
A HISTORY OF
CONGREGATION
ADAS EMUNO

1871–2022

Assembly of the Faithful (Jubilee x3)

A Poem by Lance Strate, written for the Sesquicentennial of Congregation Adas Emuno

Jubilee, jubilee, jubilee
Come join our sacred community
We journeyed across the land and sea
To a place where we could all breathe free

Assembly of the faithful
Gathering in celebration
We are joyful, we are grateful
For our home and congregation

Jubilee, jubilee, jubilee
We honor our living legacy
Keep alive our ancient memory
And renew our shared identity

Assembly of the faithful
Built on a strong foundation
Of learning, prayer, and justice
We affirm our dedication

Jubilee, jubilee, jubilee
May God grant us peace and harmony

And sustain us through each century
And bless and keep us all lovingly

Assembly of the faithful
In glad commemoration
Praising those who came before us
Hear now our proclamation

Jubilee, jubilee, jubilee
We join in devotion loyally
In defense of human dignity
And all of Creation's majesty

Assembly of the faithful
Hear now our confirmation
To remain steadfast and true
From generation to generation

Jubilee, jubilee, jubilee
Planting seeds for harvests yet to be
Building on our storied history
Together assembling faithfully

PROLOGUE

Congregation Adas Emuno at 150

Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz

Little did the small group of German Jewish immigrants who founded Congregation Adas Emuno in Hoboken in 1871 imagine that 150 years later we would celebrate their accomplishment and chronicle their history.

But *Hineni*—here we are!

We stand at the sesquicentennial of our beloved synagogue, with our current president, Michael Fishbein, offering us a true labor of love—a comprehensive record of our remarkable endurance resurrected with painstaking research from the scant and scattered accounts of our history.

Every time we enter this synagogue, we pass our original dedication plaque and when we enter the sanctuary we are surrounded by the memorial plaques from our original building. The names of our predecessors and their loved ones are not forgotten. Now their fuller stories will remain permanently ensconced in this book.

Congregation Adas Emuno has never been large or wealthy or influential. Rather it has been small and humble and intimate. A *heimish* home. The little engine that could.

The congregation persevered through the great pandemic of 1917-18. So too we persevered through the great pandemic of 2020-21.

The congregation weathered the Great Depression of 1929. So too we weathered the Great Recession of 2009.

Demographic changes—the shrinking Jewish population of Hoboken, compelled the congregation to relocate after nearly a century. Demographic changes—the shrinking Jewish population of Leonia and environs—once again challenge our future.

When our founders first established this congregation, they were thinking about the next generation of Jewish life beyond New York and their children who would grow up in the new world, speaking English. When they made the difficult decision to leave Hoboken, they were thinking about the next generation as well. They saw that Jewish life was now growing beyond the first-tier suburbs to the promising frontier of Bergen

County. They knew that Congregation Adas Emuno might not survive the move. But they also knew that Adas Emuno was a dedicated and down-to-earth assembly of the faithful, and they said *Hineni*!

Fifty years after our move to Leonia we continue to say *Hineni* as a warm and welcoming, progressive, inclusive Reform Jewish community. We are a congregation that welcomes interfaith households and blended families. We celebrate *Shabbat* and the holidays, study Torah every week, and teach our children Hebrew and heritage. We remain *heimish* and humble. In our post-pandemic world, there is no more urgent a need than community, and our congregation perseveres as a place of celebration, education and spiritual search.

Reading this book I marveled at the rabbis, cantors, presidents, trustees and synagogue families who have stepped up in every generation to say “Here I am.”

We give thanks for our past while embracing our future. Now it is our turn to add our chapter to the long saga of Congregation Adas Emuno. In the words of the Talmud, “Just as my ancestors planted for me, so I will plant for my children.”

Erev Purim, Adar II, 5782; March, 2022

Sesquicentennial is not a simple word to master, nor is it an easy milestone to achieve. But that hasn't stopped our "little temple that could" from reaching its 150th Anniversary. In fact, the story of Congregation Adas Emuno is one of optimism, challenges and triumphs.

Immigration to Hoboken, New Jersey

The story of Adas Emuno begins as many stories in America begin—with the immigrant experience.¹ New York City was the destination of choice for European immigrants in the 1840s and, as a consequence, neighboring Hoboken became an immigrant community as well. During this time, Hoboken was a small, largely undeveloped village. Colonel John Stevens had actually purchased the land that is now the city of Hoboken from New Jersey in 1784. (The Stevens family, founders of the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, played an important role in the history of Adas Emuno, as we shall see.) New Jersey had confiscated the land from William Bayard after he supported the British during the Revolutionary War.

As immigration to New York City surged in the 1850s and 1860s, many of the newcomers crossed the Hudson from the City and settled in Hoboken. (In fact, in 1875, German-speaking immigrants and their children amounted to one-third of the population of New York City.) By 1860, Hoboken had 9,662 residents, a vast increase from 1850 when the village had only 2,668 residents. By 1870, a year before Adas Emuno was founded, the population of Hoboken had doubled to 20,297, more than half of whom were foreign born.² Almost all of the immigrants settling in Hoboken were either German-speaking (there was no German nation-state until 1871) or Irish.

Between the Civil War and the First World War, Hoboken was primarily a German town. The German immigration was very diverse in terms of their region of origin, religion, socioeconomic class, and language (German dialects varied considerably). Most of the German-speakers in Hoboken were either skilled craftsmen or small store owners; very few were unskilled laborers. Others built successful businesses. While German-speakers tended to live in Hoboken in proximity to others from their region, they "were more concerned about marrying someone of the same religion than someone from the

¹ The following discussion of immigration to Hoboken is based on *Immigrants in Hoboken: One Way Ticket, 1845–1985*, by Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, published by The History Press.

² In 1877, there were about 600 Jew living in Hoboken. *The First 100 Years: United Synagogue of Hoboken* (Published November 19, 2005).

same part of Germany.” Accordingly, they “were more likely to meet future marriage partners at church, where the crucial question of religious compatibility was already resolved.” (Could this have been one of the reasons for the establishment of Congregation Adas Emuno?) Interfaith marriage was rare and tended to be between Protestants of different denominations.

In terms of religion, German-speaking immigrants were Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Jewish, and “freethinking” (anti-church intellectuals). The German-Jewish population was small, but generally thriving. These immigrants formed churches and synagogues in Hoboken or joined existing congregations, including “one German synagogue, Adath Emuno.” (In its early years, the congregation’s name was spelled several different ways and sometimes referred to as “Temple Adath Emuno”—for example, on the marble plaque in the entrance foyer of the Leonia synagogue.) Adas Emuno was the first Jewish congregation established in Hoboken and the first Reform congregation in Hudson County. In 1901,³ Moses Montefiore, an Orthodox synagogue was established.⁴ German was the language of choice at Adas Emuno in its early years and most churches with German-speaking congregations established in Hoboken before the 20th century. (Hoboken public schools were essentially operated as a bi-lingual—English/German—educational system up to the time of America’s participation in the First World War.)

The Founding of Congregation Adas Emuno

For about ten years beginning in the 1860s, the Jews of Hoboken held services in various residences. On October 22, 1871, a small group of Jews who had been meeting for public worship at Odd Fellows Hall in Hoboken assembled for the purpose of organizing the first permanent congregation in Hudson County.⁵ Seven trustees⁶ were elected and they chose the name Adas Emuno—“Congregation of the Faithful.”⁷ Bylaws were

³ Other sources date the establishment of the Moses Montefiore Synagogue to as early as 1892.

⁴ Kupper Bier, one of the leaders of Moses Montefiore Synagogue immigrated to America from Austria and settled in Hoboken in 1895. Bier was recognized as one of the oldest men in the United States at age 108 when he visited the White House and met with President Calvin Coolidge. He died at age 110. His motto was, “Keep working, keep busy and don’t worry—that’s how to be happy and grow old.”

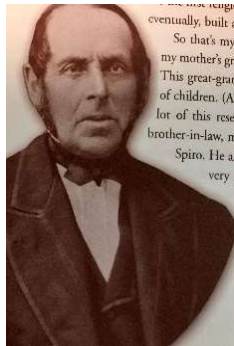
⁵ Temple Beth-El of Jersey City was also established in 1871, so the claim to be the first permanent congregation in Hudson County is questionable. See Beth-El’s website at betheljc.org. Indeed, Beth-El’s current website declares, “*Serving Hudson County’s Progressive Jewish Community for Over 150 Years.*”

⁶ The seven original trustees of Adas Emuno were Rino Berel, Charles Stern, Max Konert, Abraham Lyon, Charles Calisch, Isaac Peavy, and Moritz Leipziger. (Moritz Leipziger may have changed his name at a later date to Morris Lesser.) The certificate of incorporation was attested by Louis Ettinger as secretary.

⁷ Adas Emuno was sometimes referred to as “*The Congregation of Faith*” in printed materials of the Congregation.

adopted on November 1, 1871, and a certificate of incorporation was granted to the congregation by a county court on February 15, 1872.⁸

The newly formed congregation had about forty⁹ members, all German immigrants. Many of the early members had established businesses in Hoboken, several as “dry goods” store owners.¹⁰ Rino Berel was a bookkeeper and later an insurance agent. Louis Hart ran a clothing store in Hoboken. Morris Lesser was a metals dealer in



Hoboken. Herman Heyman, president of the “Great American Automatic Vending Machine Company,” was also an insurance and real estate broker.¹¹ The occupation of Max Konert (*pictured here*), one of the founders, is unknown. (An examination of the lives of several early members is included following the end of this history of Adas Emuno.) It is important to consider the origins and occupations of the early members of Adas Emuno since these factors were decisive in their choice to organize Adas Emuno as a Reform congregation.

So why did Adas Emuno originate as a Reform Congregation? Many of the German-speaking Central European Jews who immigrated to America and settled in Hoboken in the 1860s and early 1870s securely established themselves in their new home. They ran successful businesses and prospered. Hoboken was primarily a German-speaking town, so these recent immigrants were fundamentally comfortable in their surroundings. They mixed easily with their Christian counterparts, but that made them anxious as well because they feared their American-born children might either intermarry or even convert to Christianity. The early founders of Adas Emuno sought a way to fit into a Christian world while retaining their strong Jewish identities. Reform Judaism was a growing movement in America in this period and they saw that movement as an opportunity to meet their objectives—Judaism with decorum and more than prayer.

⁸ The certificate of incorporation designates the congregation as “Congregation ‘Adas Emunu’ of Hoboken.” The name morphed to “Temple Adath Emuno” as indicated on a marble plaque placed in the Hoboken synagogue built in 1883. The name *Congregation* Adas Emuno contains a redundancy, as the Hebrew word Adas (Adat in modern Hebrew) itself means congregation, group or community.

⁹ Some sources place the number of members at thirty-three others at forty. It is unclear whether a married couple counted as one or two members.

¹⁰ A dry goods store generally sold fabric, thread, clothing, and related merchandise, especially as distinct from hardware and groceries. Members who owned a dry goods store included Solomon Wolff and Mendel Marks.

¹¹ *The Hebrew Standard* of April 29, 1904, reported the sudden death of Herman Heyman, president of the Congregation, from heart disease. “He was just informing Mrs. William Barmeyer, janitress of... Adas Emuno... that the trustees had voted her \$10 extra for her work and was expressing his pleasure at being the bearer of the news when he reeled and said: ‘I feel very ill. Let me sit down.’” He seated himself on a couch and died in a few minutes.

The first Reform temple had opened in Seesen, Germany, in 1810. At the inaugural ceremony for the temple, an adult choir, accompanied by an organ, sang hymns in German and Hebrew.¹² The businessman who founded the temple told the attendees, “On all sides enlightenment opens up new areas for religious development. Why should we Jews be left behind?” This call “stuck a responsive chord” and Reform Judaism spread throughout Europe and then to America—carried there by the influx of German-speaking Jews from Central Europe.

The founders of Adas Emuno stressed in their observance of Judaism “the common values they shared with their non-Jewish neighbors.” They desired cultural and social assimilation even though they dreaded the idea of intermarriage. In the Classical Reform Judaism they adopted, congregants worshiped much like their Protestant neighbors.¹³ They prayed in unison (in German at first; English by the 1890s), employed a professional choir, an organ accompanied their hymns, and men and women sat together. They referred to their Rabbi as “Minister” or “Reverend.” Their hope was that these modernizations “would make services seem less foreign and more respectable, thus attracting more members to ‘ensure the strength and continuity of Judaism.’”¹⁴ To ensure their survival as Jews in a religiously diverse but secular society, the founders had to choose between traditional (Orthodox) Judaism or the growing (and soon to be dominant) Reform movement. They opted for the latter.¹⁵ (Most likely their businesses had to remain open on Saturday to prosper, so Orthodox practices would have made their lives more difficult.) Also important to the founders was the idea of “dignifying” their worship, as opposed to the perceived chaotic worship of the traditional Ashkenazic service conducted almost entirely in Hebrew. They sought a liturgy that was comprehensible as well as uplifting, so in the early years worship services were conducted primarily in German, *i.e.*, the vernacular.¹⁶

The founders chose as their first rabbi Solomon Schindler. This was a significant choice. Solomon Schindler was born in Neisse, Germany, in 1842 and was the son of a

¹² *History of Reform Judaism and a Look Ahead: In Search of Belonging*, by Lawrence A. Englander.

¹³ Initially services had been conducted with prayer books brought over from Europe. *The Record*, October 29, 1971.

¹⁴ *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* (Summer 2016), “*The Making of an Irish and Jewish Boston, 1820-1900.*” The article discusses Adath Israel, a Boston Reform synagogue. One of the prominent rabbis of that congregation was Solomon Schindler, Adas Emuno’s first rabbi.

¹⁵ According to *The Jewish Standard* (March 29, 1957), until the late 1890s there were very few Orthodox Jews living in Hoboken (fewer than a *minyan*).

¹⁶ Use of the *Union Prayer Book* was introduced at Adas Emuno in 1915.



Rabbi Solomon Schindler
(1842–1915)

Courtesy of Temple Israel Archives.

rabbi.¹⁷ Schindler was a strong-minded individual whose controversial views (opposition) about Otto von Bismarck¹⁸ made it necessary for him to leave the country and immigrate to America. Schindler arrived in America at age 29 with little in the way of resources. Because of his financial needs, Schindler reluctantly¹⁹ accepted the position of rabbi at newly formed Adas Emuno. He remained at Adas Emuno for three years, and then was hired by Temple Israel in Boston as a “preacher” and teacher, where he completed that synagogue’s transformation from an Orthodox synagogue to a Reform temple during his twenty-year tenure.

Schindler embraced American ideas and believed passionately in assimilation. In the last years of his

service at Temple Israel, he took the radical position that a universal religion of reason and science was coming. He even went so far as to advocate intermarriage and reveal his lack of faith in the existence of God. The congregation concluded he had gone too far as a reformer and dismissed him. He subsequently turned his attention to charitable work in Boston until his retirement in 1909. Near the end of his life, he offered a famous

¹⁷ Some sources indicate that his father was a cantor.

¹⁸ Bismarck was a Prussian politician who became Germany's first-ever chancellor, a position in which he served from 1871 to 1890. Through a series of wars, he unified 39 individual states into one German nation in 1871.

¹⁹ "On arriving in New York with his family, Mr. Schindler, who was without money or friends, found the darkest hours of his life before him. He made a brave struggle against starvation and death, which at this sad time robbed him of the dearest of his children. He found that fate was summoning him back to the pulpit [he had been a rabbi in Germany], a sphere he wished to avoid. Yet in the battle for bread he was tempted to respond to a call from a small Jewish congregation in Hoboken, N. J., named Adath Emuno. Out of several candidates, Mr. Schindler was chosen, and in November, 1871, he again donned his sacerdotal robes, and from that time the star of fortune began to illumine his sky. In 1874 he came to Boston and took charge of the congregation Adath Israel, which then worshiped in a small chapel on Pleasant Street." (*One of a Thousand: A Series of Biographical Sketches of One Thousand Representative Men Resident in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, A.D. 1888-'89* (1890), edited by John Clark Rand, 1890, page 542)

apologetic sermon entitled “*Mistakes I Have Made*” and modified his criticism of traditional Judaism.

The nature of Adas Emuno’s worship as a Reform congregation is evidenced by a document detailing a Confirmation service conducted on May 21, 1893, for five members of the Confirmation class (three young women, two young men, all around age 14).²⁰ The Confirmation ceremony was led by Rev. Morris (Moritz) Nathan Karasch at a regular morning service for *Shabbat*. The class entered the sanctuary while the choir²¹ sang Hymn 117. Rev. Karasch addressed the class, *in English*, “welcom[ing] [them] to the new period of life on which [they] are today entering.” Rev. Karasch continued:

The solemn hour of your confirmation has arrived and you have placed yourselves with me, before God and this congregation to consecrate your lives unto him [sic]. Holy is the place where you stand, solemn the ceremony we about to perform, important the declarations you are about to make.... I shall not take advantage of the influence of the present occasion to ask from you vows which are apt to be violated. I shall ask of you to bind yourselves to nothing more than the common obligations which virtue and morality impose on every member of society. But, my dear children, take heed and bear it in your minds that this act of your confirmation is the first important step in the career of your lives, the foundation of which is to rest the structure of your future welfare and happiness. And if to-day you have the fear and love of God firmly established in your hearts, if the germs of religion and morality so carefully planted in your breasts have sunken deep and taken roots in your young hearts, they will there grow up like a firm and powerful tree, the sweet fruit of which will be pleasing to God and man. If, however, you are insincere and wavering, if at the very outset you look upon this as a mere ceremony which shall vanish with the hour and leave no effect upon you, there is reason to fear that every future act of your lives of whatever importance will be unstable, and your whole character marked by inconsistency, and the consequences of such a character will be sad in the extreme.

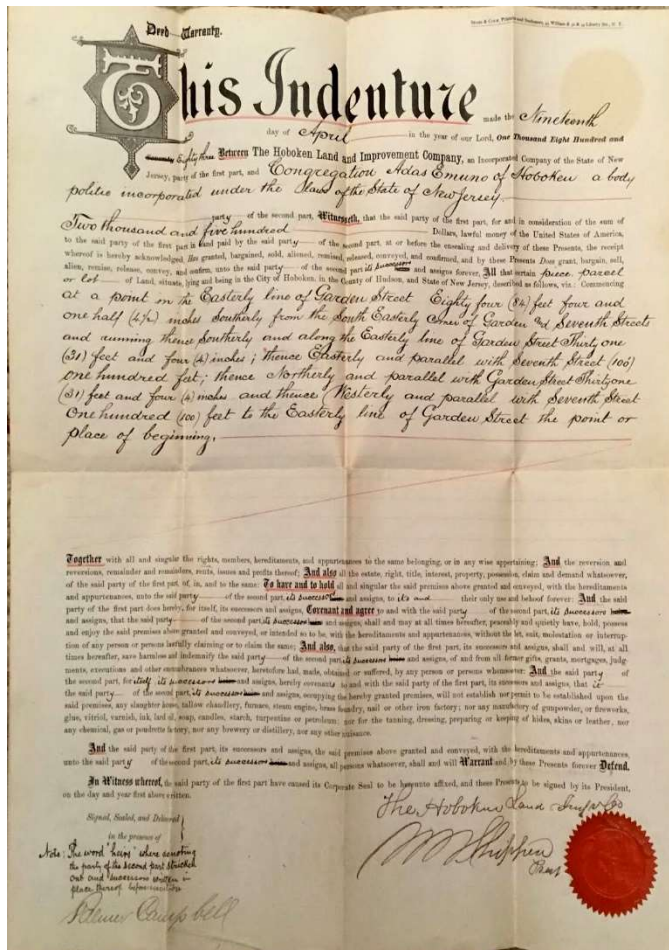
Rev. Karasch led the congregation from 1890-96 and, as evidenced by his welcoming address, could speak eloquent English. There is no mention of faithfulness to the Torah;

²⁰ The practice of *Bar Mitzvah* probably was abandoned by the early Adas Emuno congregation, although at the first annual meeting of the Congregation in 1872, president Rino Berel noted there had been two *Bar Mitzvahs* during the year. By the early 1900s, however, *Bar Mitzvahs* resumed. *Bar Mitzvah* observance was still inconceivable.

²¹ A choir—sometimes professional, most times drawn from volunteers—was a feature of services for many years. Choir members were generally young women who were members of the Congregation. There was no cantorial position.

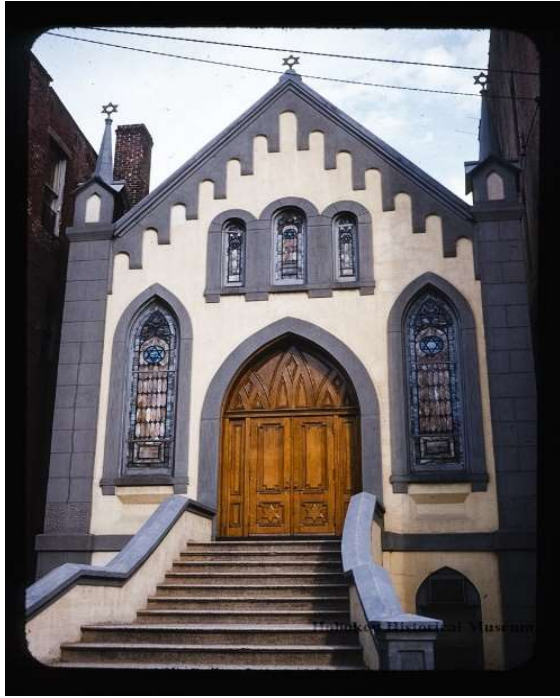
instead, the confirmation students are asked to observe “the common obligations which virtue and morality impose on *every member of society*.” This is part of the “universalist” idea of Classical Reform Judaism—integrating immigrant Jews and their children into the American scene. Also notable in the address, are Rev. Karasch last remarks predicting doom and gloom for Confirmation students who view their Confirmation as a “mere ceremony.” (Would today’s Reform rabbis speak to *B’nai Mitzvah* or confirmands this way?) Following Rev. Karasch’s welcoming address, he quizzed the Confirmation class on the principles of Jewish faith and the early history of the Jewish people. The confirmands are then asked to affirm their sincere belief in the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and accountability to God for their actions. The confirmands next thanked their parents, first in English and then German. Finally, the confirmands received the priestly benediction before the conclusion of the service.

The Adas Emuno Hoboken Synagogue



By 1866 there were about a dozen churches in Hoboken, but not one synagogue. In 1881, the necessity for a permanent edifice to house the congregation became apparent and a building committee was formed in October of that year.²² After all, the early members of Adas Emuno aspired to be much like their non-Jewish German neighbors, who by then had noteworthy houses of worship in Hoboken. Through their Hoboken Land and Improvement Company, the wealthy Stevens family “donated” to the Congregation a “land grant in perpetuity” for the construction of a synagogue at 637 Garden Street in

²² Members of the Building Committee were M. Ettinger, L. Hart, A. Lyon, S. Moos, G. Hirschberg, and M. Appel. The idea of building a synagogue in Hoboken appeared in the first annual report to the Congregation in 1872.



Hoboken.²³ The deed for this property is dated April 19, 1883, and the synagogue building²⁴ was dedicated on April 15, 1883.²⁵ According to the history of the Congregation brought up to date by Bella Schiller in 1946 (daughter of Herman Heyman and wife of Albert Schiller, both former presidents), “[b]uilding funds were raised by subscription,²⁶ and even children aided by selling ‘bricks’ to the people of Hoboken.” The synagogue, which still stands but has been converted to residential use, combines elements of Gothic and Romanesque styles. (It is sometime described as Gothic Revival in style.)

The Recollections of Paula Millenthal

*Cantor*²⁷ are those of a young woman who attended Adas Emuno’s religious school from kindergarten through Confirmation. Paula describes her memories of the synagogue:

The building, at the time I was a little girl, I thought was rather imposing. It had a flight of stairs that went up. It had stained-glass windows,²⁸ because there were memorials to a lot of my relatives in the stained-glass windows....

²³ Some sources say that the property on which the synagogue was built was *donated* by the Stevens family through the Hoboken Land and Improvement Company. The deed, however, indicates that the property was transferred to Adas Emuno “in consideration of the sum of Two thousand and five hundred Dollars.” In 2021 dollars, \$2,500 is worth \$52,349.

²⁴ They called the synagogue building “*Temple Adath Emuno*.”

²⁵ The date of the Hoboken synagogue’s dedication is engraved on a *Yad* (Torah pointer) presented to the Congregation by Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Ahrens at the dedication ceremony.

²⁶ Members of the Finance Committee were M. Konert, M. Lesser, Charles Cohen, A. Ettinger, and M. Driesen.

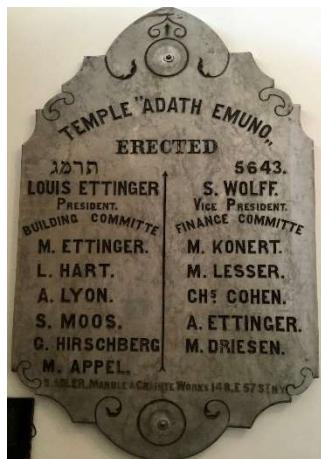
²⁷ *The Recollections* are a “chapbook” that is part of *Vanishing Hoboken: The Hoboken Oral History Project of The Hoboken Historical Museum*. Paula is the great-granddaughter of Max Konert, one of the Congregation’s founders. Paula and many of her family members were active as congregants of Adas Emuno in Hoboken.

²⁸ The memorial stained-glass windows in the Hoboken synagogue were designed and fabricated by Joseph Slomon, who was born in 1884, and lived in Union City, NJ. These windows were added as part of a renovation of the sanctuary (of which there were several). Sloman, an accomplished artist, was a member of Adas Emuno. *Who’s Who in American Jewry* (1927), page 578.

When you went in, there was a little hallway. I think they called it the vestry.... I think a lot of the terminology in Reform Judaism, especially in those days, was Christian.... [W]hile of course much was based on centuries of Jewish tradition, such as the ark, the eternal light, etc., other things, such as the stained-glass windows and the organ were probably taken from American Christianity. We had stained-glass windows along the sides, and pews—a row of pews down the middle and a row on each side; a little choir loft in the back.... Then there was... the “bema.” You walked up a few stairs, and there was a lectern for the rabbi. We didn’t have a cantor....



I think a lot of it was wood, and there were big, carved wood chairs, where the rabbi and the president and a few dignitaries might sit. The very, very first rabbi I remember was David Sherman [1939-45].



Rabbi M. Huebsch of New York gave the dedication address at the April 15, 1883, dedication of the synagogue. Louis Ettinger, the new president of the Congregation, accepted the key to the temple building from Bella Heyman, whose father was president from 1893 to 1904.²⁹ A silver “yad” (“hand” in English; a pointer used in reading from the Torah) was presented to the Congregation by Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Ahrens at the dedication of the synagogue.³⁰ William Hammerschlag presented the Congregation with a “valuable Sepher Torah” at the “consecration” of the synagogue in June 1873.³¹ A marble plaque commemorating the construction of the synagogue was placed in the vestibule of the building and is now in the entry foyer of the temple in Leonia.

The Hoboken synagogue was originally lit by gas lights and the organ pumped by hand. The building was renovated on several occasions, most notably in 1932 and 1942. At a gala 50th Anniversary affair in October 1921 held at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City, one of the feature events was the burning of the mortgage on the temple

²⁹ Bella Heyman had the honor of being given the key to the new synagogue and opening the door for the first time.

³⁰ This yad is one of the oldest objects owned by the Congregation and is still used when reading from the Torah.

³¹ Source: *The American Israelite* (Cincinnati, OH), June 13, 1873. Consecration is the solemn dedication to a special purpose or service. The word consecration literally means “association with the sacred.” (*Wikipedia*)

building. (The program for the 75th Anniversary celebration notes that “[a]ll unpaid balances had been previously underwritten by voluntary contributions.”)

On June 6, 1980, the Hoboken building (no longer a synagogue) became Hoboken’s first locally designated historic landmark. At that time the building was used by a Protestant church serving Hoboken’s Hispanic community. The building was subsequently converted to residential use, but retains its original exterior features except for the beautiful stained-glass windows.

The Eras of Eight Adas Emuno Presidents (1871–1932)³²

The German-speakers came to Hoboken either directly from Europe or with an initial stop primarily on New York City’s Lower East Side. They quickly moved to the top of the social ladder in Hoboken. German Jews were included in this upward societal move. Indeed, the German golden era in Hoboken, roughly from the 1880s to the 1910s, corresponded to Hoboken’s golden era in which the city developed a thriving industrial and commercial base as well being a transportation center, both railroad and sea.

Rino Berel’s name appears on the certificate of incorporation of Adas Emuno as president of the newly formed congregation. Rino Berel served in this capacity from 1871 through 1874.³³ Initially members gathered for services in Odd Fellows Hall³⁴ at Washington and Second Streets in Hoboken. Later they worshipped at Capp’s Hall located at Hudson and Second Streets in the city. The Congregation’s last move before constructing the Hoboken synagogue was to premises at Bloomfield and Fifth Streets; there they also established Adas Emuno’s first religious school. German was the language used in prayer along with Hebrew.

Much can be gleaned from the first annual report to the Congregation given by Rino Berel on Sunday, October 20, 1872.³⁵ He reported that the Congregation consisted of

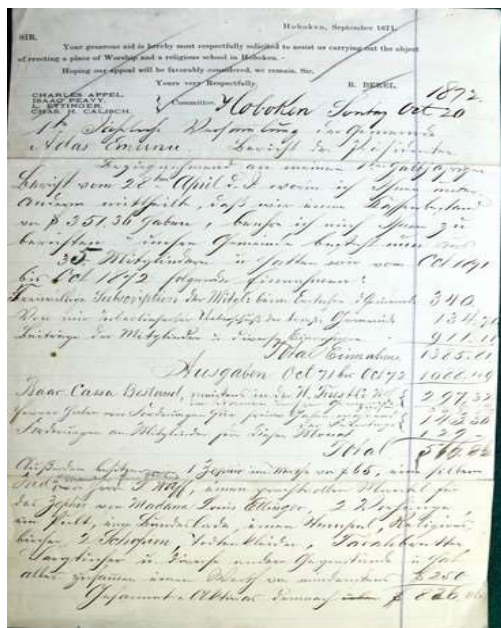
³² This section of *A History of Congregation Adas Emuno* is based mainly on the 65th Anniversary Edition (October 22, 1936) of *Temple Chronicle*, then the newsletter of the Congregation.

³³ Rino Berel was born December 21, 1826, in Breslan, Germany, and died at age 61 on May 27, 1888, after a lingering illness. His wife Rosa Loovis Berel was born June 7, 1834, in Germany, and died December 8, 1896, at age 62. Rino’s death certificate indicates his occupation as “insurance.” He had owned a “fancy goods and perfumery store” in New York City with his brother Jacob in the 1850s. Around the 1860s Rino and his brother moved to San Francisco. Apparently California was not to his liking, and in 1864 he left that state and gave Jacob power of attorney to sell property he owned in Alameda, California.

³⁴ The Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization whose goal is the promote personal and social development. The organization emphasizes the creation of goodwill among all people and aid to those in need.

³⁵ It is with much appreciation that the Congregation thanks Kurt Roberg, a member of Adas Emuno, for his translation of the early minutes which were written in an old German cursive called Kurrent.

thirty-five members, had a total income for its first year of existence of \$1,385.81, and had cash of \$297.37 held at the Hoboken Trust Company after all expenses for the year were met. The Congregation owned one Torah, a silver *yad* donated by Mr. S. Wolff, a Torah dressing donated by Mrs. Louis Ettinger, and two shofars.³⁶ According to the president,



This notable advance is partly due to the liberality of our members; primarily, however, credit can be given to the financial handling of our trustees, who made it their obligation to purchase only the most necessary things at the lowest possible prices. Since we own almost everything we need, we can estimate future expenses at \$1,000, which should be able to be covered by income without making it necessary to raise the membership dues.

The objection that we are already highly taxed cannot be raised on serious consideration because our congregation provides regular religious services, religious school instruction, and we

*grant free funeral services; we thus afford our members nearly all the advantages of a Chevra.*³⁷

In his annual report to the Congregation, Rino Berel indicated that it would be “very desirable” to find a place near Hoboken for use as a cemetery and land within the city for the building of a synagogue.

We are legally incorporated and we should be successful in obtaining these things by demonstrating to the town and the Hoboken Land Company in every way that we are good citizens and are productive and that the existence of our congregation and the enlarging of the same offers great advantages to the town.

As noted earlier, Rabbi Solomon Schindler led the Congregation in an early form of Reform Judaism, most likely based on his strong ideas. Indeed, Adas Emuno was formed two years before the American Reform movement organized in Cincinnati as the

³⁶ In all likelihood, the Congregation still has the original Torah and the two shofars.

³⁷ The word Chevra (Yiddish) means a society or tight-knit group.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations.³⁸ (Adas Emuno did not join the UAHC until April 12, 1939.)



On December 20, 1872, the Hoboken Cemetery Company donated a section of Flower Hill Cemetery to the Congregation, fulfilling the strong desire for a permanent burial ground. This section, shown in the picture, is located in North Bergen, New Jersey.³⁹ Many illustrious members are interred there, including Max Konert, one of Adas Emuno's founders. This cemetery is no longer being used by the Congregation. (On a visit by Rabbi Barry Schwartz and temple president Michael Fishbein in 2021, this small cemetery appeared to be in good condition and is being maintained.)

On June 11, 1873, the women of Adas Emuno organized under the name *"Israelitischer Frauen Hilfsverein der Germeinder Adas Emuno"*, which was later known by its English equivalent, "Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society of Congregation Adas Emuno."⁴⁰ This was the precursor to the formation of Adas Emuno's Sisterhood in January 1920. The women's group formation was a response to an economic panic in 1873 that led to a depression in which Jews suffered no less than their non-Jewish neighbors.⁴¹ A Men's Club began in 1875.⁴²

In addition to concerns about burials, intermarriage and charitable work, the newly formed Congregation was deeply concerned with the religious education of their children.⁴³ In April 1873, Reverend Solomon Schindler reported to the Board of Trustees that the religious school met on Wednesdays and Sunday afternoons to teach the reading of Hebrew and on Sunday mornings to teach religion and biblical history. Schindler

³⁸ The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), known as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) until 2003, founded in 1873 by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, is the organizational arm of Reform Judaism in North America.

³⁹ This Adas Emuno cemetery is known as "The Hoboken Cemetery." It is now being maintained by Sanford B. Epstein, Inc.

⁴⁰ For many decades there were no women on the Board of Trustees, although women played a vital role in the social life of the Congregation, fundraising, and charitable work.

⁴¹ The Panic of 1873 was a financial crisis that triggered an economic depression in Europe and North America that lasted from 1873 to 1879. (*Wikipedia*)

⁴² In 1929, the Men's Club name was officially changed to "Brotherhood."

⁴³ Once again, thanks are expressed for Kurt Roberg's translation of the early minutes of the Congregation. The following discussion is based on Kurt's translation of the second report of the school committee, dated April 20, 1873.

reported that due to very poor attendance, the Wednesday sessions were ended. He indicated that on Sundays attendance “was constant and discipline was good.” Rev. Schindler continued:

.... Generally the entire area of the Israelite religion was dealt with. The commandments, organization of the scriptures, feasts and holidays, ceremonies and dietary laws were discussed, to awaken in the children a following in these traditions and the pillars of our religion. The history of our nation was covered in the most important outlines, up to destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

Unfortunately, a similar interest could not be achieved for the Hebrew language. The reason for it seems to be the attitude of a different time. Apparently in other similar institutions no better results could be achieved either.

The religious school committee noted that because of the large number of students, “the attention as well as the interest in the studies is completely lacking and, therefore, in general the desired results are not being reached.” The committee pointed out that the stimulation for learning “has to come from the parents, just as it does for studies in the public schools.”

*.... Consequently, the [school] committee feels obligated to ask the relevant parents to urge their children to not only attend the classes on time, but also to emphasize to them the importance, or one could say, the need to learn. **How useless would otherwise be all the efforts that were made for the founding of this congregation, how wasted the sacrifices and obligations that everybody undertook, if it were not for the future of our youths to harvest the fruits of our seeds.** [Emphasis added.]*

Louis Ettinger followed Rino Berel as president of the Congregation and served from 1874 to 1890.⁴⁴ During his sixteen years of serving as president, the Congregation had three Rabbis: Rabbi Torkasch (1874-1877); Rabbi Max Bauer (1877-1880); and Rabbi Schickler (1880-1890). Before coming to Adas Emuno, Rabbi Schickler played an important role in New York City Reform Judaism. In 1873, when Harlem had only a few Jews, he was hired as the first rabbi of what was then called Congregation Hand in Hand (“*Yad be Yad*”), out of which emerged the influential Temple Israel at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 125th Street.

⁴⁴ Louis Ettinger and his brother, Moritz, owned *Ettinger Brothers, Dry and Fancy Goods, Hosiery and Underwear*, on Washington Street in Hoboken. “Mr. Louis Ettinger and Mr. Moritz Ettinger... have made it a strict rule since they have been in business, to sell goods of the very best quality at a small profit, and an evidence of the appreciation of their efforts in this direction is shown in the large trade they enjoy, and the confidence and regard of the public.” *Industries of New Jersey: Hudson, Passaic and Bergen Counties, 1883.*

Louis Ettinger was deeply involved in both the founding of Congregation Adas Emuno in 1871 and the construction of the Hoboken synagogue in 1883.⁴⁵ Accordingly, he—as well as his brother Moritz—hold a place of distinction in the history of the Congregation.

Moritz Ettinger was a vital member of Adas Emuno during the early years of the Congregation. He is described in his obituary as “one of the most prominent men associated with Jewish affairs.”⁴⁶ Moritz was born in Germany in 1841 and “belonged to a family that was renowned for learning and piety.”⁴⁷ The obituary continues:

... He possessed noble virtues and rare qualities; being modest and unostentatious, many of his charitable deeds remained unknown. He won and retained the affection of all who came within the sphere of his acquaintance.

Mr. Ettinger ever worked zealously for Congregation Adath Emuno. It was mainly through his indefatigable labors that in 1883 the synagogue of Congregation Adath Emuno, of which his brother, the late Louis Ettinger, was for many years president, could be erected. Through his efforts the Ladies' Aid Society was organized in 1873, and in his capacity as its honorary president and through his wise counsel and aid remained its source of inspiration for more than fifteen years.

But especially will his noble work in the religious school be remembered. Today many a young man and young woman rises up and calls him blessed, for the lessons that he inculcated as chairman of the school board for twenty years....

Gustav Hirschberg served as the Congregation's third president from 1890 to 1893.⁴⁸ During this period, Moritz Karasch was Adas Emuno's rabbi.⁴⁹ According to the 65th Anniversary Edition of the Congregation's newsletter (*The Temple Chronicle*, October 22, 1936), “[t]he books of the congregation show that [Gustav Hirschberg's] presidency was marked by a continuing increase in membership and that, together with Rabbi Moritz Karasch, [Hirschberg] effected many improvements in the mode of worship and

⁴⁵ The first annual report of the Congregation in October 1872 expressed thanks to Louis Ettinger as “reader of the Torah and for his arduous and free service as the secretary.”

⁴⁶ *The Hebrew Standard*, August 26, 1904.

⁴⁷ Moritz Ettinger immigrated to America in 1866.

⁴⁸ Gustav Hirschberg came to America in 1861 from Prussia, and established a business in Hoboken making caps and hats in 1872. Gustav became a Hoboken resident in 1876.

⁴⁹ Rabbi Karasch served the Congregation until 1896. A Confirmation service he conducted in 1893 is discussed earlier in this history of Adas Emuno.

the conduct of the Religious School." Among the improvements referred to may have been the use of English and not German in worship and in the religious school.

As an example of the type of social activities the Congregation enjoyed during this period, *The Hebrew Standard* (December 8, 1893) reported that Thanksgiving services were held at Adas Emuno. "There was a large attendance present and all were well pleased with the entertaining and instructive character of the ceremonies."

Herman Heyman, whose tragic death in 1904 was noted earlier, was the fourth president of Adas Emuno, serving from 1893 until his untimely passing, and was "one of its most active supporters."⁵⁰ He came to Hoboken around 1874 and succeeded in business, becoming "wealthy and respected and popular throughout the city." Just before his passing, Herman Heyman presided at the twenty-first anniversary celebration of the dedication of the Hoboken synagogue. "He spoke feelingly of the success which had crowned their efforts in renovating and redecorating the temple and expressed the hope that all would live to see the congregation still further grow and prosper." Earlier in his term in office, the Congregation celebrated its silver anniversary in October 1896. This milestone anniversary was acknowledged with a festive banquet in the Quartette Club Hall.

At a special meeting of the Board of Trustees held April 26, 1905, the Board unanimously resolved that, "as a slight token of the high regard and esteem to which Herman Heyman ever has been and ever will be held by his fellow trustees, the following be adopted":

Resolved, That in the death of Herman Heyman this congregation has sustained an incalculable loss; that the Board of Trustees herewith expresses its heartfelt sympathy with his family in their severe affliction; that the Board of Trustees attend his funeral in a body; that the foregoing be spread in full upon the minutes of the board; that as a special token of regard the memorial lamp in the Temple be lighted for thirty days....

The Congregation's rabbis during the Heyman presidency were Moritz Karasch (1890-1896); Solomon Kaufman (1896-1897); Samuel Langer (1897-1898); and Nathan Wolf (1898-1905).⁵¹

⁵⁰ Most of the following discussion is based on an article in *The Hebrew Standard* (April 29, 1904) reporting the death of Herman Heyman.

⁵¹ In 1905, there were about 1,000 Jews in Hoboken and 6,000 Jews in Jersey City. *The First 100 Years: United Synagogue of Hoboken* (Published November 19, 2005).

The next president, Solomon Moos, served from 1904 to 1909. The 65th Anniversary Edition of *Temple Chronicle* (October 22, 1936) declares that, “[h]is sterling qualities lent themselves admirably to the continuation of the work of the congregation. His dignity gave distinction to the services in the Temple and pervaded the entire organization.” Indeed, in February 1905, “a surprise party was tendered by the members of [Adas Emuno] to their president, Mr. Solomon Moos, in honor of the recent large acquisition to the membership roll.⁵² Many congratulatory speeches were delivered, and “[o]ne of the speakers waxed so enthusiastic that he promised a liberal donation toward the fund for erecting a new front for the temple.”

An important part of the Adas Emuno experience during this turn-of-the-century period involved the festive occasions enjoyed by members, particularly in keeping with the success and prosperity Adas Emuno enjoyed at this time. One example was the Congregation’s “annual mask and civic ball” in honor of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday.”⁵³ According to the account of the ball,

There was an unusually fine array of costumes and in the grand march there was a motely combination of characters....

Supper was served during the evening and was the occasion of an exchange of congratulations on the part of the rabbi, Rev. Dr. Nathan Wolf, and the people of the congregation over the prosperity which has attended the congregation... during the past year.

In 1905, it became apparent that the functions undertaken by the Hebrew Ladies’ Aid Society were “too numerous.” A decision was made to separate the charitable activities of this group from its temple and social functions. The women chose to continue the Hebrew Ladies’ Aid Society as the charity-dispensing unit of the Congregation and to form a new “auxiliary to take over those activities which belong in the realm of temple support.”⁵⁴ The result was formation of the “Herman Heyman Auxiliary,” named in memory of Herman Heyman.

During the presidency of Solomon Moos the Congregation had grown large enough that the inevitable demands for burial plots exceeded the capacity of the Hoboken Cemetery in North Bergen. On July 24, 1907, Adas Emuno acquired the North Arlington Cemetery and “transformed it into a lovely park with spacious lawns and attractive shrubbery.” (On a visit by Rabbi Barry Schwartz and temple president Michael Fishbein

⁵² *The Hebrew Standard* (March 3, 1905).

⁵³ The description of the gala event is from *The Hebrew Standard* (March 2, 1906).

⁵⁴ 65th Anniversary Edition of *Temple Chronical* (October 22, 1936).

in 2021, the North Arlington cemetery was found to be in good condition and is being maintained.)

The Congregation's rabbis during the Solomon Moos presidency were Nathan Wolf (1898-1905); Henry Stollnitz (1905-1906); and Harry Lublin (1906-1910). After his seven years as rabbi of Adas Emuno, Nathan Wolf became the rabbi of Beth-El of Jersey City, where he served for two years. It appears that Rabbi Wolf left the Congregation on good terms. In October 1906 members of the Herman Heyman Auxiliary and the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society made a presentation to both Rabbi Wolf and Mrs. Wolf, who were recently married, "as a mark of esteem."⁵⁵

Albert S. Schiller, son-in-law of Herman Heyman, served as president from 1909 to 1915 and again from 1918 to 1919.⁵⁶ "Mr. Schiller's was one of the most progressive administrations in temple history, thus continuing the example of family loyalty and active devotion set so admirably by his predecessors."⁵⁷ Schiller was engaged in the insurance business and also handled some of the most important property transactions in Hoboken.

During Schiller's first years as president, minutes of the Board of Trustees reflect that a great deal of attention was paid to improvements to the North Arlington cemetery (a road and a fence). The religious school (called the "Sabbath School") thrived with over one hundred students and excellent attendance.⁵⁸ School tuition for children of members was free, although there was concern that tuition was not being collected from non-members whose children attended the school. Rabbi Charles C. Rubens, who headed the religious school,⁵⁹ served the Congregation from 1910 through 1912 at an annual salary of \$1,100 in 1912.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *The Hebrew Standard* (October 12, 1906).

⁵⁶ Albert Schiller was also tasked with sounding the *shofar* on the High Holy Days, a high honor.

⁵⁷ 65th Anniversary Edition of *Temple Chronical* (October 22, 1936).

⁵⁸ The discussion that follows is based on the Board of Trustees's minutes during Albert Schiller's presidency, as well as the presidency of Samuel Neuberger from 1915-1918 (a difficult period for largely German Hoboken because of America's involvement against Germany in World War I). Gratitude must be extended to Recording Secretary Gustav Konert, who wrote the minutes of the Board in a beautiful and legible script for at least a decade.

⁵⁹ During this period, the rabbis each served as superintendent of the Sabbath School and reported to the Board of Trustees at every Board meeting on the school's condition.

⁶⁰ The rabbi's salary was equivalent to about \$32,000 in 2021. Membership dues at the time were \$35 a year, equivalent to nearly \$1,000 in 2021. Rabbi Rubens tendered his resignation at the Board meeting held October 31, 1912, but agreed to stay on "until a suitable successor is found." Rabbi Rubens left Adas Emuno to become

An interesting process was used to choose Rabbi Rubens's successor (as well as subsequent rabbis). One applicant for the position occupied the pulpit on November 29, 1912, and the eventual successor, Harry K. Jacobs, on December 5, 1912, "with the understanding that [Jacobs] is to show his ability to chant and sing that part of the services as has been customary by his predecessors."⁶¹ Apparently the Congregation's members liked what they heard, and at the regular quarterly meeting of the Congregation held on January 12, 1913, Jacobs was chosen as Adas Emuno's rabbi at a salary of \$1,000 a year.

On learning of his appointment as rabbi, Harry K. Jacobs wrote a letter to the Board of Trustees, dated January 19, 1913:⁶²

Permit me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter notifying me of my election as Rabbi of Congregation Adas Emuno.

In accepting the position I desire to assure the Congregation through you, that it shall be my earnest endeavor to merit the confidence you have placed in me, by discharging the duties of my sacred office with a conscientiousness that will put in my work the best and highest within me.

*Thanking you for the many kindnesses shown me in the past, I beg to remain
very sincerely yours
Harry K. Jacobs*

During 1913 there emerged a heated dispute between the Board of Trustees and the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society of Hoboken.⁶³ The HLAS paid the Congregation rent for the use of the temple for its activities. The Board indicated that rent (\$30 a year) had not been paid for several years, which the HLAS disputed. Following several meetings with Board representatives, the HLAS finally agreed to open its books for examination and it was discovered that rent had not been paid for certain years. On May 8, 1913, the officers of the HLAS wrote an apology to the Board of Trustees:

We cannot find words to express our regret at the terrible misunderstanding that has occurred recently both in your Congregation & in the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society, and the unintentional injustice done your worthy president, Mr. Schiller.

superintendent of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum in Newark, New Jersey. (*The Reform Advocate*, Volume 44, December 7, 1912, page 549.)

⁶¹ Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting of November 25, 1912. This process for deciding on a new rabbi was followed for many years.

⁶² The letter appears in the Board of Trustees's minutes of January 30, 1913.

⁶³ The organization had originally been known as the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society of Congregation Adas Emuno.

We can assure you that we feel very, very sorry and regret from the bottom of our hearts that any thing should happen which would disturb the good feeling that has existed between us during the past nearly forty years, and can only say we trust you will overlook and forgive this unpleasantness and be assured of our earnest desire to remain the same good friends in the future as we have been in the past.

We feel that had we expressed our willingness to show our books when requested, this incident would not have occurred; however, we hope you will forget it, and if we can do anything to right the wrong done to your worthy president, who we always held in the highest esteem, we are yours to command.

Trusting you will accept this our humble apology, we remain, respectfully,

Mrs. Max Driesen

Mrs. W.A. Bernstein

Mrs. E.O. Meyerson

Mrs. S.C. Fisher

At other times the minutes reflect happier—and more generous—circumstances:

Trustee [Max] Driesen stated that whereas it has come to the knowledge of the members that Miss Miriam M. Schiller, a member of the Choir for many years & assistant teacher of the Sabbath School, will be married in a few weeks, that this Congregation show their appreciation of her valuable services, by presenting to her on the occasion of her marriage, a suitable present in the name of the Congregation, and a resolution to that effect was adopted.⁶⁴

At the January 14, 1914, General Meeting of the Congregation it was reported that some members were in arrears for dues “and that the financial condition of the Congregation was very low.”⁶⁵ Some of the deficit in revenue was made up by a Thursday afternoon “Whist Club” whose activities raised funds for the Congregation’s benefit. The Board of Trustees did not shy away from asking the Herman Heyman Auxiliary for a donation “as they may deem proper” to help the Congregation’s finances.

⁶⁴ Minutes of the General Meeting of Congregation Adas Emuno, October 19, 1913. A committee was appointed to purchase the present “at an expense not to exceed \$50.00.” Quite a generous gift in view of the fact that \$50 in 1913 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$1,396.91 in 2021!

⁶⁵ When war broke out in Europe in the summer of 1914, the fear of contagion from tumbling European markets kept the New York Stock Exchange closed for more than three months. Moreover, the economy was in a recession in 1914.

At a Special Meeting of the Congregation on June 14, 1914, the Herman Heyman Auxiliary presented plans for the painting and decorating of the synagogue during July and August. At the same meeting, Herman Geismar volunteered to donate new *electric* lighting for the synagogue. Samuel Lehman and Samuel Neuberger volunteered to donate new “*electric light pillars*” for the pulpit. While mindful of the Congregation’s limited finances, the leadership believed it was important to continue to beautify the sanctuary.

Rabbi Harry K. Jacobs served the Congregation for two years⁶⁶ and was succeeded by Rabbi Henry Kleinfeld (1914–1915). Rabbi Kleinfeld wrote the following letter to President Schiller upon his election as rabbi:⁶⁷

Paterson, N.J. July 17, 1914

Mr. Albert S. Schiller, Pres. Congregation Adas Emuno, Hoboken, N.J.

Your communication notifying me of my selection to become the Minister of your esteemed Congregation received.

In acknowledgement I beg to convey my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the unanimous call extended to me.

I graciously accept this sacred call to minister before your Congregation in the capacity as Preacher, Reader & Teacher, and may the Almighty help me to discharge these duties to our mutual satisfaction.

*Very sincerely and respectfully yours,
Alexander L. Kleinfeld*

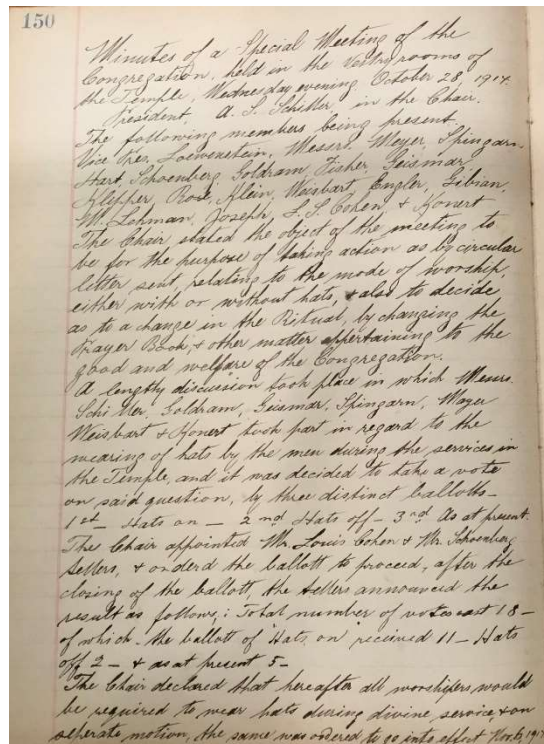
At the Board meeting of October 1, 1914, a motion was adopted to ask that Rev. Kleinfeld include at the Sunday, October 4th *Rosh Hashanah* service a special prayer for peace “in compliance with the request of the President of the U.S [Woodrow Wilson].”

At the General Meeting of the Congregation on October 18, 1914, “the question of keeping head covered or not during divine service in the Temple, also as to the adoption of the *Union Prayer Book*, was laid over for a special meeting” set for October 28th, with notices to be sent to all members informing them of this action. At that October 28th meeting, “[a] lengthy discussion took place...in regard to the wearing of hats by the men

⁶⁶ Following his tenure at Adas Emuno, Rabbi Jacobs served a congregation in Trenton. While there, he arranged for High Holy Days services at the State prison and was very active in religious matters at the State Home for Girls. (*Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1915), p. 7913.) For several years beginning in 1923, Rabbi Jacobs was the rabbi of Temple Israel of New Rochelle, a Reform congregation founded in 1908.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, July 30, 1914.

during the services in the Temple....” After a vote on this issue, “[t]he Chair declared that hereafter all worshipers would be required to wear hats during divine service” beginning November 6, 1914.⁶⁸ Use of the *Union Prayer Book* was adopted unanimously, effective January 1, 1915.



Also at the October 28, 1914, special meeting of the Congregation, Rabbi Kleinfeld, “in elegant remarks pleaded for an increase of salary of \$200....⁶⁹ But owing to the financial condition of the Treasury of the Congregation [the members] could not agree at this time to accede to the request unless the members increased their yearly dues by about 20 percent, which some of the members present were willing to do, & after all the members who wished had spoken on the question, the Chair decided that the matter would be taken up at the next quarterly meeting of the Congregation to be held in January 1915.”

At that quarterly meeting held on January 27, the question of increasing the salary of the minister was discussed, but no action was taken.

Instead, “a committee was appointed to interview Rev. Kleinfeld in relation to his removal to New York and on all other matters relating to the welfare of the Congregation.” As reported in the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting of the Congregation on April 14, 1915, “in regard to [Rev. Kleinfeld’s] removal to New York... the Rev. informed [the committee] that he did not know it was against the rules, & that he had not been told that he must reside in Hoboken.”

At the Board meeting of January 4, 1915, Rabbi Kleinfeld reported a drop in attendance at the Sabbath School “owing to the epidemic, all teachers doing their utmost to impart useful lessons, but during December a marked falling off in attendance due to the [epidemic].”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ At the Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Congregation held on January 27, 1915, the resolution adopted on October 28, 1914, compelling members (men) to wear hats at services was rescinded.

⁶⁹ \$200 is equivalent to about \$5,531.78 in 2021.

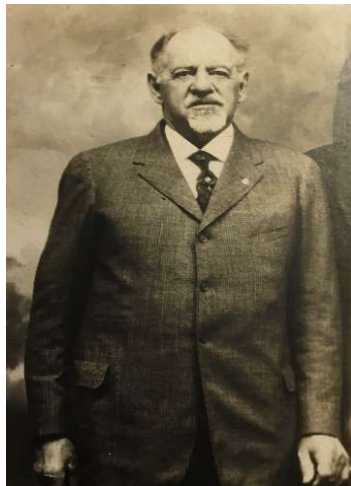
⁷⁰ This “epidemic” was not the so-called Spanish Flu epidemic (1918-1920). Perhaps the term “epidemic” was used loosely in this instance.

Collecting dues from members proved difficult during this period—yet essential due to the Congregation’s dwindling resources. In some cases, the Board of Trustees suspended congregants from membership for nonpayment of dues. In an effort to collect dues, letters were written to those in arrears and even in-person calls were made seeking commitments for an early settlement of arrears. Another source of income was High Holy Days seating. The price of seats for non-members was \$10, \$5 or \$3, “according to location.” Members could secure seats for their children or siblings at half these rates.

At the General Meeting of the Congregation on October 17, 1915, whatever dissatisfaction there was with the Rabbi came to a head:⁷¹

On motion the position of Rabbi of the Congregation now held by Rev. A.L. Kleinfeld was declared vacant at the end of his term December 31, 1915, and the Sec’y was instructed to inform the Rev. of this action, and suggest to him the advisability of tendering his resignation. Motion made to donate the sum of \$50.00 to Rev. Kleinfeld from the Treasury of the Congregation met with opposition owing to the low condition of the fund, but a voluntary subscription made by some of the members netted \$35, balance of \$15.00 to be taken from the Treasury, & a check for \$50.00 to be sent to the Reverend.⁷²

At the same time, it was announced that Albert Schiller’s term as president of the Congregation would end.⁷³ At a meeting of the Congregation on November 14, 1915, Samuel Neuberger (*pictured at left*) “was finally induced to accept” the role of president and was elected unanimously.



Several candidates for the open position of rabbi officiated at services at the end of the year into the early part of 1916. At a special meeting of the Congregation held on January 26, 1916,

... The merits of the respective applicants who had officiated during the past two months was discussed, and it appearing that the majority of the members present were favorable towards the Rev. Moses

⁷¹ In Board of Trustees’s minutes of November 29, 1915, there was a report that Rabbi Kleinfeld had been absent from several school sessions. The School Committee was tasked with informing him that it was “most necessary for him to be present” on Sunday, December 5, “to have *Chanuka* services properly observed.”

⁷² The Board of Trustees received a letter from Rabbi Kleinfeld requesting an extension of his position until February 1, 1916. In response, the Board informed Rabbi Kleinfeld that the December 31 termination of his tenure, adopted at the General Meeting of the Congregation, was final.

⁷³ Albert Schiller had a second period as president from 1918 to 1919.

Eckstein of Kingston N.Y.,⁷⁴ a vote was taken & the Rev. M. Eckstein was duly elected Rabbi of the Congregation at a salary of \$1,000 per year, & to resident in Hoboken⁷⁵....

One of the innovations brought to Adas Emuno by Rabbi Eckstein was a children's service on the Day of Atonement. The Board of Trustees authorized him to purchase one-hundred books for the use of the children on *Yom Kippur*.⁷⁶

At the general meeting of the Congregation on October 22, 1916,⁷⁷ Mrs. Herman Jaffee, and Mrs. Albert Schiller "in eloquent words addressed the members & urged them to do all in their power towards making the Ball of the H.H. Auxiliary a financial & social success, & handed the President [Samuel Neuburger] 50 tickets to be disposed of by the members."⁷⁸ Members must have been pleased with Rabbi Eckstein since they voted to raise his monthly salary from \$83.33 to \$100 a month.

In a letter to the Board dated December 6, 1916, Rabbi Eckstein made two requests:

*To the Trustees of Temple Adas Emuno
Gentlemen:*

I would be greatly obliged if arrangements could be made for the use of the school rooms one afternoon a week for Hebrew & Confirmation classes. There are meetings at present... at my home, but conditions there are not conducive to efficient work with the children; all that would be needed would be a fire in the small stove during the winter months on these occasions.

I desire also to maintain that it does not seem proper to me to give a play of a comic or semi comic nature on the pulpit on any occasion. The question is not one of orthodox or reform but of propriety; when any formal affair of a serious nature takes place, there can be no objection to the use of the pulpit. I shall abide by your wishes in this matter, but I hope you will see the merit of my contention; the vestry rooms have been used before for such purposes....

Yours respectfully, Moses Eckstein

⁷⁴ Moses Eckstein was the rabbi of Temple Israel of Kingston, a Reform synagogue.

⁷⁵ The Congregation had learned its lesson: It was made clear to the incoming Rabbi that he had to live in Hoboken.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, August 31, 1916. The tradition of Children's Services on the High Holy Days is very much alive today.

⁷⁷ Adas Emuno's 45th anniversary.

⁷⁸ A resolution in support of holding this Ball in the spring of 1917 was, for reason(s) unknown, rescinded at the quarterly meeting of the Congregation held on January 24, 1917. Perhaps the reason related to looming war clouds; the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917.

The Board approved the use of the vestry rooms, but resolved that the “*Chanuka* entertainment to be given by the children on Dec. 24, 1916, be held in the Temple.” (Adas Emuno Rabbis don’t always get their way.⁷⁹) Apparently there were no hard feelings concerning this or other matters. On February 2, 1917, Rabbi Eckstein wrote to the Board:⁸⁰

I accept the honor conferred upon me by the Congregation Adas Emuno of Hoboken in reelecting me as its Rabbi for the years commencing March 1, 1917 and herewith express my deep appreciation.

Trusting that our relations will continue to be mutually agreeable, I am with the kindest regards

*Yours sincerely,
Moses Eckstein*

Rabbi Eckstein did not shy from expressing his opinions about activities in the Temple. In a *Casablanca* moment, the minutes of March 1, 1917, include yet another letter from Rabbi Eckstein, “protesting against card playing for money in the rooms of the Temple, where parties only donate a small part of the winnings to the benefit of the Congregation, & retain the greater part as their personal gains.”⁸¹ The Board of Trustees sided with Rabbi Eckstein:

Action was taken as follows: That hereafter all games of chance, card playing, etc. for private monetary gain be prohibited in the rooms of the Temple, & the Sec’y be instructed to notify the Ladies Aid Society and the Herman Heyman Auxiliary of [this] action taken.

It is interesting to note that the membership application of Charles Heller was accepted at this meeting.⁸² Charles Heller went on to become president of the Congregation in 1919, and served until his death on February 17, 1932.

The Board of Trustees meeting of March 29, 1917, began with the sad news of the death of Lewis Hart, a charter member of the Congregation and a trustee for nearly forty years. “[A]s a mark of respect to the deceased all trustees present arose & stood silent for

⁷⁹ Another time a rabbi was rebuffed was when the National Council of Jewish Women sought to use the sanctuary for a large gathering at which non-Jewish ministers had been invited to speak. The rabbi objected to this use of the temple, but the Board of Trustees declared that, “the tendency of the day is for good will among all creeds and that the use of the temple for [this] purpose and with the speakers indicated would rather be commendable and not subject to criticism.” *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, March 7, 1929.

⁸⁰ *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, March 1, 1917.

⁸¹ “I’m shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on here!”

⁸² All new members had to be approved by the Board of Trustees.

one minute.” The death of Mrs. Solomon Moos, wife of the former president of the Congregation, was also announced at this meeting.

At the May 31, 1917, Board of Trustees meeting, Samuel Neuburger sought to resign as president, but the Board determined “they have not the power or authority to accept said resignation, as it is a Congregational matter, & must be brought up at a meeting of the Congregation...” At the October 14, 1917, General Meeting of the Congregation, Albert Schiller “*was finally induced to accept*” nomination as president for the year ending January 1918. (Before his acceptance, four other trustees had declined the nomination.) “President Neuburger vacated the Chair and President Schiller took the Chair amid great applause.”



At the quarterly meeting of the Congregation on January 20, 1918, the idea of memorial tablets was approved:

On motion the suggestion of Rev. M. Eckstein⁸³ to place Memorial Tablets in the Temple bearing the names of departed relatives of members was voted on; and it was resolved that such members as desired may do so, by voluntary contribution to such amount as they may deem expedient for each name to be not less than \$25.00. The carving of the name & date of death to be 15[cents] per letter, filled in with gold, & the full amount to be paid for in advance.

Immediately, Herman Geisman asked for two names; Louis Lehman, two names; David Mayer, two names; Charles Heller, two names; Isidore Lehman, one name; and Julius Gibian, three names.⁸⁴ Thus began the eventual creation of several memorial tablets that were later carefully moved to the sanctuary of the temple in Leonia.

The quarterly meeting of the Congregation on April 25, 1918, produced one significant development—adoption of the *Union Prayer Book* for the High Holy Days. Fifty

⁸³ At this meeting, Rabbi Eckstein was elected as the Congregation’s Rabbi for the year ending December 31, 1918.

⁸⁴ The name Solomon Moos is included on this memorial tablet. His death on January 12, 1918, was announced at the January 20, 1918, meeting of the Congregation by President Schiller “in an impressive manner and well chosen words.” Solomon Moos had been a member of Adas Emuno for thirty-eight years, served on the Board of Trustees for thirty-one years, and served five years as president.

copies of this prayer book were later purchased from Bloch Publishing Co. for 80 cents each and sold to congregants at \$1.00 each.⁸⁵

War had a direct impact on both Adas Emuno and Hoboken. Rabbi Moses Eckstein tendered his resignation, effective October 1, 1918, “owing to his entrance into the service of the Jewish Welfare Board.”⁸⁶ Hoboken itself became a strategic location since it was the main embarkation point for soldiers and sailors on their way to Europe. As a result, restrictions were placed on many of the German-speaking residents of the city who were required to register with the federal government as “enemy aliens.”⁸⁷

At the November 10, 1918, meeting of the Congregation, Charles Heller⁸⁸ was elected president, a position he would hold until his death on February 17, 1932. Heller “expressed his thanks for the honor conferred upon him, & promised with the assistance of the members to do all in his power to increase the interests of the members & to aid in the advancement and prosperity of the Congregation.” Further ushering in a new era of Adas Emuno, Jacques Landau was elected rabbi of the Congregation, a position he would hold for the next fifteen years.⁸⁹ Rabbi Landau’s salary was set at \$100 a month.⁹⁰

On November 24, 1918, the Board of Trustees adopted a ritually significant resolution requiring that the entire Congregation present during the *Mourners Kaddish* prayer rise and remain standing until the conclusion of the prayer. This is still the ritual practice at Adas Emuno.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, August 1, 1918.

⁸⁶ Founded in 1917, the role of the Jewish Welfare Board is to safeguard the rights, fulfill the spiritual needs, combat the loneliness and isolation, and honor the service of Jews in the U.S. armed forces. Several members of Adas Emuno “answered the call to arms,” including Samuel Spingarn, who became president of the Congregation in 1951.

⁸⁷ World War I brought unemployment and the closure of many businesses, displaced thousands of residents, and militarized the city. Hoboken’s bilingual English-German educational system ended after the outbreak of the war.

⁸⁸ Charles Heller was owner of The Heller Embroidery Works. *History of the Municipalities of Hudson County, New Jersey, 1630-1923, Volume 1*.

⁸⁹ Rabbi Landau’s son, Irving Landau, made his career in music. He was active as a choral director, most notably of the Radio City Glee Club in the late 1930s and 1940s. He began playing tunes on the piano at age 6 and was self-taught except for brief periods at age 10 and 12. (*The New York Times*, September 7, 1941) On October 20, 1926, young Irving Landau gave a benefit concert for the Congregation; the concert raised \$73 on the Congregation’s behalf. (*Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, January 16, 1927)

⁹⁰ By 1927, Rabbi Landau’s salary was \$250 a month.

The period of Charles Heller's presidency "was marked by heightened activity in all temple organizations."⁹¹

In January 1920, the present [speaking in 1936] Sisterhood came into being as the successor to the "Herman Heyman Auxiliary." Many new members were attracted to its fold. Due to the splendid management of its affairs, the Sisterhood remains the most important auxiliary of all Temple societies.⁹² Mrs. Herman Jaffee, its first president, is occupying that position to this day, having celebrated her 15th Anniversary in the early part of 1936. Her term was interrupted by one year of sickness, when Mrs. Samuel Lehman took her place.

A large pipe organ was installed in the Temple in June 1920. It was donated by popular subscription.⁹³

The 50th anniversary of the congregation was celebrated in October 1921. It was a magnificent event and culminated in a gala banquet at the Hotel Pennsylvania, New York. Rabbi Louis I. Newman of Temple Rodeph Sholom, New York,⁹⁴ was the guest speaker. He officiated with Rabbi Landau in the ceremony of burning up the mortgage on the Temple building. All balances had been covered previously by voluntary subscription.

At the close of the year 1928, Charles Heller and Rabbi Landau⁹⁵ looked back upon 10 years of activity. The congregation celebrated this event with a dinner, in their honor, at the Elks Club of Union City, N.J. ...

During Mr. Heller's term, in October 1931, the congregation also celebrated its 60th anniversary at the Waldheim-Stevens Forum of Hoboken, with a well attended Dinner and Dance. The only surviving building committee member, Mr. Charles

⁹¹ The following discussion of Charles Heller's years as president is taken verbatim from the 65th Anniversary Edition of the Congregation's newsletter (*The Temple Chronicle*, October 22, 1936). This is the best information we have on this period in Adas Emuno's history.

⁹² The minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Congregation on April 20, 1926, indicate that the Sisterhood presented the Congregation with a check of \$800 from events it had run, equivalent to about \$12,000 in 2021. In March 1927, the Sisterhood donated \$1,000 to the Congregation; another \$1,000 donation was made in 1929 on Purim.

⁹³ Mr. C.H. Beckman—organist of Adas Emuno for twenty-eight years—died in 1926. Proper tribute to his memory was paid by the Board at its meeting of March 4, 1926. His replacement, Mrs. De Bari, served as organist on Saturday mornings and was paid \$5.00 per service.

⁹⁴ Temple Rodeph Shalom was a Conservative synagogue founded in 1842 by wealthy German Jews.

⁹⁵ In March 1934, Rabbi Landau was installed as Rabbi Emeritus of the Congregation. President Bernard Marx—addressing Rabbi Landau at the service—said, "We prefer not to say farewell to you, but: 'Many pleasant days with us as Rabbi Emeritus.'" *Temple Adas Emuno Notes of Interest*, April 4, 1934.

Cohen, was present. A number of other anniversary events took place in the Temple during the week.

A most successful period in the annals of the congregation came to an end with the death of Charles Heller, on February 17, 1932.⁹⁶ The congregation mourned his passing with impressive services at the Temple, and the unveiling of a bronze tablet in the vestibule of the Temple, which read: "In loving memory of Charles Heller, who faithfully served this Congregation as president from 1919 to 1932."

That it could be said that Charles Heller's tenure marked a "most successful period" in Adas Emuno's history is quite a tribute to his leadership. Consider that his time in office ended with the United States mired in the Great Depression and with Hoboken in decline. Many Adas Emuno members moved out of Hoboken and resigned from the Congregation.⁹⁷ His successor, Bernard E. Marx, was left to contend with the remaining years of the Great Depression and the outbreak of the Second World War.

The Bernard E. Marx Era—and Beyond

Bernard E. Marx, who married his wife Sophia at Adas Emuno in 1924, occupies a significant role in the modern-day history of the Congregation.⁹⁸ Not only did Bernard Marx serve as president for seventeen crucial years, "[h]is prodigious energy, farsightedness, progressiveness and practical idealism mark[ed] him as preeminently fitted for the position."⁹⁹ Bernard Marx's "blending of ideas and ideals" made the difficult Depression years "a period of outstanding success in Temple affairs."¹⁰⁰

Rabbi Landau left Adas Emuno in 1934,¹⁰¹ and Rabbi Robert P. Jacobs "was installed on September 7, 1934, at an impressive Temple ceremony." Rabbis Stephen S.

⁹⁶ Samuel Spingarn, president of the Congregation beginning in 1951, is later quoted as saying, "The temple was in its heyday in the 1920s and 30s. People used to come from all over—Union City, where we lived, Old West Hoboken and Jersey City." *The Record*, October 29, 1979.

⁹⁷ Board members would usually meet personally with resigning members and ask them to reconsider. Sometimes they retained these members.

⁹⁸ Bernard Marx's application for membership in the Congregation was accepted by the Board of Trustees on August 5, 1926. His dues were set at the usual rate of \$45 a year then in effect and, as was customary, he was assigned two specific seats in the sanctuary.

⁹⁹ The 65th Anniversary Edition of *Temple Chronicle* (October 22, 1936).

¹⁰⁰ Bernard E. Marx was a CPA with offices in New York City and North Bergen.

¹⁰¹ It was reported in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* of April 8, 1934, that Dr. Jacques Landau resigned as rabbi of Adas Emuno after fifteen years of service. "No announcement was made as to future plans."

Wise and William F. Rosenblum,¹⁰² two prominent Reform rabbis of New York City congregations, participated in Rabbi Jacobs's installation.

Rabbi Jacobs was a student of Rabbi Wise at the Jewish Institute of Religion of New York, from which he graduated in 1933. Rabbi Jacobs also studied at the Hebrew University from 1931-1932 in what was then known as Palestine. Rabbi Jacobs, a 1929 graduate of Syracuse University, assumed the pulpit at Adas Emuno at age 26.

Rabbi Jacobs had—like several previous rabbis of the Congregation—effectively auditioned for his role at Adas Emuno.¹⁰³ A couple of weeks after Rabbi Landau's resignation, Rabbi Jacobs was a guest speaker at Adas Emuno, where he stressed that "unity is the sole salvation of the Jewish [people]." He asserted that affiliation with a Jewish organization was a "sacred obligation."¹⁰⁴ Rabbi Jacobs explained:

The next decade will be for the Jewish communities throughout the country a period which will necessitate stronger and stronger communal organization in order to combat the encroachments of an insane and confused anti-Jewish propaganda.

Rabbi Robert P. Jacobs served the congregation until 1938. His sermons at Adas Emuno were said to be "a source of inspiration" and services were well attended.¹⁰⁵ From 1938 to 1946, he was the rabbi of Temple Beth HaTephila in Asheville, North Carolina.¹⁰⁶ Rabbi Jacobs founded the St. Louis Hillel at Washington University in 1946 and was its first director, a position he held until 1972. In 1956, he received a Master of Social Work degree from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University. In 1962, Hebrew Union College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

¹⁰² Before joining Adas Emuno, Rabbi Jacobs headed the Hebrew department of Temple Israel of New York's religious school under Rabbi Rosenblum.

¹⁰³ While it is unclear whether Rabbi Albert Michaels of New York was auditioning for the position of rabbi, he did occupy the pulpit a week or two before Rabbi Jacobs as "the first of a series of guest speakers." *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 8, 1934.

¹⁰⁴ *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 17, 1934.

¹⁰⁵ The 65th Anniversary Edition of *Temple Chronicle* (October 22, 1936).

¹⁰⁶ *The Jewish News*, May 11, 1962.



During the early years of Marx's service as president, the Hoboken temple was

renovated and the vestry room modernized with "an adequately equipped stage." The Religious School, "with its emphasis on an activities program... [held] a high place in the esteem of the community. Children from over six neighboring towns are among the pupils in the school. Services were well attended and the choir described as 'a joy to all worshippers.'" In sum, things were going well under Bernard E. Marx's leadership.

Indeed, the Congregation expressed its approval of Bernard Marx's endeavors by holding a testimonial dinner in his honor on January 19, 1936, at the Union Club in Hoboken. The evening is described as "one of the most outstanding social events in Temple history." (This was not the last time Marx was feted.)

In 1937, the Congregation received an endowment from the estate of Phillip Waldheim, a former member. The endowment consisted of Waldheim's residence and a sizeable maintenance fund. Several years later, Adas Emuno exchanged the residence for a house adjoining the Hoboken synagogue. This house was renovated in 1945 to serve the Congregation's needs; it contained the Religious School, meeting rooms, the rabbi's study, and the caretaker's quarters.

Bernard Marx was not reluctant to express his thoughts regarding the members of Adas Emuno. In his annual report to the Congregation on October 7, 1937, while Marx "thanked all those who have helped to ease the burdens of the President, all Committees, and the Rabbi," he remarked that, "[I] do not hesitate to add here that in my opinion much more could have been done by all to contribute to the management of the affairs of the congregation." Nor was Marx averse to expressing his desire to step down from the presidency, as he did in this annual report and at numerous other times.

Marx was passionate about the religious education of the Congregation's children. He believed strongly in an early start to Jewish education, and felt that "many Jewish parents are... too lax and do little or nothing to have their children know Jewish customs, history and prayers."¹⁰⁷ According to Marx,

¹⁰⁷ Bernard E. Marx communication to members. *Summer Message Number 9*, August 18, 1949.

... Every Jewish child, from his fifth year on, should be made available by his [or her, presumably] parent to learn about the glorious religion of his [or her] ancestors. A Jewish child who knows his religion is prepared to take a proud stand in its behalf throughout life. Every Jewish child is entitled to this knowledge.

We urge our members to spread this thought among their friends and to tell them that our Congregation maintains an excellent Religious School, where the child is being taught Judaism in a liberal and truly American concept.

He was also a proponent of dialogue between Christians and Jews.¹⁰⁸ For example, on February 19, 1937, Dr. Herman Brueckner, pastor of Hoboken's St. Matthews Lutheran Church was a guest speaker at Adas Emuno.¹⁰⁹ Two hundred people attended the service and heard Dr. Brueckner speak about "Our Common Quest of God." In his remarks, Dr. Brueckner explained that the true meaning of tolerance is "the recognition of equality and the right to be what the group wishes to be, on an equal basis with all others." Rabbi Robert P. Jacobs addressed "Our Opportunities for Goodwill." Rabbi Jacobs declared that, "It is desirable to speak in fairness and to be men of goodwill in search of the truth."

In 1938—for a period of one year—Rabbi Naphtali Frishberg served as the Congregation's rabbi. Rabbi Frishberg had been rabbi of Hebrew Tabernacle, located in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, from 1934 until he assumed the pulpit at Adas Emuno.¹¹⁰

At a testimonial dinner held on December 7, 1942, celebrating Bernard Marx's tenth anniversary as president, Rabbi David Sherman—who followed Rabbi Naphtali Frishberg—"acted as toastmaster and presented Mr. Marx with a beautifully inscribed gold wrist watch as a gift of the congregation." It was also announced that in honor of the anniversary, a group of his friends had raised \$2,000 (equivalent to over \$33,000 in 2021) for essential repairs to the Hoboken synagogue.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard Marx also fostered goodwill among the various Jewish groups in Hoboken, including Orthodox Jews.

¹⁰⁹ *Jersey Observer*, Saturday Evening, February 20, 1937.

¹¹⁰ Rabbi Frishberg attended Yeshiva University, City College, Columbia University, and the Jewish Institute of Religion, where he was ordained in 1936. He was active in introducing the study of Hebrew in public schools and colleges in New York. After leaving Adas Emuno, he served as rabbi of Temple Beth El in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1951 he was installed as the first rabbi of the Hollis Hills Jewish Center in Queens. Rabbi Frishberg served that congregation until 1955, when he became the rabbi of Beth Emereth Synagogue in Larchmont, New York. Rabbi Frishberg died in 1960 at age 51. His one year at Adas Emuno is not mentioned in his obituary or any other source.



Although Rabbi Sherman served the Congregation from 1939 to 1945, there is virtually no information on his leadership during his tenure as rabbi.¹¹¹ The son of an Orthodox rabbi, he was a graduate of Boston University and Hebrew Union College. Shortly after leaving Adas Emuno, Rabbi Sherman (*pictured with his wife, Bertha Sherman, and his daughters in the mid-1950s*) emerged as a major figure in the Reform movement in

South Africa. Rabbi Sherman arrived in South Africa in July 1946 to become the first spiritual leader of a fledgling Reform congregation in Cape Town. Before that, Rabbi Sherman had left Adas Emuno near the end of the Second World War to work with the American Jewish Conference.¹¹² He was enticed into re-entering the rabbinate by the opportunity presented to him:

*The prospect of starting with a new congregation was most exciting. It is one thing to come to an established congregation where you must try to fit into a mold created by others, but it is much more satisfying to build your own congregation in accordance with your own ideas.*¹¹³

Rabbi Sherman constantly battled to have the Reform movement accepted as equal with the traditional Jewish community of South Africa.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, by the time he retired in 1982 from active leadership of the Cape Town congregation, the Reform movement proved popular, with the number of family member units increasing to about fifteen hundred. Rabbi Sherman died in May 2002 at age 90. His wife, Bertha, who was involved in every aspect of congregational life, died in April 2019 at age 96.

¹¹¹ Rabbi Sherman's rabbinical service at Adas Emuno coincided with the Second World War. According to the *85th Anniversary Souvenir Journal*, it is known that thirty-four members of the Congregation served in the military during this time, in ranks from Private to Colonel.

¹¹² The American Jewish Conference advocated for Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State.

¹¹³ *Pioneering for Reform Judaism in South Africa: A Personal Memoir*, by Rabbi David Sherman.

¹¹⁴ The Orthodox community vilified the Reform movement in South Africa. "We lived in an atmosphere of charge and counter-charge, of grandiloquent manifestoes and petty accusations, sensational rumors and fanatical tirades coupled with threats of violence, boycotts and economic sanctions. Professional men were warned they would lose clientele, and it was hinted to merchants that it would not be good for business if they joined the new movement." (*Pioneering for Reform Judaism in South Africa: A Personal Memoir*, by Rabbi David Sherman.)

Once Rabbi Sherman left Adas Emuno, the next five years (1945-1950) witnessed a succession of short-term rabbis, as well as a period in which Milton Neuman briefly replaced Bernard Marx as president (1947-1949).¹¹⁵



The first of these rabbis was Dr. Joel Y. Zion (1945-1946).¹¹⁶ Rabbi Zion attended the Jewish Institute of Religion, where he studied for the rabbinate. While in the New York area, Dr. Zion became the youngest member of the New York Board of Rabbis for Social Action. Rabbi Zion heard the call to go West, left Adas Emuno, and served as co-rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Denver, Colorado, the first synagogue established in the state and the oldest congregation between Kansas City and the West Coast.¹¹⁷

In 1959, Rabbi Zion returned East and was installed as the spiritual leader of Temple Israel of Lawrence, where he led the congregation of 1,500 families until his retirement in 2000. While leading Temple Israel, Rabbi Zion also served as president of the Interreligious Council in the area. During his tenure at Temple Israel, many high-profile figures spoke from his pulpit, including Elie Wiesel, Senator George McGovern, Senator Hillary Clinton, and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.

His replacement at Temple Israel, Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, who had been assistant rabbi for several years under Rabbi Zion, declared that, “I learned from Rabbi Zion to be available and accessible to people and one of the most important obligations is to be there in times of joy and sorry. He also taught me to have respect for the pulpit and to have appreciation for the congregants who are sitting in the pews.”

In mourning his passing in January 2008, Temple Israel described Rabbi Joel Y. Zion as “[a] great man who dedicated his life to our congregation, the Jewish people, and humankind.” Rabbi Zion was committed to Reform Judaism, Israel, and social action.

Rabbi Zion also had a career as an actor, appearing in three movies in which he played a rabbi (billed as Rabbi Joel Zion!). He can be seen in a wedding scene in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989);¹¹⁸ *The Pallbearer* (1996); and *This Is My Life* (1992).

¹¹⁵ Bernard Marx returned as president from 1949 to 1951.

¹¹⁶ Rabbi Zion is the grandfather of member Lea Sheloush. Lea graciously shared much of the information about Rabbi Zion (and corrected a couple of the author’s errors).

¹¹⁷ Temple Emanuel of Denver celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1949. Rabbi Zion had experience with just such a celebration; he was at Adas Emuno during its 75th anniversary, an occasion he must have enjoyed, as evidenced by his having saved a flyer giving details of a celebratory congregational picnic in recognition of that anniversary.

¹¹⁸ To experience Rabbi Zion’s “booming voice” (as characterized by his granddaughter, Lea Sheloush), go to <https://bit.ly/3nKKREk>. He is heard between 4:38 and 5:14 in the scene.

Rabbi Leon Elsberg (*pictured here in 1950*), the son of a Baltimore jeweler, followed Rabbi Zion to the Adas Emuno pulpit (1946-1947). Rabbi Elsberg graduated Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and attended American University, where he was a member of the debate team.¹¹⁹ He also engaged in rabbinical training in New York under the tutelage of Dr. Stephen S. Wise at the Jewish Institute of Religion.¹²⁰ After leaving Adas Emuno, he served for two years as the first rabbi of Temple Beth Sholom in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where he was well known for his interfaith work.¹²¹ Rabbi Elsberg died of a heart attack at age 40 on November 29, 1951, silencing his eloquent voice in support of religious tolerance.



One of Bernard Marx's last actions during his first (and lengthy!) turn as president, was to announce the appointment of Rabbi Azriel Grishman (1947-1949) as Rabbi Elsberg's successor. Rabbi Grishman was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and graduated from Northwestern University in 1945, where he majored in speech, history and political science. Before coming to Adas Emuno, he served a reform congregation in Lynchburg, Virginia, and then was director of youth activities at Temple Israel in New York. Rabbi Grishman received his rabbinical training at the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago and the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York with Dr. Stephen S. Wise.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Rabbi Elsberg was acknowledged early in his life as a speaker and a writer. He was awarded a gold medal for being the outstanding literary student at Baltimore City College, a magnet public high school with selective admissions criteria. He was also president of the school's Carrollton-Wight Literary Society, the oldest literary and debate society at a public high school in the country. (*The Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (March 21, 1928))

¹²⁰ Like Rabbi P. Jacobs, Adas Emuno's rabbi from 1934-1938, Rabbi Elsberg probably came to the attention of the Congregation through his close connection with Dr. Stephen S. Wise.

¹²¹ *Lived Religion and the Politics of (In)Tolerance*, edited by R. Ruud Ganzevoort and Srdjan Sremac. In 1939, Elsberg was active in the "Permanent Conference on Religious Life in Greenbelt." (Greenbelt, Maryland, was an experimental city formed by the federal government under FDR's New Deal.) The Conference's purpose was to curb religious prejudice and antisemitism, as well as sponsor interdenominational services. As one example, Elsberg offered the invocation at a Mormon service in 1939. It is likely that Elsberg's activities in Greenbelt were remembered and eventually led to his installation as the rabbi of Temple Beth Sholom.

¹²² Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and the Jewish Institute of Religion appears to have been a conduit for several Adas Emuno rabbis, including Rabbi Jacobs (1934-1938); Rabbi Frishberg (1938-1939); Rabbi Elsberg (1946-1947); and Rabbi Grishman. Rabbi Grishman's successor, Bernard Perlmutter (1949-1950), also studied at the Jewish Institute of Religion. Perhaps the short tenures of these rabbis can be explained as part of their preparation for the rabbinate.

After leaving Adas Emuno,¹²³ Rabbi Grisham enlisted as a chaplain in the United States Naval Reserve for two years. Between 1953 and 1958, he was the rabbi of Union Reform Temple in Freeport, Long Island (which merged in 2000 with Avodah in Oceanside). His travels continued in 1958 when he assumed the pulpit of Temple Emanuel in Deluth, Minnesota (now Temple Israel following a merger with another congregation in 1969), which he left in July 1962.

Later in 1962, we find the well-traveled Rabbi Grishman at Temple Emanu-El in Westfield, New Jersey. He arrived at a congregation that had witnessed the departure of a beloved rabbi and members suffering from “separation anxiety.”¹²⁴ The congregation was divided and there began a four-year period of “such intense confusion and difficulty that the personal lives of many congregants were in anguish because of it.” The situation turned into a nightmare for Rabbi Grishman who could not unify the congregants. This was likely attributable to his “unusual style:”

The evangelistic fervor of his sermons and prayers, his eyes closed and his arms imploringly raised heavenward, and his insistence on the congregation’s recitation of the Ten Commandments as part of every service, were startling to most people, although not to all for he did have his admirers.

“[B]eleaguered,” Rabbi Grishman, left Temple Emanu-El of Westfield in June 1964, “apparently the only solution to a hopelessly entangled bind.” A disturbing chapter in Rabbi Grishman’s life ended, which may even have led him to consider leaving the rabbinate.¹²⁵

During this period (1947-1949), Milton Neuman¹²⁶ served as president of the Congregation, finally relieving Bernard Marx. His successor, however, was none other than our old stalwart, Bernard Marx, who returned as president for three final years (1949-1951).

¹²³ Rabbi Grishman was only twenty-two years old when he assumed the pulpit at Adas Emuno.

¹²⁴ The following discussion is based on *A Historic Narrative: The Story of Temple Emanu-El* by Evelyn Averick.

¹²⁵ In 1964, Rabbi Grishman wrote to the head of the United Jewish Appeal seeking his advice on a new career path. He was age 39, and explained that “[a]fter nearly fifteen years in the Rabbinate I plan to conduct a quiet but serious search for a place for myself outside the ministry.” *Letter from Azriel S. Grishman to Rabbi Herbert Friedman*, February 4, 1964.

¹²⁶ Milton Neuman was Michael Levy’s uncle by marriage. (Michael is a longtime member of Adas Emuno.) Milton Neuman became a *Bar Mitzvah* at Adas Emuno in 1923. His brother, Ed Neuman, also served in many capacities, including on the board of the Brotherhood. Their parents, Henry and Freda Neuman, were major financial benefactors of the Congregation and donated the *ner tamid* (eternal light) that was brought from Hoboken to Leonia. Torah finials that are still in use today were donated in honor of Michael Levy’s cousin Peter’s *Bar Mitzvah* in 1951.

Succeeding Rabbi Grishman was Rabbi Bernard Perelmutter (*pictured here in 1949*),



age 23, and another graduate of the Jewish Institute of Religion. Rabbi Perelmutter was a native of Montreal, a graduate of McGill University, and one of three brothers who became rabbis. He was the son of Russian immigrants and was raised in a strongly Zionist family. Rabbi Perelmutter held the pulpit at Adas Emuno for just one year (1949-1950). On his first *Shabbat* evening as rabbi, he and his wife were guests of honor at a social hour held in the synagogue's auditorium; that evening he also dedicated the temple's newly renovated kitchen.¹²⁷

Bernard Perelmutter served as a rabbi for more than sixty years, and held the position of spiritual leader of Har Sinai Temple in Pennsylvania for fifteen years (1969-1984). Rabbi Perelmutter was active in many community issues throughout his life—most notably the struggle for civil and human rights, social justice, mental health, and community and interfaith outreach.¹²⁸



On the occasion of the 80th Anniversary celebration in 1951, the entire Board of Trustees posed for a photograph. The photo shows all fifteen of the trustees and officers

¹²⁷ *Hudson Dispatch, Union City, N.J.*, September 9, 1949.

¹²⁸ *The Times, Trenton*, March 17, 2014.

of the Congregation. (The officers and trustees were a well-dressed group!) It is telling that even as late as 1951, there were no women on the Adas Emuno Board. Temple president Sam Spingarn is seated in the middle of the first row, with Bernard Marx at his left.



In 1951, Samuel Spingarn, who was born in 1895¹²⁹ and began his law practice in Hudson County in 1920, assumed the presidency of the Congregation, following in the footsteps of his parents Emanuel and Celia, who had been active in the leadership of Adas Emuno. Samuel Spingarn was a veteran of the First World War and an officer of the American Legion organization. He graduated Columbia University in 1916 and entered Columbia Law School, but his legal education was interrupted by his military service overseas, where he took part in “many famous engagements.”¹³⁰ During his last four months in Europe, he studied at Poitiers University in France; his studies there and his military service “proved of great value to him, increasing his understanding of men and affairs.”

It may have been Samuel Spingarn who first broached the subject of moving the Congregation from Hoboken. In the *Temple Bulletin* of May 1957 he indicated that the June congregational meeting “will be of greater importance than any which we have held for many years.” He noted that “a report will be presented by the special committee which was appointed some months ago to explore the question of changing the location of the Temple or of some of its activities.”¹³¹ He also declared that, “aside from personal considerations which dictate a refusal to continue in the office, it is my sincere conviction that there is need for a ‘fresh’ and new approach to the problems which confront us.”

Writing in the 1964 issue of the *Temple Bulletin*, it is clear that the idea of relocating the Congregation still troubled the members, as Spingarn indicated:

The impression went forth last Spring that the site of the Temple was about to be moved. Altho much time and thought were given to the proposal and it is still being considered, the ‘report’ was premature. And so for the present, we shall carry on at

¹²⁹ Samuel Spingarn was confirmed at Adas Emuno in 1908 and his father, Emanuel Spingarn, was a trustee for many years.

¹³⁰ *History of the Municipalities of Hudson County (Volume 2)*, edited by Daniel Van Winkle (1924).

¹³¹ Adas Emuno’s eventual relocation from Hoboken is discussed later in this history.

the 'old stand' and continue to enjoy our beautiful Temple with its inspiring atmosphere.

Despite the desire to end his tenure as president expressed in 1957, Samuel Spingarn continued in that role until 1966 (a total of 15 years), when he was replaced by Harry Cohn for his term of service (1966—1970).¹³²



Returning to the earlier years of Samuel Spingarn's years as president,¹³³ Rabbi J.

Max Weis¹³⁴ (1950-1958), followed Bernard Perelmutter on the pulpit. Rabbi Weis was born in 1891 and had many years of experience as a rabbi before assuming that role at Adas Emuno. He was ordained in 1918, and became the rabbi at Temple Israel in Gary, Indiana, a congregation that is still in existence. Most significantly, he was the rabbi of the Free Synagogue of Washington Heights in New York City starting in 1922, a position he held for many years. One thing is certain about Rabbi Weis—he spoke his mind and did not fear controversy.

As an example, at the pulpit of the Free Synagogue in 1923 he actually appealed for the end of *Yom Kippur* in a sermon entitled "Is the Younger Generation Godless":¹³⁵

The Day of Atonement makes for hypocrisy. It is one of the last remnants of our outworn institutions in the Jewish faith. People crowd the synagogues in superstitious fear, unmoved and uninfluenced by the ritual of the day. Its prayers fail to touch the consciences of men. If man is to make amends for his sins, and for his wrongs to society, he should weigh his actions each day in the light of society's best thought and experience and with a spirit of hope and determination, resolve to live on the highest possible plane of conduct. Rosh Hashanah, or New Year Day, is full of inspirations, but Yom Kippur is outworn and valueless, and weighted with gloominess.

¹³² Harry Cohn was installed as president at the final service held at the Hoboken temple on September 9, 1966. The Congregation's relocation from Hoboken is discussed later in this history.

¹³³ In addition to serving as the Congregation's president, Samuel Spingarn for many years had the honor of sounding the shofar during High Holy Days services.

¹³⁴ Rabbi Weis's wife, Estelle Sternberger, was a well-known radio commentator on political and cultural events. Over the years on WLIB, WMCA, and WQXR, she was characterized as a crusader, a term that remained with her. She was known for her sharp tongue, fast-thinking brain, and the ability to discourse on a thousand subjects. She was executive director of World Peaceways and vice president of the National Council of Women of the United States in the 1930s. Estelle was a graduate of the University of Cincinnati School of Social Work. (*The New York Times* (obituary), December 24, 1971.)

¹³⁵ *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, December 17, 1923.

One of Rabbi Weis's notable causes as a young rabbi was the plight of Ethiopian Jews. He served as the Director of Appeal for "The American Pro-Falasha Committee"¹³⁶ in the 1920s. He was also the author of a widely used text in Sunday Schools entitled *Great Men in Israel: Sketches from Rabbinic and Medieval Jewry*.¹³⁷

In his sixth year as Rabbi of Adas Emuno, Rabbi Weis paid tribute to the founders of the Congregation in his message included in the *85th Anniversary Celebration Souvenir Journal*:

What was most important about their act in founding Congregation Adas Emuno was their humble recognition that important as it was for them to further their own security and economic progress, they should be equally conscious of the force that was bigger than anything in their personal sphere. The force that they recognized as that bigger reality was the religion of Judaism.

After retiring from Adas Emuno and the rabbinate, Rabbi Weis joined the faculty of the Academy for Higher Jewish Learning (later known as the Academy for Jewish Religion), as a professor of religious therapy. Rabbi Weis died January 4, 1968. His *New York Times* obituary described him as having been "[a] short, stocky, vigorous man."

Jerome S. Spivack served as the Congregation's rabbi from 1958-1961. His obituary in the *New York Times* of December 24, 2012, does not mention his tenure at Adas Emuno. Rabbi Spivack was born in 1924. He had a master's degree in Hebrew Letters from the Hebrew Union College and an M.A. in Psychology from the New School for Social Research. His obituary continues:

After several years' experience as a Rabbi, he joined the U.S. Army as a Chaplain in 1952 and served in Arkansas and Japan. He later served as a psychologist at Overbrook Hospital in N.J. and later with the Edgecombe Correctional Facility and several positions with the New York State Office of Drug Abuse Services. Jerome [Spivack] had a unique combination of intellect, capabilities, and personality. He was highly respected in his personal and professional life for his constructive advice, innovative ideas, and patience. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was passionate about music, especially classical, rabbinical and [Klezmer].

Adas Emuno's rabbi from 1961 to 1968 was Zev Bloom. Upon assuming this role, Rabbi Bloom noted that Adas Emuno's intention "was to expand its influence and to keep

¹³⁶ Use of the term *Falasha*—which means "landless" or "wanderers"—is avoided because its meaning is offensive.

¹³⁷ Bloch Publishing Co., 1931.

up with the change of population.”¹³⁸ In particular, he declared that, “I believe that it is the destiny of Congregation Adas Emuno to serve the wide Jewish population of both Hudson and Bergen Counties.” Before coming to Adas Emuno, Zev Bloom was the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El of Lynbrook, New York. He also taught four years in the Department of Hebrew at Hunter College.



Zev Bloom resided in Brooklyn, traveled widely, studied at nine universities—including City College of New York, Columbia University, and Hebrew Union College, from which he graduated in 1943. He spoke six languages (his hobby), and pursued academic studies in the fields of history, Middle East affairs, child guidance and marriage counseling. In 1944, he was sent to Europe as the overseas representative of the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS). He also spent two years in Latin America as a representative of the Israel Foundation Fund.¹³⁹

Rabbi Bloom led the last service held at the Hoboken synagogue on September 9, 1966,¹⁴⁰ and moved with the Congregation to its temporary home in Fort Lee. He left Adas Emuno in 1968¹⁴¹ to serve as the first rabbi of Bet Knesset Progressive Synagogue, located in North Hudson County.¹⁴²

Leaving Hoboken—Finding a Home in Leonia

At this point it is appropriate to suspend the chronological narrative to look in detail at Adas Emuno’s move from Hoboken, its wanderings and ambitions in Fort Lee, and its eventual relocation to Leonia.

¹³⁸ *Hoboken Pictorial*, September 22, 1961.

¹³⁹ The Israel Foundation Fund was a fundraising organization with the goal of promoting the establishment of a Jewish state.

¹⁴⁰ Curiously, this last service was just a week before the start of the High Holy Days. One is forced to wonder why there was a rush to leave the Hoboken temple at this particular time. My best guess is that High Holy Days services, which were going to be free to attend, would create awareness of Adas Emuno in its new location in Fort Lee. Arrangements were made to hold High Holy Days services at the Fort Lee Gospel Church, and Shabbat services and Religious School at the Masonic Building in Fort Lee. In fact, the Congregation used School #4 on Anderson Avenue in Fort Lee to hold its Religious School.

¹⁴¹ Rabbi Bloom’s successor was Rabbi Jerald Bobrow, who is profiled later in this history.

¹⁴² *Hoboken Pictorial*, June 20, 1968. That congregation does not appear to have lasted long.

The vibrant city of Hoboken we know today is quite different from the Hoboken of the 1930s through the 1960s.¹⁴³ In the 1930s, the city had 59,261 residents, 10,000 fewer than in 1920. Sons and daughters of the immigrants who settled in Hoboken were leaving for new opportunities elsewhere and a better quality of life. The result of the Depression was “cultural and economic stagnation and entrenchment as the dynamism of the pre-World War I decades dissipated.” While Adas Emuno was achieving success at this time, sustaining the momentum in this environment raised challenges as members began to move to the emerging suburbs north of Hoboken.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hoboken underwent another demographic change: Puerto Ricans began settling in Hoboken in large numbers. While Puerto Ricans sought better economic conditions in Hoboken than were available in Puerto Rico, their migration to the city coincided with the city’s economic decline:

... In Hoboken in the 1950s and 1960s, large factories began closing and relocating to western suburbs and the South to escape high city taxes, municipal corruption, organized crime, and an inflexible urban infrastructure; densely packed, built-up Hoboken had little room for businesses looking to expand. Some large employers—such as Keuffel and Esser and the Lipton Tea Company, both of which had been in Hoboken since the mid- to late nineteenth century—finally left the city in the late 1960s. The Port of New York’s adoption of containerization at its Newark and Elizabeth facilities in the late 1950s doomed Hoboken’s piers to gradual obsolescence.

Reacting to the decline in Hoboken and the exodus of some of its members, as previously noted a committee had been formed in 1957 to consider the options for relocating the Congregation. That report—if it ever emerged—did not convince many members of the need to search for a new home. Indeed, as late as 1964, the Congregation’s leadership (as noted earlier) indicated that any plans made to relocate were “premature” but the idea still needed to be considered.

¹⁴³ The following discussion of Hoboken is based on *Immigrants in Hoboken: One Way Ticket, 1845–1985*, by Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, published by The History Press.

Then, suddenly, in early September 1966—just before the High Holy Days—Adas

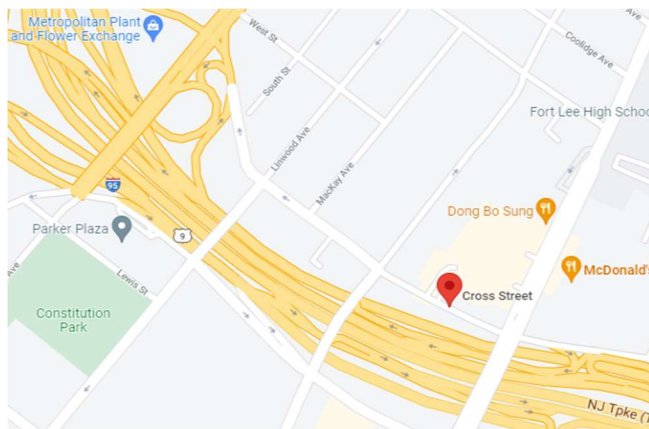


Emuno's 95-year presence in Hoboken vanished! The vision was that a new temple would be constructed in Fort Lee "in the near future." (Pictured at the last service in Hoboken, left to right, are Harry Cohn, president; Samuel Spingarn, honorary president; Rabbi Zev Bloom; and Bernard E. Marx, honorary president.)

Rabbi Zev Bloom, who by this time had been the spiritual leader of the Congregation for six years, explained the reasons for the move to Fort Lee:

First of all, most of our membership no longer lives here in Hoboken, although many families still attend services here. We want to more easily accommodate these people. And secondly, we would like to be in an area where there is a growing Jewish population.

Rabbi Bloom added that, "[n]aturally we have a great deal of sentiment for [the Hoboken synagogue] and this neighborhood, but we feel we've made an intelligent decision that will work for the betterment of our congregation." Essentially, the Congregation chose to leave Hoboken for the convenience of many of its second- and third-generation members who had moved to eastern Bergen County.



Without a home of its own, Adas Emuno was graciously hosted by the Fort Lee Gospel Church, located at that time on Main Street in Fort Lee. In the meantime, groundbreaking for a quarter million dollar temple in Fort Lee was contemplated during 1969.¹⁴⁴ While Adas Emuno had only 80 member units at the time, the proposed new temple, which would be erected at Linwood Avenue

and Cross Street, would be a two-level structure able to accommodate 500 people!¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Funds for the construction of a new synagogue in Fort Lee were, in part, derived from the sale of the Congregation's temple building in Hoboken to a Puerto Rican Pentecostal Church.

¹⁴⁵ *The Record*, January 16, 1969.

The site at Linwood Avenue and Cross Street, overlooking Route 4, was almost immediately perceived as unsuitable by the Congregation's leadership. By late 1969, Adas Emuno was looking to build its new home on Hudson Terrace, on land located both in Fort Lee and Englewood Cliffs.¹⁴⁶ The Congregation's attorney, Erwin Weitz—a longtime member—had obtained a letter requested by the Englewood Cliffs Board of Adjustment indicating that Fort Lee approved construction of the temple. What was needed from Englewood Cliffs was a variance for a 34-space parking lot on Eighth Street.

The Fort Lee/Englewood Cliffs location arose from a land swap arranged with the William Billard Corp. of Englewood. That entity would take title to Adas Emuno's property on Linwood Avenue in exchange for the Hudson Terrace land and cash.

Nearby residents of Englewood Cliffs protested that the Hudson Terrace location would add to existing traffic problems in the area. Weitz noted, however, that only about 30 congregants attended weekly services; the majority of the congregation's 75 families attended only on the High Holy Days.

Adas Emuno persisted in seeking a variance from Englewood Cliffs for either the parking lot or the temple building itself, but after several inconclusive hearings, its plans were rejected by the Board of Adjustment.¹⁴⁷ The Englewood Cliffs Board based its rejection on an ordinance they interpreted as forbidding the construction of a house of worship in a residential area.

Just three days after the rejection of the Congregation's bid to build a temple straddling Fort Lee and Englewood Cliffs, Phil Elkins was installed as president of Adas Emuno at *Shabbat* services on November 13, 1970. (He went on to serve as president with distinction for twenty-five years.) Rabbi Jerald Bobrow explained¹⁴⁸ why that date had been chosen for Phil Elkins's installation:

We chose this Sabbath to officially install those charged with the responsibility of leading and guiding Congregation Adas Emuno because it is on this Sabbath that, according to tradition, God chose Abraham to be the founding father of the Jewish people to serve God and man with a blessing.

¹⁴⁶ *The Record*, December 16, 1969.

¹⁴⁷ *The Record*, November 10, 1970. At some point, Samuel Spingarn had replaced Erwin Weitz as the Congregation's representative in the battle for the variance.

¹⁴⁸ *The Record*, November 11, 1970.

Rabbi Bobrow pointed to Abraham's crossing from Babylonia to Canaan "as a symbol of the congregation's hope to move from its temporary home at the Fort Lee Gospel Church to a permanent home in the coming year." *A year later, that hope turned into reality.*

In Adas Emuno's 100th year of existence, the Congregation acquired a former church in Leonia as its permanent home. The Leonia Lutheran Church was established in 1926, but two years later the congregation split over doctrinal issues.¹⁴⁹ In 1942, members of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church built a small church on the corner of Broad Avenue and High Street in Leonia, with the help of a financial gift from Bing Crosby. On May 27, 1970, Holy Trinity Lutheran merged with Calvary Lutheran Church—both located in Leonia—to form Holy Spirit Church on Woodland Place. As a result of this merger, the property of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church became available.

Adas Emuno purchased the property on August 12, 1971,¹⁵⁰ from Holy Spirit for \$175,000. The purchase included the church building, a school building and a house. The property had also been sought by a retirement housing association, but Adas Emuno succeeded in obtaining the church's property through negotiations that had been ongoing since February 1971.

After acquiring the new temple, Phil Elkins explained that renovation costs were estimated at between \$15,000 to \$25,000.¹⁵¹ He added that,

We expect to make the necessary renovations in time for the High Holy Days in September. We hope to arrange for Rabbi Bobrow to live in the house, and expect our religious school to move into the building formerly occupied by the church school.

¹⁴⁹ The discussion of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is based on *Images of America: Leonia*, by Carol Karels (Published by Arcadia Publishing (2002)).

¹⁵⁰ Sadly, Honorary President Bernard E. Marx died on January 16, 1971, without knowing that his beloved Congregation had acquired a new permanent home.

¹⁵¹ *The Record*, August 11, 1971.

In the *100th Anniversary Souvenir Journal* (October 23, 1971), Phil Elkins declared that, “[the year 1971 is indeed a milestone in the history of Congregation Adas Emuno, for not only does it represent the year of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of our Congregation but it also marks the year in which we found our beautiful new home in the lovely suburban Town of Leonia.” He further remarked,

During our years of wandering in the wilderness we unfortunately saw some of our brethren fall away from membership in our Congregation. But now that we are finished with that trying period and we have found our Promised Land it is necessary for each of us to extend his every effort to rebuild our Temple membership into a vital and moving force....

Now that we have a permanent base there is much to be done. While our new Temple is inspiring, many improvements are needed in its physical plant in order that we may resume our Sisterhood dinners, Brotherhood’s Seder, our card parties and the many other social affairs which we have so long enjoyed and so sorely missed in recent years....



IN THE BEGINNING OUR WORSHIPPERS WERE IN GREAT NEED
THEY HAD FOUNDED THEIR NEW HOME, NOW HOW TO RAISE MONIES,
HOW INDEED

BERNIE BECKER HAD A VISION THAT BINGO WAS OUR SALVATION
AND PROMPTLY SET WHEELS IN MOTION WITH WORK AND DEDICATION
PHIL ELKINS AND HIS LOVELY WIFE, PITCHED IN AND JOINED
THE FORCES

THEY WORKED LIKE TROOPERS, OR SHALL WE SAY LIKE HORSES
NOW THE COHN'S JOINED, THE PERLMANS TOO
WITH GOD'S HELP AND JUST A FEW
THEY COULD SLOWLY BEGIN TO SEE THE LIGHT THE LORD HAD
INTENDED THEM TO

MILLENTHALS, MELLOWS SAM SPINGARN AND SAPOLSKYS OFFERED UNSELFISH
SERVICES TOO

SO OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO OUR MANY LOYAL WORKERS
TO YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU.

How did this small Congregation manage to finance the purchase of the Leonia temple and pay for necessary renovations? The answer just might be BINGO! Much of Adas Emuno’s income from about 1967 to 1973 came from Saturday night bingo games. For example, the Congregation’s income statement for the year ended April 30, 1969, indicates Bingo receipts of \$27,866

and expenses of \$11,059 (*prize money?*)—for a net income of \$16,807. All other operating income (dues, memorials, and contributions) amounted to \$12,507. For the year ended April 30, 1970, the net income from Bingo was \$18,007. Similarly, for the year ended April 30, 1971, the net income from Bingo was \$18,524 (*i.e.*, \$5,536 more than income from dues, memorials, and contributions). The net income from Bingo for the year ended April 30,

1972, was \$20,084, which helped offset about \$16,000 in expenses for renovating the sanctuary that year. The net income from Bingo the next year was \$20,234.

Also financially significant was the sale of the Fort Lee property owned by the Congregation to Billard Associates in November 1973 for approximately \$210,000.¹⁵²

Because a Christian Church had permitted the Congregation to occupy its facilities in Fort Lee for five years, Adas Emuno reciprocated by extending to a different Christian congregation—the Fort Lee Japanese Church—use of our temple and religious school for about a dozen years beginning in the 1980s.¹⁵³

At Home in Leonia

The narrative returns now to the lay leadership of Adas Emuno, its rabbis, and some selected cantors of note or particular interest.

In August 1968, Rabbi Jerald Bobrow was selected to replace Rabbi Zev Bloom as spiritual leader of the Congregation.¹⁵⁴ Rabbi Bobrow was age 39 and lived in Monroe, New York, where he had been the rabbi of the Monroe Temple of Liberal Judaism. He graduated Brandeis University and did graduate studies at the Boston University School of Social Work and Columbia University, where he received a Master Degree in Education. Rabbi Bobrow was ordained in June 1961 at Hebrew Union College.¹⁵⁵

Although Rabbi Bobrow died in 1986 at age 57, his life was full of significant experiences. Before coming to Adas Emuno, he served as assistant rabbi at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto under famed Rabbi Gunther Plaut, who wrote a volume of commentary on the Torah that is the standard *Humash* used by the Reform movement. In June 1961, Rabbi Bobrow was one of five rabbis who participated in the Freedom Rides in the South. Rabbi Bobrow lived in Israel from 1948 to 1951 and served in the Israeli Army during the War of Independence. He was one of the founders of Kibbutz Gesher HaZiv, situated in the Western Galilee on the coastal highway between Nahariya and the Lebanese border.

¹⁵² Letter from the Law Offices of Spingarn & Sachs to Philip G. Elkins, November 21, 1973.

¹⁵³ The author recalls that we received the microwave in the kitchen when the Japanese Church left.

¹⁵⁴ Around 1950, the bylaws of the Congregation were amended to grant the Board of Trustees the sole power to select a rabbi. Although Rabbi Bloom had served the Congregation for eight years, the Board chose not to retain him. At least one trustee (Mac Ellison) believed that a decision on whether to retain Rabbi Bloom should be considered at a general meeting of the Congregation.

¹⁵⁵ *The Record*, August 14, 1968.

Rabbi Bobrow served the Congregation initially at the Fort Lee Gospel Church¹⁵⁶ and presided over the dedication of the Leonia synagogue on October 29, 1971. (*This photo*



taken at the dedication of the Congregation's new home in Leonia includes Rabbi Bobrow on the far left; temple president Phil Elkins, second from the right; and Bernard Becker, far right, who temporarily replaced Phil Elkins as president.) Rabbi Bobrow left

Adas Emuno in 1973 to serve as spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel in East Meadow, New York, from 1973 to 1975. Following that move, Rabbi Bobrow served for a decade at Temple Covenant of Peace¹⁵⁷ in Easton, Pennsylvania, until his passing.

To learn more about Rabbi Bobrow, we turn to his widow, Eleanor (Ellie) Bobrow, now in her 80s. Eleanor remained active at Temple Covenant of Peace after her husband's death. She helped organize the annual Lehigh Valley Women's Seder and other events. Eleanor participates every year in the congregation's Purim spiel. Most notably, she was the host of a weekly self-help program on the local NPR station called *Take Care of Your Life* until 2019.¹⁵⁸



When Eleanor was a sophomore in high school, she received a seven-week scholarship in Israel, which changed her life and resulted in her being a life-long member of *Hadassah*. But she never intended to be the wife a rabbi.¹⁵⁹

When we met, I was enthralled by the fact that he was interested in Israel and Jewish history and was not interested in being a rabbi. We were both teaching, and

¹⁵⁶ When Rabbi Bobrow began his tenure with Adas Emuno, the Congregation had seventy-five families as members, some twenty-five of which joined because of the move from Hoboken to Fort Lee. (*Letter from Mac Ellison, Treasurer, to the Board of Trustees and Members of the Congregation*, February 15, 1968)

¹⁵⁷ Temple Covenant of Peace, founded in 1839, recently merged with another Reform congregation in Easton, Pennsylvania, to form Congregation B'nai Shalom.

¹⁵⁸ Programs that aired between 2019 and 2019 are archived at <https://www.wdiy.org/show/take-charge-of-your-life>. I recommend listening to a few of these timeless half-hour interview programs.

¹⁵⁹ This discussion is based on an article in *Lehigh Valley Style*, February 28, 2014, entitled "Seniors, Shine On! 5 Stellar Seniors Redefining Life After 80—and 90!" See Eleanor Bobrow speaking about her radio program at <https://www.facebook.com/JFSLV/videos/meet-eleanor-bobrow-8ish-over-80-honoree/738946089589042/>.

I expected to be the wife of a high school teacher. We were married two years and he made the decision to become a rabbi.

It was Rabbi Bobrow who suggested that she start a radio program when she was having difficulty sleeping and longed for a late-night radio show to listen to. When he died, she took his advice—paying homage to her late husband.

Adas Emuno welcomed Rabbi Irving Baumol as its spiritual leader on August 28, 1973, and formally introduced him to the Congregation shortly thereafter at the *Shabbat* service of September 7. Being a rabbi was in his DNA: His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all well-regarded rabbis in Poland. Rabbi Baumol was a 1940 graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He was also a graduate of Brooklyn College.



Rabbi Baumol served at Temple Beth Sholom of New York City, a Conservative congregation, from 1941 to 1969. Rabbi Baumol served as an Army chaplain during the Second World War. After leaving the pulpit at Beth Sholom, he served for two years as clergyman and religious-education director at the Jewish Child Care Association's Pleasantville Cottage School.¹⁶⁰ At that time, he had also been affiliated with Temple Beth Am in nearby Yorktown Heights. Rabbi Baumol was one of the founders of the Jewish Community Council of Washington Heights.¹⁶¹ He was well known as a lecturer in the fields of Jewish humor and ecumenicism.

Upon his selection by the Board of Trustees, Rabbi Baumol wrote a thought-provoking letter to members of the Congregation:

... Though it is traditional to have a public installation of a Rabbi, I respectfully declined; not with feigned humility, but because I firmly believe that the time for praising and evaluating a Rabbi's services is not upon his arrival. When people praise him at the beginning of his ministry—that represents an act of faith on their part. If it occurs in the middle—that's hope. If he is lucky enough to get the praise at the end of his ministry, that has to be an act of charity.

¹⁶⁰ Pleasantville Cottage School is home to emotionally troubled boys and girls.

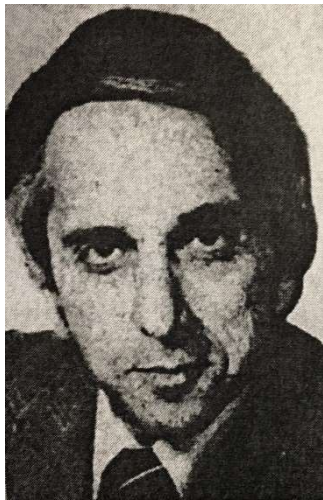
¹⁶¹ Now known as the Jewish Community Council of Washington Heights-Inwood (the JCC-WHI), this organization works with individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds to enhance their quality of life. Its programs include social workers and entitlement assistance to access help available through government or other agencies.

I hope, when the time comes for you to evaluate me, that you will use all three—Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Now I am just a name to you. I hope to become more than a name—an interested, concerned, and involved teacher, counsellor and friend.

On December 14, 1973, Sophia Marx, wife of Bernard Marx, was honored at a *Shabbat* service. Sophia Marx had been affiliated with Adas Emuno since her marriage in 1924, and had served the Congregation in many capacities. No task was ever too menial for her nor any obstacle too large to overcome. Her passion, however, was that of chief *challah* baker for *onegs*.¹⁶² Sophia Marx died on July 2, 1983.

By this this time, Phil Elkins had turned over the role of president of the Congregation to Bernard Becker, the inspiration behind the successful Bingo fundraising effort, for a short period. In 1975, Rabbi Baumol left Adas Emuno,¹⁶³ and Rabbi Aaron Pearl was selected as the Congregation's spiritual leader. Before assuming this role at Adas Emuno, Rabbi Pearl had been the spiritual leader of the Electchester Jewish Center in Flushing, New York—a conservative synagogue.¹⁶⁴



Rabbi Pearl was a frequent guest on two late-night radio shows hosted by famed broadcasters Long John Nebel and Barry Gray. An outspoken supporter of Israel, Rabbi Pearl was known for his “incomparable eloquence and humor, powerful voice, sharp wit, and brilliant mind.”¹⁶⁵ Rabbi Pearl had a master's degree in chemistry from UCLA, worked five years as a news broadcaster in Israel for the Mutual Broadcasting System, and received the Faith and Freedom Award in Broadcasting in 1966 from Religious Heritage of America Inc. for a series of radio

¹⁶² From *The Megillah*, newsletter of Adas Emuno (March 1974).

¹⁶³ Rabbi Baumol passed away on November 30, 1990, at age 74. He was living in Englewood at the time of his death.

¹⁶⁴ One of Rabbi Pearl's students at Electchester Jewish Center was Kenneth Emert—later Rabbi Emert—who eventually followed Rabbi Pearl as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Rishon in Wyckoff, New Jersey. It was Rabbi Pearl who influenced the career choice of Rabbi Emert. He also inspired Rabbi Emert's brother to follow his passion as a musician, which he has done. (*Telephone Interview with Rabbi Kenneth Emert, retired rabbi at Beth Rishon*, January 13, 2022.)

¹⁶⁵ *The New York Times* (obituary), April 11, 2005.

programs following the course of religious history from the Maccabean revolt to the birth of Jesus.¹⁶⁶

Rabbi Pearl unmistakably expressed his view regarding the loss of interest in temple life by the Jewish population:¹⁶⁷

Most people attend the temple out of habit. Too many don't attend—because of boredom. I'd like them to attend because of interest.

I'm trying to take away the mythology and superstition in religion. I am a rationalist. I question a great deal. I want people to question their most cherished beliefs. I don't want to rely totally on the past.

Rabbi Pearl explained that he wished to help congregants find a more creative approach to Jewish life. According to Rabbi Pearl, “*Sabbath* services [at Adas Emuno] on Friday nights are informal, warm, and conducted in an atmosphere of sharing and dialogue. The emphasis is on learning.” Temple president Bernard Becker added that Rabbi Pearl’s stress on learning “is stimulating to the small congregation.... Through our learning, [Rabbi Pearl] is teaching us what it means to be a Jew in modern times.” Rabbi Pearl believed that “the past has a vote in what I do—but not a veto.”

Rabbi Pearl was joined on the *bimah* by Cantor Phyllis Cole. There is no indication that the Congregation had retained the services of a cantor before Cantor Cole. (Previously, music in the synagogue was under the direction of choir directors, including Ann Balter.) Cantor Cole was one of the first women to be ordained as a cantor by the Hebrew Union College-School of Sacred Music.¹⁶⁸

Around 1978 Rabbi Pearl left Adas Emuno to serve as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Rishon in Wyckoff, New Jersey. His successor, Rabbi Kenneth Emert, who knew Rabbi Pearl for many years—and remembers occasionally attending services at Adas Emuno when Rabbi Pearl was the spiritual leader—describes him as a pioneer for unrestricted participation by women; a rebel with strong views; someone who could speak about almost any subject on a moment’s notice; a crafter of superb sermons; a persuasive advocate for inclusion of music in services; a rabbi who was loved by children;

¹⁶⁶ *The Record*, September 10, 1976. The article also indicates that, in 1976, in addition to having a woman cantor (Cantor Phyllis Cole), two women were on the Board of Trustees—the first mention of such a presence.

¹⁶⁷ *The Record*, September 10, 1976.

¹⁶⁸ Cantor Cole was ordained in 1978. Later in her career, Cantor Cole sang at Temple Beth Rishon in Wyckoff, New Jersey, both as part of a choir there and as a soloist. (*Telephone Interview with Rabbi Kenneth Emert, retired rabbi at Beth Rishon*, January 13, 2022.)

a phenomenal educator; and a learned person. Rabbi Pearl retired from Temple Beth Rishon in 1995. He died in 2005 following a lengthy and debilitating illness.¹⁶⁹

Rabbi Pearl's successor at the Congregation was Rabbi Fredric S. Dworkin, who served from 1978 until June 1994. Rabbi Dworkin had an Orthodox upbringing; his *Bar Mitzvah* took place at Sinai Congregation in Hillside, New Jersey, an Orthodox congregation.¹⁷⁰ Rabbi Dworkin graduated New York University, Hebrew Union College and Drew University, where he was the first rabbi to graduate from Drew's Doctor of Ministry program. Before coming to Adas Emuno, Rabbi Dworkin was the founder of Temple Beth Torah in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Dworkin was learned in history and Judaism, and his broad knowledge was reflected in his sermons.¹⁷¹ He was particularly effective in ministering to interfaith families and brought many interfaith couples into the Congregation. After serving the Congregation for sixteen years, a significant number of members felt it was time for a change; an almost equal number wished to retain Rabbi Dworkin. A vote for competing slates of officers¹⁷² and trustees resulted in the election of those who sought a change. Rabbi Dworkin subsequently founded Temple Beth Elohim in Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey, and the majority of his supporters followed him to that congregation.

For much of Rabbi Dworkin's tenure he shared the *bimah* with Cantor Ian Cosman, an extraordinary person. In 1945, NYPD Patrolman Ian Cosman, a member of the police department's midtown squad since 1939, made his opera debut at New York City Center.¹⁷³ Cantor Cosman studied opera at Louisiana State University with Pasquale Amato, a well-known baritone with the Metropolitan Opera Company. He continued his opera studies while on the police force at the Chatham Music School. As a result of his performance, Cantor Cosman became known as "the singing policeman."

¹⁶⁹ Rabbi Pearl's wife, Sheila Akin Pearl, is a keynote speaker, seminar leader, and life coach. Years ago, she came from California to New York to pursue a career in opera, but when she married Rabbi Pearl her pursuits changed to becoming a family therapist and a cantor. For thirteen years she was Cantor and Educator at The Barnert Memorial Temple in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, and later served in the same positions at Temple Beth Jacob in Newburgh, New York. Her caregiving for her husband while he suffered from a disorder that has the features of Parkinson's Disease and dementia led to her writing the book *Still Life: A Spiritual Guidebook for Family Caregivers of Alzheimer's Patients, and other Difficult Challenges*.

¹⁷⁰ *New Jersey Jewish News*, February 20, 1948.

¹⁷¹ Examples of Rabbi Dworkin's sermons over the many years included "Our Jewish Ennui in a World in Flux"; "Conforming to Confirmation"; "The Bush Was Not Consumed"; "Jewish Civil Disobedience"; "Semitic Intolerance."

¹⁷² By this time attorney Paul Kaufman had replaced Phil Elkins as president of the Congregation.

¹⁷³ *The New York Times*, October 11, 1945. He sang the role of Turiddu in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*.



At age 39, in his eighteenth year on the police force and after studying mostly at night for five years, Ian Cosman was ordained as a cantor by Hebrew Union College. (The photo of Cantor Ian Cosman was taken shortly after he was ordained.) He chose to remain on the police force, but was active as a cantor with the NYPD's Shomrim Society.¹⁷⁴ Cantor Cosman retired from the NYPD in 1965 and became a fifth-grade teacher in the Bronx. He taught there for 15 years before retiring in 1980.

After he retired from teaching, Cantor Cosman undertook the role of cantor at Adas Emuno—at age 70—starting a third career. The author of this history remembers Cantor Cosman for his beautiful singing voice, his sweet disposition and, especially, his love of children. Cantor Cosman thoroughly enjoyed leading the students of the Religious School in song during family *Shabbat* services and at festival holidays.

Cantor Cosman served Adas Emuno until the summer of 1990, when he became seriously ill. He died in November 1990; the author remembers the large gathering that assembled for his funeral.

Ian Cosman's successor was a unique individual, Nico Castel. Born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1931, raised in Venezuela, Nico Castel was "[t]he scion of a multigenerational dynasty of Sephardic rabbis."¹⁷⁵ Cantor Castel had served at the Scarsdale Synagogue in Westchester and the Progressive Synagogue in Brooklyn. Nico Castel was a highly regarded opera singer who was a mainstay of the Metropolitan Opera for many years, performing on the stage of the Met over 800 times. He also performed numerous concerts, often including Jewish music in Hebrew, Ladino and Yiddish. For three decades, he was the diction coach of the Met.¹⁷⁶ He also lectured and taught at universities and conservatories around the world, including The Julliard School of Music and Mannes College. Nico Castel was a polyglot, able to speak fluent Portuguese, Ladino, German, French, Spanish, Italian and English.

¹⁷⁴ *The New York Times*, October 30, 1958. The NYPD Shomrim Society is the official organization of Jewish members of the NYPD.

¹⁷⁵ *The New York Times (obituary)*, June 3, 2015.

¹⁷⁶ To see Cantor Nico Castel's display of humor, acting and diction, check this enjoyable YouTube video he made: <https://bit.ly/33JxXzp>. The author's impression of him on the *bimah* was that he was a larger-than-life character with immense talent and skill.

Cantor Castel joined Adas Emuno a mere two weeks before the High Holy Days of 1990, but he was able to apply his 30 years of experience as a cantor to perform for the



Congregation under this time constraint. Nico Castel talked about how his busy day schedule intersected with his role of cantor at Adas Emuno:

"I just came from singing all day at the Met," Castel said after singing the Friday night service at Adas Emuno. "I taught at Julliard in the morning; then four hours at the Met; then I ran up to the Manhattan School of Music for a two-hour class; then I ran over [to Adas Emuno]."

"I switched gears as I came over the bridge. I get in a different mood to sing [at Adas Emuno]. Here, it's very simple. It all comes out of the heart, out of the mouth, with no big histrionics"....

"Tonight I sang for eight people. I sing with the same sensitivity for eight as I do for 8,000. I don't discriminate."¹⁷⁷

Speaking about his role in High Holy Days services as the cantor, Nico Castel explained, "It's a wonderful, cathartic experience, because not only do you put your soul into your prayer, but you put it into singing. And hopefully, people listening can catch some of that inspiration, and it will help them come through the Holy Days feeling better about themselves to face the new year."

Cantor Castel was with Adas Emuno from September 1, 1990, until the end of June 1991. In addition to serving at Friday night services,¹⁷⁸ the High Holy Days, and *B'nai Mitzvahs*, Cantor Castel led the second night Passover Seder during his tenure. The *April 1991 Bulletin* of the Congregation noted that he and Rabbi Dworkin made the *Seder* a "festive occasion" at which attendance was "high."

¹⁷⁷ *The Record*, September 20, 1990.

¹⁷⁸ Cantor Castel's contract recognized his busy schedule: "It is understood and agreed that your artistic schedule may require your presence elsewhere on an occasional Friday evening and that you will provide a satisfactory replacement at that time. It is expected that such occasions will not exceed approximately six per contract year." The author remembers Cantor Castel sending substitutes on numerous occasions; his substitutes were opera students with experience as cantorial soloists; they, too, were excellent.

Cantor William (Bill) Walton replaced Nico Castel, joining Rabbi Dworkin on the *bimah* in September 1991. Cantor Walton possesses a wonderful voice and can evoke a



wide range of emotions through his singing.¹⁷⁹ In addition to cantorial music, Cantor Walton is able to sing anything from opera to Broadway and the American songbook.¹⁸⁰ In recent years, he has performed with his son, Alex, accompanying him on piano in concerts featuring his vast repertoire of music and songs.

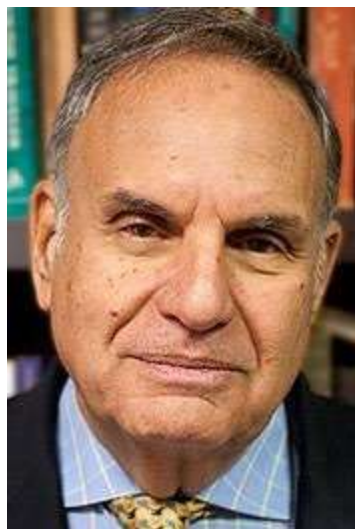
Cantor Walton left Adas Emuno at the same time as Rabbi Dworkin. He subsequently served ten years at Temple Israel of Union, New Jersey, a Conservative congregation. (Temple Israel merged with Temple Beth Ahm in 2008 to form Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael, a Conservative Egalitarian synagogue in Springfield, New Jersey.) Cantor Walton then took a position at Glen Rock Jewish Center beginning in 2009, where he shared the *bimah* with Rabbi Neil Tow. Rabbi Neil Tow describes Cantor Walton as “a gifted musician who used to say he could read and learn music as quickly as you can read the newspaper.” He added that “Cantor Walton had a big voice with a range that leaned toward operatic.” In recent years, he has served at Temple Israel of Vestal (New York) for the High Holy Days.

Adas Emuno was at a crossroads in the summer of 1994, with neither a rabbi nor a cantor. As luck would have it, the Congregation was able to obtain the services of Rabbi Ira S. Youdovin on a one-year interim basis and Cantor Orna Tuchendler for a number of years. This brought a welcome stability to the *bimah* and enabled Adas Emuno to embark on a new beginning.

¹⁷⁹ The author was always especially moved by Cantor Bill Walton’s chanting of the *Hashkiveinu* prayer.

¹⁸⁰ As just one example, Cantor Bill Walton led a program on George Gerhwin tunes at Café Europa at the Fair Lawn Jewish Center for Holocaust survivors. *The Jewish Standard*, October 12, 2012.

Rabbi Youdovin came to Adas Emuno in 1994 after spending three years at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City.¹⁸¹ Before serving at Stephen Wise, Rabbi



Youdovin had led Temple Beth-El in St. Petersburg, Florida, since 1984. He has held leadership positions in both the national and international Jewish community. Rabbi Youdovin was the founding executive director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA)—the Zionist arm of American Reform Judaism—from 1977 to 1984. From 1973 to 1980, he was the North American Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, serving as liaison between North American Reform Jews and their counterparts in Israel and twenty-five other countries. Rabbi Youdovin graduated from Columbia College with a degree in psychology and then studied for the rabbinate at Hebrew Union College, where he

was ordained in 1968.

After his valuable interim service at Adas Emuno, Rabbi Youdovin was the executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis¹⁸² until his retirement in 2009. While he was in Chicago, Rabbi Youdovin served for nine years as the part-time spiritual leader of B’nai Abraham, a small congregation in Beloit, Wisconsin. During his tenure there, the congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary. Rabbi Youdovin now lives in Santa Barbara, California, and remains outspoken on Jewish issues.

Cantor Orna T. Green is a native Israeli¹⁸³ and received a master’s degree in Sacred Music from Hebrew Union College. Cantor Green also holds a degree in Biology and Animal Behavior from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In addition to joining Rabbi Youdovin—and a year later, Rabbi Henry Weiner—on the *bimah*, she also taught music and *B’nai Mitzvah* students at the Congregation’s religious school. Cantor Green had the

¹⁸¹ Coming to Stephen Wise Free Synagogue was a homecoming for Rabbi Youdovin since his family was a member there when he was growing up.

¹⁸² The Chicago Board of Rabbis (CBR) represents over two hundred rabbis from the Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform streams of Jewish life. The CBR works to support rabbis in their congregational, educational, and institutional settings, and is a voice of the rabbinate in Chicago in communal and interreligious affairs.

¹⁸³ Orna Tuchendler came to the U.S. in 1972 as an exchange student and the guest of Temple Sinai of Summit, New Jersey. During her six-month stay, she attended Summit High School. At the time, she was an accomplished dancer who “also sings and plays guitar.” *The Summit Herald*, October 19, 1972.

ability to bring out the best in her students and, in particular, challenged *B’nai Mitzvah* students to participate as fully as possible on their special day.¹⁸⁴



Cantor Green has had a distinguished career. Before joining her current congregation in 2014—Har Sinai Temple in Pennington, New Jersey—she served at Temple Avoda in Fair Lawn. (That congregation merged in 2009 with Temple Shalom to form Temple Avodat Shalom in River Edge, New Jersey.) Following that merger, Cantor Green moved to Temple Sinai in Massapequa, New York. At Har Sinai Temple, she is employed in the dual role of Cantor and Director of Education. Cantor Green also has taught at the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies

Cantor Green is the recipient of awards for Excellence in Cantorial Studies, *Nusach*, and Cantillation as well as the Benjamin & Molly Borowitz Memorial Prize in Jewish Religious Thought.

Rabbi Nancy Weschler took the pulpit of Adas Emuno shortly after Rabbi Youdovin completed his interim service in 1995 and remained for two years. Rabbi Weschler (Weschler-Azen at the time) was ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1990. Prior to that, she received an undergraduate degree in psychology from UCLA. After being ordained, Rabbi Weschler became the first rabbi of Temple Kol Ami in Thornhill, Ontario.

Rabbi Weschler possesses a beautiful singing voice and has served as both rabbi and cantorial soloist at Congregation Beth Shalom in Carmichael, California, since 2003.¹⁸⁵ At Beth Shalom, Rabbi Weschler established a monthly *Rosh Chodesh* program for women dealing with spiritual ethics, *Mussar*¹⁸⁶ learning for adults, and a monthly band service called “Shabbat with a Beat.” She has also been active in creating interfaith programs of understanding. Rabbi Weschler is a member of *Salam Shalom*, a monthly program of learning and sisterhood between Jewish and Muslim women.



¹⁸⁴ The author knows this first-hand, since Cantor Green tutored his daughter, Elana Fishbein, for her *Bat Mitzvah*. He is grateful for Cantor Green’s effort and perseverance.

¹⁸⁵ Rabbi Weschler initially shared the *bimah* at Beth Shalom with her then-husband, Rabbi David Azen, who is now the spiritual leader of Congregation B’nai Harim in Grass Valley, California.

¹⁸⁶ *Mussar* is a Jewish spiritual practice that gives concrete instructions on how to live a meaningful and ethical life, first developed in the 19th century by Orthodox Lithuanian Jews.



While at Adas Emuno, Rabbi Weschler was joined on the *bimah* by student cantor Margaret Bruner (*photo at left*). They often joined their voices in song during *Shabbat* services to produce spiritually uplifting melodies. Although Cantor Bruner's family members were practicing Quakers, her mother exposed her to Jewish culture at a young age. After graduating college with a degree in music, she received a master's in music at the Early Music Institute of Indiana University. There, she became interested in synagogue music and applied to Hebrew Union College, where she was ordained in 2000. Cantor Bruner served at Congregation Ahavath Chesed in Jacksonville, Florida, from 2001 to 2009. At present, Cantor Bruner is the religious leader of Temple Beth El in Salinas, California.

David Thomas joined returning Cantor Orna Green on the *bimah* in 1997 while he was a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College. Thomas received a degree in Biblical Hebrew from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1979. For fourteen years he pursued a career in broadcast journalism as a sound engineer, living in Israel, England, and the United States. In 1993, he answered a lifelong call to be a rabbi. He earned his Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature in 1997 and was ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1998. Rabbi Thomas made a strong impression at Adas Emuno and was admired for his dedication to the Congregation.



In 2001, Rabbi Thomas followed well-known author and scholar, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, as rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Rabbi Thomas retired from Beth El in 2018. While at Beth El, he launched the MetroWest Free Medical Program¹⁸⁷ and was known for his work in social action and racial justice. Rabbi Thomas is a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute.¹⁸⁸ He remains active in rabbinic life by mentoring colleagues and teaching in the Jewish community of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

¹⁸⁷ The MetroWest Free Medical Program serves as an entry point to the health care system for those in an area near Boston who are uninsured or insufficiently insured by providing general medical and specialty care to meet immediate health care needs; connecting patients with social services; and advocating for policies that assure good health for all people.

¹⁸⁸ The Shalom Hartman Institute is a center of Jewish thought and education, serving Israel and North America.



Speaking of retired rabbis, Rabbi Thomas's successor, Rabbi Henry M. Weiner, came to Adas Emuno after retiring from Temple Shalom in Aberdeen, New Jersey, following thirty-two years at that congregation.¹⁸⁹ Rabbi Weiner was ordained in June 1962 at Hebrew Union College. His first pulpit was in Glens Falls, New York, from 1962 until 1967, when he accepted the position at Temple Shalom.

While at Temple Shalom—to better serve the congregation—Rabbi Weiner attended the Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute of Religion and Health in New York, receiving a certificate in advanced studies in pastoral counseling, and a certificate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Seton Hall University. In 1992, he received the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Psychology from New York Theological Seminary.

Speaking at the Central Conference of American Rabbis at its 2012 Convention on the occasion of his 50th year as an ordained rabbi, Rabbi Weiner explained his rabbinical thinking:

My thirty-two years at Temple Shalom evolved around three personal philosophical levels: the rabbi and his responsibilities towards his congregation; the rabbi and intra-Jewish community relations; and the rabbi and the non-Jewish community. Functioning within these three levels brought me great honor and great satisfaction.

Rabbi Weiner even received a certificate of appreciation for aiding in the establishment of the Matawan/Aberdeen *Orthodox* congregation, Bet Tefilah, in 1979. He was also a recipient of numerous awards relating to interfaith relationships.

Rabbi Weiner served at Adas Emuno from 1999-2005, initially with Cantor Orna Green (1999-2000), then with Cantor Arlene Frank (2000-2003), and finally with Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro for his final two years. Later, he held a part-time position at Congregation Sha'arey Ha-Yam in Manahawkin, New Jersey. After moving to Washington, DC, he taught the Outreach Program sponsored by the Reform movement, engaged in pastoral services for George Washington University Hospital, and served as rabbi for High Holy Days services at Leisure Village in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is

¹⁸⁹ In 1977, Rabbi Weiner presided over the *Bar Mitzvah* of Doug Emhoff, the husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, at Temple Shalom.

remembered at Adas Emuno for his intelligent spiritual leadership, his pleasing disposition, and his sense of humor.¹⁹⁰

On one memorable occasion, within a few days of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, members of Adas Emuno and the community at large filled the sanctuary for an emergency “service of healing” led by Rabbi Weiner. With his calm and comforting presence, Rabbi Weiner provided a much-needed voice of clarity and strength at a time of great anxiety.

Rabbi Weiner had an ongoing commitment to Israel and—together with his wife Rickie—led National Federation of Temple Youth Bible Institute programs in Israel during the summers of 1968 through 1981. That passionate commitment nearly cost Rabbi Weiner his life in 2002.¹⁹¹

In Jerusalem for a convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Weiner was having lunch with his wife, Rickie, at the Kaffit Cafe on a hot day when a man came into the cafe wearing a heavy topcoat and a knapsack. “The next thing I knew, our waiter [Shlomo Harel, veteran of an elite combat unit] was pushing this guy out of the restaurant and into the courtyard.” Once outside, the 23-year-old waiter noticed a wire protruding from the knapsack and pulled on it, preventing the detonation of forty pounds of explosives. “The police said there would have been a major disaster. It would have been the end of our lives.” Rabbi Weiner and Rickie, along with their dining companions, invited Shlomo Harel to visit the United States as their guest. “Since he saved our lives, the best thing we could do is to share our lives with him.”



Cantor Arlene Frank served Adas Emuno beginning in 2000 as a student, until being ordained at the Academy for Jewish Religion in 2003. Growing up in Irvington, New Jersey, she spent nearly all her days in a synagogue of which her grandparents were founding members. She was very active in youth groups, including Young Judea and United Synagogue Youth. It was clear to her at this early age that she had a love of Jewish music and dance.

Once ordained, she worked at Temple Beth El in Rockland County as that congregation’s cantor until the temple’s merger in 2016. Following her tenure at Temple Beth El, she became the cantor

¹⁹⁰ Rabbi Weiner died in 2018 in Israel, where he had moved with his wife, Rickie, some years earlier.

¹⁹¹ While the author heard Rabbi Weiner’s harrowing encounter when he returned (safely) from Israel, the following account is taken from *The Jewish Week*, March 1, 2002.

of Congregation Shir Shalom near Buffalo, New York. Shir Shalom, established through the merger of a Reform congregation and a Reconstructionist synagogue, is the first of its kind, *i.e.*, a congregation affiliated with *both* movements.

Cantor Frank is an extremely versatile singer who brings her joy and enthusiasm for Judaism and music to all her functions as a cantor. While at Adas Emuno she engaged effortlessly with congregants and on several occasions presented entertaining musical programs.¹⁹² As Virginia Gitter said when she was president of the Congregation, “her presence on the *bimah* truly enriche[d] and enliven[ed] our worship services every Friday evening and on every holiday that we celebrate[d] together.”



This picture was taken at the celebration of Cary Gitter's Bar Mitzvah in 2000. Shown from left to right (front row) are Bob Sherwood; Karen Sherwood, who played a prominent role in the restructuring of the Religious School's curriculum in the late 1990s; Henry Tucker, who had been an active member of Adas Emuno since the Hoboken days; Phil Elkins, who was president of the Congregation for more than two decades; and Barbara Boren. In the back row are Hal Boren; and Robin Cramer and Ed Cramer, both longtime active members. Clergy conducting the Bar Mitzvah service were Rabbi Weiner and Cantor Green.

¹⁹² For an example of Cantor Frank's versatility and the joy she brings to Jewish music, see her singing *Mi Chamocha* to the tune of *Mr. Tambourine Man* by Bob Dylan at <https://bit.ly/34j3xnN>.

Beginning in the summer of 2002, eight women members of Adas Emuno came together to study Hebrew with Rabbi Weiner. At first, only a few could read Hebrew with any confidence, but all progressed because of his patience and encouragement. Studies then turned to selected readings from the Bible that held particular significance for Rabbi Weiner. The next aspect of their studies involved learning to chant from the Torah under Cantor Frank's guidance. The group also practiced leading the *Shabbat* evening service.

On Friday, June 6, 2003—*Shavuot*—these eight women became the first adult *B'not Mitzvah* class at Adas Emuno. The group presented the Congregation with a "Tree of Life" painting which contains brass "fruits" that can be engraved to honor a life-cycle event.



Pictured above is the first Adult B'not Mitzvah class at Adas Emuno. Front row from left to right: Fanny Fishbein, Marcia Wilson, Robin Cramer, Michele Harris, Cantor Arlene Frank, and Beti Rozencwajg-Hays. Back row from left to right: Virginia Gitter, Rabbi Henry Weiner, Kim Merlino, and Karen Whritner.

The Last Twentieth-Century Presidents of the Congregation

After Phil Elkins ended his long run as president of the Congregation in the early 1990s, Paul Kaufman was elected president, after serving for years on the Board of Trustees. Paul has been a practicing attorney since 1974 in the Fort Lee area and specializes in land use and zoning matters and commercial real estate and banking law. He also served Leonia as the town's mayor while he was a member of Adas Emuno. During his time in office, he led the Congregation through a difficult period when a significant number of members left Adas Emuno to join Rabbi Dworkin at a new congregation he established in Hasbrouck Heights. Because of his efforts and those of Interim-Rabbi Ira Youdovin, Adas Emuno began a steady recovery. His successor, Rob Shafran, continued the work of recovery.



While mayor of Leonia in 2000, Paul Kaufman proposed that the town include a *menorah* in its holiday celebration, which featured a Christmas tree in the center of town. This seemingly innocuous suggestion led, unfortunately, to a major controversy.¹⁹³ The town council did not approve the placement of a *menorah* on municipal property, indicating that there was not enough time to consider this idea. In response, Paul formed a clergy committee representing the town's congregations to find a solution. Based on the recommendations of this committee, the council voted the next year to approve the *menorah* placement, and Adas Emuno and Leonia's Conservative synagogue, Sons of Israel, erected a *menorah* in the center of town, near the town's Christmas tree. (That *menorah* is still in use, but has been located during *Hanukkah* in front of the Congregation's temple ever since that initial display in 2001.)

Dr. Vincent R. Bonagura, MD, an allergist-immunologist and medical researcher, followed Paul Kaufman as president. His term began in 1997 and he was re-elected in June 2000. Adas Emuno continued to make progress under his leadership, which included the hiring of Rabbi Henry Weiner and Cantor Arlene Frank while she was a student. High on his list of priorities for the Congregation were fiscal responsibility and commitment to Reform Judaism. In addition to his time as president, Dr. Bonagura previously served one year as vice-president and two years as a trustee.



¹⁹³ This account of the *menorah* issue is based on an article in *The Record* (December 5, 2001). The controversy seemed to center on whether a *menorah* is a religious object, while a Christmas tree is secular in nature.

During his second term as president, Dr. Bonagura found it necessary to step down from this position due to his commitments in academic medicine. Vice-president Virginia Gitter was elevated to president, becoming the first woman president of the Congregation in its long history. Virginia was well-prepared for this role since she had taken on many responsibilities during her service as vice-president. The transition from Dr. Bonagura to Virginia Gitter occurred in January 2001.¹⁹⁴

These congregational leaders, who performed their duties alongside several rabbis and cantors, are no longer members of the Congregation (except Virginia Gitter, who is an Honorary Member of the Congregation and remains active in Adas Emuno from her home in Portland, Oregon). Nevertheless, all of them played a part in shaping Adas Emuno's future and helped the Congregation reach its 150th Anniversary in 2021.

On to the Sesquicentennial!

One of the most noteworthy individuals at Adas Emuno in the beginning of the twenty-first century is Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro. Cantor Shapiro¹⁹⁵ served Adas Emuno from 2003 until 2011. Originally from West Hartford, Connecticut, Cantor Shapiro graduated with a B.A. in English from Macalester College in Minnesota, and then pursued further studies at the Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies and Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford. She later received her ordination from Hebrew Union College in 2003.

Kerith explained the factors that motivated her to become a cantor:

*I grew up in a secular, interfaith household. It's sort of a minor miracle I became a cantor. It was a combination of interests. I love learning and teaching. I love music. I like being there for people, doing pastoral work. It's also about an interest in social justice and interfaith work. I can't imagine any other life work that would afford me all the amazing experiences that we get to have as cantors. It's exciting and fulfilling.*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ It is noteworthy that both Dr. Bonagura and Virginia Gitter are Jews by choice. Virginia Gitter's tenure as president of the Congregation is discussed below.

¹⁹⁵ Kerith Spencer-Shapiro was generally referred to as Cantor Shapiro during her time at Adas Emuno.

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.accantors.org/cantor-spotlight/volunteer-month-cantor-kerith-spencer-shapiro>.



Cantor Shapiro began her tenure at Adas Emuno alongside Rabbi Henry Weiner. What she remembers most about her three years with Rabbi Weiner was that he was a “sweet man with kind eyes” who was very loving and very supportive of her. Although their styles were different in terms of their *bimah* presence and how they related to congregants, she has explained that the contrast was healthy and a good thing in meeting the needs of a small, but diverse Congregation. Most importantly, Kerith felt that she and Rabbi Weiner connected very deeply because what they both brought to Adas Emuno “had a basis in compassion.”¹⁹⁷

With Rabbi Weiner’s pending retirement in 2006, the Congregation was focused on keeping continuity in its leadership. From that was born the concept of having Cantor Shapiro become Adas Emuno’s full-time spiritual leader.¹⁹⁸ While she was enthusiastic about this idea, Cantor Shapiro, in her own words, shared that she had to overcome some of her own assumptions about what that would require—most notably, the idea of a “certain kind of faith or spiritual leanings” that one should have to be a rabbi or spiritual leader. What she came to realize was that spiritual leaders in any capacity are always searching and learning—and being transparent about that quest. Cantor Shapiro feels that her position at Adas Emuno was beneficial in terms of discovering her own spirituality and she remains grateful for that.

During her time as the Congregation’s spiritual leader, Cantor Shapiro served as mentor to two rabbinical students: Carrie Barrie, who became a cantor, and Allison Berry, who is a rabbi. She explained that this was an excellent learning experience for which she relied on her relationship with her own mentor, Rabbi Linda Henry Goodman of Union Temple in Brooklyn (now Congregation Beth Elohim).

Among the many highlights of her tenure, the Congregation enjoyed concerts featuring top-notch musicians who were friends and colleagues of Cantor Shapiro. These successful fundraising events could not have happened without her effort and talent. The Congregation was also blessed with beautiful musical experiences at weekly *Shabbat* services and holidays. The Adas Emuno Religious School thrived under her direction.

¹⁹⁷ This and parts of the following discussion are based on Virginia Gitter’s interview with Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro conducted February 2022.

¹⁹⁸ While the concept of having a cantor as a congregation’s spiritual leader was unusual at the time, presently there are more cantors leading congregations.

While Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro has moved on to a position with one of the largest Reform congregations in the country—Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles— she has declared that she is no less proud of her time at Adas Emuno and what she was able to accomplish at this small congregation.



If there is a 21st century equivalent of Bernard Marx or Phil Elkins, it's Virginia Gitter.¹⁹⁹ Although she served as president of the Congregation for only four years, that relatively short tenure hardly begins to describe her contributions to Adas Emuno. Before becoming president, Virginia served as a trustee and then as vice-president, where she provided strong leadership as Dr. Bonagura's surrogate. As Virginia has explained, like so many who have volunteered their time in service to Adas Emuno over its long history, she was always compelled to do more.²⁰⁰ There is virtually no activity that has taken place in the more than twenty-five years Virginia has been a member of the Congregation that does not bear her fingerprints.

Virginia graduated from San Jose State University with a dual degree in English Literature and Journalism. She had a career in recruitment advertising for many years before becoming a licensed real estate agent in New Jersey.

Virginia characterizes her experience as a leader of Adas Emuno as “life changing on so many levels”:

It deepened my connection to Judaism, particularly through the close relationships I developed with clergy. It challenged my abilities to lead and work with a diverse and committed group of trustees and volunteers. And, most importantly, it allowed me the opportunity to develop so many meaningful relationships with my fellow congregants.

Although Virginia now lives in Portland, Oregon, her connection to Adas Emuno remains strong. She continues to be a trustee and even co-chairs the Congregation's active Ritual Committee and the newly formed Caring Committee. When she moved to Portland, Virginia was awarded a framed “Certificate of Lifetime Honorary Membership,” the only person to have achieved this status. Congregation Adas Emuno continues to be Virginia Gitter's spiritual home despite a distance of 3,000 miles.

¹⁹⁹ Although throughout its long history women played a major role in sustaining Adas Emuno, Virginia Gitter holds the distinction of being the first woman president of the Congregation.

²⁰⁰ A Congregation does not survive 150 years (and counting) without having had many dedicated volunteers throughout its history willing to do the large and small things it takes to sustain its vitality.

During the last month of her tenure as president in 2004, Vitter Gitter announced that, beginning in September 2004, a group of fifty-five individuals from Chavurah Beth Chavairuth would be joining Adas Emuno. Beth Chavairuth was the oldest Reform *chavurah* in Bergen County and had been holding services in congregants' homes since it was established in 1975. In the months before the group joined Adas Emuno, members of Beth Chavairuth had been visiting Reform synagogues in Bergen County in search of a new and permanent home.²⁰¹ After a series of discussions and meetings with the president and vice-president of Beth Chavairuth—Fred Friedman and Sandy Kluger, respectively—Adas Emuno was informed of that congregation's decision. Both Fred Friedman and Sandy Kluger accepted invitations to join Adas Emuno's Board of Trustees, where they served for several years with distinction.

A collection of members of Temple Sinai in Tenafly, New Jersey, had met at the home of Sandy and Millie Kluger in 1975 and "conceived the idea of forming our own congregation with all the attributes of a Reform synagogue—except buildings."²⁰² Fifty families formed the nucleus of this *chavurah* (Hebrew for fellowship), and the group flourished, eventually numbering over one hundred members. They celebrated *Shabbat* and holidays at each other's homes, and held High Holy Days observances at country club venues where nonmembers could buy tickets to attend.

Rabbi Avraham Soltes served as the spiritual leader of Beth Chavairuth from 1977 until his death in 1983. Rabbi Soltes also was the Jewish chaplain of the United States Military Academy in West Point. He was active in many cultural and educational activities involving Jewish art, music and literature. Rabbi Soltes hosted a radio program, *The Music of Israel*, on WQXR from 1974 until 1983.²⁰³

Adas Emuno is grateful to former *chavurah* members who continue to be congregants in 2022: Jerome and Enid Alpern; Maren Friedman; Muriel Reid; Kurt Roberg; Norm and Joan Rosen; Kate and Noah Scooler; Margaret Strauch; and Roslyn Swire. The Congregation recalls fondly those who have passed away: Cynthia Bernstein; Pearl Bernstein; Eileen Cohen; Al Fossner; Fred Friedman; and Ellen Lester. Due to illness or relocation several others are no longer active members, but they are remembered warmly as well.

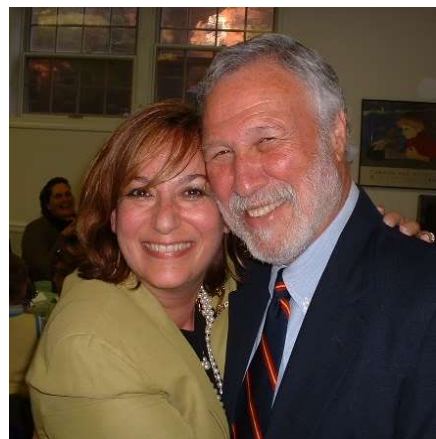
²⁰¹ At the time of their visits to Adas Emuno, both Rabbi Weiner and Cantor Shapiro were on the *bimah*. Just as Beth Chavairuth joined the Congregation, Rabbi Weiner retired.

²⁰² This discussion of Beth Chavairuth is taken from the "Member Spotlight" of *Kadima* (May/June 2021), written by Virginia Gitter.

²⁰³ *Texas Jewish Post (obituary)*, June 16, 1983.

In countless ways, Adas Emuno is a better congregation because of the *chavurah*. They enrich Adas Emuno with their personal histories, their spirit of volunteerism, and their commitment to lifelong learning through the study of Torah. Indeed, many Beth Chavairuth alumni are pillars of Adas Emuno.

Beth Ziff, who for years played against type as Haman in the Adas Emuno *Purim spiel*, was president of the Congregation from 2004-2006 and again from 2008-2010. (Beth is shown here with Rabbi Henry Weiner at his retirement party in June 2005.) Beth graduated Emerson College with a B.S. in Communications and Speech. She has put her college degree to exceptional use both in her professional life leading customer service contact centers and at Adas Emuno. As president, she set a high standard in her leadership of meetings of the Board of Trustees. Beth encouraged all trustees to state their views on issues coming before the Board, kept Board meetings focused and amicable, and achieved outstanding results. As a longstanding member of Adas Emuno, Beth has served the Congregation in many capacities, including most recently as Chair of the 150th Anniversary Planning Committee.



As president and as a past-president, Beth Ziff has addressed the Congregation on numerous occasions, always crafting presentations that are enjoyable and meaningful. Her love of Adas Emuno shines through in all aspects of her deep-rooted involvement with the Congregation.

Dr. Louis Steinberg, a dentist and National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellow in nutrition research, followed (and then preceded) Beth Ziff as temple president, serving from 2006-2008. Louis Steinberg's story is symbolic of the Congregation's embracing of interfaith families. He was raised as an Orthodox Jew and even had rabbinical aspirations. Several years after leaving home, Louis married Carolyn, who was raised as a Roman Catholic. Speaking of his place in the Jewish world, Louis has said that, for several years—without children—he “just hung loose, it was easy.” (He now has two adult sons.) Then friends invited him to Adas Emuno. He found there “a place where an ex-Orthodox Jew and a former Roman Catholic feel completely at home.” Louis, a supporter of interfaith acceptance, has



remarked that Adas Emuno is “so welcoming and so spiritual that the cultural biases of the assorted religions are somehow transcended.”

In 2010, Dr. Alan Spector, a family and cosmetic dentist who attended Tufts University’s School of Dental Medicine, began his two-year tenure as president of the Congregation. He and his wife Sheila believed in instilling Jewish values in their children.



All three of their children became a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at Adas Emuno, each with different clergy presiding over the service. In addition, each of their children traveled to Israel on the Birthright program.

Alan Spector’s presidency featured all-new clergy. Rabbi Barry Schwartz began in August 2011 as the Congregation’s rabbi, and later was joined on the *bimah* by student cantor Luke Hawley for one year. While he was president, Adas Emuno had the privilege of receiving a Czech Holocaust Torah scroll from Congregation Beth Am in Teaneck; this scroll is now used by the Congregation at every *B’nai Mitzvah* service as part of the traditional passing of the Torah from generation to generation. To help preserve a Jewish presence in Leonia, the Congregation also received a significant donation from Sons of Israel when that congregation merged and left the town. Adas Emuno also received the ark doors of Sons of Israel’s sanctuary that now grace its *bimah*.

Dr. Spector has been a leader in the effort to fundraise for the Congregation, and from 2021-2022 served on the planning committee for the 150th anniversary celebration, where he played a major role in promoting the patio paver project to congregants.

Sometimes circumstances and luck favored Adas Emuno. In July 2010, Rabbi Barry Schwartz began his first job in publishing as director and editor-in-chief of The Jewish Publication Society. From 1999 to 2010, Rabbi Schwartz had led Congregation M’kor Shalom, a large Reform congregation in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Leaving the *bimah* and taking the position at JPS allowed Rabbi Schwartz to amplify his passion as an educator by producing both scholarly and popular Jewish works for a diverse cross-section of Jews. Although Rabbi Schwartz knew that there would be significant challenges in leading JPS, he was ready for that task. But less than a year later, Rabbi Schwartz also realized that he was missing life as a congregation’s rabbi. At the same time, Adas Emuno had the need to replace Cantor Shapiro who was leaving the Congregation for a position as a full-time cantor. The match



was made—and Rabbi Schwartz became Adas Emuno’s “part-time” rabbi in August 2011, moving into the Congregation’s house where he could be part of the community.

Rabbi Schwartz holds degrees from Duke University and Hebrew Union College, where he was ordained in 1985. He began his career in Israel as rabbi of the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa. Later, he served as rabbi in Amherst, New York; Chevy Chase, Maryland; and most notably, in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Rabbi Schwartz is a prolific writer and reader. He is the author of numerous books for adults, teens, and children, including titles such as *Judaism’s Great Debates* (2012); *Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values* (1996), which is used in over three hundred religious schools; and *Path of the Prophets: The Ethics-Driven Life* (2018).

Asked what brought him to a rabbinical career, Rabbi Schwartz responded:

Growing up as the eldest grandson of Eastern European immigrants, and hearing their story of coming to America, made a big impression on me. I was also the kind of child who read and read, and got wonderfully lost in the magisterial history of the Jewish people. So maybe it was not a complete surprise when I changed from studying biology to history and religion and spent my junior year of college at the Hebrew University. During a gap year between college and seminary I served as a volunteer at the newly established Kibbutz Yahel of the Reform movement, where I met my wife, Debby.

I was ordained a rabbi in 1985, first serving in Haifa (where I was also drafted into the Israeli army) and then returning to the States. After 25 years in the pulpit I had the unique opportunity to become the director and editor-in-chief of The Jewish Publication Society, the nation’s oldest and most distinguished Jewish publisher. One year later the opportunity to also continue in the pulpit as rabbi of Congregation Adas Emuno arose. I’ve been blessed to serve both venerable institutions for over a decade.

While at Adas Emuno, Rabbi Schwartz has conducted a well-attended and treasured Torah Study, taught Confirmation classes, and mentored several student cantors with patience and wisdom. Rabbi Schwartz is an environmentalist, social justice advocate, avid hiker, traveler, cyclist, and table tennis player.



After mentoring student cantor Luke Hawley from September 2011 through June 2012, Alison Lopatin was welcomed as a student cantor for one year in September 2012, during her fourth year at Hebrew Union College, joining Rabbi Schwartz on the *bimah* for *Shabbat* and holiday services as well as providing musical programming at the Religious

School. Alison, who grew up in the Reform movement in Connecticut, attended Wesleyan University where she received a degree in music and psychology. After graduation, she attended San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she received a Master of Music in Vocal Performance. Cantor Lopatin is an accomplished and vibrant vocalist, and enriched Adas Emuno during her year with the Congregation.

Cantor Lopatin (now Levine) considers that she was called to become a cantor because it combined all the things she loved: music, Judaism, teaching, and interacting with people. Following her ordination in 2014, Cantor Lopatin assumed the cantorial position at Temple Beth El in Huntington, New York.

From 2013-2014, Rabbi Schwartz was joined on the *bimah* by cantorial soloist Nancy Beller-Krieger, who also served as the music teacher at the Religious School. Nancy's cantorial style emphasized folk music. In fact, she and her husband—Cantor Wayne Krieger—have performed Jewish folk music wherever they have lived. Nancy Beller-Krieger's love of Jewish music was always in evidence during her year at Adas Emuno. The cantorial tradition remains strong in the Krieger family, as their daughter, Yael Krieger, is cantorial soloist at Temple Beth Abraham, a Conservative congregation in Oakland, California. Another daughter, Kochava Krieger, has been a cantorial soloist in Burlington, Vermont, and began the five-year cantorial program at Hebrew College in Massachusetts in 2019.



Cantor Sandy Horowitz came to Adas Emuno in July 2014 to serve both as cantor and Religious School director. She brought with her a passion for both music and Jewish education. After receiving a degree in English Literature/Composition from Colgate University, Cantor Horowitz moved to New York City and began formal voice training while working in publishing and later as a computer systems project manager. She began exploring her Jewish roots and immediately found a connection through music. Cantor Horowitz served as a cantorial lay leader, became a *B'nei Mitzvah* tutor, and was a founding member of the Hebrew School of Beth Am The Peoples Temple/Hebrew Tabernacle of Washington Heights.

Sandy acknowledges Beth Am as her inspiration for becoming a cantor. "When I was first looking for a congregation back in the early 1990s, I saw a listing in the phone book (remember phone books?) and thought to myself, 'the Peoples Temple'—sounds

like my kind of place!" She has been a member ever since, and credits Beth Am as her inspiration and initial training ground for becoming a cantor. Cantor Horowitz received her ordination in 2014 from the Academy for Jewish Religion and also has a Master in Jewish Studies from Gratz College.

Cantor Horowitz twice received the Rabbi Timoner Award for her musical compositions. As a classically trained singer she is equally comfortable with the great masters of Jewish *hazzanut* and contemporary Jewish music. Sandy was held in high regard at Adas Emuno, both as a cantor and an educator. After leaving Adas Emuno in June 2019, Cantor Horowitz now serves at Beth Am in Washington Heights on two *Shabbats* a month and leads other congregations in prayer during the High Holy Days.



Lance Strate, a Professor of Communications and Media Studies at Fordham University, served as president of the Congregation from 2012 through June 2018. Lance is internationally recognized for his scholarship, intellectual leadership, and creative activities. In addition to being the author of eight books (including two collections of his poetry), Lance has written many of Adas Emuno's *Purim spiels*, featuring humor and clever lyrics. In addition to his active participation and leadership at Adas Emuno, Lance serves as an advisor for several autism groups in Northern New Jersey.

Lance and his family joined the Congregation in 1999, and he has been a member of the Board of Trustees since 2006. He served as vice-president from 2010-2012, during Alan Spector's tenure as president. Lance continues to serve as a trustee, and brings his experience to the Board having seen the Congregation go through trials, experimentation and numerous changes. Lance has eloquently expressed his understanding of what sustains Adas Emuno:

Congregation Adas Emuno is not a place It's not the property, not the buildings, not the plaques on the walls not even the prayer books, Ark, and Torah scrolls, important as they may be. Adas Emuno is us, the assembly, the congregation, the people, the community. Without members, Adas Emuno is nothing more than history, a past without a future, without a present....

Congregation Adas Emuno is an extraordinary, altogether unique, and beautiful spiritual community, a place where we join hands in praying for healing and in service for those in need where hearts and minds work together in hamishe

cooperation to create something for ourselves, something that is greater than ourselves....

Lance is an outstanding public speaker, and on numerous occasions has delivered memorable addresses at important temple events, including a High Holy Days appeal and the *Shabbat* service celebrating the Congregation's 150th anniversary on October 22, 2021. He has often served as lay leader of *Shabbat* services, where his *d'var torah* presentations are eagerly anticipated.

A longtime member of Adas Emuno, Michael Fishbein,²⁰⁴ followed Lance Strate as president in July 2018, and continued in this position during the sesquicentennial. He is a graduate of Rutgers College with a B.A. in Economics and received a Juris Doctor from Rutgers Law School. He had a career spanning forty years in tax law publishing.



Michael Fishbein had previously served as the Congregation's treasurer and spent many years as a trustee, beginning on the Board in the 1980s, when Phil Elkins was president. For several years, Michael took a respite from the Board during which time his wife, Fanny, served on the Board. Michael has been active in managing the maintenance and repair of the Congregation's three buildings as chair of the building committee and partners in the production of the Congregation's bi-monthly newsletter, *Kadima*. Michael was the original livestream producer for services and events occurring in the sanctuary.²⁰⁵ During his tenure as president, Michael has worked with Rabbi Barry Schwartz, Cantor Sandy Horowitz, student cantor Iris Karlin, and a steadfast Board of Trustees and officers.

Iris Karlin, a native Israeli, officially began her service as student cantor at Adas Emuno in September 2020, but appeared at several Zoom services in the summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Iris joined Adas Emuno as a second-year cantorial student at Hebrew Union College. Her academic studies started at Rubin Conservatory in Haifa, where she studied piano, flute and voice. She received her Bachelor in Music and Master in Education from Haifa University. Iris also pursued postgraduate studies in opera at the Buchman Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv.



²⁰⁴ Michael Fishbein is the author of this history of Adas Emuno. He is responsible for the inevitable errors and omissions. He also owes a debt of gratitude to Virginia Gitter for her long-distance help in writing this history.

²⁰⁵ He is currently joined in livestreaming production by Lauren Rowland and Dylan Pribo. Livestreaming of services began in August 2020, and proved its worth during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After singing with the Israeli Opera, Iris continued her opera career in the United States. She has been praised for her rare combination of stage presence and musicianship by critics and conductors. Iris brings her singing, her piano accompaniment, her personality, and her love for Jewish melodies to the *bimah*.²⁰⁶ Iris also shines as a composer of new Jewish melodies, some of which have debuted at Adas Emuno. She will be remembered for her hard work on behalf of the Congregation and her commitment to excellence.

Before coming to Adas Emuno, Iris taught music and Hebrew at several synagogues and was the soprano soloist at Riverdale Temple in the Bronx. In 2019, Iris heard her calling and began pursuing her cantorial studies, where she started as a second-year student.

Rabbi Schwartz expressed his view of Student Cantor Karlin during an interview with The Jewish Standard²⁰⁷ concerning the Congregation's 150th anniversary: *"We have a part-time student cantor—that's Iris Karlin—who is a breath of fresh air and will be a star one day; in my 40 years in the rabbinate, I've never worked with anyone as spiritual or as nice."*

Toward the Future

The first minutes of Congregation Adas were written in German, possibly with a quill pen. Certainly, much has changed since the Congregation's founding in 1871. But much has not. While this history of Adas Emuno has focused primarily on the lay and spiritual leadership of the Congregation, it is really the devotion and volunteerism of the members that has sustained Adas Emuno for 150 years. Ninety-four years were spent in the Congregation's beloved Hoboken, six years "wandering in the wilderness in Fort Lee," and now fifty years in Leonia. The vital work of women members of the Congregation gets too little attention in this narrative due to the lack of available information. Suffice it to say, that without their labors on behalf of Adas Emuno over the past 150 years, this small Congregation would never have survived.

It is the author's hope that others in the future add to this chronicle of Congregation Adas Emuno as "the little temple that could" reaches future milestones.

²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the majority of Student Cantor Karlin's services have had few congregants in attendance due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, members of Adas Emuno have enjoyed the opportunity of seeing and hearing Iris by attending services virtually, either by Zoom or via livestreaming on YouTube.

²⁰⁷ *The Jewish Standard*, October 13, 2021.

A Look at Some of the Founders

What was most important about their act in founding Congregation Adas Emuno was their humble recognition that important as it was for them to further their own security and economic progress, they should be equally conscious of the force that was bigger than anything in their personal sphere. The force that they recognized as that bigger reality was the religion of Judaism.

— Rabbi J. Max Weis, message in the 85th Anniversary Celebration Souvenir Journal

Who were these founders of Congregation Adas Emuno? Certainly, they were German-speaking immigrants who sought to become “Americans.” But they were also Jews who wished to retain their Jewish identity while assimilating into mainstream America. This addendum to “*A History of Congregation Adas Emuno*” provides some background information on the founders and early members, chiefly their occupations.

Rino Berel, the first president of the Congregation, was born on December 21, 1826, in Breslan, Germany,²⁰⁸ and died at age 61 on May 27, 1888, after a lingering illness. His wife, Rosa Loovis Berel, was born on June 7, 1834, in Germany, and died on December 8, 1896, at age 62. Rino’s death certificate indicates his occupation as “insurance.” Before working in insurance, Rino was a bookkeeper. He also had owned a “fancy goods and perfumery store” in New York City with his brother Jacob in the 1850s.

Max Konert was born in Germany on June 8, 1812, and died on May 17, 1885, at age 72. He immigrated to the United States between 1852 and 1858. His son, Paul Konert, was born in New York City in November 1858. Another son, Gustav Konert, born in 1850, served on the Board of Trustees in the early twentieth century and was the recording secretary until his death in 1929. His daughter, Sophie, was born on April 2, 1859, and died on July 21, 1881, at age 22. He and his wife, Menna, had six children. One source described him as a successful businessman. Descendants of Max Konert were members of the Congregation into the 1950s. Max Konert is the great-great grandfather of Juliette Barr, who was the Religious School Director for several years between 2004 and 2006.

Louis Ettinger followed Rino Berel as president of the Congregation. He and his brother, Moritz, both born in Germany around the middle of the nineteenth century, owned *Ettinger Brothers, Dry and Fancy Goods, Hosiery and Underwear*, on Washington Street in Hoboken. “Mr. Louis Ettinger and Mr. Moritz Ettinger... have made it a strict rule since they have been in business, to sell goods of the very best quality at a small profit, and an evidence of the appreciation of their efforts in this direction is shown in the large trade

²⁰⁸ There was no unified “Germany” until 1871.

they enjoy, and the confidence and regard of the public.”²⁰⁹ The Ettinger brothers, who played a large role in the building of the Hoboken synagogue, came from a German family that was renowned for learning and piety.

Lewis Hart, whose name is on the plaque commemorating the building of the Hoboken synagogue,²¹⁰ was born in Bavaria around 1839. He owned a clothing store in Hoboken on Washington Street for men and boys.²¹¹ “Mr. Hart has one of the largest and finest stocks of clothing to be found in the city at the lowest prices, and always uses his best endeavors to please those who favor him with their patronage.... [S]ince he has been a resident and engaged in business in Hoboken [he] has gained a high reputation.”

Morris (Moritz) Lesser, who was on the Building Committee, was born in 1826 and died in 1914 at the age of 89. Morris was a metals dealer in Hoboken. Charles Cohen of the Building Committee, was born in Germany around 1850, and had a produce store in Hoboken.

Another member whose name is on the plaque is Morris Appel, who was born in Holland around 1847. He owned a shoe store located adjacent to Lewis Hart’s clothing store.²¹² “He is one of the most popular business men [sic] of the city, and as such enjoys the confidence and esteem of the whole community.”

Max Driesen, another member of the Building Committee for the Hoboken synagogue, was born in Prussia around 1846. He, too, owned a clothing store and tailoring business on Washington Street in Hoboken.²¹³ “Mr. Driesen is a skilled, practical, correct cutter, and always guarantees an easy, comfortable fit and the latest and most fashionable styles in dress or business suits or single garments.” Max Driesen suffered an enormous tragedy in the death of his daughter, Carrie, in 1899. Carrie was secretly in love with Meyer Goodhorn, a clerk in the clothing store. At age 24, she eloped with Meyer and was married by a rabbi in New York City. The marriage was hidden from her parents, but Max Driesen discovered her status several days later. Max and his wife, Rachel, went to call on Meyer’s parents in New York. Sadly, while they were gone, Carrie committed suicide at the Driesen family home by drinking carbolic acid while no one was home.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ Industries of New Jersey: Hudson, Passaic and Bergen Counties, 1883.

²¹⁰ The plaque is in the foyer of the Leonia temple.

²¹¹ Industries of New Jersey: Hudson, Passaic and Bergen Counties, 1883.

²¹² *Id.*

²¹³ *Id.*

²¹⁴ *The World (New York)*, October 20, 1899 (page 14).

Herman Heyman, the fourth president of the Congregation, who was born around 1833, came to Hoboken in 1874. In addition to being a pillar of Adas Emuno from the 1890s until his sudden death in 1904, he was a successful businessman. Herman was president of the “Great American Automatic Vending Machine Company” and also an insurance and real estate broker. His son-in-law, Albert Schiller, who also served as president of the Congregation, was involved in his father-in-law’s real estate and insurance business (“Heyman’s Agency”) for many years. “He handles extensive realty deals and has carried out some of the most important property transfers in Hoboken.”²¹⁵

²¹⁵ *Hoboken Illustrated*, page 18.