

gard to the Friday evening services, if the weather is mild, you get an attendance, but if it snows or rains it makes no difference how good the sermon is, you get no attendance. When you name a baby girl or invite the Bar Mitzvah to the service the family will attend and you have a good attendance. A third gimmick is to invite a guest speaker. Now I don't know what you call a good attendance or bad attendance, but after you get them to the Synagogue, how do you get them to pray? They sit like statues, few consult the prayer books, even those who can read the Hebrew. And even the English readings are mechanical and dull. They lack warmth and there is no emotional response. It is really more of a show than a service. This is the problem. How do you get them to pray?" (P. 202)

There is a cry of anguish here that comes from the heart of every Rabbi.

In the book of Genesis, there is the beautiful and dramatic story of Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching into the heavens. He is sense of awe, of reverence. This is the experience every Jew must undergo. Call it "kadushah,"—holiness; call it "taharah,"—purification; call it awe. It is the spirit of Kol Nidrei; it is the mood that floods our beings—that moves us to cry out "Lord I love the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

We should like to believe that over the years, something of this spirit has descended over our Synagogue. More and more of our people are involving themselves in our con-

gregational activities. In diverse and different ways, they have become identified with Beth Israel. Perhaps the greatest tribute that could be paid to them would be to say that they have become "seekers of knowledge". They ask questions and they want answers, and as a result, the services too, have become more meaningful.

In the December, 1962, issue of the B'Nai Brith magazine the educational director of B'Nai Brith writes "When it comes to adult education people stay away in droves." We here, at the Beth Israel, have been more fortunate. True, we still don't turn them away at the doors, but the people do come and they listen and they learn. Much ground has been covered, and much instruction has been given. Like Jacob of old, many have made the great discovery—they have regained their kinship with G-D, the link in the chain has been forged, it is strong and it will endure. There is a sober appreciation today of the place of the Synagogue in the life of the Jews of Bangor.

We have indeed reached a high moment in the life of Beth Israel. We are deeply indebted to all who have worked in the "vineyards of the Lord." We have reached a station but not a destination. What is our destination? To become a "Kehillah Kadoshah"—a Holy Congregation. Not a group of men and women, not a collection of people, not an organization like all other organizations but a Holy Congregation, informed, dedicated, committed, Torah-loving. A Holy Congregation of men and women banded together in the service of G-D.

Beth Israel Had Its Scholars

None is poor but the poor in knowledge—
Talmud Ned. 41a

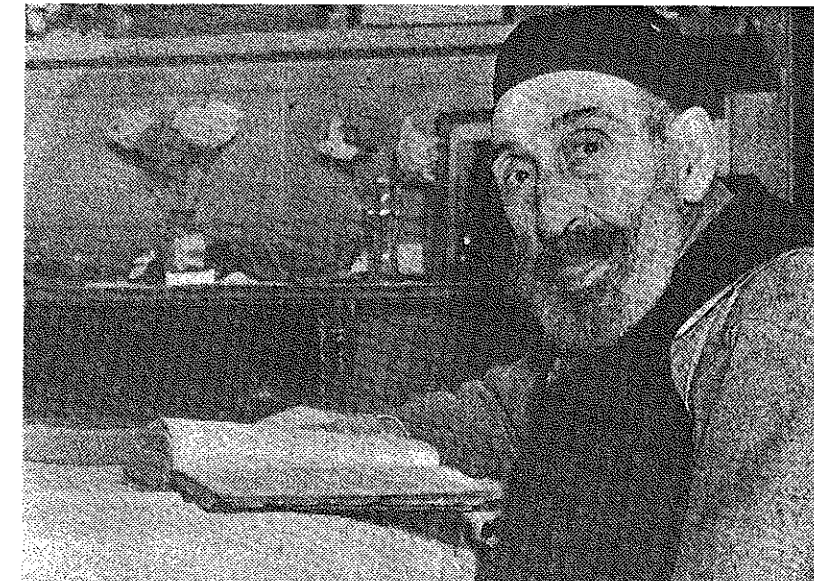
In the various changes of the Jewish intellectual and cultural development throughout the ages, a benign Providence furnished outstanding personalities who gave direction and guidance to the course of events that fashioned every new phenomenon. Often this was accomplished by a group of persons whose foresight and broad outlook helped to establish the new domicile for the Jewish spirit on a firm footing, but in all such cases there was always those who gave tone and character to the changed arena of intellectual and spiritual endeavor.

The coming of such men to our shores in the formative years of Beth Israel are regarded as events that consolidated Jewish cultural strivings and made them harmonious with the life and tendencies of the environment. The various waves of immigration brought such men as Solomon Harris, Shabbtai Rudman, Morris Golden, and Jacob David Leavitt and they were able to continue their studies with merit and distinction. Their efforts on behalf of the community continues to elicit the gratitude and veneration of future generations even as we venerate the memory of all the other scholars who stood at the cradles of their respective communities and helped in the design of fashioning them in accordance with Jewish tradition.

As great paintings can be appreciated only from a distance, so can the stature of great men be understood only in the perspective of time. We may estimate the power of their personalities during their lifetime, but only years after their death can we measure the effects of their life's work upon their own generation as well as that of their talmidim. Indeed the labors of great men are to the end that their children's children may reap the fruits of their toil. Like our Father Abraham, they walked not only with God but "before God," for they prepared the road of the future.

There is no record of great Jewish learning in Bangor in spite of loyalty to Judaism. But there was not much Jewish scholarship anywhere in the United States until larger and much richer communities began to

bring scholars from abroad. In the formative years our community was indeed fortunate to boast of such "lamdanim" as Solomon Harris, Morris Golden, Shabbtai Rudman and Jacob David Leavitt. Of these, Solomon Harris and Jacob David Leavitt left an indelible mark upon the young who were their students. Of Morris Golden and Shabbtai Rudman their reputations as scholars have become legend. Unfortunately none remain who can evaluate these men with objectivity and candor.



SOLOMON HARRIS

Solomon Harris

Solomon Harris was an outstanding pioneer in this community in the field of Jewish education, combining great knowledge with ineffable charm and wit. He served as one of the teachers in the first Talmud Torah sponsored by Beth Israel in 1903. In later years he conducted his own private academy more commonly called a Heddar. He fascinated his students by his masterly art of shedding new light on Biblical exegesis—even when discussing a subject of secular literature, he knew how to demonstrate the eternal truth of Judaism and its immutable validity for every generation. He served faithfully for many years as secretary and beadle of the synagogue.

His lectures to his colleagues on Talmud and Bible, still remembered, kept his audience spellbound from beginning to end. Of him it can be said that he brought the spirit of his dynamic personality into the Jewish community. He was truly a part of the founding movement and sustaining effort that nourished Beth Israel to its present status. He was a master of the enormous spiritual and religious heritage of Judaism. Because of Solomon Harris' work and his great qualities, the people of Bangor, both Jews and non-Jews held him in profound regard.

After a short illness, the hand of death brought to a close the distinguished and fruitful career of Solomon Harris on Feb. 1, 1943.

He was active until a short time before his demise. Even the affliction which clouded the last few months of his life could not diminish his zeal for service nor his concern for his congregation and its affairs. For Solomon Harris was of that calibre of God's ministers who throughout his years gave himself wholly to his congregation, his community and his fellowmen. An entire city bowed in grief at his passing, their sorrow shared by men in all walks of life throughout the community who had felt the warm influence of his personality, his profound wisdom that commanded the respect and esteem of all who knew him, the deep and abiding humanity of the man that brought glory upon Klal Yisrael and increasing modesty unto himself. Bangor was a small city when he came to it in 1888 and with its growth the congregation grew in stature, dominated by the great and good qualities of this man that taught our children.

But of all the honors and respect that bestowed upon him during his lifetime, none pleased Solomon Harris more than the affection and esteem of his pupils. He is still remembered for his paternal affection and solicitude, guiding and instructing, directing. There was a gentleness and sternness combined. Such was the nature of the man—modest, loyal, sympathetic. No one could escape his endearing qualities. It was only natural that the congregation of whom he was its most honored member, revered him without reservation.



Jacob David Leavitt

To own books has ever been the ambition of all cultivated gentlemen, but when setting out to settle in a new country, it is not to be expected that even the most devoted book-lover would find much cargo space at his disposal for such impractical baggage. Bibles and Talmudic tomes comprised in large part all that many Jewish immigrants counted as necessities.



JACOB DAVID LEAVITT
1868 - 1948

Jacob David Leavitt was indeed in this category. The writer recalls that his small study was virtually crammed with Hebrew literature of every description. It is impossible within the natural limits of this publication to do even the scantiest justice to one who was a gigantic spirit of Judaism in our community; nor is it easy for myself admitted to his gracious friendship in my early years, to speak of him in measured terms. He was a true friend and mentor.

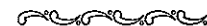
"Rebbe" Leavitt was so richly endowed with all the gifts of mind and soul. A bit of a mystic and philosopher, he was a veritable religious genius. He would have been a noble soul even if he had not read a single book, for his fine spirit came not from his books, but from the inner welling forth of a richly endowed soul. His personality had something ethereal about it. His large tender eyes, inscrutable and dreamy, gazing,

as it were, into eternity, lent mystery to his aspect. Under the spell of his discourses one often felt that peace was returning to the tortured soul.

We recognized him as a scholar, endowed with extraordinary mental gifts. His learning, coupled with an unusually wide acquaintanceship, tempered by long experience with human kind and mellowed by the passage of years, all contributed to make him a man of exceptionally broad vision, of tolerant understanding and of warm sympathies.

We knew him as a friend—and teacher—genial, kind and cordial always. Everyone was at home in his presence. In conversation with those who had known him but briefly, as well as with others whose contacts were of long duration, one sensed immediately a kinship and a knowing, ready response. In the very best sense of the word, he had the human touch.

But above all else, we knew him as a man of God, a man of deep religious convictions which made themselves felt in every phase of his life. There would have been little need for "Rebbe" Leavitt by word of mouth to urge men to the love of God and of our neighbor. He did not have to preach it, he lived it. No one could escape the inspiring influence of his manly virtue. He walked among us with a simple dignity that won not only our hearts, but our deep and sincere respect. His example, I know, has contributed much to your well-being as it has to mine.



Morris N. Golden

After the departure of Hazan Goldenkopf, the Congregation continued without a hazan-shohet for nearly five years. In the interim Morris N. Golden officiated at weddings and was recognized as a highly quali-

fied model. He was not an ordained rabbi, but was a man of great learning, well versed in Torah and Talmud, and he consented to act as rabbi until a professional leader could be obtained. Mr. Golden also served as secretary of the Chevra Kadisha and his beautiful handwriting has been compared to some of the finest Jewish manuscripts. His Judeo-German is succinct and expressive—the Yiddish literary style of an era long gone.

Mr. Golden conducted a meatery that was known for its strict supervision, and his name became a trade-mark known all over central and northern Maine. Many families in the rural areas were able to obtain kosher meat through his efforts. Moreover, there was no denying that the standards of Mr. Golden were an improvement in terms of the religious values to which the observing Jews adhered.

—THE EDITOR



MORRIS N. GOLDEN
1859 - 1916