 11 January 1965, Box 8, Folder A; see also 14 May 1962, Box 7, Folder B; for a clear articulation of the congregation's position on religion in the public schools, see "A Handbook for the Religious School of the Congregation Mishkan Israel," Box 37, Folder H, MIA.
- In 1973, the Mishkan Israel nursery school closed due to financial difficulties and the proliferation of other nursery schools in the area. Theodore Zanker, Co-chair, nursery school committee to George Weinstein, president, Mishkan Israel, 6 June 1973, Box 8, Folder C, MIA.
- 99 The circumstances surrounding the resignation of Cantor Sebran were a source of great conflict at Mishkan Israel. Minutes, 9 December 1963; Joseph Silva, president, Mishkan Israel to Harry Sebran, 17 December 1963, Box 7, Folder B; minutes, 9, 23 March 1964, 5, 8 June 1964, Box 8, Folder A, MIA; for an analysis of the conflict, see Boulian, "Symbolization in Organizational Life," pp. 44-51.
- Minutes, 17 June 1965, Box 8, Folder A; minutes, 8 December 1969, 22 April 1970, Box 8, Folder B, MIA.

- For more information on Interns for Peace, see *New York Times*, 12 February 1981, p. A2; David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, Teacher's Guide (Washington, D.C.: Greater Washington Educational Telecommunications Association, 1989), p.12.
- 100 Minutes, 5, 12 June 1972, Box 8, Folder C, MIA; Boulian, "Symbolization in Organizational Life," pp. 55-56, 63-94; on the Fair Share Dues plan, see minutes, 8 September 1972, 2 October 1972, Box 8, Folder C, MIA.
- 101 For a sampling of speakers visiting Mishkan Israel, see Box 26, Folder F-Box 29, Folder L; bulletin, 5 November 1976, 30 January 1976, 13 February 1976, 24 September 1976, 26 September 1975, Box 21, Folder C; Brotherhood minutes, 10 November 1970, Box 47, Folder D, MIA.
- 102 The discussion regarding Bat Mitzvah celebrations seems to have begun when the parents of one girl, who had been studying for a Bat Mitzvah before the family relocated in New Haven, wanted their daughter to be able to celebrate the occasion at Mishkan Israel. Many Board members worried that girls might leave the religious school after Bat Mitzvah and not remain for confirmation—a common practice among boys. Bat Mitzvah celebrations were initially conducted on Friday nights, but later moved to Saturday mornings. Minutes, 8 May 1967, 12 June 1967, Box 8, Folder A; minutes, 6 November, 1972, p.2; 11 December 1972, p.2; 11 January 1973, p.2, Box 8, Folder C, MIA.
- 103 Bulletin, 7 January 1972, Box 21, Folder A; Sisterhood report, 12 December 1971, minutes, 11 April 1972, p.6, Box 8, Folder C; Alberta Roseman had also been elected vice-president of the New England Region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1962. Minutes, 12 February 1962, Box 7, Folder B; bulletin, 23 April 1976, Box 21, Folder C; "Cantor's Voice," bulletin, March 1983, Box 22, Folder C, MIA.
- 104 Minutes, 15 October 1962, Box 7, Folder B; minutes, 12 January 1968, Box 8, Folder A, MIA.
- 105 Bulletin, 2 January 1976, Box 21, Folder C; minutes, 4 January 1973, Box 8, Folder C; on Hebrew, see minutes, 13 December 1971, Box 8, Folder C; bulletin, 1 November 1963, Box 20A, Folder A; minutes, 10 October 1966, 8 January 1968, Box 8, Folder A; minutes, 8 February 1960, Box 7, Folder B; interview with Rabbi Herbert Brockman, 6 February 1990; for examples of television broadcasts, see bulletin, September 1964, Box 20A, Folder A; minutes, 17 August 1964, 12 April 1965, Box 8, Folder A, MIA.
- 106 *New Haven Register*, 17 September 1981, p.38.
- 107 "Rabbi's Message," bulletin, November 1983, Box 22, Folder B, MIA.
- 108 For a description of the changing composition of Mishkan Israel's membership, see "President's Corner," bulletin, April 1987, Box 22, Folder E; on new programming, children as early as 1849. Minutes, 2 December 1849, 23 April 1852, 27 February 1853, Box 1, Folder E, MIA.
- 109 Bulletin, June 1986, Box 22, Folder D; on ecumenical services, see bulletin, February, December 1987, Box 22, Folder E, MIA; bulletin, May, June, November, December 1989, January 1990, Congregation Mishkan Israel Miscellany, New Haven Colony Historical Society



THANKS AND CREDITS

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