Chapter 11
Beyond the Temple Walls

All that goes on under the sun . . .
—Ecclesiastes 9:3

Long before they formed a congregation, Fort Worth’s Reform Jews were involved in the community. Their contributions to the outside realm have not abated. Congregants interact with the larger world in business, finance, politics, the military, social services, leisure, and interfaith endeavors. Numbering some 2,500 residents within a city of 516,000, Fort Worth Jewry naturally integrates with the larger universe. Illustrating that high degree of involvement was Marcus Ginsburg, a lawyer active in Jewish and secular causes. As longtime legal counsel for Texas Christian University, Ginsburg enjoyed the irony of being called the “Texas Christian attorney.” Upon learning that Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger was teaching at TCU’s Brite Divinity School, he phoned Mecklenburger, congratulating him on becoming a “Texas Christian rabbi.”

First Things First . . .
Spotlighting congregants’ accomplishments during the first 100 years —By Marian Haber

We take pride when fellow Jews at Beth-El become the first in their fields to earn recognition for varied endeavors—from drafting legislation in Austin to reporting the war against terrorism in far-away Afghanistan. Their accomplishments demonstrate that there are few barriers to Jewish involvement. Their Temple affiliation conveys shared religious identity. There is collective pride when members of the extended Temple family become trailblazers. Following is a small sampling . . .

It all began in 1856 with founding member Simon Gabert (1836–1911), the first Jewish pioneer to settle in Fort Worth. When gold fever broke out in California, Gabert headed West. He later returned to Fort Worth, becoming a cotton broker.

When the first railroad line reached Fort Worth in 1876, Oscar Seligman (1855–1934) arrived, becoming one of Fort Worth’s first trade emissaries to

West Texas.” According to the Star-Telegram, Seligman traveled on horseback, selling wholesale liquor and tobacco to stores in outlying towns.

In 1892, attorney Theodore Mack (1864–1952) argued the first case on the docket of the Second Court of Civil Appeals, which had just been established in Fort Worth. Two years later he moved from Albany, Texas, to Fort Worth, becoming Cowtown’s first Jewish attorney.

Sam Rosen (1868–1912), a Russian immigrant to Texas, pioneered in residential real estate development, planning a North Side neighborhood for stockyards employees. Rosen is the only Fort Worth Jew to have a school (Sam Rosen Elementary) and a church (Rosen Heights Baptist) named for him.

Brothers Will and Henry Nurenberg, who moved to Fort Worth in 1903 from Greenville, Texas, were pioneers in the lumber business and the first in the nation, according to their descendants, to market plywood.

B. Max Mehl (1884-1957), who made his fortune from rare pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, was the first in the world to launch a mail-order coin-collecting business. The Saturday Evening Post of February 5, 1949, ran a cover story about Mehl titled, “The Dean of American Numismatists: Want $3750 for a Nickel?”

Coast to Coast
The first congregant to make it big in the Big Apple was David Carb (1885–1952), a New York playwright and a drama critic for Vogue. He wrote several Broadway plays and a biographical novel, Sunrise in the West. The novel was about his grandmother, Babette, who emigrated from Alsace to the antebellum South and later to Fort Worth. David Carb, along with Eugene O’Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay, was a member of the Provincetown Players, the Massachusetts troupe that sparked the nation’s Little Theater movement in the 1920s. Carb often said that Fort Worth’s Greenwall Opera House, operated by Beth-El founder Phillip Greenwall, gave him his first taste of Broadway.

On the opposite coast was Rufus LeMaire, the first congregant to make his name in Hollywood. The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer casting director got a phone call in 1936 from Fort Worth publisher Amon Carter, asking how Cowtown could oustline Dallas during the Texas Centennial celebration. LeMaire introduced Carter to Broadway impresario Billy Rose, who created the first Casa Mañana
production, a summerlong extravaganza complete with nude showgirls and live elephants.

**Politics**

Sam Davidson, an early Beth-El president, was the first Jew elected to the Fort Worth City Commission, the equivalent of the city council. Voted in during 1906, Davidson served as the first parks commissioner, earning the sobriquet “father of the city parks.”

Alex Greines (1898–1978), a family physician, TCU football star, and co-founder of the Fort Worth Boys Club, was the Fort Worth School Board’s first Jewish member, serving from 1953 to 1962. The school district’s $6.5 million Wilkerson-Greines Activities Center, an athletic complex dedicated in 1981, honors his memory.

Bayard H. Friedman (1926–1998), called “Mr. Fort Worth,” was the city’s first Jewish mayor, serving from 1963 to 1965. Friedman is credited with negotiating the agreement with rival Dallas to build the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. When Friedman died in October 1998, mounted police units led a procession downtown to the first memorial service held at the Bass Performance Hall.

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Arnold’s grandfather Jake, a Russian refugee who arrived in Fort Worth in 1913,-founded Gachman Metals & Recycling in 1913, a family business that continued with his son, Leon Gachman, up to 40% of the city’s trash. The Gachman family is an immigrant success story that began with a pawnshop purchased from Wolf & Klar, a pawnshop owned by fellow Jews. Details of the notorious kidnapping are dramatized in the 1958 movie, Machine Gun Kelly.

Mack Scrapbook, American Jewish Archives

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**Civic Involvement**

Attorney Henry Mack (1903–1968) did not hold elective office, yet he was responsible for what may well be the first gun-control legislation in Texas. Concerned that local Jewish pawnbrokers were marketing firearms to gangsters, he drafted a bill outlawing the sale of machine guns, except to licensed law enforcement officials. He persuaded state Rep. Tom Rentro to shepherd the bill through the Legislature. Mack’s motivation was the Page 1 kidnapping on July 22, 1933, of an Oklahoma oilman. The weapon used in the abduction was purchased from Wolf & Klar, a pawnshop owned by fellow Jews. Details of the notorious kidnapping are dramatized in the 1958 movie, Machine Gun Kelly.

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**Music**

Morton H. Meyerson, who was confirmed at Beth-El in 1953, played piano and sang throughout his career. The first gun-control legislation in Texas. Concerned that local Jewish pawnbrokers were marketing firearms to gangsters, he drafted a bill outlawing the sale of machine guns, except to licensed law enforcement officials. He persuaded state Rep. Tom Rentro to shepherd the bill through the Legislature. Meyerson’s boss, billionaire Leonard H. Roberts, was named United Way of America board chairman in 2002. The previous year, in the wake of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, Roberts headed the United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County’s annual campaign. Faced with local layoffs and a slowing national economy, he managed an aggressive, innovative campaign that raised $25.4 million, the most successful United Way drive in Tarrant County history.

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**League membership or to leadership in a host of volunteer and social activities once tacitly restricted. Louise and Gordon Appleman’s daughter, Anne Appleman Mann, was the city’s first Jewish debutante, making her bow at a Steeplechase ball in 1990. Their son, Michael Appleman, a Temple board member in 2002, served as Steeplechase president in 1997. Louise Appleman was also elected to the board of Tarrant County College in 1988 and won reelection to the millennium.

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**Education**

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Some get their name on ballots, others on buildings. The first congregant to have a major Dallas landmark named after him is Morton H. Meyerson. Meyerson, who was confirmed at Beth-El in 1953, played piano and sang throughout high school and college. His love of music and his business skills—he was president of Electronic Data Systems—led him to become the Dallas Symphony Orchestra’s building committee chairman in the mid-1980s. Meyerson’s boss, billionaire H. Ross Perot, contributed $10 million to the orchestra’s downtown home “to assure that the new hall would meet international standards.”When the Symphony Association offered Perot the opportunity to name the facility, he surprised the public by choosing to honor his “friend, business colleague and [symphony supporter], Morton H. Meyerson.” The center opened in 1989.

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**Medicine**

Medical milestones are another way in which Beth-El congregants have made a difference. Polly Mack (1873–1939) and others active in the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) were responsible for establishing the city’s first children’s hospital in 1918. Called the Fort Worth Free Baby Hospital and located in Park Hill, it was the forerunner of Fort Worth Children’s Hospital. Mack’s motivation for launching the baby hospital was her first pregnancy. Skeptical about local medical care, she returned to Texas convinced about local medical care. She returned to Texas convinced about local medical care.

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Barry Shlachter, a Fort Worth Star-Telegram writer, covered the pope’s 1987 visit to America. In 2002, Shlachter was named the state’s premier reporter by the Headlines Foundation of Texas. Shlachter, on loan to parent company Knight-Ridder and its wire service, covered the war against terrorism in the autumn of 2001. He reported from New York, Afghanistan, Israel, Bahrain, the Persian Gulf, and from three aircraft carriers. A former overseas correspondent for the Associated Press, Shlachter observed: “When I covered Afghanistan in the 1970s, I was the youngest correspondent at age.

MANNY AND ROZ ROSENTHAL are first in many people’s hearts for their generous gifts of leadership, compassion, and philanthropy.

TALENTED SHERWIN GOLDMAN grew up to win a Tony award for his Broadway revival of Porgy and Bess.

29. But now, at 52, I was older than the warlords."

Attorney Marcus Ginsburg (1913–1996) was also a global thinker. As national vice president of the American Jewish Committee, he headed its Commission on International Affairs. That position that took him, in 1985, to the Middle East to seek peace with heads of state in Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. It was the first official Jewish delegation to Jordan since 1948. Two secretaries of state, Christian Herter and Dean Rusk, appointed Ginsburg to the United States Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). He served from 1959 to 1965 and was chairman of a committee that produced a 1963 United Nations booklet titled, Advocacy of the Great Questions of Human Rights: A Guide for Community Action. Ginsburg personally presented the booklet to U.N. Secretary-General U Thant.

Firsts at Beth-El

Within the Temple walls, congregants have initiated a number of firsts. The first bat mitzvah girl, dubbed a bat Torah, was Tami Hoffman Jara in 1972. The first bar mitzvah was 18 years earlier in 1954, and the boy was Sherwin M. Goldman. Now executive producer of the New York City Opera, Goldman is also the first congregant to receive a Tony Award, presented for his 1977 revival of Porgy and Bess. While Goldman made Temple history on the ism, his sister, Carol Goldman Minker, achieved a less visible milestone. She was the first Temple member to ride down Beth-El’s elevator, in 1980. The two-person conveyance was financed by Laura Stein in memory of her sisters Harriet and Katie. Although the elevator was installed with seniors in mind, Minker, in her 30s, gratefully hobbled on. A Colorado ski accident had put her in a plaster cast from hip to heel.

RUBY KANTOR, SUSAN MITCHELL, and JE Beth Williams shared the spotlight January 26, 1979, as the first in the congregation to celebrate an adult bat mitzvah. The trio took an 11-week class exploring Judaism and completed independent work on issues relating to their thoughts on Judaism.

The first congregant to celebrate his second bar mitzvah was 83-year-old Charles Miron. Because the Bible teaches that a natural life span is “three score years and ten,” the sages declared that when people reach age 70, they start counting again. As he approached his 83rd birthday, Miron, a Russian-horn retired engineer, decided he was ripe for a second bar mitzvah. Relatives from Brooklyn to Odessa, Texas, attended the ceremony April 6, 1990. “I’m thankful for being healthy in body and mind, and it’s about time to celebrate it,” Miron told the Star-Telegram on the eve of his second coming-of-age.

At Beth-El, we look forward to more trailblazing firsts during our second 100 years.
Throughout the past 100 years, Jewish builders and land developers have named more than a dozen city streets and landmarks after their coreligionists.

Rosenthal Heights, the residential area launched a century ago to house meatpacking plant employees, is named for developer Sam Rosenthal, whose children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren grew up at Beth-El. Rosen Heights’ streets include Ephriam Avenue, named for Rosen’s oldest son, who actually spelled his name Ephrhim, without the extra h. Rosen Avenue, of course, is named for the developer.

Cath Drive, off Roaring Springs Road in Westworth Village, carries the surname of homebuilder Meredith Carb, a Temple president during the 1930s. Simondale Drive, which intersects with Colonial Parkway, is Carb Drive, off Roaring Springs Road in Westworth Village, carries the surname of homebuilder Meredith Carb, a Temple president during the 1930s. Simondale Drive, which intersects with Colonial Parkway, is named for developer Leo Karrens, who lived in Fort Worth during the 1950s; used his name but altered the spelling when he platted Karen Circle in Ridglea. Rashti Court in Bluebonnet Hills got its moniker from builder Aaron Rashti. He named nearby Jeannette Court for his daughter.

Ben H. Rosenthal Park, is three blocks east of Dan Danciger Road—a street named for the oilman who donated land for the old Dan Danciger Jewish Community Center. The JCC’s acreage encompassed some green space that the city wanted for a neighborhood park. In the mid-1980s, the center’s board deeded the land to the city in memory of Ben Rosenthal (1896–1965), the center’s first president.

Although Wedgwood, each street begins with the letter w, articulating consensus-builder who had served multiple terms as president, Krauss’s daughter Barbara. “Rebecca, in her own gentle way, was not bashful,” Krauss recalled. “Like Jerry Wolens, she also asked me to name a street.” Krauss’s daughter Rebecca Winesanker, a childhood friend of Krauss’s daughter Barbara. “Rebecca, in her own gentle way, was not bashful,” Krauss recalled. “Like Jerry Wolens, she also asked me to name a street.” Krauss’s daughter Barbara. “Rebecca, in her own gentle way, was not bashful,” Krauss recalled. “Like Jerry Wolens, she also asked me to name a street.”

The terminology has changed, but the focus remains the same. In the 1930s Mission of Israel was called social justice. Reform rabbis as a group advocated an end to child labor and the beginning of health insurance, minimum wages, and workers’ compensation. During the 1960s, the buzzwords for Israel’s mission became social action. Rabbis marched for civil rights and enlisted their congregants in President Lyndon Johnson’s war on poverty.

Today’s terminology for the Mission of Israel is tikkun olam, Hebrew for repairing the world.

Beth-El’s chief tikkun olam activity is Mitzvah Day, a Sunday in April when more than 200 congregants of all ages begin their day at the Temple with bagels and prayer, then disperse across the county to assist with social-service projects. Some grab hammers and nails to help construct a house with Habitat for Humanity. Others prepare lunches for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. At the John Peter Smith Hospital nursery, volunteers cradle infants in rocking chairs. At nursing homes, teenagers arrive with bouquets of fresh flowers and entertain with song and dance. Animal lovers walk stray dogs and clean cages for the Humane Society. Volunteers who remain at the Temple sort toys, clothing, and household goods for donation to women’s shelters. Congregants sew sock puppets for abused children and stuff goody bags with sample-size toiletries for hospital patients.

Mitzvah Day literally means a day for performing the commandment to do good deeds. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations started promoting annual Mitzvah Days around 1990. Fort Worth’s first Mitzvah Day was in 1995. After several years, the event expanded beyond the Temple walls to include the participation of neighborhood Congregation Ahavath Shalom and Arlington’s Congregation Beth Sholom. Susan LaMere, and Ellen Rubinson, working together, coordinated five of the first eight Mitzvah Days.

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War and Rememberance

The call to defend America resounds strongly in the Jewish community. The false stereotype of Jews as meek scholars rather than fighters developed in Europe when our ancestors endured centuries of pogroms. It took bravery and cunning to flee conscription in the czar’s army, as multitudes did.

In ancient times, the Jewish military tradition was evident when David faced Goliath and when the Maccabees fought for freedom. In the United States, Jewish soldiers enlisted in the Civil War. Immigrant Jews, born without a country, sought to defend their new homeland. At least six Civil War veterans are interred in Emanuel Hebrew Rest.

During Beth-El’s first century, Fort Worth’s small Jewish community sent 89 soldiers to fight in World War I. One soldier, Samuel Raiz, was killed in action. During the Second World War, 226 Jewish soldiers from Fort Worth served in the armed forces, including Beth-El President Richard Simon.

hometown boys—Harold Gilbert, Alvin Rubin, Richard Burt, and Walter Sanders—did not return. On the home front, scores of soldiers stationed from Stephenville to Mineral Wells enjoyed Saturday night socials and Passover seders in Fort Worth. Dozens of soldiers corresponded with Regina Gernsbacher, our liaison to the USO.

Still later, Jewish soldiers from Fort Worth served overseas in the sometimes forgotten war in Korea, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and the war against terrorism. The community’s Jewish War Veterans post had 122 members in 2002. Many congregants’ fathers and grandfathers were introduced to Beth-El and to Ahavath Sholom while stationed at Camp Bowie, Taliaferro Field, Fort Wolters, and Carswell Air Force Base. Because the local community extended such warm hospitality, many soldiers transplanted to Fort Worth by the armed forces elected to stay and enrich our congregations. We salute them.

Jewish War Veterans: Left to right, Gary Baum, Ken Sherwin, Nat Cohen, and Herbie Berkowitz, hoist the colors during the final leg of the Torah march that brought five sacred scrolls from Beth-El’s second Temple to its third Temple, August 13, 2000.

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