

Beth Israel's Tomorrow

To turn from the past to the future is at once to attempt the most difficult and the most intriguing part of this evaluation. Difficult, because not even with the most instructive insights of our history would any honest man pretend to accurate clairvoyance. Intriguing, because though we have been largely determined beyond our will by the past, we have it within our present power, in part at least, to act in determination of the future. Indeed, this is in a sense the reason for undertaking such a study as this on the occasion of Beth Israel's Diamond Jubilee; that we may learn enough about the past, and apply it with sufficient intelligence in the present to influence our congregation's character in the future.

Not by number, but by spirit, do we measure our advances of the past and present. For our material growth is affected by the growth of Bangor Jewry's population; but our spiritual growth is affected by our own will to live as Jews and our own devotion to the congregation which has been a treasured possession and hallowed force in our lives.

Let it be recorded that our Synagogue today stands on a foundation of the founders' dreams, the hopes and determination of the generations that preceded us, and—most of all—the eternal ideals of Judaism. All, that has gone before us is only a prelude to the fulfillments that lie ahead of us.

It is for us to carry forward the Ark of the Covenant, to create new and even more glamorous traditions, to enlarge our horizons, to become builders, to make ourselves living witnesses to the goodness and the glory of God, as worthy sons and daughters in whom abides the spirit of Beth Israel.

The events of history do not arrange themselves in such an orderly and convenient manner that one epoch closes and another begins precisely on some particular anniversary. In the case of Beth Israel, the 75th Anniversary finds the Congregation in

the middle of a period of change and transition.

Verily, the first 75 years have been fruitful and good. Congregation Beth Israel's yesterday and today chronicle years of consecrated loyalty to faith and people—years of worship and service—years of striving and searching. In order to pay proper respect to these years of our inheritance, we must prepare to attain an even greater future in the 75 years of tomorrow.

As we look into the future, we see the years unfolding with a promise of tremendous vitality for this Synagogue.

Our country has fought through two world shattering wars during the lifetime of Beth Israel. The world has grown smaller in these 75 years. Human values are constantly being sacrificed to world conquest—religious values are being cast aside. Congregation Beth Israel will seek to lend its weight and its voice against these destructive tendencies—against the bitterness and hatred of nations; against the evil ambitions of the powerful; against the sordid materialism of unspirited men.

These critical times challenge Jews to follow but one ism—Judaism. It holds a key to human salvation. Its emphasis on democracy, on social justice, on love and on world brotherhood can be the panacea for human ills. Just as the founders of Beth Israel proudly and heroically determined that Judaism shall not perish in this isolated frontier of our country, so we, their descendants, must resolve that Judaism will remain the primary urge of our life. We shall not succumb to hysteria or jitters. Faith in God and not fear of man will be the keystone of our existence.

When the tyrants rage and reign, we shall heed the injunction of the jubilee and "proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all inhabitants thereof."

AS far as possible, this history has followed the main stream of the story of the Congregation. However, just as a river broadens and meanders in its course, even dividing itself into branches, so have the activities of the Congregation broadened to include new functions, and to branch out into diverse fields.

Some of these "branch streams" of Beth Israel deserve recognition of their own; therefore separate chapters have been accorded to "The Chevra Kadisha", "The Sisterhood", and "The Brotherhood." Each of these contributed to the welfare of the Congregation; they enlisted the services of devoted men and women to whom the Congregation is eternally grateful. Their story is recounted briefly on the pages which follow.



... that has sustained us and brought us to this day

In The Midst Of Our Festivities Let Us Pause To Remember.....



We Have Mourned The Six Million

We have mourned the six million . . .

We have celebrated Israel's rebirth . . .

During the 75 years of our existence, the world has been shrunk by technology and shattered by war.

We have been witnesses to homelessness and enslavement and death. As witnesses, we have been spared much, but we have been seared by the ordeals of our age. We saw our brothers and sisters in Europe become the victims of one of history's most

savage tyrannies. As our synagogues remained secure, their synagogues were violated and demolished. As our congregation flourished, theirs were decimated and destroyed.

We lived those years with the awareness that all of Israel was one fellowship. The goal of our labor, we knew, was to create the conditions for the one fellowship of mankind, to remove the dominion of tyranny, to rescue Jews, to help them reach Israel and America.



We Have Celebrated Israel's Rebirth

On Friday evening, May 14, 1948, with a jubilation and a thanksgiving unknown to any previous generation of Jewry, we conducted our Sabbath services in the knowledge that a few hours before, in the museum in Tel Aviv, David Ben Gurion had read the declaration of independence proclamation of the third Jewish Commonwealth. The miracle of rebirth had happened in our time.

What was our special merit, that unto us this miracle was shown? Our eyes had seen it, the fulfilling of the words of the prophets; the opening of graves, a doomed people arising to life, to light; the blossom-

ing of a desolated land; the victory of the few against the many; the gathering in of the exiles, their being borne aloft as on eagle's wings. We shall remember this tragedy and this miracle all our days and they shall be remembered as long as Jewish history unfolds. These two events of the past 75 years will be remembered throughout all the days of Jewish history.

The death of the six million.

The rebirth of the State of Israel.

May they continue to teach us their lesson:
Out of death can come life.

These Are The Rabbis Of Beth Israel

*By a man of understanding and knowledge
established order shall long continue.—Proverbs 28:2*

JUDAISM as a faith is a democratic theocracy that recognizes the ability of every human being to commune with God. Man and his maker require no special intermediary. Our ancient faith, therefore, has never made any distinction between Rabbi and layman with regard to ecclesiastical attributes or religious obligations. Both he and the layman are equally responsible for the fulfillment of the duties placed upon all Jews by the sacred law.

The Rabbinate, however, without being a special group of theologians, has, nevertheless, exercised the profoundest influence upon the direction of Jewish life over the centuries. The positive continuity of this way of life may well depend upon the influence exerted by the men in the Rabbinate.

The real significance and place of the Synagogue can be understood all the better, if we can appreciate the character and place

of the Rabbi in Israel. As the custodian of the ideals for which the Synagogue stands, the Rabbi symbolizes the House of Assembly. He is the leader of the Jewish community and of all that pertains to community welfare. He is the social architect and is motivated by a spiritual purpose which makes it in the deepest sense religious.

The Rabbi symbolizes the House of Prayer in the piety of his own personal life. Above all, the Rabbi symbolizes the House of Study, for the reservoir from which he draws his inspiration is the Torah and the hundreds of tomes that serve as commentaries that are contained in the rich repositories of Jewish learning. We can take deep pride that the Rabbis of Beth Israel have been men of great learning and well qualified in expounding the higher moral and spiritual purpose of Judaism. The Synagogue and the Rabbi are the unifying and creative forces in Jewish life.

