

# SOUTHERN JEWISH

# HERITAGE

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## Reb Leizer Shore . . . .

*The research for this article turned up with several spellings for the word "shammash". I elected to follow this spelling from The Encyclopedia Judaica. The shammash was usually a salaried employee known as a sexton in the community. He worked closely with the Rabbi and Cantor and provided a variety of services for the Congregation.*

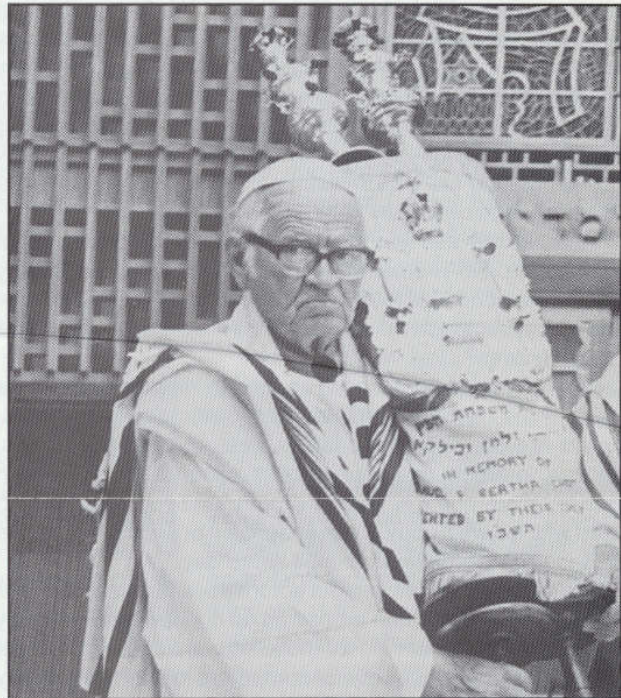
*The word shammash also means "servant" and Reb Shore truly served his Congregation. I am reminded of the shammash used as a source of light for all of the candles of the Chanukah Menorah. Like Reb Shore, bright, glowing, upright, and for those of us who knew him there is a special meaning and memory for each of us.*

It could have been any weekday morning at the old Baron Hirsch Synagogue on Vollintine. In the daily chapel Reb Leizer Shore would be walking to the door of the adjacent room where those joining the regular morning minyon for prayers were putting on their tefillin. His keen eyes quickly told him which of his regulars were a bit late or perhaps had not arrived yet. As he made a mental note of these, he proceeded back to the daily chapel, walking toward the bema in front to be sure that whoever was leading the service was ready. Precisely at 6:30, his hand made a large "klop" on the bema and everyone knew it was time for morning prayers to begin. He would then put on his own tefillin and as he finished, would take another walk to the back of the chapel, checking once more to see that everyone who was saying "Kaddish" was accounted for. If someone was still a bit late, he would motion to the person leading the service to slow down or perhaps stop for just a minute until the person could come into the chapel.

Thus began another day for the shammash at Baron Hirsch Synagogue in Memphis. And, Reb Leizer Shore, this wonderful man with a great smile and twinkle in his eye had in a short time become an integral part of the lives of many of

## "The Shammash"

by David Schneider



Reb Leizer Shore holding Torah on Yom Kippur Eve

the members of this great synagogue.

After morning services, there was always a breakfast in the adjacent room and Reb Shore, sitting to the right of the Rabbi, always greeted each person and always inquired about his health and the health of his family members. While he did not seem to know a lot about American sports, he knew the members who were great sports enthusiasts and he often asked questions or kidded them about their love of sports.

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## "FROM SWASTIKA TO JIM CROW"



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2001

3:00 P.M.



**Fogelman Center - The University of Memphis**

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FREE TO THE PUBLIC

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID-SOUTH - FOUNDED IN 1986

P.O. BOX 17304, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38187

## President's Message . . . .



Peggy Jalenak

It is an honor to step into the footprints of our distinguished past presidents: Harriet and Tom Stern, Leonid Saharovici, David Schneider, Steve Biller, Gloria Felsenthal, Sumner Levine and immediate past-president, Marjean Kremer. But what is a great tribute to our organization is that these presidents have stayed active and are still contributing their time and dedication. The Jewish Historical Society has made exceptional strides in these fifteen years. We have published our book, *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt*, by Selma Lewis of blessed memory. We have produced a film on the Jews of Memphis. We have a newsletter that is an outstanding compendium of Memphis history, painstakingly put together by David Schneider. David will now have help from our new Editor, Marcia Levy. Our Historian, Shirley Feibelman, has diligently and devotedly kept up the archives.

But let me ask you to stop a moment to think about something. Do memories make history? Or does history make memories? If there is no memory (of no event), how can there be a history? If there is no history, how can there be memories?

We want your memories! The Jewish Historical Society is making a concerted effort this year to collect those memories. We'd like copies of your family tree, any pictures, tapes, videos, artifacts or documents of significance to Jewish history in Memphis or the Mid-South. And you don't have to part with it – we'll copy it, computerize it or just record where it is in case we have an exhibit some day.

There are three new project committees this year and one ongoing. Irwin Kaufman is heading up our Jewish Genealogy Society. Irwin is planning for those who are interested to get together at a site with several computers to search for family histories. Harvey Reisman is chairing an Archives Committee to encourage all the synagogues, Jewish organizations and individuals to save and inform us of items relating to important Jewish events. Gil Halpern is our Information Technology Chairman and is looking into the possibility of setting up our own website connecting with Jewish genealogy and historical societies. May Lynn Mansbach and Harriet Stern are in charge of our Oral and Recorded History Project, which is going strong with many taped interviews and lost more to

## Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid-South

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come. If anyone would like to participate on any of these committees or to contribute something to them, please contact me at: 683-7425.

We have a great board of directors and 320 members (including families). We are dedicated to preserving the remarkable history of the Jews who have helped shape our city and the mid-south area. I hope you'll come and bring guests to the many exciting programs coming up. Please share another terrific year with us!

*Peggy* 

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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## September Meeting Opens a Season of Great Programs

"From Swastika to Jim Crow" is a fascinating documentary film about two very different cultures sharing a common burden. It tells the little known story of Jewish professors who were expelled from German Universities by Hitler in the 1930s and immigrated to the United States, finding refuge in Black Colleges in the South. Having escaped persecution in Nazi Germany, they identified with the oppression of the Blacks in a segregated society and found new meaning and purpose in their adopted homeland.

A panel discussion will follow with: Dr. George Johnson, President of LeMoyne-Owen College, will serve as moderator. Featured on the panel are: Dr. Donald Cunnigen, a Tougaloo College student in the film and now Professor of Sociology at the University of Rhode Island and President of the Association of Black Sociologists; Dr. Barbara Stein Frankle, Dean of Faculty and Professor at LeMoyne-Owen College for over thirty years; Producers Stephen Fischler and Joel Sucher and Director Lori Cheate, the award winning filmmakers.



# The Crossing of Paths . . . Freemasonry and Memphis Jews

by Harriet Stern

On June 3, 1915, the Congregation Children of Israel celebrated the building of a new house of worship. In a move eastward from their former downtown location, the congregation was erecting what was later described in the newspaper as "the finest Jewish Temple in the South," at Poplar and Montgomery, the third location in 60 years of existence. At four-thirty on that Thursday afternoon, the laying of the cornerstone ushered in a celebratory weekend of two special services, a banquet, and the dedication of a new organ.

Sam Schloss, 'hale and hearty' at the age of 80, graced the occasion as the congregation's only surviving charter member of the original 36. Following an overture by the Shrine band, the invocation by Rabbi Max Samfield, the reading of an original poem by his daughter Lelia, and a song by the choir, Congregation President, Joseph Newburger reached out to Orthodox Jews and all humanity in a theme of unity. "Come meet with us, for this is a house for all nations."

The confidence of Jews in a land of freedom was another theme, and the singing of the anthem "America" was part of the program. Elias Gates, lawyer and trustee, in the closing address stated,

"We find in the history of the Jew many times when he was not even a citizen... The days of the Jew in this country have been few, but their progress has been great... We, in our pride, are commemorating, in the building of this temple, the virtues we have had in the field of our bright opportunity. It also stands as an instance of our abiding faith that in the future we shall still enjoy these rights and cultivate these virtues."

The Jews of this congregation were standing tall as members of their community. The newspaper headlined what may be the most interesting historical feature of the event:

**"CORNERSTONE OF NEW CONGREGATION 'CHILDREN OF ISRAEL' IS LAID WITH ANCIENT MASONIC RITES."** Not only had the

Shrine band sounded the opening notes of the event, but the cornerstone was laid with rituals of the Scottish Rite Masons. The ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone was performed by the Grand Master of the Free and Accepted Masons of Tennessee, T.A. Hisey of Morristown, who began with a description of the contents. These included a Torah scroll, the day's program, a photograph of Samuel Schloss, a symbol of the Order of the Eastern Star (the women's branch of the Masons), the congregational constitution and bylaws and cemetery rules, a membership list, copies of newspapers, various poems and writings, as well as coins and various articles given by Jacob Goldsmith, Elias Lowenstein, Max Isaacs, Rabbi Samfield and others of the congregation.

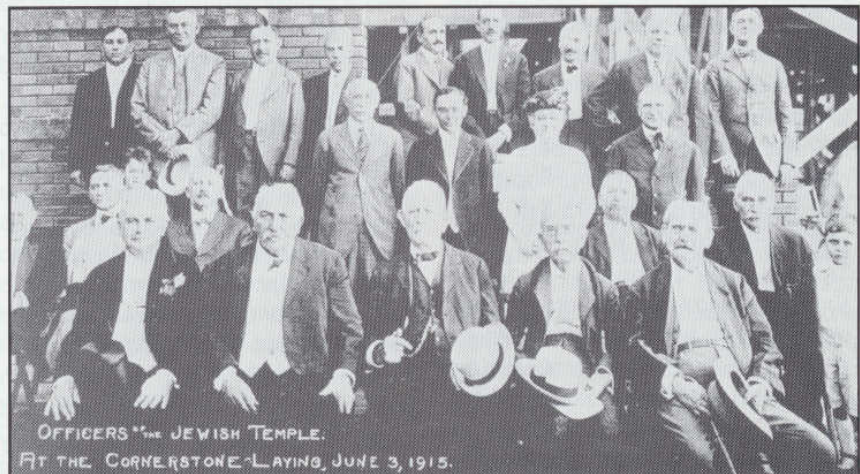
"According to the ritual, Mr. Hisey had his craftsmen apply the plumb, the level and the square to the cornerstone, and they pronounced it good. He then scattered the corn and poured the oil and the wine from the silver vessels. The corn represented nourishment of the laborers by which life is sustained; the wine, the gladness of heart of which the psalmist speaks, and the oil

commemorated the anointing by Jacob and Moses." So read the newspaper article.

A Temple dedication with Masonic rites was not unusual for that time, nor were burials of individual Jews with Masonic funeral rites. In fact, the close ties of Masonry and Judaism in America began during the country's founding. Jews were actively involved in bringing Masonry to Colonial America, were among the earliest leaders, and helped to establish the Masonic Order along the eastern seaboard, notably in Newport, Rhode Island, and Richmond, Virginia. George Washington and other early national figures were dedicated Masons. Twenty-four Jewish Masons served as officers in George Washington's army.

According to one interpretation, given in the narrative accompanying an exhibition in the 1980's, "Freemasonry is generally acknowledged to have affinity to the Bible and Judaism both ritually and in general belief... (it) enabled Jews and Christians to commingle without the requisite that either one accept the tenets of the other. Masonry was an important Americanizing influence that also provided Jews an

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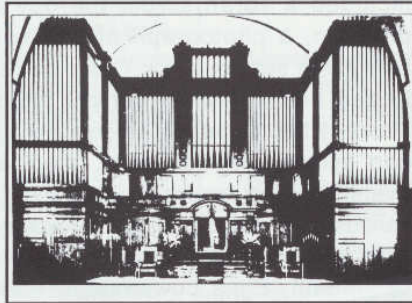
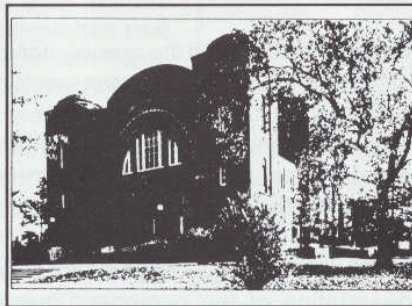
Top row, standing—Elias Gates, Ben Goodman, Herman Bluthenthal, H. Henochsberg, Sol Isenberg, Leon Sternberger, Otto Metzger, Simon Levi, Jos. Rosenfield. Middle row, standing—Simon Jacobs, Rabbi Wm. H. Fineshriber, Mrs. Hirsch Morris, David Sternberg. Middle row, seated—Rabbi M. Samfield, Jos. Levy, B.W.Hirsch, Albert Dreyfus, David Ginsburg. Bottom row, seated—Joseph Newburger, Samuel Schloss, Elias Lowenstein, Sam Hirsch, Samuel Sternberg.

acceptable entrance into a predominantly Christian society, making contacts with Christians possible. Any negative feelings Christians might have harbored with regards to doing business with Jews could be addressed through this Masonic society. Freemasonry served Jewish needs well for acculturation without assimilation, and as a meaningful tool for Jewish interests and activities." Another commentator states, "Masonry, with its emphasis on the brotherhood of mankind, strongly appealed to the Jews, who had been so long excluded from the general brotherhood."

Many Jews from all branches of Judaism and from many callings, businessmen to lawyers to rabbis, embraced Masonry but, in fact, it has been an imperfect brotherhood. For most of its history, it was banned by the Catholic Church, and African-Americans were simply excluded from membership in the Scottish Rite lodges. The church has now removed its restrictions, yet in only a few states, (not including Tennessee), have Masonic leaders exercised their autonomy to incorporate African-American members. There continue to be separate African-American Masonic lodges under a different (York) ritual.

The Jewish Encyclopedia identifies Freemasonry as "The institutions, rites, and principles of a secret society devoted to the promotion of fraternal feeling and morality among the members of the order." Masons trace their philosophical forebears to the builders of the pyramids and particularly of King Solomon's Temple. The technical language, symbolism and rites of the order contain many Jewish terms derived from the Bible or from its commentators: Urim and Thummin, Adonai, Cohen, Emeth, Ephod, High Priest, Holy of Holies, Jacob's Ladder, Jehovah, Kaballah and Kadosh.

The Masonic organization has been traced by some to British self-help "Box Clubs," but its practices are more commonly thought to derive from craft



Temple Israel at Poplar and Montgomery

guilds of stonemasons who built the medieval cathedrals. This later evolved to become social and fraternal organizations of moral instruction and mutual support. Modern Masonry is usually traced to 1717, when the Grand Lodge of England was organized at the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse in London. Its English constitution, written in that Enlightenment period was Deist in nature, welcoming "anyone found to be true and honest, of whatever denomination or persuasion" and believing in a Supreme Being.

This tolerance did not always lead to the inclusion of Jews as members of Masonic lodges, but Jews became members of some, if not all, lodges as Freemasonry spread in England and to Holland, France and Germany. Due to anti-semitism, Germany least accepted Jewish membership. In addition, all of Masonry was often viewed with suspicion, and anti-semites accused Jews of expanding the presumably subversive organization. In Germany of the 1860's, Jews and Freemasons were accused of undermining traditional society. Such accusation played a significant role in the Dreyfus Affair and in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion,"

a slanderous tract from 1904 Russia, accusing Jews and Masons of plotting to rule the world. By the 1920's, this supposedly sinister alliance was blamed for Germany's defeat in World War I. Hitler persecuted Freemasons along with Bolsheviks and Jews. In the United States, political hostility to Masons arose in 1812 with the Know-Nothing Party, though without lasting effect.

In Memphis, as in the rest of the United States, Jewish participation thrived in the openness of the Masonic fraternity. Membership provided social activities, including family events and service projects in the context of friendship and fellowship between Jew and Protestant. Herschel Feibelman recalls that, as he traveled in the Mississippi Delta, the Masonic pin on his lapel brought a ready welcome in any town.

Over the years, so many members from the Jewish community became dedicated Masons and rose to leadership that it is impossible to do justice to them all. Harold Shinbaum, Dave Mendikov, Alvin Salomon, Harry Derman, and Aaron Brenner are names that rise to mind in addition to those mentioned below. But, even all of these must represent many others.

Among the very distinguished have been Jewish Potentates of the Shrine: S.J. Bestoff (1912), I.M. Bilsky (1970's), Dan Grief (1980), and William Jason (1980's). To William Jason, the organization practiced "ecumenism before the term was popular." Dan Grief was one of the most enthusiastic exponents of Masonry. "Masonry makes a good man better," he once stated. "It is a supplement to religion, not a substitute for it... You work for God and mankind." Surrounded in his home with a spectacular array of honorary fezzes earned through the years, Grief allowed that a good Mason will recruit another before he dies.

The earliest lodge in the Memphis area was in Germantown. Jews could belong to any "blue lodge," but most affiliated with the Leila Scott Lodge #289, founded

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*Reb Shore and Bessie Shore at their daughter Bella's wedding in 1955*

As the Rabbi studied at the morning breakfast, Reb Shore answered questions and made comments with great insight. Often he would talk about his childhood in Europe and the years he spent in Mexico before coming to the United States. He had a wonderful way of chiding people. His great smile and sparkling eyes told you immediately that he loved people and just wanted the opportunity to help others. Often his hands told as great a story as his eyes and smile.

Reb Shore was born June 19, 1885 in Berdichev in the Ukraine, a city known for the Berdichev Rabbinical dynasty. His father was a moel and shacchet and performed these services free to the poor. He had two brothers and two sisters and in 1928, due to the persecution of Jews and the pogroms in Russia, he left for Mexico with plans to ultimately come to Memphis where his wife had two brothers and an aunt.

Harry Samuels, whose wife Flora was Reb & Mrs. Shore's niece, writes as follows, "He lived in Russia before and following the Revolution and remembered seeing the last Czar. Under the Bolsheviks, he worked as a bookkeeper in a plant. Recognizing that his outspoken honest nature was incompatible with the new regime, he left for Mexico. He told me that he would not have lasted long in Russia. To prevent the authorities from knowing he was a

Rabbi, during his travels he hid his smicha (ordination papers) in a jar of schmaltz (chicken fat). Because he was a very humble individual, he was most reluctant to acknowledge his ordination publicly and revealed it to me quite accidentally. Although his sojourn in Mexico was only meant to be temporary until he and his family could come to the United States, he immediately so ingratiated himself with his neighbors that he was instrumental in helping to establish a new congregation, Nidchay Yisrael, in Mexico City. One of his responsibilities was to supervise the Gemillat Chessed Fund for the Jewish community.

Reb Shore was active in the Masonic Lodge of Mexico City, but he subsequently resigned when he was unsuccessful in extending membership opportunities to those Mexicans of Indian descent. He once showed me a picture of a friend at that time who became the president of Mexico".

In 1939, Reb Shore and his family moved to Memphis, where like many others, he started out as a peddler selling vegetables and ultimately had a small grocery store. In 1956 he joined Baron Hirsch Synagogue as sexton (shammash), and Jewish history was being made at Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

Bella Lansky (Mrs. Frank Lansky), his daughter, tells a wonderful and interesting story about Reb Shore while he operated the grocery store. She was still a child, but noticed that on Fridays her father would gather together lots of fruit, candy, cookies and cigarettes (at that time nobody knew how bad cigarettes were for you), and since Reb Shore never drove an automobile, a friend would pick him up and they would leave with all the goodies. After noticing this happen every Friday, curiosity got the best of her and she asked her father where he was going with all these goodies. He hesitated, then told her, "to the B'nai B'rith Home." He said that the people at the home were very lonesome and so he would visit them each Friday prior to the Sabbath and bring them the snacks.

She was very touched by his answer and asked if anyone else knew he did this, because, she now felt everyone should know—it was such a nice thing to do. Reb Shore answered that when you do a nice thing for someone, it's a

mitzvah and if you tell everyone what you do then it is no longer a mitzvah.

For the next 30 years, Reb Shore became an integral part of everything that was Baron Hirsch Synagogue on Vollintine. His Torah knowledge was vast and his capacity to love and care for all people was truly magnificent. Harry Samuels writes, "To me, he was a pious Jew whose concern for others transcended all boundaries: social, economic, religious, political and racial. He was even thought by some to be a Lamed Vovnik, one of the 36 righteous people of each generation on whose merit the world continues to exist.

Once while discussing the Friday night service, I asked him if there was any additional significance when we stand and face the rear of the sanctuary at the end of the "L'Cha Dodi" melody other than the one given of welcoming the Sabbath bride. He smiled and repeated what his Rabbi in Berdichev had told him years earlier when he had asked the same question.

At that time, he was reminded, only the wealthy or influential of the synagogue sat near the Eastern Wall toward the front, and they often were unaware of the pain and suffering of those behind them; however, when they stood and turned around, they were able to see those who needed a good meal or were in need of financial help, or maybe just some companionship."

Unfortunately, the shammash, in most synagogues, did not enjoy the same respect as the rabbi. His job, particularly in the early years, made him responsible for cleaning rooms, taking care of prayer books, helping with the mikve, along with many more spiritual tasks, such as reading the Torah, leading daily services and in some instances even helping with Bar Mitzva lessons and the daily chore of changing Yahrzeit lights. Reb Shore, in his 30 years at Baron Hirsch Synagogue, did all of these things along with the many emotional tasks such as laughing and celebrating births, weeping with the ill and mourning members of the synagogue and enjoying the many children who were always around him during Hebrew and Sunday School sessions.

Harry Samuels spent a day with Reb Shore when his wife, Bessie, was ill. While searching for some stationery in

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Reb Shore's desk, he opened a drawer filled with personal checks made out to Reb Shore. When he asked why they were never deposited, Reb Shore acknowledged they were for various services for which he would not accept remuneration, such as helping officiate at funerals, weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, etc.

Leonid Saharovici tells another beautiful story about Reb Shore at the time of his son, Alex's bar mitzvah, in 1973. At that time, individuals were allowed to bake and cook at the Baron Hirsch kitchen. However, it was mandatory that they have a mascheach, someone whose responsibility it was to be certain that all foods brought in were strictly kosher and that all cooking was done ritually correctly. Since the Saharovici family had just recently moved to Memphis in 1972, funds were a bit tight, and to pay for a mascheach would have been most difficult. However, as usual, Reb Shore came to the rescue and was there each time they cooked or baked, fulfilling the ritual duties and becoming lifelong friends of the family. Of course, he refused to accept any remuneration for his services. It was just his wonderful way of showing love and friendship for others.

Rabbi Rafael Grossman, senior Rabbi of Baron Hirsch Synagogue remembers Reb Shore as follows:

"Leizer Shore, the beloved ritual director (shammash) at Baron Hirsch Synagogue in Memphis, was a unique person. He served Baron Hirsch's congregational family for over thirty years. Steeped in Torah knowledge, he succeeded in becoming a friend to everyone and left an indelible mark on all of us who were fortunate to know him.

He was a quick wit. His response to any question, be it religious or a world event, was intelligent and forever funny. He was bereft of cynicism and prejudice. Of the many anecdotal memories, there are some that distinctively express the exceptional character of this man.

Bear in mind, Reb Leizer, as he was affectionately known, was a European Jew who had spent his first immigrant years in Mexico. His English was accented and somewhat halting. One day, I found Reb Leizer sitting alone in our chapel. As I entered, I could hear

him passionately praying.

'What's wrong?' I asked.

'Somebody's wife is very sick.'

'Who is it?' I wanted to know.

'You don't know her.'

When I persisted, he admitted that he himself had never met this person. She was the wife of one of our non-Jewish porters.

'Her husband told me he doesn't know how to pray, so I told him that I would do it for him.'

On another occasion, I saw our beloved Reb Leizer emptying out liquor bottles into one bottle. (It is the custom of many to bring a bottle of whiskey to the minyon on the day of Yahrzeit.) Reb Leizer was pouring Scotch, rye, bourbon and liqueurs all into one bottle, so I said, 'We can't do that!' He looked at me in amazement, telling me, 'You don't understand. Some people like one kind of schnapps and others a different type. This way, everyone can drink from one bottle and enjoy the divergent taste.'

He then continued to explain...

'It's like Baron Hirsch. There are those who come every day, and others, three days a year, and everyone gets something else out of it, but we all go to the same Shul.'

At first, I laughed, but over the years, I came to appreciate the profundity of his words."

In 1976, Reb Shore was in a terrible automobile accident as he crossed the street to transfer to another bus. A car hit him and he was seriously injured, taken by ambulance to the hospital where his doctor, Jacob Alperin, said "There were three miracles that saved his life. First, he was still sharp enough to tell the ambulance driver who he was, who his doctor was and which hospital to take him to. Second, an operating room was available and a surgeon at hand and third they had a bed available in the brand new intensive care room at the hospital which had just opened."

When Reb Shore recovered enough to come home, the first evening his house was packed from front to back with people surrounding him and so happy that they could just see him smile again. Dr. Alperin, who never made house calls, came with his wife and just happened to have his medical bag with him so he could double check Reb Shore. It was just a "social call." However, Dr. Alperin was very upset to

see all these people and called Bella aside to say, "Your father has to have rest from this serious head injury and you must get these people out of the house." Reb Shore overheard this comment and pleaded with Dr. Alperin not to send them away. "They are making me well by being here." And truly he loved people so much that knowing they cared about him did help make him well.

For a number of years, he was totally consumed by a desire to take care of his beloved wife at their home. During her long illness, he was constantly by her side. Although isolated at home for years, he was always aware of those in Memphis who were ill and suffering, and he never ceased in bringing them comfort regardless of their synagogue affiliation.

During his last illness, while confined in the hospital and literally only a few hours prior to his death, he placed a long distance call to New York in an effort to comfort his great-nephew, who was scheduled for serious surgery. One day, Leonid Saharovici, who was a regular visitor of Reb Shore's and a good friend, remarked how well he looked. Leonid was surprised when the response was to the effect that he really felt the end was near. "However," he said, "I am not afraid to die because the first thing I am going to do when I come before the Rebbenu Shel Olam (Ruler of the World) will be to ask that he save my nephew."



## SJHS to Meet in Norfolk

The 28th annual meeting of the Southern Jewish Historical Society will be November 2-4 in Norfolk, VA, at the scenic Sheraton Norfolk Waterside. The program begins with a tour of the 18th century Moses Myers house. Local artist Marsha Mauer will speak on the stained glass windows of Temple Sinai in Newport News.

A number of other speakers and projects will fill the daily historical programs. Also, both the Mayor of Norfolk and Newport News will address the conference in connection with a Memorial to the late Norman Sisisly, U.S. Congressman, Virginia's 4th Congressional District.

For more information, please call Sumner Levine 682-5935.

## Early Grand Masters of the Leila Scott Masonic Lodge



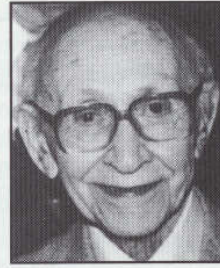
Israel H. Peres  
1902



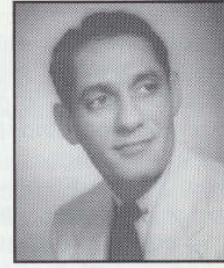
Harry Abraham  
1928



Leo Bearman, Sr.  
1930



Hyman Dudley Kapell  
1934



Louis Turetsky  
1954

### Paths

*Continued from Page 4*

in 1860. There they could rise in probably four years through the ranks to the 32nd degree level. They would then become eligible for election to the Shrine as well. The Shrine is the upper level of Masonry and the level at which the major charities are done. The title 33rd Degree Mason is a great conferred honor. Abe Plough, Philip Belz, and more recently William Jason have been among the recipients.

Many Jewish members distinguished themselves as Grand Masters of the Leila Scott Lodge. These include Israel H. Peres (1902); Leo Bearman, Sr. (1930); Hyman Dudley Kapell (1934); Julius Alperin (1920); Philip C. Levitch (1924); Jacob Scharff (1932); Angel S. Meyers (1877-79 and 1881-79); William Frank (1874); H.H. Zellner (1905); Jacob Peres Lowenstein (1910); Lloyd B. Bensinger (1922); Harry Kabakoff (1926); Harry Abraham (1928); Benjamin Abraham; Herbert W. Zimmerman; Louis Byall; J.D. Marks (1951); Ben J. Ballin (1952); Louis Turetsky (1954); and William Jason (1957). The 1960 Centennial Master of the Lodge, Porter J. Lucas, who compiled what history he could find, learned that more information is available about some of these leaders than others.

Israel Peres, lawyer and Chancery Court judge, received the highest Masonic honors during his lifetime. Of him it was said, "Memphis Masonry has not had a greater scholar or nobler man." He himself wrote in an essay in March, 1910, "Never before in the history of our country has it been in such need of men of uprightness, honesty of purpose, and

high and disinterested patriotism; and in the teaching and practice and spread of these saving virtues, Scottish Masonry has its highest calling."

Angel Meyers was one of the most noted early Masons. He was secretary for 30 years and rose to the second highest position in the state. Of him it was said, "Probably no other man equaled him in service to yellow fever victims." The Masonic Relief Board took a major role. Others joined their efforts. In the Memphis Room collection of the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library can be found an 1873 letter of thanks from "Worshipful Master A.S. Meyers" to "Worshipful Master A. F. Davis" of the B'nai B'rith Lodge, of which he was also a member, for joining in work to aid yellow fever sufferers. In 1877, nine lodge members died of yellow fever. There is a special Masonic plot in Elmwood Cemetery.

Jacob Scharff served during the Depression. He waived dues for needy members and gave relief to the unemployed members even though the Lodge lost membership and had to borrow money and lower salaries to meet its obligations.

Hyman Kapell was another who helped the Lodge weather the Depression. Not only a Masonic leader, he served as secretary of Baron Hirsch Synagogue and treasurer of Sam Schloss Lodge of B'nai B'rith.

Harry Kabakoff was noted as an outstanding ritualist.

The Leila Scott Lodge itself was known for many years for its presentation of the

morality play, "A Rose on the Altar." Its honorary life member group, the De Molay Boys, was founded by Rabbi James A. Wax of Temple Israel. There was an especially close relationship between that congregation and the Al Chymia Shrine, not only in the laying of the cornerstone. On Poplar and Montgomery, where they were next-door neighbors, a tradition was established for a joint Thanksgiving service in which a leader of the Shrine gave the main address or sermon.

Dan Grief called the Shrine the greatest charity in the world. Masons give 70% of fluids to the general community. Nationally, the Shrine is noted for its creation of three major burn institutes, 19 orthopedic hospitals, and one combined burn and spinal injury facility. All of these operate with no government funding and no cost to patients. Over 250,000 children have received treatment at these centers.

In addition to national charities, the local charities of the Shrine have been significant benevolences and have changed over the years as needs changed. In the mid-1940's, the Al Chymia Shrine established the Shrine School for Crippled Children, the only one in the United States associated with a community Board of Education (the then superintendent was himself a Shriner), and the Crippled Children's Hospital. The Shrine also funded homebound programs on a nonracial basis. After the government and the local school system assumed responsibility

*Please see Paths, Page 9*

paint landscapes, still lifes, flowers, animals, old barns, and rabbis. He was frequently asked to give art exhibits around Memphis and Nashville and won many blue ribbons. He played the accordion and there was always a harmonica in his pocket. His favorites were the Beer Barrel Polka and the Tennessee Waltz. He spoke seven languages, served in the Army Reserves, was a Mason and a Shriner and member of Temple Israel. He also served on the board of the Memphis and Germantown Art Leagues.

Sig Gruenwald died August 30, 1996. In May of 1997, the Germantown Art League gave a \$500 scholarship to an upcoming art student in his name.

In 1998, the Tennessee Academy of General Dentistry honored Sig's memory when the Board of Directors, on the basis of his service to the community and the profession, selected him as their "Dentist of the Year" and established the Sig Gruenwald Humanitarian Award to be conferred on future honorees. Dr. B. Randall LeDuke, then president-elect of the Tennessee Academy of General Dentistry said, "Sig was a fine man, and an example to all dentists in his service to people and to dentistry. As a pioneer of the Academy in Tennessee and the first to achieve the level of Mastership, we think he represented an ideal to which we all should aspire. He was much beloved by those of us who knew him professionally, through our Academy and through the Tennessee Dental Association".



*A sampling of Dr. Gruenwald's art*

for those needs, the Shrine turned its efforts to the burn centers. The current national emphasis is on programs dealing with childhood speech, language and learning disorders. The local Shrine supports programs dealing with childhood aphasia and provides funds for the University of Tennessee Speech Center. Monies are also provided for some dental care, and a number of Shriners give their time visiting in the VA Hospital. For its own members, there is a confidential emergency loan fund, "to get a man's ox out of the ditch," and a Widows and Orphans Fund.

Masonic membership, Jewish and

otherwise, has declined in recent years from the heights of the past. In 1813, there were 485 state lodges; in 1996, there were 366. The organization remains strong in spite of a decrease in size, and the 1997 budget for the state Widows and Orphans Fund was \$400,000 with a statewide roster of 70,428 Master Masons. If it does not hold the same importance for the Jewish community as in the past, Masonry deserves recognition for its significant role in Jewish affiliation where "instruction about the great ideas of morality, philosophy, religion and philanthropy permeate our ritual and our writings, unencumbered by sectarian doctrine."

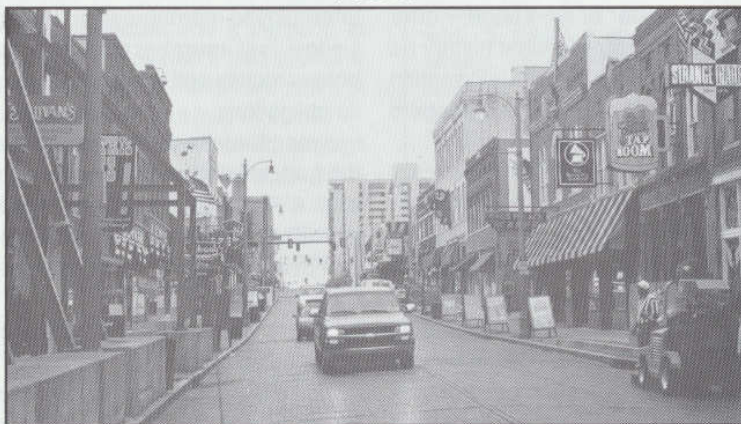


## THEN



*Beale Street, circa 1950. Looking west you can see "Pawn Shop Row" where most of the shops were owned by Jewish Merchants. Also, A. Schwab's store, still a Beale Street landmark today.*

## NOW



*Beale Street, 2001. A growing mecca for jazz and tourists.*

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MEMPHIS and the MID-SOUTH

in cooperation with

## BORNBLUM JUDAIC STUDIES at the UNIVERSITY of MEMPHIS

### 2001-2002 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

All programs are free of charge. The public is invited.

**\*September 16 – “From Swastika to Jim Crow” – film and panel discussion**

The fascinating story of Jewish professors expelled from prestigious German universities by the Nazis in the 1930s, who found teaching jobs at all-Black colleges in the segregated South. **3:00 p.m. at the Fogelman Center, University of Memphis, 330 DeLoach.** Co-sponsor: Memphis Jewish Federation.

**\*October 7 – “Jewish Superstitions and Folklore” – Dr. Ellen Frankel**

Dr. Frankel is Editor-in-Chief of The Jewish Publication Society and a scholar of Jewish folklore. She has published The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah, The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, The Classic Tales: 4000 Years of Jewish Lore and her newest book, An Illustrated Hebrew Bible. She was awarded the Myrtle Wreath by Hadassah for her outstanding contributions to Jewish literature. **2:00 p.m. MJCC.** Co-sponsor: Hadassah.

**\*November 11 – “Jewish Confederates” – Robert Rosen**

Robert Rosen, author of The Jewish Confederates, is a practicing attorney in Charleston, S.C. A scholar of the Civil War, he introduces readers and audiences to the world of Southern Jews during the 1860s. With the exception of Judah P. Benjamin, Jewish Confederates have been largely unknown even to specialists of American Jewish history and Civil War history. Alan M. Dershowitz writes of his book: “An eye-opening, myth-shattering, stereotype-breaking work of originality, elegance and wisdom.” **2:00 p.m. MJCC.** Co-sponsor: MJCC.

**\*November 19 – “Churchill and the Jews” – Sir Martin Gilbert**

Sir Martin Gilbert, British historian, is the official biographer of Winston Churchill. He has published eight volumes of the Churchill biography, culminating in his single-volume Churchill: A Life. He is the author of The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy, Jerusalem in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Never Again: A History of the Holocaust. He co-wrote the script for the Academy Award winning film, “Genocide.” In 1985-86 he served on the UN Human Rights Commission and in 1995 he was knighted “for services to British history and international relations.” **7:30 p.m. Fogelman Center.**

**\*February 21 – “Jewish History and Jewish Memory” – Dr. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi**

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, the Salo W. Baron Professor of Jewish History, Culture and Society at Columbia University, is the acclaimed author of nine books and dozens of scholarly articles and reviews. His watershed book, Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, inspired a generation of scholarly inquiry into historical images, the construction of the Jewish past, and the making and meaning of collective memory. **7:30 p.m. Fogelman Center.**

**\*March 24 – Selma Lewis Scholars Program**

Students from the Memphis Jewish day schools and congregation's religious schools will report on tracing their family history. The students who are chosen to be Selma Lewis Scholars will describe what they learned from the Jewish Historical Society's Genealogy Project. **2:00 p.m. MJCC.**

**\*April 21 – “Jewish Genealogy on the Internet” – Joyce Field**

Joyce Field from Indianapolis will be representing JewishGen.org, the primary internet institution providing information connecting Jewish ancestry and family history. It has partnered with the International Association of Genealogical Societies and Beit Hatefutsoth in Tel Aviv to produce “The Family Tree of the Jewish People.” It also links with Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Jewish Historical Society. **2:00 p.m. MJCC.**

**\*May 12 – Annual Meeting: “Discovering Jewish Heritage Along the Mississippi River” – Dr. Mark Greenberg.** Dr. Greenberg is Historian-in-Residence at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute for Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, MS. He received the 2000 Humanities Scholar Award from the Mississippi Humanities Council, which recognized his outstanding work in oral history, historic preservation and community service. **2:00 p.m. MJCC.** Co-sponsor: Institute for Southern Jewish Life.

*Your President, Officers and Directors of the*

**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS & THE MID-SOUTH**

*extend*

*Rosh Hashana Greetings*

*To Our Entire Membership and Friends*



*Best Wishes for a Year of Health and Happiness*



# Dr. Sig Gruenwald . . . . The "Painting Dentist"

by Susan Gruenwald Rosen

Dr. Siegfried (Sig) Gruenwald was known as the "Painting Dentist" to many of his patients, not because he painted their teeth, but rather because although dentistry was his vocation, painting was his passion. He pursued this hobby and produced art that is found scattered around Memphis in private homes, hospitals, restaurants, and antique shops and in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. His aptitude for art and music was well known since his childhood. To many he painted a picture of how the world could be, and he never stopped.

Siegfried Gruenwald was born March 26, 1911, to Meier and Settchen Gruenwald in a suburb of Giessen in the province of Hesse in Germany (where the famous Hessians of the American Revolution came from). Giessen was a part of Wieseck much like Germantown is a part of Memphis where Sig spent most of his best years. But we get ahead of our story.

He had a brother Jerome and a multitude of friends there, whom we heard about in bits and pieces. Sig always avoided talking about them as they were lost to him (and the world). He had many unpleasant memories of that time. After completing secondary school and having enough college to qualify him to study dentistry at the university town of Marburg, he graduated in 1932 at the age of 21. He practiced dentistry in Konstanz, Germany but within a few years it became apparent to the young man that Germany, was not the safest place for him.

He tried to convince the rest of his family of this fact, but finally struck out on his own for Switzerland in 1936. Unfortunately, his father and mother, unable to leave, were caught in the Hitler holocaust, and were both killed in Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1941. There was difficulty transiting Switzerland for America, but he had an uncle, Louis Greenwald, living in the Bronx, NY, and working as a tailor there, who in September of 1937 swore before the courts that he would guarantee that Sig would not become a public burden if he was admitted to American immigration. Sig arrived and enrolled December 7, 1937, at NYU to study English. In 1938 he was accepted at the University of Tennessee Dental School in Memphis after long discussions with the State of New York authorities, who indicated he would certainly have to do dental school over in order to practice in the United States.

The Memphis Jewish Federation arranged for his sponsorship and he was placed with a Jewish family, the Kabakoffs, who happened to have a single eligible daughter, Evelyn, whom he married during his second go around in dental school. They had a daughter Susan born in 1945 and a son Stephen born in 1950.

Now known as Sig Gruenwald, he loved to boast how he taught his professors in America the continental expertise in dentistry above and beyond what was practiced in the New World. He did once again graduate from dental school, second in his class, in June of 1941. He practiced dentistry for years at an office in the Sterick Building downtown in Memphis before moving to 4515 Poplar and retiring in 1989.



A sampling of Dr. Gruenwald's art

He was President of the Memphis Dental Society, President of the Tennessee State Dental Society, the first Master to be inducted into the Academy of General Dentistry. He was a member of the Thirteenth International Dental Congress. He wrote many articles about cosmetic dentistry in the Tennessee State Dental Journal. He also was first to patent the diamond dental burr for porcelain crowns and was recognized in Who's Who in the State of Tennessee in 1962. He was commissioned to do an oil portrait of the Dean of the University of Tennessee Dental School in Memphis.

Sig Gruenwald---dentist, painter, philanthropist and musician---made his life a work of art. He was a volunteer dentist at Saint Francis Hospital,, cleaning the residents' teeth, and taught residents at the McWhorter Senior Center to dance the latest dance craze. A self-taught artist, he would lock himself in his room to paint when he was a child. He particularly liked to

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