



"OurStory"–

150 Years of Congregation Shaarey Zedek

By Judy Levin Cantor

THE BACKGROUND

Sarah and Isaac Cozens, who have seven daughters, open their home in 1851 to Detroit's first minyan. The Orthodox Beth El Society is formed.

IN THE BEGINNING: 1861-1932



1861: When Beth El adopts new reform practices, seventeen men leave to organize the Shaarey Zedek Society so that their families can continue their observance of Traditional Judaism. Each of the men pledge one dollar for membership. They meet over Sherer's Drug Store for services and buy land and open the Beth Olem Cemetery in Hamtramck.

Seventeen Founders: Isaac Epstein, Raphael Epstein, Leopold Fink, Marcus Freud, Jacob Freud, Samuel Fleischman, Hiram Kraushaar, Ludwig Levy, Morris Levy, David Marx, George Morris, Louis Myers, Samuel Newman, Jacob Robinson, Harris Solomon, Isaac Warshauer, Isaac Wertheimer.

A Morris family photo.



1861: Simon Wertheimer, of the family of founder Isaac Wertheimer, is among the first in Michigan to volunteer for the Union Army in the Civil War. He enlists in Detroit's First Michigan Infantry and fights in the bloody Battle of Bull Run.

181 men and boys from 151 Jewish families in Michigan join the Union Army, participating in every battle on every front. This may be a national record for percentage of participation.

1864: Two years after incorporating, Shaarey Zedek, with 63 members, purchases its first building at Congress and St. Antoine Street from the St. Matthews Episcopal Colored Church.



1877: Shaarey Zedek builds a larger imposing synagogue on the same site at Congress and St. Antoine. On the Fourth of July before a crowd of 400, Detroit's Mayor lays the cornerstone for this first building in Detroit built specifically as a synagogue.

1879: During an economic recession, Shaarey Zedek cannot meet its payments and loses the building.

1886: As the economy improves, the growing membership buys back the Congress and St. Antoine building and rededicates it: "to hold forever and forever."

1896: Miss Minnie Lipsitz of 232 Adams Avenue East, Detroit, Michigan marries Jacob Steinberg of St. Ignace, Michigan at Congregation Shaarey Zedek on Congress and St. Antoine Streets in Detroit.





1897: Rabbi Judah L. Levin is hired and serves as rabbi of Shaarey Zedek, Beth Jacob and B'nai Israel. He advocates for a new Shaarey Zedek synagogue, to accommodate the changing neighborhood. A charismatic leader who is also a brilliant mathematician, he receives patents for his invention of an adding/subtracting machine that is in the collection of the Smithsonian Institute.



1899: In response to the greatly expanding Jewish immigration, the Hebrew Relief Societies of both Shaarey Zedek and Temple Beth El combine to form the United Jewish Charities, the forerunner of the Jewish Welfare Federation. Shaarey Zedek's David W. Simons becomes the first president of the newly formed agency.

1903: At an impressive ceremony, Rabbi Levin delivers the dedication address for the third Shaarey Zedek synagogue, located on Winder Street and seating 750. William Saulson, who had previously served as Mayor of St. Ignace, is elected the new president.



1906: Laura Simons, wife of D. W. Simons, founds the Women's Auxiliary, the forerunner of the Sisterhood. Their first project is to purchase curtains for the Winder Street ark.



1907: Shaarey Zedek hires Rabbi Abraham M. Hershman, an honors graduate of the new Jewish Theological Seminary. A scholar and an early Zionist, he continues to lead the congregation and the community with distinction for forty years.

1913: As the growing Jewish population continues to expand northward, so must the "shul" follow. The cornerstone is now laid for a 1430-seat sanctuary at Brush and Willis. (L to R) Rabbis Hershman, Levin, and Beth El's Rabbi Leo M. Franklin join President David W. Simons and Judge Harry B. Keidan to conduct the impressive patriotic ceremony.



CONGREGATION
SHAAREY ZEDECK
BUILDING FUND



1913: Shaarey Zedek joins the new movement of Conservative Judaism as one of the founding members of the United Synagogue of America.

1915: The fourth building for Shaarey Zedek, the Brush and Willis synagogue opens – "one of the most classic religious temples in America – to serve the congregation for generations to come."

1917: Shaarey Zedek opens the 50-acre Clover Hill Cemetery on 14 Mile Road.



1915-1919 World War I: Jack Wertheimer sails home from Army service in Europe. Many young men of the congregation serve in the armed forces of World War I. At home, an active Sisterhood meets in basement rooms to roll bandages for the Red Cross, while the congregation raises money for the Detroit Patriotic Fund. Levin goes to Versailles.



1930: Detroit is the fourth largest city in the nation. Responding to the Jewish community's move to new neighborhoods west of Woodward, renowned architect Albert Kahn is commissioned to design an enlarged sanctuary on Chicago Boulevard. Meanwhile, the beautiful Brush and Willis building is rented to the Mt. Olive Baptist Church. While religious services and the school continue in a rented building on Twelfth and Clairmount, this 1930 class conducts its graduation out-of-doors.





THE CHICAGO BOULEVARD SHAAREY ZEDEK: 1932-1962

1930: The cornerstone is laid for the Chicago Boulevard synagogue. (L to R front row) David W. Simons, past president; David Hershman, the Rabbi's son; Rabbi Hershman; Louis Granet, past president. (Second row center) Isaac Shetzer and Sadie Cohn.

1931: Lawsuits attempt to stop the building of the synagogue in that neighborhood, but construction goes forth.



Blueprint from Albert Kahn, Inc Architects

1932: Shaarey Zedek wins all the lawsuits up to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the synagogue is dedicated. Leading the procession of the Torahs: (R to L) Rabbi

Hershman; Dr. Louis Finkelstein of The Jewish Theological Seminary; and A. Louis Gordon, president.



Circa 1930s: Ladies of the Sisterhood attend an outing at Knollwood Country Club. (see page 19 for names)

1934: Instead of playing in a crucial game on Yom Kippur, Hank Greenberg, the home run king of the Detroit Tigers, attends holiday services at Shaarey Zedek. During this time of rabid anti-Semitism flamed by Father Coughlin, "Hammering Hank" is greeted by a spontaneous standing welcome.

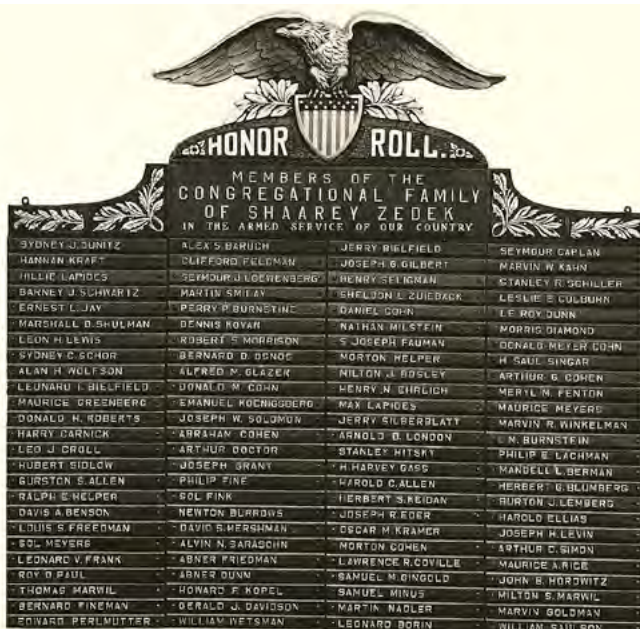


1937: In spite of the dire financial difficulties in the midst of the Great Depression, Shaarey Zedek pays its contractors 100%. "It is futile for me to find words to express my gratitude to you (for the \$250 check)... May the God who recognizes neither race or creed prosper you and bless you..." The mortgage is burned in 1944.

1938: Rabbi Morris Adler is hired as Assistant Rabbi.

1941: Davida Robinson (Gale), on behalf of the Girl Scouts, presents flowers to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at a national Sisterhood meeting at Masonic Temple.





December 7, 1941 – 1945: America enters World War II and many hundreds of Shaarey Zedek men and women serve. Sadly, many are wounded or die in action. Rabbi Adler enlists and is the first Jewish Chaplain to serve in occupied Japan.



1940s: A Sunday school class celebrates Purim!



1950s: Governor G. Mennen Williams signs an early civil rights bill granting voters absentee ballots for Jewish holidays. (L to R Standing) Rabbi Leon Fram of Temple Israel, and Rabbi Adler.





1950s: The Kibbutz, a Men's Club annual retreat, meets "Up North" for study and camaraderie.



1950s: The congregation readies for holiday services.



1950s: The beloved Cantor Jacob H. Sonenklar, with his operatic-trained voice and warm personality, serves the congregation for thirty seven years!

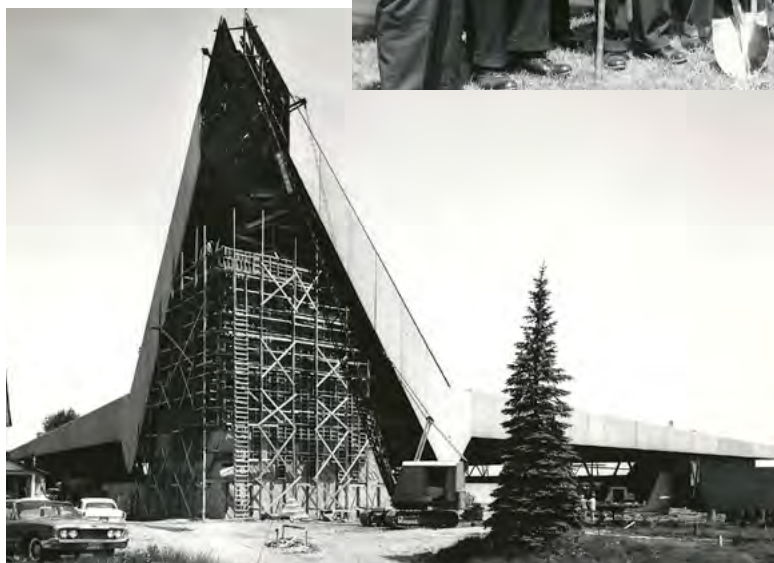
1962: The new synagogue in Southfield is completed. In a moving ceremony of traditional prayers, the Torahs are moved out of the Chicago Boulevard synagogue to be taken to Bell Road and a new era begins. (see page 19 for names)



BELL ROAD – THE FIRST FORTY YEARS: 1962-2002

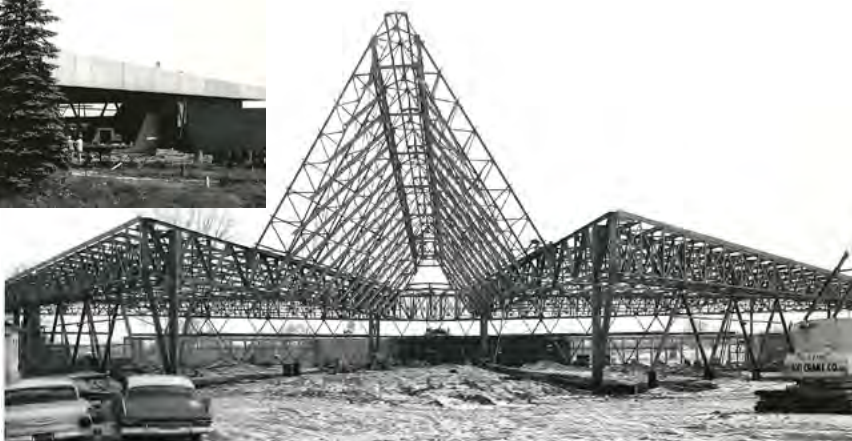
Sunday, May 28, 1961:

The long awaited Bell Road Groundbreaking takes place under the leadership of Building Chairman Mandell Berman (at the microphone). It had been preceded by years of planning, the purchase of 45 acres of land, and the drawing of plans by the architects Percival Goodman and Albert Kahn, Inc. (see page 19 for names)



The congregation celebrates its 100th anniversary at Havdalah and a gala banquet on the Saturday evening before the Groundbreaking.

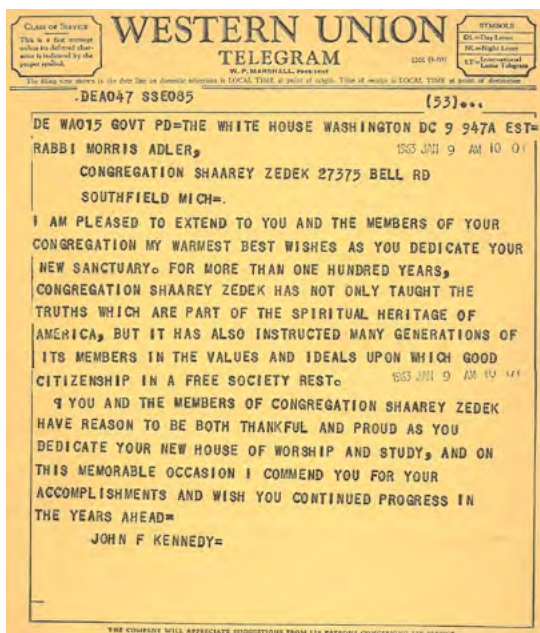
1961-1962: Six hundred tons of structural steel are used in Shaarey Zedek's construction! The central shape is symbolic of Mt. Sinai.



June 17, 1962: The cornerstone for the new synagogue is laid in place by Louis Berry, Development Chair; David Miro, President; Rabbi Morris Adler; and Mandell Berman. Rabbi Adler says this building "is to be a house of worship, of assembly and of learning."



December 20, 1962: The men who had carried the Torahs out of the Chicago Boulevard building place them in the ark in the new Bell Road sanctuary. They pose before the ark - and the new synagogue opens for services.



January, 1963: United States President John F. Kennedy sends a telegram of congratulations on the synagogue's 100th anniversary year.

*Shall I cry out in anger, O God
Because Thy gifts are mine but for a while...*

By RABBI MORRIS ADLER

March 11, 1966: Rabbi Morris Adler dies after being critically wounded at Shabbat Services on February 12. Chancellor Louis Finkelstein of The Jewish Theological Seminary officiates at the funeral services attended by thousands and noted worldwide. Rabbi Irwin Groner, who was appointed Rabbi of the congregation after one year, tells a grieving congregation, "In his memory we will find the strength to go forward."



1970s: The Shaarey Zedek Cultural Commission, initiated and chaired by Walter Field, brings to overflow audiences the nation's notables, including Elie Weisel, Mordecai Kaplan, and Senator Daniel Moynihan (in photo with Walter Field).



1979: Russian Jewish immigrants who had recently arrived under the "Free Soviet Jewry" movement are introduced to the Sukkah by Rabbi Irwin Groner.



1970s and on: The distinguished Peter and Clara Weisberg concerts bring world class performers and musical events to the synagogue, annually filling the sanctuary with appreciative audiences.



Cantor Chaim Najman with Lucille and Harvey Weisberg.

1982: The celebration of the congregation's 120th anniversary is initiated by (L to R) Senator Carl Levin, Cantor Chaim Najman, Harold Berry, President Harvey Weisberg, Louis Berry, Rabbi Groner, Honorable Avern Cohn, William Davidson, and David Hermelin. The book of the synagogue's history is published and an historical exhibit is on display through the summer - attended by thousands of metro Detroiters.



Irving Laker: For more than twenty years, the Laker Family Concerts bring well-loved musical performances to the congregation and the community.



1984: First Adult Bat Mitzvah class: The activism of Marjorie Saulson and other Sisterhood leaders over an extended number of years leads to new fully egalitarian practices at Shaarey Zedek. Women read from the Torah and are counted in the minyan, and the Adult Bat Mitzvah program is instituted. (see page 19 for names)



Leonard Baron: Girls' Bat Mitzvahs are initiated in 1980 under the leadership of President Baron.

1987: The Michigan Historical Commission awards Shaarey Zedek a coveted Michigan Historical Marker, following a two-year application process by the synagogue archivist. A proud congregation celebrates the Dedication of the Marker, which includes the quote: "Shaarey Zedek continues to transmit its heritage from generation to generation." (see page 19 for names)





1980s: Cantor Reuven Frankel and Cantor Sidney Rube demonstrate the rite of Blowing of the Shofar.

November 1988: "*Siyum Hatorah*" - A new Torah is commissioned and written by a scribe, under the chairmanship of Dottie Wagner.

Its completion personally witnessed by synagogue children and families, the sacred Torah is then dedicated by a joyous congregation.

Irving Laker and Marvin Fleischman (in front) and Richard Brown and Yale Levin have the honor of holding the "*chuppah*" as Rabbi Groner carries in the Torah.



1990s: Dottie Wagner, the congregation's first woman president, installed in 1998, stands with a group of the presidents who preceded her. (L to R) Alan S. Schwartz, Richard Brown, Yale Levin, Dottie Wagner, Wallace Handler, and Rabbi Groner.



1998: Rabbi Groner welcomes Rabbi Joseph Krakoff, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. "I am excited to be at Shaarey Zedek and I am especially honored to work with Rabbi Groner," Krakoff tells the congregation.

SHAAREY ZEDEK IN THE 21ST CENTURY — FIFTY YEARS IN SOUTHFIELD!

From the 140th to the 150th...

The 21st century past presidents.

(L to R) David Wallace, Brian Hermelin, Lawrence Berry, Gregg Orley, James Safran, (lower left hand corner) Steven Weisberg.



2002: The 140th anniversary is celebrated with a lively presentation of "The Producers," created and directed by talented-professional Melba Winer and Cantor Chaim Najman.



2010: The Sisterhood, under Janice Stoneman, initiates popular congregational Sabbath luncheons. Soon the "Kugel Mavens" add that treat to the menu. (see page 19 for names)

2011-2012: Veterans' Shabbat honors all Jewish veterans in the community who have served in our nation's Armed Forces. Hundreds, including Brigadier General Donald Schenk, participate in the annual moving ceremonies.



2011: The young people of the congregation star in "The Rabbi of Oz," one of the annual musical parodies written by Monica Finkelstein and directed by Cantor Meir Finkelstein and Tobye Bello. Soloists at center front of stage (L to R) Sophie Ehrlich and Emily Finkelstein.



2011-2013: (L to R) Robert Goodman; Jeri Fishman; Larry Nemer, Vice President; Steve Margolin, President; Mary Knoll, Vice President and Janice Stoneman.

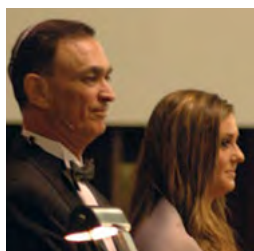
President Steve Margolin and the officers lead the congregation during the 150th year. The anniversary is initiated at High Holiday services, with a popular reciting of interesting historical vignettes.

2012: Celebrating the 150th, the Bus Tour visits the Michigan Historical Marker on the Detroit Riverwalk. The crowd enjoys the narration by Chair Ruthe Goldstein. (holding mike)

Members sign the "The Golden Book," a treasured memento first signed at the 1932 dedication of Chicago Boulevard Shaarey Zedek.



2012: Rabbi Krakoff and Rabbi Starr meet with Shaarey Zedek youngsters attending Camp Tamarack - a fun taste of home.



2012: With the generous support of Henrietta and Alvin Weisberg, Cantor Meir Finkelstein composes "Gates of Righteousness," a cantata performed before an audience of 1500 by the DSO, directed by Maestro Leonard Slatkin, with soloist Olivia Brodsky.



Rabbi Aaron Starr, Rabbi Joseph Krakoff, Cantor Meir Finkelstein and Assistant Cantor Leonard Gutman hold the sacred Torahs. The beautiful new Torah covers, a 150th project, are dedicated at High Holiday services. A final 150th gala party takes place in October of 2012.



"Following this 150th year of remembrance and commitment, we now look forward to the future with renewed faith and joy." *Rabbi Joseph Krakoff*

"L'DOR VADOR - FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION."

"OurStory" Photograph Captions

Sisterhood, 1930s: (L to R Top Row) Bessie Cohen (Mrs. Herman), Belle Lichtig (Mrs. David), _____, Rae Stralser (Mrs. A.B.); **(Second Row)** Mrs. Samuel Eder, Ida Blumberg (Mrs. Morris), Freida Weinstein, Rhoda Levin (Mrs. Theodore), Miriam Hershman (wife of Rabbi A.M. Hershman), Mary Zemon, Elizabeth Kaplan (Mrs. Hyman), Rose Cooper (Mrs. Abraham), Bertha Saulson (Mrs. Saul); **(Third Row)** Dora Leiter (Mrs. Moe), _____, Millie Kaufman (Mrs. Sol), Rebecca "Bea" Zackheim (Mrs. Maurice), Hattie Gittleman, Lillian Smith (Mrs. Charles), Jennie Blumberg (Mrs. Oscar); **(Fourth Row)** Henrietta Gordon (Mrs. A. Louis), Lil Diamond (Mrs. David), Gloria Shetzer (Mrs. Simon), _____, Anna Srere (Mrs. Abraham); **(Fifth Row)** Sadie Brown (Mrs. Harry Z.), Gertrude Warner (Mrs. Herbert), Rose Loewenberg (Mrs. Robert), Sally Davidson (Mrs. Ralph), Elizabeth Finley, Rose Fauman (Mrs. David), _____.



Moving Torahs, 1962: (L to R Front Row) Cantor Jacob Sonenklar, Rabbi Irwin Groner, Abraham Satovsky, David Miro, Louis Berry, Rabbi Morris Adler, Abraham Salzberg, Peter Weisberg, Morris Karbal, _____; **(Second Row)** _____, I. Murray Jacobs, Sexton Jacob Epel, _____, Reuben Himmelstein, M. Ben Lewis, Tom Borman, Hyman Keidan, Joseph Gendelman, Leonard Sidlow, Hyman Safran, Morris Fishman, Joseph Brandt, Israel Elperin; **(Third Row)** Abraham Srere, Charles Agree, Jack Gordon, Abraham Caplan, Harvey Weisbeg, Harold Berry, Lester Satovsky, Harry Cohen, Jay Rosenthal.



Groundbreaking, 1961: (L to R) Julius Steinberg, Maurice Zackheim, Abraham Srere, Louis Rosenberg, Julius Berman, Harry Cohen, Hyman Keidan, Max Krell, George Parzen, _____.



Adult Bat Mitzvah, 1984: (L to R Top Row) Sally Fand, Faye Ullmann, Mary Lee Fishman, Linda Kozlowski, Evelyn Kasle, Ruthe Goldstein, Judith Blumeno, Susan Bernstein; **(Second Row)** Cantor Chaim Najman, Marjorie Saulson, Adria Aronovitz, Sharon Brown, Diane Lutz, Janice Epstein, Linda Lee, Roz Shipko, Annette Cooper, Cantor Sidney Rube; **(Third Row)** Rabbi Lee S. Paskind, Robyn Rontal, Gail Tukel, Ann Zuckman, Rena Meyers, Margelee Ruby, Lorie Horowitz, Diane Blau, Elaine Burton, Rabbi Irwin Groner; **(Fourth Row)** Doris August, Linda Applebaum, Rosalind Gilson, Deborah Balkin, Marcia Auster, Elizabeth Tam, Dorothy Kaufman, Miriam Goldberg.



Historical Marker, 1987: (L to R) Marvin Fleischman; Jerry Roe, Michigan Historical Commissioner; Judith Cantor, archivist; Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi; Thomas Jablonski; Myron Milgrom, President; Leypsa Groner; Rabbi Irwin Groner; Cantor Chaim Najman.

"Kugel Mavens," 2010: (L to R) Ruthe Goldstein, Jacqui Elkus, Sandy Wittenberg, Wendy Arnold, Richard Jacob, Helene Cherrin, chair; Eileen Glogower.