

GREENBURGH HEBREW CENTER CELEBRATES JUBILEE

(Part Two)

-- by Rabbi Barry Kenter

Having created a congregation, the founders of the Greenburgh Hebrew Center watched the synagogue grow and flourish. As the Jewish community expanded, so did the membership of the congregation.

Critical to Jewish identity in the river towns were the Six Day War in June 1967, and the Yom Kippur War in 1973. A renewed consciousness of the Shoah, the Holocaust, deeply affected an awareness of the importance of a vibrant, strong, identifying and identifiable Jewish community.



Rabbi Immanuel Lubliner

Beginning with its first rabbi, Rabbi Jerome Weistrop, continuing with Rabbi Mordecai Brill, of blessed memory, Rabbi Immanuel Lubliner, the synagogue's beloved rabbi emeritus, and continuing with Rabbi William Marder, Rabbi Lyle Fishman, and its present spiritual leader, Rabbi Barry Kenter, throughout its history, the synagogue's professional and lay leadership sought to engage and involve Jews both inside and outside of the synagogue.

As young families moved into the river towns, second and third generation members began to fill the

halls of the building. The 1956 addition reflected one growth spurt; the major renovation completed just five years ago attested to the continued dynamic growth of the congregation and to the need to create additional space to meet with ever-expanding requirements.

During the two years that we were out of the 515 facility, the synagogue was able to secure space for prayer and study throughout the village. A store front on Cedar Street housed the office and morning minyan; the Parish Hall at Zion Episcopal Church became the setting for our nursery program, for Shabbat and festival services. B'nai Mitzvah were celebrated at the Masters School, Beth Shalom in Hastings and at South Presbyterian Church. High Holy Days services were held in the gymnasium at Our Lady of Victory Academy and at Mercy College.

Because of the patience, courage and understanding of staff, professionals, the officers and trustees, congregants and volunteers, we were able to maintain a high level of service and performance throughout the time of our displacement. Most evident was the cooperation and assistance provided by each of the religious and educational institutions within the village.

In anticipation of our return to Broadway, the synagogue commissioned the writing of a Sefer Torah. A festive procession of Sifrei Torah, complete with klezmer accompaniment from throughout Dobbs highlighted the rededication of the building.

Among the first activities upon our return were the Bat Mitzvah of Karen Ecker and the observance of Yom Ha-Shoah.

The congregation joyously dedicated stained glass windows commissioned from the noted Israeli artist, Naphtali Bezem. The critically-acclaimed Bezem windows, symbolizing both the diaspora and Israel, are

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indeed a special addition to the artistic heritage of the village.

On a dreary fall day, as we moved out of Cedar Street, following months of preparation, packing, shlepping, and anxiety, there were not a few tears. After all, a building stores memories, moments of shared joy and sorrow. Many of those standing around as demolition began, recalled locking principals in closets on an upper floor, others spoke of storing items for rummage sales, while still others recaptured on mental footage the celebration of a simcha.

More than a year later, amidst blue and white balloons breaking up the drabness of cement and exposed beams, it was hard to believe that we had actually reached the moment of affixing the corner-stone. On a bright early spring day, as we marched back to the synagogue, up Cedar Street to Broadway,

from Clinton Avenue and from Mercy College, tears could be seen in the eyes of those who had worked and dedicated themselves to the synagogue's growth for more than four decades.

Returning to the synagogue from each of the temporary locations, with the synagogue's Torah scrolls marched in festive processions under prayer shawl canopies and to the music of a klezmer band, early members could not help but feel that earlier negative responses to the arrival of the first major influx of Jewish families after World War II had been replaced by delight in the synagogue's accomplishments.

"To Build and to Plant" -- *Jeremiah 1:10*

As we celebrate our jubilee, the seeds planted fifty years ago are bearing fruit, and the corner-stone's quote from the prophet Jeremiah remains apt as we continue to build the Jewish community and to plant the seeds that will flourish well into the next century.

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