

CORNERSTONE TO CORNERSTONE . . . A CENTURY OF COMMITMENT

History is a review of events which took place many years ago. This history of our Shul refers to events which took place during the past 100 years involving Anshe Emunah (Hanover Street Shul), Aitz Chaim (Eden Street Shul), and Tifereth Israel Anshe Sphard (Smallwood Street or Dolfield Avenue Synagogue), culminating into the Liberty Jewish Center.

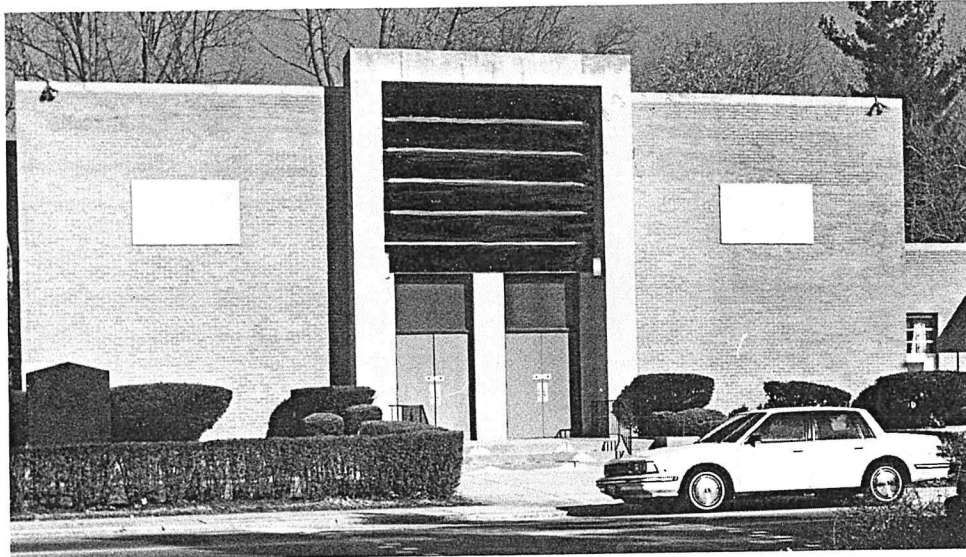
Our thanks to the following: Moses J. Cohen; Salem Rifkin, son of the late Rabbi Reuben Rivkin of Aitz Chaim and Anshe Emunah Congregations; Mrs. William Taragin, daughter of Rabbi Hillel Mihaly of Tifereth Israel Congregation; Bernard Fishman, Director of the Jewish Historical Society; Mrs. Pauline Shaffran, daughter of the late Rabbi Noach Kahn of Anshe Emunah Congregation; Jack Lipsitz, and others to numerous to mention who make available to us their personal recollections.

The story that will unfold consists of four sections: Liberty Jewish Center, the surviving organization which has begun in 1953 and is presently located on Church Lane; Anshe Emunah, Aitz Chaim and Tifereth Israel which will be listed in individual chapters.



*Present LJC
1984*

LIBERTY JEWISH CENTER



Marmon Avenue LJC 1955

Liberty Jewish Center was organized in February, 1953 at the home of the late Cantor Morris Miller, together with Rabbi Jacob A. Max. Meetings were held by a group of young people living in the Howard Park/Liberty Road area, all of whom expressed a desire to worship in a building of their own in their own neighborhood. Shortly afterwards, a sisterhood was begun which became a strong supporting arm in helping to build the shul.

Land was available at the corner of Marmon and Liberty Heights Avenues. Work began to raise money. Enthusiastic members went from door to door to sign up members. The first Sisterhood Donor was held in March 1954. The first Carnival was held on August 30-September 1, 1954. The reigning Miss America was present. Both the Donor and the Carnival received city-wide acclaim.

In 1954 the first High Holy Day services were held at Community Hall, located over Read's Drug Store at the corner of Gwynn Oak and Liberty Heights Avenues. Services were conducted by Rabbi Jacob A. Max and the late Cantor Morris Miller.

In March, 1955 the Liberty Jewish Center merged with Anshe Emunah Congregation (Hanover Street Shul). It was through this merger that "seed" money was obtained to erect the Marmon Avenue building. In September, 1955 the first services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were held in the Marmon Avenue synagogue. Officiating were Rabbi Jacob A. Max and Cantor Morris Miller, the same charismatic team that remained together for a number of years. Rabbi Jacob A. Max was officially installed as rabbi of the congregation in 1956.

Also in 1956, at a time when most synagogues were investing their time and money in cemeteries, Liberty Jewish Center was busily engaged in starting a Hebrew School for their children. As the Shul began to grow, so did the Hebrew School and soon it became one of the largest, most viable Hebrew schools in Baltimore. At this time too, there was so much activity at the Liberty Jewish Center that many members enthusiastically spent Sunday through Thursday at Liberty Jewish Center working on various projects in support of the Shul.

Numerous names appear through our LJC records: Cliff & Tessie Jacobson, Nat & Irene Klein, Jack & Elsie Lipsitz, Dave & Lil Hellman, Leslie Miller, Ralph & Rose Rosenfield, Phyllis & Leonard Glassman, Micki & Bernie Naiditch, Jack & Pearl Mazo, Macy Plaine, Norman & Leona Brager, Henry & Doris Cohen, Danny & Marilyn Fink, Marlene & Ron Rubin, Ida & Sidney Garfinkel, Doris & Dick Rudolph, Ruth & Morton Kellman, Selma & Siggie Melnikoff, Herman & Eleanor Setlin, Selma & Morty Braiterman, to name just a few.

In addition to the merger with the Hanover Street Shul in 1955, we were fortunate that in 1960 a merger was also effected with the Aitz Chaim Congregation. This was known as the Eden Street Shul, who shared cemetery land with Anshe Emunah on Washington Blvd.

The Liberty Jewish Center became known as Anshe Emunah - Aitz Chaim Congregation.

In 1964, in order to provide for future growth, plans were made to purchase land at 8615 Church Lane, our present location. In 1966 the first stage of present building were erected; a Social Hall and Hebrew School.

In 1968 the Marmon Avenue building was sold and the Congregation moved in its entirety to Church Lane.

Adding the Sanctuary in 1971, when set up for High Holy Day services, at least 1,000 worshippers could be accommodated. Up to the present time these services draw this maximum capacity.

ANSHE EMUNAH



*Anshe Emunah Congregation
Hanover Street*

Anshe Emunah was known as the Hanover Street Shul. Because its basic organizers were from the town of Tavrig, it was sometimes referred to as the Tavriger Shul. It was organized in about 1884, its first meetings being held in the homes of various members until a location was established at 313-15 Hanover Street. Its first services were held upstairs from a Chinese Hand Laundry.

To establish continuity and legality, the Congregation voted to have a charter. This beautifully handwritten charter was prepared by J.H. Mitnick entirely in script. The charter was approved at a congregational meeting on December 11, 1887 and signed December 19th of the same year. It was then submitted to the State of Maryland and officially approved that year.

Ten members signed the charter. These were officers and members of the Board of Directors, as follows: Bernard L. Livingston, President; Isaac Levithin, Vice President; Ellis Theodore, Secretary; Baruch Eliason, Treasurer; Board members: Bernard Rosenberg, Morris Wisberg, Solomon L. Oilberman, Mendel Fein, Jacob Blum, Moses Fedder.

In 1890 the congregation had an opportunity to purchase St. Stephens Episcopal Church in the 500 block of Hanover Street. This beautiful building would adequately serve the needs of the congregation. Plans were begun to furnish the building. In order to raise funds, permanent seats were sold in addition to other fund-raising enterprises. Pew seats already in the building were retained until changes could be made. Just at this time, Oheb Shalom Congregation (on Hanover Street, between Lombard & Pratt Streets) was preparing to move into their new

building on Eutaw Place. Officers of Anshe Emunah and Oheb Shalom met and it was agreed that the Oheb Shalom Aron Kodesh would be given to Anshe Emunah. This outstanding Aron Kodesh was twenty feet high of gold and white hand carved wood. It was considered to be one of the finest Jewish artifacts in the United States. It remained in Anshe Emunah until the synagogue closed its doors.

Original contracts for the sales of two permanent seats in 1894 show that these seats were sold in pairs, a man's seat and a lady's seat together for a cost of \$290, requiring a ten percent down payment, the balance to be paid within ten years. An original transfer contract shows that the male owner of a seat had died and his widow sold his seat for \$140, while retaining her own permanent seat. The amount agreed upon was paid to her within one year.

The first rabbi at Anshe Emunah was Rabbi Wolfe Smulkin. the first cantor was Cantor S. Seidman who first performed in 1897. Other rabbis who served Anshe Emunah were Rabbi Reuben Rivkin, 1914-18, Rabbi Raphlael Greenspon, 1918-29, and Rabbi Noach Kahn, 1930-38. After 1938 Rabbi Joshua Shenker and Rabbi S. Markowitz served as officiating rabbis.

Anshe Emunah housed many functions in the South Baltimore area. It became known as the "Big Shul" while the "Little Shul" was located on Hill Street. The first wedding on record held at Anshe Emunah was in 1887. Jennie Eliason was the bride; the groom was S. Levithan.

Membership in the "Big Shul", grew. Around World War I there were over a thousand members. One of the highlights and reasons for the Shul's success was the importance placed on the education of the children.

Anshe Emunah was the first Orthodox congregation to organize their own Hebrew School. First chairman of the school was Baruch Elison. The first melamed was Rabbi New-house. Soon the Hebrew School grew to such proportions that a building was purchased across the street at 518 South Hanover Street, which eventually became the Anshe Emunah Hebrew School.

The UOJCA - Union of Jewish Orthodox Congregations of America - was begun in the late 1890's. Anshe Emunah was one of the three founding synagogues, the other two being based in New York.

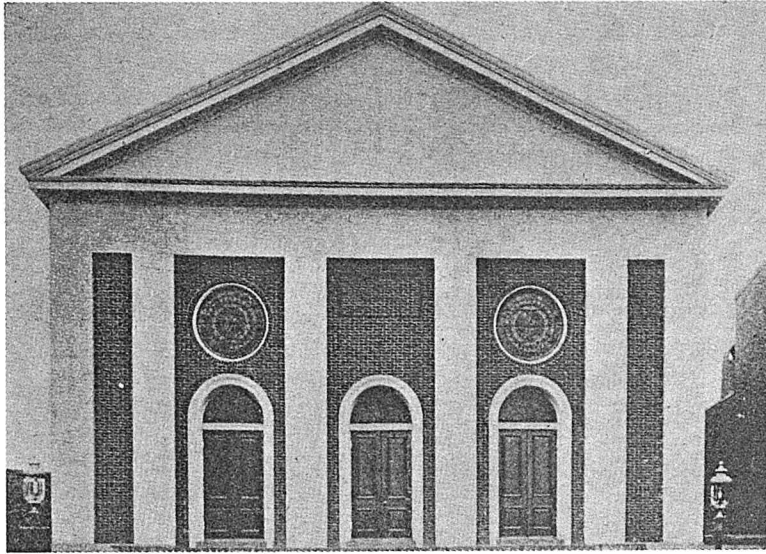
Among many other active members of the time were: Charles and Maurice Banks, Maurice Banks having served as president for a number of years, the Krieger family; the David Lipsitz family, Isaac Epstein, Morris Berman, W. Richman, Joseph Sultzer, the Shavitz family, the Shofer family, I Livingston, I. Needle, B. Siegel, and many others.

Toward the late 1930's and early forties the neighborhood began to change. Although the shul tried to remain active, it finally had to close its doors in March 1955 since most of its members had by that time moved to other areas of the city. At this time Anshe Emunah merged with the Liberty Jewish Center.

Just about the time of the merger completion, the chairman of the Merger Committee received a phone call from Rabbi Abraham Shaw, then rabbi of The Oheb Shalom Congregation. He asked the committee to return the Aron Kodesh to Oheb Shalom (from where it originally came) if it could not be used at the Marmon Avenue building. We complied with this request. Since then we have tried to locate this beautiful Ark, However, its whereabouts could not be traced and a most beautiful object, rich in tradition and artistry has apparently been lost.

AITZ CHAIM

(Eden Street Shul)



*Aitz Chaim
17 S. Eden Street*



*Rabbi Moses Romanoff
Aitz Chaim 1915 - 1918*

Aitz Chaim Congregation was organized in 1887 by a group of Russian Jews. Its first location was at 16-18 North Exeter Street in East Baltimore. Records indicate that on July 22, 1889 the Aitz Chaim Shul was chartered by the State of Maryland. The following were signers of this historical document: Aaron Goldstein, Jacob Merican, Morris Cohen, Hyman Nashalsky, Morris Greenberg, Louis Rosenthal. Isaac Greenbaum and Louis Richter.

The Shul was known also as the Prushpetzer Shul.

In 1902 Aitz Chaim purchased a building at 17 South Eden Street which had belonged to a Reform congregation known as the Hebrew Friendship Fells Point Congregation. This Temple had been organized in 1848 to accommodate Reform Jewish families living in the East Baltimore area.

This building on Eden Street then became known as Aitz Chaim but was more commonly referred to as the Eden Street Shul. It grew to have the largest membership of East Baltimore congregations. On High Holy Days a uniformed guard stood at the door to collect tickets due to the overwhelming crowds attending services.

Rabbis serving Aitz Chaim were Rabbi Shefferman and Rabbi Hurwitz. In 1916 Rabbi Moses Romanoff assumed the pulpit and remained at Aitz Chaim for two years. Rabbi Reuben Rivkin, who was the rabbi at Anshe Emunah at that time, succeeded Rabbi Romanoff. Rabbi Rivkin was installed officially at a banquet held at the Shul on December 1, 1918. Rabbi Rivkin served until his death in 1953.

Before the turn of the century, Aitz Chaim had bought land together with two other synagogues on Washington Boulevard - Anshe Emunah and Moses Montefiore. This land is still used and is known as the United Hebrew Cemetery. It is maintained and operated by a combined committee of Liberty Jewish Center and Woodmoor Congregation members. From dates on the gravestones, burials date back to the beginning of this century. It is divided into sections belonging to Aitz Chaim, Anshe Emunah, Moses Montefiore Woodmoor Congregations as well as a small section belonging to the Hebrew Young Men's Sick Relief Association.

Aitz Chaim Congregation grew and became known as "the pearl of shuls" in East Baltimore. Rabbi Rivkin enjoyed an enviable reputation and continued to grow in stature over the years. He gained a national reputation for his efforts to sell War Bonds during World War II.

The Eden Street Shul was renowned for its Cantors, especially Cantor Ben Bleiberg. Cantor Bleiberg enjoyed great popularity and people came from all parts of the city to hear him. Prior

to his tenure, Cantor Moses Smuckler served the Aitz Chaim Shul. Solomon Ruback was the sexton for many years. After leaving Aitz Chaim, Mr. Ruback served Beth Tfiloh Congregation.

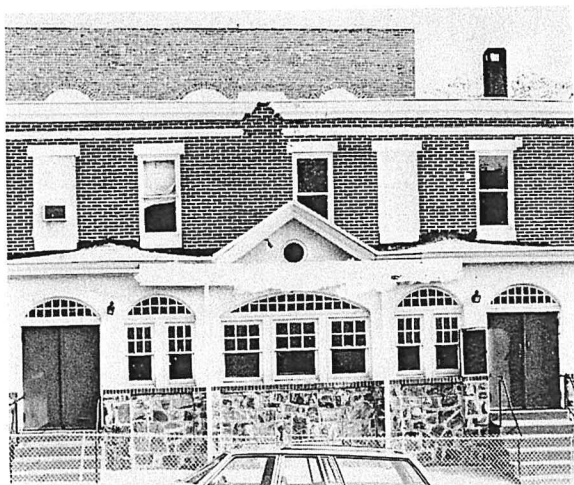
Many families were active in the Eden Street Shul. A review of records indicated the following active participants: Simon Harris, Judge Joseph Sherbow, the Castleberg family, Judge Phillip Sykes, the Needle family, Hyman Riffman, Hyman Shapiro, the Rodbell family, Julius Traub, S. Kaplan, Israel Dorman, Jesse Weinberg, Samuel Sakols, and many others.

As families moved away from the East Baltimore area, the Shul began to decline in membership. In December 1960, it merged with the Liberty Jewish Center. At that time, the LJC assumed the Hebraic name of Anshe Emunah-Aitz Chaim Congregation.

Records indicate that in 1933-34 the Cantor's annual salary was \$800. per year. Rabbi Rivkin, one of the outstanding Rabbi's of his time in Baltimore, received a salary of \$100. per month, plus additional \$100. for Passover, for a total annual salary of \$1,300.

Sad to say we were deeply disappointed in being unable to find even one picture of the inside of this building; which was known to have beautiful chandeliers and warm interiors.

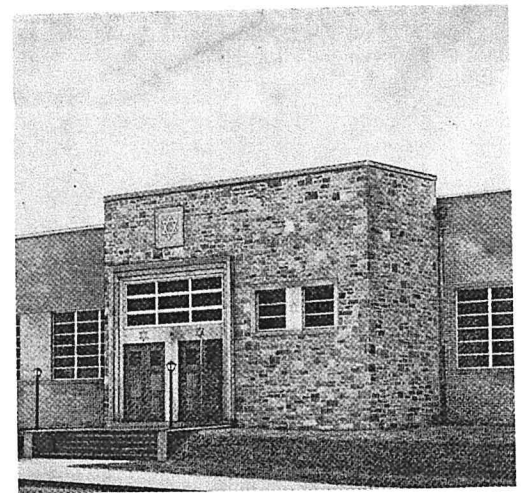
TIFERETH ISRAEL ANSHE SPHARD



*Tifereth (SRAC)
Anshe Sphard
1705-07 Smallwood Street*



*Rabbi Hillel Mihaly
Tifereth Israel
1927-57*



*Tifereth Israel
Anshei Sphard Congregation
Dolfield Building*

Records of this synagogue show that in 1921 it was located at 1011 North Stricker Street. The name of this congregation at this address appeared in the Baltimore City telephone directory until approximately 1928, when the new address, 1705 North Smallwood Street is listed. Two private homes had been combined to form one building to house the synagogue, the exact numbers being 1705 and 1707 North Smallwood Street.

Spiritual Leader of the congregation was Rabbi Hillel Mihaly, a man of handsome and prestigious appearance. He and his family resided in the 1500 block of North Bentalou Street, approximately two and a half blocks from the Shul.

The Shul remained on Smallwood Street until 1955. At that time it was sold because of a decrease in membership and a new building was constructed at 3925 Dolfield Avenue. It was a very progressive Synagogue.

From their records we find the following names, among others: Mr. & Mrs. Martin Richmond, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Fox, Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Resnick, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Hyatt, Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Scherr, Jack Noren. Mr. Nathan Caplan was president there for a number of years.

This congregation existed until about 1970 at which time there was a change in the Dolfield Avenue neighborhood. The building was sold and members tried to form a new congregation in the Greengate section. This, however, did not materialize.

As previously stated, Rabbi Hillel Mihaly, was the rabbi for this synagogue for many years, beginning in 1928 until his demise. In his late years, Rabbi Harry Rottenberg assisted him in the performance of his duties. Later, Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro became rabbi of the Dolfield Avenue Congregation. He served until they merged with the Liberty Jewish Center in 1974.

SYNOPSIS

As you can see, throughout this material we have combined the old with the new. Anshe Emunah and Aitz Chaim are the centenarians - the synagogues that are 100 years plus. Tifereth Israel Anshe Sphard will soon reach its 65th birthday. Liberty Jewish Center, which is now the remaining existing congregation, has passed its 34th year. All of these factors make LJC what it is today - a thriving, vibrant synagogue wherein the history of the past is utilized to help future growth. It is the hope of the synagogue and its members, that someone, sixty-six years from now, will write a history of the Liberty Jewish Center.



*1st Batmitvah Class
May 1957
LJC
Marmon Avenue*



*1st Graduation Class
LJC Hebrew School
Marmon Avenue
June 1957*